The London School of Economics and Political Science

Normalizing the Israel Asset. The Reagan Administration and the Second Cold War in the Middle East: Leverage, Blowback and the Institutionalization of the US-Israel 'Special Relationship'

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

The US-Israel relationship reached a critical, *institutionalizing* juncture during the 1980s. Measurable in qualitative and quantitative terms, the Reagan administration had a transformative impact on bilateral ties, institutionalizing ad hoc forms of cooperation while modifying prevailing discourse to recognize Israel as an 'ally' and a 'strategic asset' in the Cold War. New bureaucratic agreements were signed, bilateral working groups formed and joint military exercises held throughout a decade that capped a long familiarization process between societies and political elites in the two countries. By the end of the 1980s, many of the bureaucratic frameworks that today still govern the US-Israeli relationship were institutionalized, as were those elements of preferential treatment commonly cited as proof for the 'special' or 'unique' nature of US-Israel ties.

This study focusses on the *institutional* and *bureaucratic* dimensions of US support for Israel, examining the changing rationalizations for this support and the way this relates to the salient theme of a mutual struggle for influence and leverage over the policies of the other. Drawing on recently declassified documents, complimented with high-level interviews and other materials, the research answers three interrelated questions as to 'why' this institutionalization process was carried out, 'how' it would materialize and 'what effects' these processes would have on future US policy towards Israel and the Middle East.

While predicated on an effort to *enhance* US leverage over Israel, the study argues that the institutionalization of the relationship would formalize *interdependence* between the two countries, consolidating a 'policy straitjacket' that has constrained presidential freedom of action towards *both* Israel and the broader Middle East. This has furthered the US's 'entrapment' in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel that has enhanced a process of 'Israelization' of US approaches and viewpoints on Middle East developments, harming US influence while transforming the US into an active participant and major obstacle to a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the broader stabilization of the Middle East.

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For Mom & Dad
In memory of Tom Boyden

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Introduction

The 1980s and the Reagan administration are commonly described as a 'golden age' for US-Israel relations. Reagan noted in his diary that Israel 'never had a better friend'[1] in the White House, and Moshe Arens, Israeli ambassador to the US and later defence minister in the right-wing Likud government at the time, agrees, remembering the 1980s as an 'extended honeymoon',[2] a decade when the US-Israel relationship reached a level of 'friendship and alliance unprecedented in previous years'.[3] Writing on the eve of Reagan's death in 2004, Arens recalled how the president's two secretaries of state were the 'first to change' the 'traditional attitude' towards Israel in the US State Department, adding that 'when it comes to friendship for Israel, all occupants of the White House can be measured by the standard' Reagan set.[4]

Beyond the pleasantries conveyed by such statements, one might be puzzled to find that the 1980s were marked by severe, even unprecedented, tensions between the United States and Israel. Crises ranged from Israel's staunch opposition to the sale of US weaponry to 'moderate' Arab states, Israel's bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor and PLO headquarters in Beirut, the annexation of the occupied Golan Heights, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the 1985 arrest of Jonathan Pollard, to name but a few. While such events could be expected to severely test and even damage the US-Israel relationship, not least by calling into question the increasingly public portrayals of Israel as a 'strategic asset' and 'loyal ally' of the United States, disagreements were quickly overcome and the overall trend remained characterized by a profound institutionalization of the relationship and a growing *interdependence* between the national security policies of the two countries.

By the end of the 1980s, many of the institutional frameworks that today still govern US-Israel ties were institutionalized in the US bureaucracy, as were those elements of preferential treatment that are commonly cited as proof for the 'special' or 'unique' nature of the US-Israel relationship. Adding to the twin pillars of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities that had defined US support for Israel since 1948, a third and most controversial pillar would be formally added to the relationship during the 1980s: that of 'strategic cooperation'. This would represent the climax of a long, incremental process of institutional development that began in the late 1950s, was further augmented by a series of key bilateral agreements signed throughout the 1960s and 1970s, leading finally to the normalization of relations and their formalization during the second Reagan term in the mid-to-late 1980s (see Appendix A-F).

An unprecedented number of 31 bilateral agreements were concluded during Reagan's tenure, covering everything from cooperation in research and development to emergency medical assistance, anti-terror

[1] Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, New York, Harper Collins, 2007, p.14.
[2] Moshe Arnes, *Broken Covenant. American Foreign Policy and the Crisis Between the US and Israel*, Simon & Schuster Ltd., 1995, p.25.
[3] Moshe Arnes, "A True Friend," *Ha'aretz*, 22 June 2004, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/a-true-friend-1.125913.
[4] Ibid.

training, pre-positioning of US military hardware in Israel and periodical military exercises.[5] The relationship was also deepened by the conclusion of the US's first bilateral free trade agreement, Israel's inclusion in Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and the recognition of Israel as a 'major non-NATO ally' of the United States. Beyond the flourishing of economic, military and intelligence ties, the 1980s also inaugurated a significant deepening of societal bonds, whether in the form of private business ventures, military-to-military cooperation, or official or non-official state visits that were to increasingly add a separate, more informal, dimension to the relationship.[6]

Most importantly, in late 1983, the Reagan administration created a Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) tasked with strategic planning and coordination between the respective foreign and defence ministries of the two countries. This was followed by the launching of a Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAP), where aid and military supplies were discussed, a Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG), where policies aimed at strengthening Israel's economy were coordinated, and finally, by 1988, the launching of Joint Political Consultations (JPC).

The long-term significance of these groupings rested in their ability to extend US-Israel cooperation beyond the current administration or personalities occupying the White House. By involving the respective bureaucracies in these discussions, the US-Israel relationship would be better shielded from the top-level political crises that have been a constant feature of the relationship. Staffed by professional bureaucrats drawn from the Treasury, State and Defence departments—as well as the National Security Council (NSC)—such working groups also served to 'sensitize' these American bureaucracies to the potential benefits the US could draw from establishing closer ties with Israel as elements of cooperation were effectively diffused and compartmentalized within the US's foreign policy bureaucracy.

This would diminish the traditional scepticism towards overt cooperation with Israel present within these branches of government by creating new constituencies within them, particularly among the various branches of the US armed forces, which actively campaigned for increased cooperation with Israel. Such bilateral groupings also served as important channels for the creation of personal and professional contacts between staffers and mid-level officials in both countries. These would serve as avenues for increased understanding and cooperation on various dimensions of the US-Israel relationship, as well as forums to pre-empt and defuse the numerous political crises that have periodically arisen between the respective governments of Israel and the United States.

[5] For a (non-exhaustive) list of formal US-Israel agreements from 1950 to the present see, "US-Israel Relations: Formal US-Israel Bilateral Agreements Index," *Jewish Virtual Library*, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/MOUs.html.
[6] The first official visit by the Chairman by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff took place in 1984, followed shortly thereafter by the commander of the US Marine Corps. Israel's port of Haifa also became a major docking area for the US's Sixth Fleet. See, Yossi Melman and Daniel Raviv, *Friends in Deed: Inside the US-Israeli Alliance*, New York, Hyperion, 1994, p.243-50.

The Reagan period would therefore lead to the development of new bureaucratic frameworks, negotiating modalities and rationalizing principles applied to US-Israel relations. By the end of Reagan's tenure the relationship was thus formalized to new extents, with strategic rationales emerging at the forefront of the debate surrounding US support for Israel. As noted by Steven Spiegel, 'in the mid-1980s, […] there was the beginning of the institutional process. A number of people in the American bureaucracy became involved with this program and liked what they saw, so that in a *very quiet way* strategic cooperation did become institutionalized'[7] during the latter half of the 1980s.

Against the backdrop of a renewed heightening of East-West tensions and animosities associated with the 'Second Cold War' (1979-89), the key strategic priority of the Reagan administration during the 1980s revolved on drawing closer to *both* Israel and Saudi Arabia, seeking to transform these countries into the 'twin pillars' of US military strategy in the region and the first line of defence against the Soviet Union, its regional 'proxies' and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Such efforts would not come easy and indeed represented a rehashing of the traditional challenge that had long plagued US Middle East policy: that of reconciling the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of US policy into a single and mutually reinforcing plane. In this context, US efforts had traditionally focussed on Arab-Israeli diplomacy, identifying the festering conflict as a major impediment to these efforts to reconcile the US's set of partnerships in the region as well as a significant structural constraint to more overt forms of US-Israeli cooperation and alliance. Moreover, both sets of partners in the region had long sought to co-opt US policy to serve their own narrow interests, adding a further dimension of complexity to US efforts. As candidly noted by Nicholas Veliotes in an interview with the author, 'each new president had to learn two things when dealing with the Middle East. The first is that Israeli right wing governments would screw you and the second that the Saudis would disappoint you'.[8]

As the Reagan administration juggled these competing interests and partnerships in the Middle East, it gradually moved to overturn previous approaches and conceptualizations of US policy towards both sets of partners in the region. While downplaying the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a means to reconcile the two strands of policy, it would approach the region as divided into separate zones—the Near East and the Persian Gulf. This served a precise objective, that of diminishing tensions between US-Israeli and US-Saudi relations, thereby ostensibly freeing the US to draw closer to both without damaging its interests in either of the two central zones of the Middle East.

[7] Steven Spiegel, "US-Israeli Relations in the Post-Cold War Era," *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, Vol. 97, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs (JCPA), 1 January 1990, p.7, http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=2310 [emphasis added].
[8] Author interview, Nicholas Veliotes, Washington DC, September 2015. Veliotes served as US Ambassador to Jordan (1978-81), Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (1981-84) and US Ambassador to Egypt (1984-86).

It is in this context of efforts to enhance US strategic cooperation with *both* sets of partners that the key institutionalizing juncture for the US-Israel relationship should be framed. Israel, therefore, represented *one component* of a much broader US strategy for the region, one that would however reap the greatest benefits of this American 'second coming' to the region, essentially succeeding to 'entrap' the US in an increasingly one-sided, or *exclusivist* relationship with Israel in the Middle East.

Israel was thus formally integrated into the US's global security strategy, becoming an overt component in US deterrence posture in the Middle East, a complementary 'asset' for US-NATO contingencies in the Eastern Mediterranean and a key covert ally in advancing US interests in the Third World. As noted by William Quandt, by the end of Reagan's presidency 'the entire relationship was given a strategic rationale that had previously been missing, or had at least been less central'[9] under preceding administrations.

In light of these dynamics, Moshe Arens's description of US-Israel ties during the 1980s should come as no surprise. Such views were shared by other high-level officials at the time. In September 1981, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin spoke of the Reagan administration's interest in concluding a strategic cooperation agreement as signalling a 'third stage'[10] in US-Israel relations. In the wake of the 1987 recognition of Israel as a major non-NATO ally, his successor, Yitzhak Shamir, would proudly announce to the media that 'for the first time, Israel is formally considered an ally'[11] by the United States government.

Research Questions and Contribution

The overarching objective of this research is to delve deeper into this institutionalizing juncture for the US-Israel relationship and examine what set of motivating drivers can best account for this push to formalize the relationship under Reagan. More precisely, the thesis will answer three interrelated questions pertaining to this institutionalizing juncture, highlighting the continued importance of this period and its key relevance to the fundamental themes of leverage, influence and *interdependence* in the US-Israel relationship. The three questions relate to:

- 'The Why': *Why* did this institutionalization process occur during the 1980s, what motivating drivers can account for this shifting conceptualization of Israel's role and value for US policy and why did the US's traditional reluctance to overtly embrace Israel as an ally change under Reagan? What mixture of strategic, ideational and political pressures can best account for this shift?

- 'The How': *How* was this institutionalization process carried out, what were its major qualitative and quantitative components and how did these processes differ from previous US approaches towards Israel and the Middle East?

[9] William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, Washington & Berkeley, Brookings Institution Press, 2001, p.289.
[10] Paul L. Montgomery, "Begin Proclaims a New US-Israeli Era," *New York Times [NYT]*, 15 September 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/09/15/world/begin-proclaims-a-new-us-israeli-era.html.
[11] Dan Fisher, "US Granting Israel Non-NATO Ally Status," *Los Angeles Times [LAT]*, 16 February 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-02-16/news/mn-2391_1_egypt-non-nato-ally.

- 'What Effect': *What effect* would this institutionalization have on future US policy towards Israel *and* the Middle East, and to what extent were the original hopes and expectations matched by the outcome of these processes? What elements of path dependency can be traced back to this period, and in what ways does this juncture help to explain a number of key themes often associated with the 'special' US-Israel relationship?

Drawing on recently declassified documents from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL) and other collections in the United States and UK, combined with high-level interviews with Reagan era officials,[12] archival news articles, oral histories and other secondary source materials, the study will set out to unpack and problematize this institutionalization of the relationship under Reagan. Based on the above questions the research will provide a mixture of empirical and analytical contributions to the study of US Middle East policy and US-Israel ties while engaging with a number of themes and debates that have often been associated with the 'special' relationship.

These range from understanding why there appears to be an inverse relationship between *growing* Israeli dependence on the US and *decreasing* US leverage over Israel; to engaging with the so-called 'asset/burden' debate on Israel which has accompanied US-Israel relations throughout the Cold War and beyond. The notion that Israel represents a 'strategic asset' for US policy has developed into one of the fundamental drivers to justify mounting US aid and support. Significantly, with the end of the Cold War and the retrenchment of the Soviet threat, new strategic conceptualizations would be developed. Terrorism and Iran would serve these purposes—and indeed the political, legal and conceptual foundations of US policy on terrorism, including pre-emptive strikes and a growing reliance on Israeli intelligence, would first begin to emerge during the Reagan administration.[13]

Understanding the nature of these *strategic justifications*, and the extent to which these would survive repeated changes to the strategic environment in the Middle East, provides many insights into the evolution of the bilateral relationship. It is in this context that the 'asset/burden' debate has been identified by so many scholars as holding important insight for the articulation of US policy towards Israel.[14] The fact that these conceptualizations stemmed more from short-term expediency and domestic political calculations than a concrete appreciation of Israel's tangible contributions to key strategic interests stands out as a highly important dynamic in US-Israel relations.

Through an examination of these themes the research will engage with a number of other 'principles' or 'slogans' often associated with US support for Israel. From the 'tail wagging the dog' scenario to the 'no-

[12] Interviews were conducted in September 2015 in Washington DC, New York and Boston. Interviewed experts include: Richard W. Murphy, Nicholas Veliotes, Dennis Ross, Geoffrey Kemp, Daniel C. Kurtzer and Thomas Pickering. Exploratory meetings and discussions were also held with: Stephen M. Walt, Noam Chomsky and Rashid Khalidi.
[13] Mattia Toaldo, *The Origins of the US War on Terror, Lebanon, Libya and American intervention in the Middle East*, New York, Routledge, 2012.
[14] Camille Mansour *Beyond Alliance: Israel and US Foreign Policy*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994; John J. Mearshimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, New York and London, Penguin Books, 2008.

daylight' principle, the 'linkage doctrine' or support for Israel 'right or wrong', these rhetorical labels are valuable to engage with the prevailing literature, discourses and controversies that are often associated with US-Israel relations. Engaging and problematizing these labels will help to explain the incremental trajectory of the relationship while clarifying the complex interactions between domestic and systemic pressures in the development of US policy towards Israel and the broader Middle East

One could not write a thesis on the US-Israel relationship without acknowledging the powerful influence of pro-Israel lobby groups in the United States. The study will address this theme, arguing that the key institutional juncture for the US-Israel relationship during the 1980s would help lay—and institutionalize—both the *conceptual* and *institutional* groundwork for this expanding relevance of strategic justifications for US aid and support for Israel. It would be on the basis of these precedents that the influence and access of pro-Israel lobby groups in the US would grow and expand during the 1980s[15] and indeed it is no coincidence that the growing influence of such groups closely matches the gradual development and institutionalization of the third pillar in US-Israel relations: that of 'strategic cooperation'.

While no doubt influential, the Israel lobby cannot be identified as a key impetus for the development of US-Israel relations or the growing overt US bias towards Israel. It rather represents something akin to an 'enforcement mechanism' that, particularly in the post-Cold War era, has constrained US policy options while ensuring that successive administrations abide by certain precedents governing US support that have become institutionalized in the US foreign policy bureaucracy. It is for this reason that mapping the changing conceptualizations of US support for Israel and the underlying rationalizations for this aid and assistance is so important to explain the development of US policy towards Israel and, almost by extension, the broader Middle East as well.

In examining the key significance of the 1980s for the institutional history of the US-Israel relationship, the study will be of interest to a wide and diverse readership. Fundamentally, it will argue that a key by-product of this juncture would be to further the development of an institutional and bureaucratic straitjacket constraining presidential freedom of action to develop policy while essentially 'entrapping' the US in a circular game of inducements and compensation for Israel each time it sought to develop a new policy action for the region. This would in turn draw the US closer to Israel's long-term goal of establishing a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East, one capable of preserving the unique nature of US preferential treatment for Israel while elevating Israeli interests and concerns to front and centre of US Middle East policy.

[15] Michael Thomas, *American Policy Towards Israel. The Power and Limits of Beliefs*, London, Routledge/LSE International Studies, 2007.

In this respect, the research will engage with a final debate that can also be traced back to the 1980s and the Reagan administration. Aside from a growing *interdependence* between the US and Israel, the study will also address the theme of a gradual 'Americanziation' of Israeli state-society relations as compared to a parallel process of 'Israelization' of US perceptions and approaches to Middle East developments. These dynamics have become increasingly prominent in certain debates in the post-Cold War era and, more so, since 9/11 and the beginnings of the 'US war on terror'.[16]

Herein lies the paradox addressed by this study, and which is indeed also applicable to the broader history of US-Israel relations: US efforts to increase leverage over Israeli policy, or to mould it through a combination of inducements, soft persuasion and a slow, largely covert effort to 'Americanize' Israel's policies and behaviour, have actually had the opposite effect.

Rather than limit (or satisfy) domestic constraints on policy, the formalization of the relationship under Reagan and the emergence of overt forms of cooperation and interdependence in the economic, military and political domains, would increase the weight of domestic constraints. Indeed, while Israel's dependence on the US was solidified and institutionalized through long-term military aid and new bureaucratic and institutional agreements, it was Israeli leverage, not that of the US, that appeared to be enhanced, as US policy became increasingly reliant on this Israeli pillar.

The normalization of ties and the lack of conditionality or clear enforcement mechanisms that link Israeli behaviour to US aid and support would therefore increase *interdependence* between the two countries, gradually making US Middle East policy reliant on Israeli approval and backing. This has contributed to a scenario in which the US's own perceptions and priorities in the region have gradually become coloured by Israel's interpretations of regional developments, a dynamic that has considerably hampered US Middle East policy while significantly undermining its professed role as a mediator between Israel and the Arabs.

Indeed, rather than creating a scenario in which Israeli policy and perceptions would become 'Americanized', the formalization of the relationship would set the stage for what appeared to be an increased 'Israelization' of US policy in the Middle East. Meanwhile, beyond highly specific policies or negotiating circumstances, the US's embrace of a strategy based mainly on inducements and soft persuasion has not increased US leverage and influence over Israeli behaviour.

This growing interdependence between US and Israel and the related reluctance to link US aid to Israeli policy also contributed to a sense of impunity and hubris on the side of Israeli politicians during the

[16] See for instance, Special Issue of Journal of Israel Studies, "The Americanization of Israel," Vol.5, No.1 (Spring 2000), pp.1-372; The author is indebted to Marwan Bishara for an insightful discussion on this theme in Bologna, Italy in April 2017. Also see, Marwan Bishara, *Embedded: Israel, America, and the War on Terror*, New York, Nation Books, 2004.

1980s, given that US backing was increasingly taken for granted. This would further complicate US strategic objectives in the region, while demonstrating the catch-22 affecting US policy and leverage towards Israel. As aptly noted by Henry Kissinger in one 1975 meeting where US aid to Israel was discussed: 'If you don't give them arms, you weaken an ally; if you give them arms, they get total freedom'.[17]

Against this backdrop, many within the Reagan administration approached the question of US-Israel ties from a different angle, overturning previous assumptions on the central importance of the Arab-Israeli conflict and discarding the common belief in the prominent linkages between the US's two strategic zones in the region.

In conceptual terms, the significance of the Reagan period can be framed by the emergence of a discourse and rationalizing principles that boil down to a belief that an *overtly* pro-Israel policy in the Middle East was equivalent to a pro-US policy. Increasingly public demonstrations of the US's unwavering support for Israel should be welcomed as a means of restoring US resolve in the region. This would foreshadow the gradual emergence of a contemporary slogan characterizing US support for Israel 'right or wrong', a slogan that has increasingly been applied to US policy towards Israel in the post-Cold War era. Yet, the origins and conceptual foundations of this approach—like the 'no-daylight' and 'no surprises' principles—can be traced back to the Reagan administration and the formalization of the 'special' US-Israel relationship.

In a nutshell, these principles all stemmed from a belief that the best means to increase US leverage over Israel while limiting the political costs of disagreeing with its leadership in public, was by 'hugging it closer', displaying an outward image of alliance and an ironclad support for Israeli security and military superiority as the *foundation* of US-Israel relations in all spheres, not as a potential lever or 'quid pro quo' in exchange for tangible Israeli concessions or commitments.[18]

Any hint of overt linkage between US aid and tangible Israeli concessions, argued the supporters of the institutionalization process, would be counterproductive. It would signal to Israel that US support was not 'sincere' but rather a tactical investment aimed at extending US influence over the Arab world. This would deepen Israeli fears that its interests would someday be sacrificed by the US in order to attract the

[17] Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], Volume XXVI (1974-1976), Document 159.
[18] A leaked 2010 email by Martin Indyk containing recommendations on how to deal with the intransigence of Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu included a variant of the 'hugging Israel closer' theme, with Indyk counselling the Obama administration to 'put your arm around Bibi [Netanyahu] […] to nudge him forward'; the US needed to 'try to make him understand that his negotiating tactics are counterproductive to his own purposes'. 'If all else fails, avoid recriminations […] you should avoid finger-pointing in favour of a repeated commitment to a negotiated solution and a willingness to engage with both sides in trying to make this happen, when they're ready'. UNCLASSIFIED, US Department of State, Case No.F-2015-06322, Doc No. C06065660, Date: 02/24/2017, available online at https://foia.state.gov/searchapp/DOCUMENTS/Litigation_Feb2017/F-2015-06322/DOC_0C06065660/C06065660.pdf. The author is indebted to Amb. Daniel Kurtzer for highlighting this dimension in an interview with the author.

numerically superior and energy-rich Arab states into the US orbit, in turn strengthening Israel's propensity for unilateral military action and more general reticence to follow the US lead in the region.

Conversely, according to this emerging constituency of US experts and practitioners, any use of negative conditionality, sanctions or coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis Israel in an effort to extract concessions or modify a given Israeli policy would actually be damaging to US interests. Israel would be unlikely to give in to pressure; US leverage and influence would decline or be proven inefficient, and those Arab states still at war with Israel could be expected to increase their demands in light of the appearance of a 'crisis' or 'weakening' in the US-Israel relationship

Yet, by effectively granting Israel exuberant amounts of aid and military support with little or no strings attached and transforming US support into what amounts to a *de facto* alliance framework without any formal and binding exchange of assurances, Reagan and his team of advisors have undermined an important lever that could have been used as a means to incentivize Israel to modify policies the US has long opposed. Indeed, with Israel already benefitting from elements of preferential treatment that are not even supplied to NATO countries, and US aid and support growing annually independently from Israeli actions or behaviour, the question must be asked what real incentives Israel has to modify its policy and entertain concessions needed for peace.

In terms of pronouncements by Reagan officials, there is little doubt that strategic rationales were elevated to the forefront of the public debate on US support for Israel during the 1980s. Internal documents from the administration demonstrate the extent to which US officials were divided on endorsing Israel as a strategic asset. Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger was entirely opposed to the notion, arguing—as many had done before—that such overt forms of cooperation would endanger US-Arab relations and that Israel's capabilities to contribute to America's strategic priorities in the region were actually quite limited. This was not a new phenomenon—indeed, in 1976 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. George S. Brown, expressed in an interview with an Israeli journalist that he considered Israel 'a burden' rather than an asset for US military planners.[19]

A close examination of these competing views will provide important insight into the underlying motives that led to this institutionalizing juncture as well as a better understanding of the benefits—both strategic and political—that US officials hoped to draw from these efforts to normalize the relationship with Israel. When assessed in relation to the broader historical development of US-Israel relations since 1948,

[19] The remark led Joseph Churba, the Air Force's top Middle East intelligence expert at the time, to publicly rebuke his boss by describing Gen. Brown's comments as 'dangerously irresponsible' given that they 'encouraged the Arabs and Russians to think American backing for Israel had diminished', as the *New York Times* put it. Churba was subsequently forced to resign his post. He would later play an important role in the Reagan administration's efforts to formalized strategic cooperation with Israel, also serving as a campaign advisor to Reagan in 1980. "Joseph Churba, Intelligence Aide Who Criticized General, Is Dead," *NYT,* 28 April 1996, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/28/world/joseph-churba-intelligence-aide-who-criticized-general-is-dead.html.

the thesis will demonstrate how these efforts to institutionalize the relationship during the 1980s are part of a wider theme that has long existed below the surface of the so-called 'special relationship': that of a constant struggle by both sides to increase their influence and leverage over the policies of the other—and, for the United States, to reconcile domestic political pressures to support Israel into a broader strategy capable of advancing other US interests as well.

The underlying incompatibility between the long-term US and Israeli visions of the regional order in the Middle East, and the best means to provide for Israeli security therein, has long represented (and still represents) a source of top-level political crises and disagreements between Washington and Tel Aviv. It is in this context that US policy towards Israel has sought to gradually 'Americanize' Israel's long-term viewpoints and policies in the region, bringing these more in tune with the US's own vision and interests.

Explained in part by Ronald Reagan's instinctive feelings of sympathy and support for Israel and the dominance of the globalist, East-West prism in Washington, this push to formalize the relationship can also be understood through a set of deeper political, moral-ideational and strategic objectives. Three interconnected aims can be identified as motivating drivers for this process of institutionalization, and it important to note how all three of these objectives relate directly or indirectly to an effort to increase US leverage over Israeli policy and seek to guard against (or satisfy) domestic constraints on executive action.

These aims included:

- To limit and restrain Israel's adventurist policies in the region by requesting that Israel coordinate major policy actions with the US ahead of time, as would be expected from two 'formal' allies;
- To reach an amicable agreement with Israel and members of the organized Jewish-American community in the US whose influence and financial capabilities the Reagan administration (and the wider Republican Party) knew could complicate US policy objectives and that they therefore wished to co-opt to serve their own foreign and domestic agendas;
- To convince Israel to support, or at least not overtly oppose, Reagan's national security strategy for the Middle East based on building up the military capabilities of 'moderate' Arab states while enhancing the US's ability to directly project military force into the region to deter potential Soviet moves, particularly in Iran and the Persian Gulf.

Underpinning these efforts was the key aim of reducing the tension between US policy toward Israel and broader US-Arab relations, an objective that has remained a constant in US Middle East policy since the 1950s.

Enhanced cooperation with Israel, therefore, also represented a means for the US to consolidate its leverage and influence, formalizing the clear power asymmetry between the two countries, while banking on the notion that Israel's increased dependence on the US would provide US leaders and policymakers with more grounds on which to influence Israeli policy and behaviour.

Reagan himself was fond of describing the US-Israel 'alliance' as a 'two-way street', and expected Israel to act not as a proxy but as the 'loyal ally' he believed it to be. This entailed not creating problems for the

administration, both in terms of political capital at home and in the strategic domain abroad where Israel's adventurist policies or opposition to the US's wider strategic plans for the region were creating considerable frustration among administration officials.

A key objective in this context, particularly following the serious disagreements that emerged between the US and Israel in 1981–82, was to keep political crises under wraps, thereby avoiding the political costs of publicly clashing with Israel on issues where the two countries did not agree. Also significant was the hope that by responding favourably to Israel's requests for aid and preferential treatment, the Reagan administration would garner important political support for policies that had little or nothing to do with the Middle East, but on which Israel's supporters in the US could provide important assistance and backing.

Israeli services, particularly in the covert domain, were no doubt helpful for administration officials during the 1980s. Israel (and other allies) could be relied upon to help circumvent Congressional bans on aiding revolutionary groups in Central America and other Third World 'hot spots'. Israel's geostrategic location and experienced military forces equipped with US weaponry could assist US goals as a potential force multiplier and in serving as a staging area for force projection contingencies. Finally, the considerable increase terrorist attacks against US personnel and allies throughout the 1980s—coupled with Reagan's fixation on the need to save US hostages abducted in Lebanon—furthered Israel's value as a source of intelligence and counter-terrorism tactics, a component of US-Israel cooperation that has become increasingly visible in recent years.

In broad geostrategic terms, however, these benefits were on the whole limited considering the actual priorities that governed the Reagan administration's approach to the Middle East. In this context, the Persian Gulf quickly emerged as a top strategic priority for the US in the 1980s. The need to reassure local allies in the wake of the 1979 revolution in Iran and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the major impetus that drove this renewed emphasis on the region. Other events such as the Iraq-Iran war and the 1987 US Operation Ernest Will (aimed at protecting shipping lanes and escorting oil tankers in the Persian Gulf) furthered the importance of the area.

In light of these dynamics, how can one account for the Reagan administration's repeated portrayals of Israel as a 'strategic asset' of the United States? How did this effort to formalize the relationship fit into US interests and priorities in the Near East and how did these compare to broader components of US Middle East policy centred on the Persian Gulf and developments in the Iraq-Iran war?

What tangible benefits did the Reagan administration believe would flow from this institutionalization process, and how can one explain the decision to revive formal US-Israel strategic cooperation in the midst of the severe disagreements that rocked the relationship during the Lebanon war? If Israel's

strategic capabilities can only partially account for this formalization of US-Israel relations, what set of deeper, indirect benefits did the US hope to draw from closer ties with Israel? Given that Israeli leaders had long lobbied the US to formalize the US-Israel relationship, and that US officials had in the past turned down similar offers of cooperation, how can one account for this change in US policy during the 1980s?

Finally, would it have been possible for the Reagan administration to implement its wider national security strategy for the Middle East *without* upgrading US-Israel cooperation? In other words, may Reagan's formal embrace of strategic cooperation with Israel be considered a form of *compensation* for similar efforts aimed at enhancing strategic cooperation with the US's Arab allies?

When framed within the wider context of the Reagan administration's ambitions and priorities and examined on the basis of historical precedents tied to US-Israel relations, a clearer picture emerges of the underlying motivations that led to this critical, *institutionalizing* juncture in the US-Israel relationship.

The research will therefore examine and differentiate between the image and reality of US-Israel 'strategic cooperation' during the 1980s, while reflecting on the lasting impact this notion has had on the broader US-Israel relationship in the post-Cold War era. The long-term explanatory significance of this institutionalizing juncture can be framed in terms of the consolidation of a powerful 'policy straitjacket' governing US strategy and approaches to Israel and the broader Middle East, one that has essentially crystallized the intrusion of the 'domestic' over the 'systemic' for examinations of US foreign policy towards the Middle East in the post-Cold War era. It has further resulted in a growing, but ultimately harmful, interdependence between US and Israeli approaches to the Middle East, and a considerable decline in presidential freedom of action to develop policy vis-à-vis *both* Israel and the broader region.

Division of the Volume

Before proceeding with a brief overview of the division of the volume, it is fist important to clarify that this study does not set out to perform a comprehensive diplomatic history of the US-Israel relationship, or of US policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. These dimensions will of course be present in the following chapters, yet they serve as backdrops to contextualize a number of key themes associated with the US-Israel 'special' relationship and US policy towards Israel.

Moreover, the research is tailored towards understanding the US's standpoint vis-à-vis Israel and the Middle East, and in this respect the empirical analysis is primarily drawn from US sources and documents. The analysis will take into account the perspective of Israel and the Arab States—Saudi Arabia in particular—but the fundamental angle will remain centred on Washington. While the research does employ a number of non-US primary sources, a lack of local language skills—in both Hebrew and

Arabic—does represent a 'gap' in the analysis, and may in itself provide one potential avenue for future research agendas that may complement this research.

The first chapter will introduce the research framework and methodological tools employed throughout the analysis of US foreign policy towards Israel and the Middle East during the Reagan administration. Here the research will adopt a modified Neo-Classical Realism framework that identifies the domestic setting in the US as the independent variable, while recognizing the importance of the systemic—regional and international—level as the intervening variable needed to explain US-Israel relations during the 1980s (the dependent variable). Within the domestic context, the research will prioritize executive agency, but it will complement this focus on the president and his key advisors with a broader appreciation of historical precedent and the power of intangible forces such as belief systems and ideology that also impact decision-makers. Here the research will introduce the twin methodological tools of Foreign Policy Analysis and Historical Sociology as a means to 'unpack' the domestic 'playing field' and account for broader influences and constraints on executive agency.

The second chapter of the study will introduce the foundations of US policy towards Israel, highlighting the shifting weight of the 'three pillars' of US support: shared Judeo-Christian values, political affinities and, finally, 'strategic cooperation'. The chapter will further address the changing conceptualizations of Israel as a 'burden' or 'asset' for US policy and the growing significance of the systemic—Cold War—environment as an intervening variable to help frame the slow emergence of strategic rationalizations for US aid and support during the 1970s. These themes will be analysed and assessed through the prism of reoccurring top-level political crises and disagreements between Israel and the US and the growing tendency of US policy to embrace a strategy predicated mainly on inducements ('carrots') rather than pressure of coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis Israel.

The third chapter will address the 'Reagan Revolution', zeroing in to analyse the important socio-cultural and political changes occurring in the US in the run-up to Reagan's electoral victory in 1980. These will be employed to emphasize how the Reagan administration would herald an overturning of traditional political alliances and constituencies in the US. While Reagan's approach to the Middle East would represent an 'evolution' from the previous Carter administration, the way in which the administration approached Israel would stand out as a considerable departure from previous US policy and approaches, and can largely be explained by the composition and ideational inclinations of key advisors within the Reagan administration.

The fourth chapter will introduce the strategic environment of the Middle East in the 1980s and the 'Second Cold War', emphasizing the key priorities of the Reagan administration and the difficult relationship between US allies and strategic zones in the Middle East: Israel, in the Near East, and Saudi

Arabia in the Persian Gulf. The fifth chapter will highlight the deep divisions within the Reagan administration on enhanced strategic cooperation with Israel, and carefully trace the development and balance of viewpoints and rationalizations among supporters and sceptics of such cooperation. The first 1981 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on US-Israel strategic cooperation will be introduced and analysed, pointing to the very different understandings of this agreement held by Israel and the US.

Chapter 6 will engage with the key event of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which led to a significant top-level political crisis with the US and yet ultimately resulted in the final push for the institutionalization of the relationship. The Lebanon war and Israel's policy of deception vis-à-vis the US would therefore pay off, effectively 'entrapping' the US in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East, an objective that had long been a key goal of Israel's foreign policy establishment but which US officials had traditionally opposed.

The seventh chapter will trace the subsequent blossoming of bilateral agreements and institutional frameworks governing US aid and assistance for Israel following 1983. The focus here will be the bureaucratic and institutional agreements concluded with Israel in the latter half of the 1980s, and the implications these agreements would have on the growing interdependence between the US and Israel in the Middle East, particularly in the Near East, the strategic theatre of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The chapter will demonstrate the continued significance of this period in terms of key themes and slogans such as the 'no-daylight' principle; support for Israel, 'right or wrong' and the 'tail wagging the dog' scenario.

Finally, in the conclusions, the study will reflect on the broader legacy of this critical institutionalizing juncture for the relationship and its impact on the key themes of influence, leverage and interdependence between the US and Israel in the post-Cold War era. Here the study will emphasise the growing development of a policy straitjacket constraining US presidential authority to develop policy while deepening the US's entrapment in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East based on a circular game of inducements and compensation each time the US seeks to articulate a new policy approach to the region.

Chapter 1

Framing US Foreign Policy

This study will examine the changing nature of US support for Israel in the 1980s, and the ramifications these changes would have on future US policy towards Israel and the broader Middle East in the post-Cold War era. To frame the significance of the Reagan administration, and identify the strong degrees of path dependency that would flow from this period, the research will focus on the key variable of executive agency in the United States in an effort to discern how elite opinion—including the President and his closest advisors but also extending to Congress, media and think tank elites as well as the various branches of the foreign policy bureaucracy in Washington—would develop policy towards Israel and the Middle East during the 'Second Cold War' (1979–1989).

In keeping with the overarching goal of providing qualitative and quantitative evidence in support of the claim that US-Israeli relations reached a critical, *institutionalizing* juncture during the Reagan administration, and giving answers to the three interrelated questions of *how*, *why* and *to what effect* these processes of institutionalization would take place during the 1980s, this chapter will address the following dimensions:

- It will provide a research framework that accounts for the importance of the domestic setting in the United States in examining US-Israel relations, emphasizing that intangible forces rooted in US society stand out as the fundamental driver for US support for Israel, and were only later joined by strategic and Cold War rationales.

- Having identified the domestic setting as the independent variable, the chapter will address the role of the systemic, international environment, recognizing it as an important 'intervening variable' needed to explain the slowing or acceleration of US-Israeli cooperation in the broader context of the Cold War. In this respect, the thesis will adopt a slightly modified Neo-Classical Realism (NCR) framework to account for this 'special' intrusion of the domestic over the international in US-Israeli relations.

- Finally, the chapter will move to 'unpack' the domestic context, and identify those structural and ideational variables that have an impact on executive agency. Here the research will employ Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) with a focus on executive agency—the President and his closest advisors—as the fundamental unit of analysis, but will combine this focus with a wider appreciation of how structural and ideational forces also influence policy decisions by establishing certain parameters, 'road maps' or 'world view(s)' within which US policy debates are held. In this respect, FPA will be combined with Historical Sociology (HS) as a means to account for the broader influences of history and ideology on executive agency.

This chapter will therefore introduce the research framework and methodological tools through which to analyse the changing nature of US support for Israel during the 1980s. This will be combined, in Chapter 2, with an in-depth analysis of the incremental development of US-Israel ties between 1948 and 1980, in order to demonstrate the administration's shift from the past and significance for the future.

1.1 A Modified Neo-Classical Realism Framework for the 'Special' US-Israel Relationship

Neo-classical realism provides much of what is required by this research. NCR can account for the role of ideas and ideology, acknowledges the important interplay between the domestic and the international levels of analysis and places much emphasis on the key role of executive agency in making policy decisions.[1] NCR also resonates with the twin methodological tools of HS and FPA employed to 'unpack' the domestic context and add clarity to the diverse influences and constraints impacting executive agency.

NCR's acknowledgment of 'intervening variables' accommodates the need to account for the shifting relationship between the 'domestic' and the 'international' levels of analysis in explaining the development of US policy towards Israel. While the US-Israel relationship was born out of intangible feelings of moral responsibility and ideological support rooted in the US domestic setting, the bilateral relationship would begin assuming 'special' characteristics only *after* US strategic interests in the Cold War and the Middle East became aligned with this baseline of US moral and political support for Israel.

It is against this backdrop that the research framework will acknowledge the important role of the systemic environment as an intervening variable, while firmly approaching the domestic context—and within it the role of executive agency—as the key independent variable employed for an examination of the US-Israel relationship. This modified NCR research framework is more adept at capturing the largely unique nature of US-Israel relations, allowing the analysis to underline the influence of the domestic level, while highlighting the key role of executive agency in seeking to reconcile domestic constraints into a coherent strategy that at the same time was also capable of advancing US strategic and material interests in the Cold War and the broader region.

When it comes to the US-Israel relationship, the context is defined by the domestic setting of the United States, as it is within this base of US societal sympathy and support for Israel that executive agency has developed policy. For the purpose of this research therefore, the traditional NCR framework is modified to account for the domestic as opposed to the systemic environment as the independent variable, while the international level can be considered an intervening variable, speeding up or slowing down the incremental development of US-Israel ties.

[1] See, Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation," *Review of International Studies*, No.36, (2010), pp.117-43; Gideon Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, Vol.51, No.1 (Oct.1998), pp.144-72.

Having identified the domestic level as the fundamental unit of analysis, the next step is that of 'unpacking' the domestic setting, in an effort to discern those influences that have a bearing on executive agency. To examine the *structural* and *ideational* 'playing field' in which executive agency develops policy, the twin methodological tools of HS and FPA can be employed. Historical sociology will allow the analysis to trace the political and ideational roots of policies, contextualizing their development into broader historical and socio-political trends taking place at the domestic level. FPA meanwhile will serve as a tool to focus on executive agency, seeking to clarify how the President and his key advisors weigh up these diverse material and non-material, domestic and systemic pressures, developing policy within these parameters and constraints.

Here the more subtle functions of ideas and ideology can be conceptualized in relation to their role in creating certain 'road maps' and 'worldviews' that influence, albeit at times subconsciously, the way society and decision-makers interpret and (re)act to international developments. A focus on ideology and beliefs systems will allow the research to better contextualize the analysis of internal debates and competing views within the administration, highlighting the deeper ideological and political roots of these perceptions and the ways these are influenced by the general socio-political context in which the administration operates (i.e., US society). In the words of Fred Halliday, a combination of historical sociology and foreign policy analysis will make it possible to examine how the 'decisions, and capabilities, of rulers are to a considerable extent formed by the *history* and *context* within which they operate'.[2]

This approach is particularly well suited for the present study in light of the continuous interplay (and tension) between US domestic pressures to support Israel and the US's wider geostrategic ambitions and responsibilities in the Middle East. It is the way presidents and their closest advisors interpret and react to systemic pressures, while choosing from a pool of policy options and strategies that have already been restricted by this baseline of US moral and ideational support for Israel, which explicates the domestic determinants of US policy. Significantly, as the relationship matured and became institutionalized, the relevance of the domestic setting would extend to broader dimensions of US Middle East policy as well. This stemmed from the growing tendency to elevate Israeli security to front and centre of US policy towards the region, gradually making US Middle East policy reliant on this Israeli pillar.

Such exercise will provide essential insights into the US foreign policy decision-making process towards Israel and the Middle East, emphasizing that there was nothing predetermined in the way the relationship developed. Rather, the gradual transformation of Israel from a 'burden' or 'liability' to an 'asset' for US foreign policy would be the product of tactical choices made by US and Israeli leaders in reaction to broader developments tied to the Cold War and the growing Soviet penetration of the Middle East. It is

[2] Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations. Power, Politics and Ideology*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.40 [emphasis added].

the underlying rationalizations advanced as justifications for increased aid and support—and the ways these have been updated and modified over time in an effort to reconcile domestic constraints to support Israel with the task of advancing wider US strategic interests tied to the Cold War and continued access to oil—that define the development of US Middle East policy from Truman to Reagan.

1.2 Unpacking the Domestic 'Playing Field'

US foreign policy is often framed in term of a clash—or perennial search for balance—between the pursuit of hard, material and geostrategic interests ('realism') and the promotion of intangible norms and values such as democracy, human rights, individual freedoms and the rule of law ('idealism'). Both prisms are fundamentally linked to the national interest of a state, understood as the maximization of (material) power and (intangible) influence abroad in order to enhance security at home.

These strands are rarely reconcilable into a coherent set of policies to pursue, however. Indeed, and particularly in the Middle East, US interests have tended to coexist in tension with the promotion of intangible values. Throughout history, US presidents and administrations have inevitably couched their policies with broad reference to both prisms, generally emphasizing the one considered most convincing and/or applicable in a given case. In light of the spread and complexity of interests and responsibilities, US foreign policy is infused with a high degree of flexibility and pragmatism, capable of adjusting to specific circumstances and crises. Thus, it is rarely simply 'realist' or 'idealist', 'interventionist' or 'isolationist', and instead tends to be infused by various shades of 'grey' that push US policy away from either extreme.[3]

This dynamic increases the explanatory value of the domestic context and in particular those structural and ideational variables that combine to create the playing field in which policy debates are held and approved by executive agency. By mapping various constituencies and belief systems present at the domestic level and assessing the degrees of influence each holds on individuals charged with key positions in the executive branch, a clearer picture emerges of the origins of a given policy as well as the reasons why other approaches or viewpoints rarely seem to attract the same degree of support.

Distilled to its minimum, US foreign policy can be conceptualized as resulting from a complex process of balancing and negotiation between different power nodes present in the domestic context of the state. As the arena in which policy is formed, debated, diluted and ultimately approved, the domestic context is crucial for understanding the political origins of a given policy as well as the mix of ideational, strategic and material motives that are provided as justification for its implementation.

[3] Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam. Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, pp.4-6.

Individual actors (or executive agency) make policy decisions, and while these are necessarily influenced by outside developments it is through the prism of domestic realities that such events are interpreted in Washington. Foreign engagements are ultimately aimed at advancing the domestic standing of states (i.e., the 'national interest'), and given that states do not correspond to monolithic actors on the world stage, the choice of individual policies—as well as the underlying strategies to advance a given 'national interest' and the definition or ranking of that interest itself—are the product of complex negotiations between various constituencies and centres of power within them.

The domestic characteristics of a state include 'static' elements, such as geographic positioning, size, national resources and the bureaucratic makeup of a state,[4] as well as more intangible forces like societal cohesion, political culture, historical experience and ideology. These characteristics combine to create the general domestic context, the *structural* and *ideational* playing field where executive agency develops policy. It is on the basis of internal debates and capabilities that certain policies are chosen over others, and it is through debates occurring at the domestic level that actors and broader society define a set of 'national interests' for a country to pursue. In other words, while a focus on the systemic environment may provide important insights as to *why* (and to some extent *when*) US policy and perceptions changed, it is developments at the domestic level that provide further analytic depth for explanations of *how* the US decided to (re)act, and with what means.

The centrality of the domestic setting is particularly relevant in the context of the United States. The structural characteristics of the US set it aside from most, if not all, other state actors on the world stage. Its size and political system—defined by a federalized structure of checks and balances that diffuses decision-making power among various branches of the bureaucracy—ensure that a multitude of views and opinions coexist (and compete) within the political arena (and even a sitting administration) on any given policy issue.

The legal and structural makeup of the US, which allows special interest groups to influence the decision-making process, further enhances the value and complexity of the domestic context. On this topic, it is important to appreciate how the US's size, security and geographic positioning remove large segments of US society from many aspects of foreign policy. This trend has allowed presidents and decision-makers, as well as special interest groups, greater freedom of action to develop policy. Yet, on issues where American society is more actively engaged, the relevance of domestic constraints increases, given that policy decisions will be more closely scrutinized and debated in the public sphere.

[4] The bureaucratic makeup of states is less 'static' than the other structural elements. While the bureaucratic architecture remains largely stable, the influence of the bureaucracy and legislative branch over the articulation of US policy has ebbed and flowed throughout history, often in reaction to a perceived overstepping of authority by the executive branch. In the 1980s the legislative branch maintained significant influence over US foreign policy. A major objective of the Reagan administration was to win back authority. Indeed, the administration would set the stage for a consolidation of decision-making powers in the executive branch from 1989 onwards.

Of the large number of US foreign policy topics, no single issue is capable of arousing such domestic animosity as the US's relationship with Israel.[5] This dynamic, combined with the fact that increased American presence in the Middle East largely coincided with a deepening of the political-military relationship with Israel, has rendered the US's approach to the region particularly exposed to domestic considerations.

US policymakers are effectively constrained by public interest in, and support for, Israel's survival and wellbeing.[6] The fact that this support has traditionally been understood to coexist in tension with the US's ability to maintain cooperative relations with Arab states, thereby weakening its geostrategic positioning in the Middle East, stands as a testament to the power of these intangible bonds. As noted by Michael Barnett, 'Israel's collective identity, and the US's understanding that Israel shares with it certain values', becomes 'critical for an understanding of US-Israel' relations.[7] While 'domestic and systemic pressures affected the level of US support for Israel, it is the existence of a shared identity and transnational values that is the foundation of this relationship'.[8]

With these societal bonds acting as the foundational driver for the US-Israel relationship, every president since Truman has been committed to Israel's survival and security—and it is for this reason that US policymakers have had to struggle, and at times fall over backwards, to develop creative strategies for the region that were capable of advancing US interests while staying true to this baseline of support for Israel. A 'more vulnerable' Israel 'would not just be a strategic failure, it would be a *moral* failure,[9] noted US President Barack Obama in a recent interview, demonstrating the degree to which 'values' remain even today a key driver for the relationship.

Indeed, it is this commonality of interests and values—with the former still debated by some—that makes the US-Israel relationship 'unique' as well as a *de facto* alliance. By comparison, the US relationship with Saudi Arabia or with other Arab states is generally framed as a 'partnership', because as one high-level policymaker recently put it, 'America's allies share values and not just interests'.[10]

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[5] Walter Russell Mead has described American societal support for Zionism (and later Israel) as 'one of the most potent political forces in US foreign policy'. See, W.R. Mead, "The New Israel and the Old: Why Gentile Americans Back the Jewish State," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.87, No.4 (July-August 2008), p.29.

[6] See, Avraham Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel. The Limits of the Special Relationship*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, pp.1-29; Shai Feldman, *US Middle East Policy: The Domestic Setting*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies [JCSS], Tel Aviv University/Westview Press, 1988; Nimrod Novik, *The United States and Israel. Domestic Determinants of a Changing US Commitment*, JCSS, Tel Aviv University/Westview Press, 1986.

[7] Barnett, "Identity and Alliances in the Middle East," in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), T*he Culture of National Security. Norms and Identity in World Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp.400-447, pp.402-3 (quote).

[8] Ibid., pp.403-4.

[9] Thomas L. Friedman, "The Obama Doctrine and Iran," *NYT* (Video Interview with President Obama), 5 April 2015 [emphasis added], http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/opinion/thomas-friedman-the-obama-doctrine-and-iran-interview.html?ref=opinion.

[10] Dennis Ross, "The Saudis are rightly concerned about Iran," *NYT Opinion Room for Debate*, 5 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/04/saudi-arabia-a-dangerous-ally/the-saudis-are-rightly-concerned-about-iran.

It is also in light of the power of these intangible bonds, and the politically charged nature of US support for Israel, that successive administrations have sought to concentrate decision-making on this issue within the White House.[11] An agency-oriented approach is therefore indispensable for studies of US-Israel relations.[12] By focussing on individual agency, the broad influences and constraints coming from the domestic and international levels as well as the weight of material and non-material considerations can be collapsed into single planes and assessed in terms of their impact on the views, beliefs and perceptions of executive agency charged with implementing policy.

In this respect, it is important to specify at the onset that intangible forces on which a national identity is based have also been influenced through interactions with the 'international'. This specification is important given that an encompassing analysis of the domestic context should also appreciate the way ideological inclinations and historical experience have a bearing on the policymaking process through their role in creating a national identity, world view(s) or understanding of one's self in comparison to others.[13] Important for a conceptualization of foreign policy is therefore also an understanding of national identity (*who we are*), the historical roots of such identity (*where we come from*), and the ways these two dimensions combine with present realities to create the ideational context in which executive agency develops policy.

1.2.1 Bureaucratic Structure and Executive Agency

The ultimate authority to make foreign policy decisions rests with the president, who weighs diverse policy options and engages in a cost-benefit analysis of each before making a final decision. Here, the president and his closest advisors take into consideration their material capabilities and chances of success, bad and worst case scenarios, the impact on domestic politics—including opinion polls and the electoral cycle—and the available sources of support that can be rallied around a given policy decision.

In this process, a number of domestic constraints come into play and often dilute or modify an ideal policy approach developed by the executive. Indeed, the power of the presidency is in many respects circumscribed by the vast bureaucracy and often-competing interests and priories present within society. It is in this context that Richard Neustadt wrote that the real sources of presidential power are largely

[11] Quandt, *Peace Process,* op.cit., pp.6-8.
[12] Indeed, some of the most insightful and detailed studies on these topics have adopted precisely this approach. See, Quandt, *Peace Process*, op.cit., pp.5-10; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1986, pp.10-15; George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East*, Duke University Press, 1990, pp.1-6.
[13] Iver B. Neumann, "Uses of the Other in World Politics," in *Uses of the Other. 'The East' in European Identity Formation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp.1-39; Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1987. Hunt describes US foreign policy ideology in terms of three reoccurring core concepts: US national greatness, the hierarchy of race and US hostility towards social revolutions. Elements of comparison with the American experience are implicit in each dimension.

intangible in nature, derived from the symbolism and visibility associated with the office of the presidency and the power of persuasion this pulpit bestows on its occupant.[14]

The various branches of the bureaucracy—the Department of Defence, State Department, Congress and the intelligence services—all play a role in the policymaking process. Together with the media, think tanks and lobby groups, these domestic actors seek to influence executive agency by advancing their own interpretation of the 'national interest' or the best means to advance it. On top of these domestic influences, international systemic forces, such as responsibilities towards allies, threat perceptions or perceived opportunities, also influence executive agency in the development of foreign policy.

As argued by Robert Putman, these processes of balancing and prioritization between domestic and systemic pressures can be framed as a 'two-level game', in which key decision-makers weigh up the constraints and chances of success among two separated constituencies, one internal and one external.[15] In noting how 'it is fruitless to debate whether domestic politics really determine international relations, or the reverse'[16], Putman argues for 'general equilibrium' approaches that account for the complex interactions of both the domestic and the international in the articulation of policy.

The central component of these equilibriums relates to the need to secure separate 'win sets' or buy-ins for a given policy at both the international and the domestic level, then reconciling what is desired/made possible internationally with what is desired/made possible in light of political realities at home. In the case of the US-Israeli relationship and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the development of US policy has been deeply affected by the inability to reconcile the demands of the international and regional environment with what is politically feasible at home. The need to secure domestic buy-in for a given policy has repeatedly resulted in a modification or dilution of the proposed policy, which in turn has weakened the potential buy-in(s) from the region. Indeed, one by-product of the gradual processes of institutionalization of US-Israel ties and the addition of strategic rationales for US support for Israel has been to further diminish the potential overlap between domestic and international 'win sets', in light of the fact that US policy has consistently prioritized the former over the latter, not least given the politically charged nature of US policy towards Israel.

Such micro-level, agency-orientated approaches tend to focus on the personnel changes brought about by the electoral cycle and the individuals tasked with such high-level positions as the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defence and the staff on the National Security Council. As outlined by Steven Spiegel, 'whenever a new president arrives in the Oval Office, the system changes because he brings with him a

[14] Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, New York, Free Press, 1991.
[15] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization*, Vol.42, No.3 (Summer 1988), pp.427-60.
[16] Ibid., p.427.

new set of advisers and associates, a new background, different knowledge and predispositions, a new philosophy, a conception of his own interest, and a new attitude towards the proper policy roles of the bureaucracy, Congress and interest groups'.[17]

The impact of the so-called 'bureaucratic model' on decision-making is often emphasized in studies of US foreign policy in the Middle East in the context of the more sympathetic stance towards the Arab states and the Palestinians that is traditionally associated with the State Department's office of Near East Affairs, US diplomats serving in the Arab world and other lower level bureaucrats and analysts in the Pentagon and intelligence services.[18] These individuals, often referred to as 'Arabists' in the US foreign policy bureaucracy, are in turn contrasted with the point of view of the executive branch, Congress and other high-level political appointees, where domestic political considerations and a greater focus on the global dimension of US foreign policy have tended to dominate decision-making, often translating into more sympathetic policies towards Israel.[19]

In the context of the 1980s, a focus on the bureaucratic model is important in light of the infighting and dysfunctional decision-making processes that defined the Reagan administration. Numerous studies recount how the president's hands-off leadership style and aversion to confrontations with advisors led to significant problems in the policymaking process.[20] A recently declassified document found at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL) sheds light on the leadership qualities of the president. Described as 'non-provocative', Reagan was said to prefer to lead 'by example and suggestion' while leaving 'the detailed work to subordinates' and delegating 'authority and decisions to appropriate individuals'.[21] This tendency contributed to significant uncertainty as to who was 'in charge'[22] of policy, and in turn to repeated turf wars between the State and Defence Departments. One member of the Reagan administration later recalled how 'in terms of US foreign policy decision making, the Reagan administration was the messiest I've ever seen'.[23]

These dynamics, combined with an appreciation of the ebb and flow of legislative oversight on executive power, are important in framing the balance of decision-making power within the US domestic setting, helping to highlight the role of key individuals within the administration and broader bureaucracy and their respective influences on the president's prerogative to develop policy.

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[17] Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, op.cit., pp.14-15.
[18] Author Interview, Richard W. Murphy, New York, September 2015. Richard Murphy served as US ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1981-83) and Assistance Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs (1983-89). Also see, Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, op.cit., pp.4-10; Fawaz A. Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp.16-25.
[19] Hugh Wilford, *America's Great Game. The CIA's Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East*, New York, Basic Books, 2013.
[20] More will be said on these dynamics in Chapter 3, 'The Reagan Revolution'.
[21] RRPL, George Shultz Papers, "Executive Secretariat Super Sensitive (10/08/1986-10/15/1986)," Box 4A.
[22] Quandt, *Peace Process*, op.cit, pp.245-68.
[23] Ronald Reagan Oral History Project, "Interview with Kenneth Adelman," Miller Center of Public Affairs, Presidential Oral History Program, September 2003 (Published 2005), p.18, http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/ohp_2003_0930_adelman.pdf.

Yet, an excessive focus on executive agency or the relative balance of power and influence between the executive and the legislative branch of government, may also obscure important elements of continuity carried over between administrations. While it is undoubtedly true that each new administration brings along its own 'baggage' of ideas and priorities, it is also important to appreciate the impact of institutional constraints and political precedents on the policy actions of a sitting administration.

To begin with, any president or new administration will necessarily be affected, and sometimes constrained, by the actions of his predecessors. This dynamic holds particular weight in the case of the US-Israel relationship, where a president's freedom of action has been constrained by a combination of domestic politics and the murky array of ad hoc agreements and commitments granting Israel elements of preferential treatment in Washington. These agreements have been provided on a linear, incremental basis by each administration since Truman, ensuring that every new president will not only inherent but also *build on* these commitments upon entering the White House. Aside from institutional constraints, another means of capturing elements of continuity across various administrations is that of emphasizing the power and influence of political precedents in the making of US foreign policy.

Presidents and policymakers tend to ground their decisions on the experiences of previous administrations, a dynamic that leads to certain perceptions and approaches becoming engrained in the policymaking process and thereby replicated across administrations. Once a policy decision becomes institutionalized in the political bureaucracy, together with the concepts and assumptions underpinning its approval, it becomes particularly hard to overturn. Such entrenchment further increases when powerful domestic constituencies—lobby groups, Congress or elements of elite or popular opinion—are actively engaged in campaigning for continuation of a given policy or conceptual approach.

Conversely, when a given policy approach or argument has been shown to cause particular damage to one administration, its successor will internalize these lessons and avoid repeating similar mistakes. This is relevant to the case of the US-Israeli relationship, in light of the political costs implied by clashing with Israel in the court of US public opinion. These experiences, combined with the powerful reputation of pro-Israel lobby groups in the US, would create important precedents for US policy towards Israel.

It may be no more than a coincidence that two of the most controversial US presidents on Israel, Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush, were both one-term presidents, but such dynamics do have an impact on the policymaking process and are carried over across administrations. This in turn may help to explain the more general US embrace of a policy of positive inducements and soft persuasion (carrots) as opposed to sanctions or coercive diplomacy (sticks) vis-à-vis Israel.

Ultimately, the salience of executive agency for such analysis is augmented in that any definition of the 'national interest' carries an inherently 'subjective element', and no consensus exists as to what strategy is best suited to advancing these goals.[24] As a result, it is not enough to identify a set of interests, material or otherwise, for US foreign policy to pursue. Individual actors and groups of decision-makers will necessarily devise different strategies or approaches to achieve such ends. Thus, agency-oriented analytical approaches should be combined with a wider appreciation of the power of intangible forces, such as ideological inclinations, cultural predispositions or beliefs. Dennis Ross, who served in successive US administrations since the mid-1970s, is right to point out that 'differences in foreign policy goals and objectives may express themselves politically but are more often based on ideological premises. […] It is the ideological divide about the proper course for American foreign policy that needs to be understood'.[25]

Notwithstanding the fact that US national interests in the Middle East remained largely constant throughout the Cold War—secure the flow of oil, support Israel and prevent Soviet encroachment—between 1948 and 1989 US policymakers adopted different strategies to achieve these goals. As noted by William Quandt, 'without a common yardstick, […] there was almost no agreement on what these interests meant in terms of concrete policies'.[26] Some in the United States have considered Israel to be a burden, while others contend that Israel is an asset for US interests. Some have called on America to apply conditionality to US aid and support for Israel, arguing that only an even-handed and balanced policy is capable of advancing US interests vis-à-vis *both* Israel and the Arabs. More recently, new constituencies in America have argued against the US's traditional search for balance in the Middle East.

Indeed, and starting in the early-to-mid 1980s, some have urged the US to be openly pro-Israel as the best means of advancing US interests in the region, a dynamic that would become institutionalized during the latter half of the 1980s and has continued to hold significant influence over US policy. As noted by Dennis Ross in an interview with the author, to understand US policy towards Israel it is critical to discern the worldviews and ideological inclinations of key decision-makers in the US, and the relative distribution of viewpoints and perceptions held by key personalities with decision-making roles within the administration.[27]

US policy towards Israel cannot therefore be explained through the simple prism of material interests and contemporary developments, the 'here and now' of international politics. Neither can the administration's policies be understood though an exclusive focus on key decision-makers. A more encompassing analysis

[24] Quandt, *Peace Process*, op.cit., pp.10-15, p.11 (quote).
[25] Dennis Ross, *Statecraft: How to Restore America's Standing in the World*, New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007, p.12.
[26] Quandt, *Peace Process*, op.cit., p.14.
[27] Author Interview, Dennis Ross, Washington DC, 25 September 2015. Dennis Ross has served in various capacities in successive US administrations since the 1970s. In late 1980s he served as director of Near East and South Asian affairs on the National Security Council staff and deputy director of the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment

should also focus on the deeper layers of ideational and historical influences that have a bearing on the policymaking process.

1.2.2 Ideology and Beliefs: The 'Power' of Ideas

An emphasis on ideational forces can provide important analytic depth to agency-oriented studies focussed on key decision-makers and elite opinion. The embedded, personal or societal beliefs of a nation and its leaders, in themselves the result of historical experience and the construction of a national identity, also have a bearing on the policymaking process.

Ideational forces and beliefs gradually become embedded both in society—in its various groupings and sub-groupings—and the institutions of the state, thereby influencing the principles and assumptions of decision-makers.[28] As noted by Goldstein and Keohane, 'insofar as ideas put blinders on people, reducing the number of conceivable alternatives, they serve as invisible switchmen, not only by turning action onto certain tracks rather than others, […] but also by obscuring the other tracks from the agent's view'.[29]

While many have warned that an excessive 'intrusion' of ideology, 'moralism' or domestic politics into the realm of foreign policy would complicate the task of defining and advancing US material interests, domestic political realities (and rivalries) have gradually spilled over to impact policymaking.[30] Nowhere is this dynamic more evident than in US policy towards Israel, also contributing to explain the significant criticism of US policy coming from key realist thinkers in academia and the policymaking circles.

The relevance of ideology grew with the deepening political partisanship between Republican and Democratic parties, and the gradual fraying of the so-called post-war foreign policy consensus. As noted by Destler, Gelb and Lake in 1984, 'for two decades, the making of American foreign policy has been growing far more political—or more precisely, far more partisan and ideological'.[31] In the 1960s, John F. Kennedy used foreign policy issues—and in particular the supposed threat of a widening 'missile gap' between the Soviet Union and the United States—to score political points against President Eisenhower, setting a trend for the future.[32] Growing ideological and political partisanship at home meant that no foreign or domestic issue was out of bounds for the two parties to compete over, including issues of war

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[28] See, Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," in I*deas & Foreign Policy. Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Ithaca/London, Cornell University Press, 1993, pp.8-10 & 13-17; Nicholas Kitchen, "Ideas of Power and the Power of Ideas," in Asle Toje and Barbara Kunz (eds.), *Neoclassical Realism in European Politics*, Manchester/New York, Manchester University Press, 2012, pp.80-82.

[29] Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," op.cit., pp.8-19, p.12 (quote).

[30] George F. Kennan, the 'godfather' of American 'realism', famously warned that an excessive 'moralism' or 'legalism' in foreign policy would carry decision-makers 'away from the sterner requirements of political realism', causing their 'statements and actions, however impressive to the domestic political audience, to lose effectiveness in the international arena'. 'Government is an agent, not a principle', wrote Kennan, "its primary obligation is to the *interests* of national society it represents, not to the moral impulses that individual elements of that society may experience'. George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 64:2 (Winter 1985), pp.205-18, pp.205-6 (quote).

[31] Destler, Gleb and Lake, *Our Own worst Enemy. The Unmaking of American Foreign Policy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, pp.11-30, p.13 (quote). Also see, Ole R. Holsti, *Making American Foreign Policy*, New York/London, Routledge, 2013.

[32] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.

and peace as demonstrated by Nixon's and Kissinger's efforts to scuttle peace talks with the Vietnamese to enhance their chances of electoral success in 1968.[33]

The role of Israel as a political wedge would grow during the 1970s and 1980s, as Republicans and Democrats began competing on the nature and extent of US support for Israel. Reagan in particular would employ Israel to detract votes from Jimmy Carter—another important precedent in US-Israel relations that can be traced back to the Reagan period, as was the increased identification with Israel among new Republican constituencies in the United States during the 1980s. These trends would in turn further consolidate the explanatory significance of the domestic setting over US policy towards Israel (and eventually the broader Middle East) as political competition on Israel would only deepen the relevance of domestic constraints on executive agency.

US leaders have repeatedly emphasized how US support for Israel is derived from these intangible bonds and political affinities.[34] President Kennedy spoke in 1960 of how Israel 'is the child of hope and the home of the brave. […] It carries the shield of democracy and it honours the sword of freedom'.[35] Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, would further this emphasis on common values, while also expressing admiration for Israel's military successes.[36] Johnson, a native of Texas and a man who was significantly influenced by his religious upbringing, would come to consider Israel as a kind of extension of the US, incorporating its same values and human spirit. As noted by Steven Spiegel, 'Johnson tended to see the Israelis fighting the Arabs as a modern-day version of the Texans struggling with the Mexicans. The analogy between the Alamo and Masada was not far below the surface'.[37]

While in the case of Israel, US policy has traditionally been coloured by emotional considerations linked to common values and political organization, such 'idealism' has been lacking in relations with Arab partners. US-Arab relations are driven by purely material and geostrategic interest, mostly of an exogenous nature and linked to the safeguarding of the status quo in the region as a function of the Cold War, energy flows and Israel's security. The dominance of the globalist, Cold War perspective in US foreign policy has meant that regional developments tended to be interpreted in Washington in light of their implications for the outside world and the US's confrontation with the Soviet Union. In other words, the Middle East was important for Washington due to its exogenous qualities, not because of any

[33] Greg Grandin, *Kissinger's Shadow. The Long Reach of America's Most Controversial Statesman*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2015, pp.36-52.
[34] As noted by Secretary of State Dulles in one 1953 meeting with Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion when the idea of a permanent US-Israeli alliance was being discussed, the presence of these strong societal feelings of sympathy and support for Israel in the US 'created a feeling of common debt which was more binding than a formal treaty of alliance'.[34] See, FRUS, Volume IX Part 1(1952-1954), Document 13.
[35] The American Presidency Project [APP], "Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention," Statler Hilton Hotel, New York, 26 August 1960, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74217.
[36] Spiegel, *The Other*, op.cit., pp.118-125; Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed. The US-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015, pp.76-103.
[37] Spiegel, *The Other*, op.cit., p.123.

attachment to the region, its governments, cultures and people. The obvious exception to this rule is Israel, contributing to very different dynamics of bilateral relations than with the US's Arab partners.

While the Arab components of US Middle East policy can in general be defined in terms of the US realist school of thought, the presence of Israel in the region and the importance of intangible norms and values to explain US support have complicated the development of a purely 'realist' approach to the Middle East. Indeed, while these shared bonds of friendship between societies have forced US policy towards Israel to operate within certain supportive parameters, no similar sensitivities were present in US policy towards the Arab world. Geography, cultural barriers and historical contingency have reinforced this dynamic, yet it would be a mistake to seek to explain this apparent insensitivity through an excessive focus on cultural, religious or ideological differences.[38]

Cultural differences and historical experience have no doubt created a rich reservoir of symbolism, images and stereotypes associated with the Middle East. However, these would survive and continue to surface primarily in light of other dynamics tied to the global ideological and military confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, in juxtaposition with the Arab-Israeli conflict in the post-1967 era. Given that 'the Cold War shaped the conceptual lenses through which American officials viewed the Middle East'[39] and that the United States had, by the early 1960s, all but abandoned efforts to convince Egypt's Nasser to exit the Non Aligned camp and enter the Western bloc, the US came to view Arab nationalism as a threat to the regional status quo.

Initial hints of what this would entail were detectable already in 1958 as evidenced by a report prepared by the NSC in which scenarios and policy options are explored in light of recent developments in the region. The document begins by acknowledging that 'current conditions and political trends in the Near East are inimical to Western interests' while adding that if indeed the United States opts for a confrontation with the forces of Arab nationalism, rather than putting pressure on Israel to reach a territorial compromise with Egypt and the Arab states, then 'a logical corollary would be to support Israel as the only strong pro-West power left in the Near East'.[40]

Overall therefore, a major reason for the continued presence (and indeed deepening) of mistrust and misunderstanding between the United States and large portions of the Arab world does not relate to an irrational rage among Muslims or an engrained US cultural bias against Islam. Rather its roots are found in actual US policies conducted in the region and the gradual expansion, or juxtaposition, of the Cold War onto regional dynamics, which in turn would solidify these popular conceptions of the 'Arabs' as

[38] See, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011; *Bernard* Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*, New York, HarperCollins, 2003; Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York/London, Penguin Books, 1995.
[39] Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East*, op.cit., p.21.
[40] FRUS, Volume XII (1958-60), Document 35.

antagonists to US interests. Indeed, following the First World War, when the United States was still a distant and relatively neutral power in the region, it was common to find widespread admiration for the US in the Middle East.[41]

These dimensions have led certain scholars to downplay the role of intangible feelings of moral and political support for Israel in US society, and argue that material and strategic interests tied to the Cold War and US-Arab relations are of greater relevance. While it is no doubt true that the US-Israeli relationship only assumed 'special' or 'unique' characteristics following the addition of strategic rationales to the relationship, these Cold War justifications would emerge and become consolidated due to the prior influence of domestic political and moral-ideological constraints on executive agency, and the consequent need to orchestrate a foreign policy strategy with this central commitment in mind. As will be outlined in more detail in the subsequent chapter on US-Israeli relations, it is the twin pillars of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities that provide the greatest explanatory significance for the way US-Israel relations developed. The third pillar of 'strategic cooperation' also retains explanatory value, but has never reached the same level of consensus or significance compared to the original, foundational pillars of shared norms and values.[42]

Due to the existence of strong bonds of sympathy, and a related feeling of moral responsibility for the legacy of the Holocaust, US policy towards Israel has been particularly exposed to domestic political pressures. The growing identification with Israel as part of the 'Western' bloc in the Cold War, sharing principles of democracy and the rule of law, has facilitated the blossoming of US-Israeli cooperation. Yet, if Israel had opted to side with the Soviet Union in the early-to-mid 1950s, it is highly doubtful that such popular conceptions of Israel would survive and continue to surface in US popular and official discourse. Rather, it is likely that similar stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Jews would instead be present, as ideational constructs will generally gain currency among large and diverse cross-sections of society *only* when rival material and strategic interests are added to the mix.

Indeed, the influence of ideology and beliefs is inherently linked to the advancement of the 'national interest', understood in both hard and soft power terms. In this respect, ideology and ideational constructs also serve as a means to strengthen and reinforce feelings of national pride and self-confidence, essential elements tied to the promotion of US influence, credibility and prestige ('soft power') on the world stage. 'Americans have used the Muslim world as a reference point to highlight their exceptionalism—liberty, power, and human progress',[43] serving as a reminder of the US's unique attributes and a mirror used to cement feelings of national pride and the benign nature of the US's role in

[41] Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of US-Arab Relations: 1820-2001,* New York/London, Public Affairs, 2010.
[42] Shai Feldman, *The Future of US-Israel Strategic Cooperation*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 1996, pp.6-7.
[43] Gerges, *America and Political Islam*, op.cit., p.9.

the world. 'American policy makers', wrote Michael H. Hunt in his study of ideology and US foreign policy, had a tendency to measure 'the worth of other peoples and nations against a racial hierarchy'[44] dominated by America's ethno-cultural ties to Europe and the subsequent experience of revolutionary and enlightened governance, the separation of powers, individualism and scientific progress. 'Revolutions that failed to conform to the standards of America's own moderate, constitutional beginnings', Hunt explained, 'inspired hostility and, with increasing frequency, active opposition'[45] from the US foreign policy establishment.[46]

Notwithstanding the US's early confrontation with the colonial powers of Europe, such stereotypes and popular characterizations of the Middle East would resurface in US discourse, resulting in often distorted—or at the very least less sympathetic—portrayals of the Middle East, its peoples and cultures. These are particularly detectable in popular culture and the media, which have furthered these stereotypical characterizations by highlighting the lack of conformity, on the part of 'the Arabs', with US values and experiences.[47] Thanks to increased media coverage of such events as the 1972 Munich attacks, the 1973 war and oil embargo, the 1979 revolution in Iran and the ensuing hostage crisis, popular conceptions of the Middle East were further solidified in US society.[48]

This tendency to demonize adversaries or 'the other' is part of human emotions and psychology, and also serves as a means to enact coercive policies—war, sanctions, boycotts, etc.—that would otherwise be harder to justify in the court of public opinion. It is in this sense that ideological constructs can be used by elite opinion to 'manufacture consent' and increase the propensity for a given policy over another.[49] Indeed, the relevance and appeal of such stereotypical portrayals increase exponentially when such 'otherness' is joined by contrasting material, strategic or political interests.

Historical contingency has meant that US interactions with the Arab world have occurred through either war (starting with the Barbary wars of the late 18th and 19th centuries) or missionary activity and trade, and these dimensions have no doubt facilitated the spread and resurfacing of stereotypical portrayals of the Arab-Muslim world in US popular culture. The increased juxtaposition of Cold War realities with the Arab-Israeli conflict in the late 1950s, and particularly since the 1967 war, have reinforced this dynamic,

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[44] Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, op.cit., p.171.
[45] Ibid., p.174.
[46] Also see, William Stivers, *America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-83*, Macmillan Press, 1986, pp.95-106.
[47] See, Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters, Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, Berkeley/London, University of California Press, 2005; Douglas Little, *American Orientalism. The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (3rd ed.), Washington DC, University of North Carolina Press, 2008, pp.10-11 & 17-25. For a visual representation of the role of culture and media in portrayals of the Middle East see, Michael Singh, *Valention's Ghost: Framing the Arab Image*, Two-Part Special Documentary Series, *Al-Jazeera English*, 2015, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2015/08/valentino-ghost-150816121213605.html.
[48] Important in this respect was the launching, in 1980, of the first 24/7 news channel (CNN). McAlister, *Epic Encounters,* op.cit., pp.178-87 & 198-201. Also see, Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, op.cit., pp.5-16.
[49] Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1988.

with Israel being often cast as the pioneering 'Westerner' fighting the ruthless Arabs motivated by denial of the Jewish right to a national home. It was therefore the growing association between Arab rivals of Israel and the Soviet Union that ultimately consolidated and diffused these ideational constructs of Israel as an 'extension of America' sharing both 'values' and 'interests'.

A final clarification is in order before moving to dissect the origins and development of US-Israeli relations. The first has to do with the ranking and relationship between shared norms and values and material interests in US support for Israel. The above passages do not mean that shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities, the twin pillars of US support for Israel, are simple constructs articulated by elites in the US to justify the pursuit of material interests and power. What is meant instead is that the resilience of these principles and popular portrayals of Israel was facilitated by this marriage of US interests and values in US support for Israel, which in turn has extended the 'shelf life' of such principles, shielding them from other more critical viewpoints or approaches.

It follows that intangible norms and values do retain explanatory influence for the development of US-Israel ties, but need to be addressed in synergy with broader US strategic interests and concerns. As aptly noted by Noam Chomsky 'America's relationship with Israel has been determined primarily by the changing role that Israel occupied in the context of America's changing conceptions of its political-strategic interests in the Middle East'.[50]

Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the research framework and methodological tools that will be employed for the subsequent analysis of US foreign policy towards Israel and the Middle East during the 1980s. In light of this work's focus on a specific time period—the 1980s and the 'Second Cold War'—and its efforts to answer the three interrelated questions of *why* the US-Israel relationship became institutionalized during the latter half of the 1980s, *how* this institutionalization process was carried out and *what effects* these processes would have on future US policy (and leverage) over Israel and the Arab Middle East, the research will prioritize methodological tools that focus on the domestic micro-level of foreign policy decision-making in the United States.

In this context the chapter has introduced a modified Neo-Classical Realism research framework that prioritizes the domestic context (independent variable) over that of the international environment (intervening variable) for the study of US foreign policy in the Middle East and the evolving relationship with Israel (dependent variable). In focusing on the domestic context, the chapter has highlighted how

[50] Quoted in Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, op.cit, p.17.

executive agency and elite opinion serve as the most encompassing unit of analysis for examinations of US policy towards Israel.

The president and his closest advisors retain the power to make foreign policy decisions, but they do so through a complex process of balancing and negotiation with other domestic power centres in the United States. During this negotiation other important forces at the domestic level—public opinion, the bureaucracy, party politics, pressure groups, the media and research centres—all compete for influence over the decision-making process by advancing their own interpretation of the national interest and the best means to advance it.

Examinations of US foreign policy must therefore attempt to 'unpack' the domestic context and examine domestic debates with the aim of identifying the various pull-factors that direct policy along one trajectory as opposed to another. International developments, in the form of both threats and opportunities, will necessarily impact and at times constrain a president's prerogative to enact policy. Yet, it is ultimately through the prism of the domestic context that outside events are viewed and interpreted from Washington, and it is through a careful examination of domestic debates that a clearer picture emerges as to *how* the US eventually decides to (re)act and with what means. This approach will also help to explain *why* alternative strategies or viewpoints on Israel and US Middle East policy rarely seem to attract the same degree of consensus.

Yet, assessments of the domestic context must go deeper, detecting further variables that impact foreign policy by influencing and constraining the actions and viewpoints of executive agency. Starting from the most basic (and static) characteristics of a state—its geographic positioning, availability of natural resources and political-bureaucratic setup—these 'structural' characteristics impact the way a state and its leaders interact with the outside world. Such structural elements also influence perceptions and interpretations of outside developments, particularly as these relate to security, threat perceptions and the availability of resources to back up foreign engagements.

US foreign policy is also influenced by intangible forces such as historical contingency, political or institutional precedents and ideology, which combine to create a particular national identity. The perceptions and/or 'world view(s)' of a nation and its leaders will be coloured by these intangible forces. By influencing the principled and causal beliefs of leaders, ideology can have an important impact on the policymaking process, directing policy within certain parameters while constraining, albeit at times subconsciously, alternative policy options.

A historical lens is indispensable to frame the gradual emergence and development of a US national identity and conception of itself in comparison to the actions of others. The US's geographic positioning

has shaped this identity, as has its particular historical development, its links and tensions with the Colonial powers of Western Europe and its struggle to define itself as separate from, yet profoundly influenced by, the lessons of the Enlightenment and European politics. The US's deep belief in the exceptionalism of the American experience, mixed with a similarly pervasive conception of the universal appeal of its values and ideals, is inherently linked to the country's historical development and gradual emergence as a superpower on the world stage.

History, however, is not limited to the international environment and also includes socio-cultural and political changes occurring within the domestic context of a state. Individual leaders and decision-makers are part of broader society and as such are impacted by socio-political and ideational changes occurring within that society. Generational changes and social, cultural and economic developments occurring within the domestic context of a state, but which are also necessarily impacted by outside developments, lead to the creation of new political constituencies and alliances, changing viewpoints and new pressures on those individuals charged with developing foreign policy.

Ronald Reagan's electoral victory in 1980 was itself the product of a long process of socio-political change occurring in the United States since the late 1960s. This would lead to a slow replacement of old political elites associated with the Republican Party and based in the affluent north-western US states, with a new leadership based in the South. This in turn would produce a GOP leadership with different worldviews, priorities and political rhetoric. Generational changes within US political bureaucracies, the media, pressure groups and broader elements of elite opinion can therefore serve as further demonstrations of how changes at the domestic level impact the way a country and its leaders interact with the outside world. As new advisors and lower level officials join the US government, their worldviews and perceptions are defined by more recent phenomena that have impacted their personal life-development. These experiences translate into different perceptions and priorities, in turn leading to shifts in US debates on foreign policy.

On the whole therefore, to unpack the domestic context is to appreciate how *structure* and *national identity* combine to create the general domestic 'playing field' where individual *actors* develop foreign policy. Executive agency shares this playing field with other important forces and together these engage in negotiations and debates on foreign policy. It is in this context that a focus on the micro-level of executive agency can be coupled with the twin methodological tools of foreign policy analysis and historical sociology to add further depth to analyses of the domestic context and executive agency.

Chapter 2

Anatomy of a 'Special Relationship': Domestic Constraints, Power Asymmetries and the Struggle for Leverage

Few topics in US foreign policy give birth to such hard-felt emotions and contrasting views among popular and elite opinion as the US relationship with Israel. Beyond the controversy and recriminations about lavish US support for Israel, comparatively little attention has been given to the structural—bureaucratic and institutional—components of US aid and assistance that are the cumulative result of successive presidential commitments and ad hoc agreements providing Israel with preferential treatment in Washington.

The fact that many of these commitments were justified on the basis of their ability to increase the US's room to manoeuvre in the region, exposes what has long been an underlying paradox in US-Israel relations: the US's apparent lack of leverage over Israel notwithstanding the clear power asymmetry between the two countries and repeated attempts by the US to establish a traditional patron-client relationship with its small Middle Eastern ally. Indeed, a bird's-eye view of the history of US-Israel relations would appear to reveal an inverse relationship between growing Israeli dependence on the US and a parallel decline in US leverage and influence over Israel, a dynamic that has become crystallized in the 'tail wagging the dog' scenario often associated with US-Israel relations.[1]

While lacking an official agreement codifying these ties into a legally binding alliance, the US-Israel relationship has evolved from difficult beginnings in the 1950s to dwarf the relationships the United States has with other strategic partners, from NATO allies to countries like the United Kingdom, Canada or Australia. In 1974, Israel became the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign assistance since World War II and by the mid-1980s US aid stabilized at an average of $3.1 billion annually, with all assistance transferred from loans to outright grants.[2] The first multi-year military-aid packages were provided in the early 1970s, but it was only in the 1980s that bureaucratic and institutional frameworks were developed to institutionalize long-term economic, military and political cooperation.[3]

[1] See, Kathleen and Bill Christison, "Does the Israeli Tail Wag the American Dog?" *Information Clearing House*, 1 March 2007, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17217.htm.
[2] US assistance to Israel began in 1949 with a $100 million export-import bank loan. The first major sale of US weapons to Israel occurred in 1962, and military aid has skyrocketed since the early 1970s. Much of this aid was provided as long-term loans with highly beneficial, 30-year repayment terms. In 1985 all aid was transformed into grants and by 2008 Israel stopped receiving economic support funds. Jeremy M. Sharp, "US Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service* (CRS), 10 April 2018, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf.
[3] Today, US aid to Israel, all of it composed of foreign military financing, is governed through 10-year supply assistance agreements. The first 10-year MoU covered FY1999-FY2008, followed MoU (FY2009-FY2018) and most recently by a new MoU (FY2019-28) that elevated annual US aid to $3.8 billion. Ibid., p.5.

With official bilateral aid now standing at over $134.7 billion in non-inflation-adjusted dollars since 1948[4] and Israel accounting for over 61% of America's annual foreign military financing (FMF) budget, a growing consensus has formed around the notion that this relationship holds certain 'unique' characteristics that set it aside from other bilateral relationships.

While no doubt striking, it is the *qualitative* rather than quantitative nature of US support that makes the relationship unique. This is particularly true with regard to the unprecedented institutional agreements granting Israel elements of preferential treatment in the US, and the extent to which these commitments have gradually constrained US policy options towards Israel *and* the broader Middle East. It is also true regarding the way Israeli leaders and representatives can publicly defy stated US objectives with little fear of political repercussions, or any decline in US foreign aid and assistance. As noted by Nicholas Veliotes in an interview with the author, 'the usual bureaucratic rules don't apply to the US-Israel relationship and sometimes even the usual security rules don't apply'.[5]

Defined by a complex and multi-layered web of bonds, US-Israel ties were recently described as 'too big to fail' by long-time US Middle East negotiator Aaron David Miller.[6] This is mostly a result of the gradual institutionalization of the relationship and the considerable *interdependence* that has developed between the two countries in the economic, military and politico-diplomatic domains. Given the lack of an alliance framework, US-Israel ties have come to be governed by a murky patchwork of ad hoc agreements, presidential commitments and the signing of various Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and Agreement (MoA) that together form the legal and bureaucratic backbone of the US-Israel relationship.

Elements of interdependence are particularly visible in the growing juxtaposition or assimilation of the US's military-strategic positioning in the Middle East and its alliance with Israel. As US planners began fashioning a military-strategic approach to the Middle East centred on an ironclad US commitment to Israeli security and defence, US strategy and approaches in the Middle East became increasingly reliant on, and *interdependent* with, Israel.

This chapter will introduce the 'three pillars' of US support for Israel, emphasizing how these derived from a *combination* of shared Judeo-Christian values, political affinities and, finally, 'strategic cooperation'. Based on the shifting weight of these pillars and their relationship with broader US interests and concerns, the remaining sections will trace the evolution of US-Israel ties between 1948 and 1980, highlighting the fluidity of US policy but also its underlying continuity. We shall see how perceptions of

[4] Ibid.p.1. Adjusted for inflation, the figure is more than double. In 2013, total US aid since 1948, excluding loan guarantees, which account for about $19 billion, stood at $233.7 billion. Ora Coren and Nadan Feldman, "US Aid to Israel Totals $233.7b Over Six Decades," *Ha'aretz*, 20 March 2013, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/.premium-u-s-aid-to-israel-234-billion-over-60-years-1.5234820?=&ts=_1524214130790.
[5] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[6] Aaron David Miller, "The US-Israel relationship is fraying, but won't fail," *RealClearWorld*, 26 May 2015, http://www.realclearworld.com/articles/2015/05/26/obama_netanyahu_the_us-israeli_relationship_is_fraying_111215.html.

Israel moved from a 'liability' to an 'asset' and how US policy came to justify this support on the basis of US self-interest in *both* the political (domestic) and strategic (systemic) domains.

Finally the chapter will address the security-leverage paradox that has come to dominate US policy towards Israel and, almost by extension, the wider Middle East. As the United States emerged as Israel's primary security provider, linking this support to the advancement of other US Cold War objectives, US Middle East policy has effectively been caught in a vicious circle of having to abide by these institutionalized precedents even when systemic developments would suggest a revision of these conventional wisdoms.

Increasingly caught in this policy straitjacket, US approaches to the Middle East would become predicated on the need to periodically upgrade elements of US preferential treatment towards Israel without any assurance of a change in Israeli behaviour or an increased US ability to restrain Israeli policy. As a result, rather than slowly 'Americanizing' Israel's policies and bringing them more in tune with the US's own objectives and concerns, the outcome of these processes of institutionalization would have the opposite effect, gradually 'entrapping' the US in a quasi-*exclusivist* relationship with Israel that would result in a slow 'Israelization' of the US's own policies and viewpoints on the Middle East rather than the other way around.

2.1 Foundations of US Support for Israel: The Three Pillars

Academic literature has long recognized Israel as transcending the boundaries between foreign and domestic politics in the United States. The baseline of US societal support for Israel is derived from a mixture of ideological, religious and emotional considerations that can be summarized by reference to the 'twin pillars' of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities. Such intangible forces are reinforced by the memories of the Holocaust and the striking parallels that can be drawn between the early experiences shared by the two countries, the US and Israeli frontier and entrepreneurial spirit and the fact that both societies are built on immigration.

The role of religion in the US and Israel, and America's early fascination with the Holy Land as the birthplace of Christianity have furthered the popular appeal of Israel within US society, a dynamic which has also been strengthened through major motion pictures and romanticized portrayals of biblical and historical occurrences in the Middle East.[7] These domestic influences are an integral part of what Abraham Ben-Zvi has termed the 'special relationship paradigm', described as 'a widespread fund of goodwill toward Israel that is not restricted to the Jewish[-American] community' and has resulted in 'an equally strong and persistent commitment to Israel's continued national existence, integrity and security'.[8]

[7] Little, *American Orientalism*, op.cit., pp.1-43; Mcalister, *Epic Encounters*, op.cit, pp.43-83 & 155-98.
[8] Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel,* op.cit., pp.15-16.

A shared adherence to democracy and the rule of law have traditionally been among the most powerful concepts used to rationalize US support for Israel. On the basis of its liberal-democratic credentials, Israel has attracted widespread bipartisan support in the US, helping to solidify its image as a 'stable' and 'reliable' ally, a kind of 'small America', or, as some have grown accustomed to calling it, the 51st state. 'Israel is not only a nation—it is a symbol', exclaimed Republican candidate Ronald Reagan during a campaign speech at the 1980 *B'nai B'rith* forum in Washington. 'Since the rebirth of the State of Israel, there has been an iron-clad bond between that democracy and this one', continued Reagan. 'In defending Israel's right to exist, we defend the very values upon which our nation is built'.[9]

The US's decision to recognize Israel in 1948 was itself born of the influence of these intangible feelings of support. President Truman noted in his diaries how the 'specialists' in his administration 'were almost without exception unfriendly to the idea of a Jewish State'. Yet in a private letter sent to Eleanor Roosevelt, the US president stated that his sympathy had 'always been on their [Zionist] side'.[10] Further evidence of popular feelings of support for Israel is found in the diaries and writings of Kermit Roosevelt Jr., the grandson of US president Theodore Roosevelt and organizer of the CIA's covert operations in the broader Middle East during the 1940s and 1950s. Being an anti-Zionist in the United States during the late 1940s, Roosevelt lamented, was akin to 'marching through the ranks of a parade "in the opposite direction"'.[11] A Gallup poll from June 1948 confirms this trend, with almost three times as many Americans describing their sympathies as lying with Israel compared to 'the Arabs'.[12]

The importance of American public support for Israel is recognized by all major players in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such feelings of societal sympathy are present beyond the Jewish-American community and encompass other important segments of American society. Few would debate that such high levels of sympathy—especially if compared to the decidedly limited identification with the Arab or Palestinian side in the conflict—have had a strong impact on US policy, not least by influencing the perceptions and cost-benefit analyses of key decision-makers in the US.

As the relationship progressed, and particularly in the wake of the 1967 war and Israel's capture of Jerusalem and its holy sites, important segments of the evangelical Christian community in the United States also became strong supporters of Israel. By the late 1970s, these would come to replace the waning support of US Protestant communities, which tended to hold more liberal views and were consequently

[9] RRPL, Geoffrey Kemp Files, "Israeli Settlements 1981," Box 3.
[10] Quoted in Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, *Myths, Illusions and Peace. Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East* (with new afterword), New York/London, Penguin Books, 2010, p.36.
[11] Hugh Wilford, *America's Great Game. The CIA's Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East*, New York, Basic Books, 2014, p.93 (quote), pp.77-92 & 113-127.
[12] Mead, "The New Israel," op.cit., p.29.

more troubled by Israel's military reprisals and treatment of the Palestinians.[13] So-called Christian Zionism in the United States, together with the growing breed of US intellectuals and policymakers who rose to prominence during the 1970s and 1980s and later came to be known as neoconservatives, would considerably expand the domestic basis of support for Israel in the United States.

This represented a growing marriage of convenience between the more hawkish, idealistic and offensive strands of conservatism in the United States, reflecting the slow emergence of the third pillar in US-Israel relations: 'strategic cooperation'. United by their calls for large defence budgets and more forceful and direct use of US military and economic power abroad, these constituencies were among the most vocal and successful supporters of Israel. Many of these personalities also considered support for Israel a means to restore US global military-political influence, as well as to instil a renewed sense of self-confidence and pride in US capabilities.[14]

During the late 1940s and 1950s such popular feelings of support were not shared by a majority of expert practitioners, particularly in the State Department and Pentagon.[15] At the time, Israel was largely viewed as a 'liability' for the pursuit of US strategic interests, and support for Israel was primarily 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'. It was in this context, and in an effort to overcome this tension between 'interests' and 'values' in US support for Israel, that US administrations sought to develop strategic functions for the relationship. By adding 'strategic' rationalizations, US policy could be brought more in tune with the prerogatives of elite opinion and executive agency in the United States.

Israel's military prowess and emphasis on national sovereignty and self-reliance, characteristics that find significant parallels in US society, were also appreciated in the US.[16] Israel's traditional reluctance to entrust its security to third parties garnered significant praise, not least in light of the fear that US troops might someday be needed to defend Israel directly.[17] While Israel has been far from self-reliant, given that US aid and political-diplomatic support have effectively bankrolled its military and economic standing, the country's successes, particularly in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, did much to stir the imagination of US society. Following 1967, Israeli military effectiveness came to be seen as an asset in the context of the Cold War and US efforts to contain Soviet influence in the Middle East, adding a further layer of *strategic justifications* for US support for Israel.

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[13] Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, New York, Henry Holt Publishing, 2012, pp.30-59; Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, op.cit, pp.9-32; Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe. The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2016, pp.55-147.

[14] See, James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans. The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, London, Penguin Books, 2004, pp.112-150; Chomsky, Fateful Triangle, op.cit, pp.13-32.

[15] See, Walt and Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby*, op.cit, pp.1-51; George F. Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*,Vol.64, No.2 (Winter 1985/86), pp.205-218.

[16] Andrew J. Bachevich, *The New American Militarism. How Americans are Seduced by War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

[17] This praise has also turned into frustration due to Israel's reluctance to follow the US lead or to have Israeli forces come under a unified American command. Indeed, while the US has striven for a traditional patron-client relationship with Israel in the Middle East, Israel has consistently pushed back against these efforts, instead seeking to establish a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the region.

Such views derived from Israel's territorial conquests during the 1967 war. These territories would become the key bargaining chips or levers used by US planners to solidify Washington's hegemony in the Middle East. The promise of being the only player capable of 'returning' these territories or extracting Israeli concessions would become the key to developing a new strategic approach to the region based on a growing marriage of 'interests' and 'values' in US support for Israel.

US self-interest—both *political* and *strategic*—has therefore also played an important role in the development and expansion of US-Israel ties. It would be naïve to think that US policymakers would agree to such high levels of aid and support if this were perceived as damaging to the US's own interests and concerns. To understand the development of US support for Israel is therefore to understand how Israel's perceived value for US foreign policy changed in synergy with broader regional and international developments tied to the Cold War and US-Arab relations.

In conceptual terms, the significance of strategic cooperation rests on the fact that while the other two pillars of the relationship—shared values and political affinities—were born out of intangible feelings of societal and ideological (bottom-up) support, the third and last pillar held the promise of material benefit. This synergy could allow executive agency to harness domestic constraints and reconcile them into a more coherent strategy able to advance broader US strategic and political interests as well. The need to 'protect the domestic flank'[18] of an administration, by heeding the fundamental baseline of US sympathy for Israel, while seeking to harness this support and reconcile it with broader US strategic interests would therefore create the fundamental parameters for US Middle East policy during the Cold War. One quote from Kissinger's memoirs—that 'Israel's security could be preserved in the long run only by anchoring it to a strategic interest of the United States, not to the sentiments of individuals'[19]—is particularly salient in this context, demonstrating the sequencing and causality underpinning the emergence of a marriage between US 'values' and 'interests' in support for Israel.

Significantly, it is on these strategic and security-related themes that pro-Israel lobby groups in the US have been most active and successful. The fact that the growing influence of these groups closely matched the gradual emergence of the third pillar of US support for Israel reinforces this point. The Israel lobby does not operate in a vacuum. Its activities are facilitated by widespread popular support for Israel but also by the institutionalized nature of certain concepts and perceptions linking Israeli military strength and superiority to the advancement of US interests.

[18] This term was used by Robert Kromer a member of President Johnson's NSC staff in the mid-1960s. FRUS, Volume XVIII (1964-67), Document 140; also (partially) quoted in Robert D. Johnson, "Lyndon Johnson and Israel: The Secret Presidential Recordings," The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, July 2008, p.19.
[19] Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, London, Phoenix Press, 1982, pp.203-4.

Ultimately, the undeniable influence of the various pro-Israel lobby groups in the US—particularly in the late 1970s, 1980s and more so during the post-Cold War era—is attributable not only to their effectiveness or their command of important financial assets, but also to the fact that the very ideas they promote derive at least in part from the institutional, bureaucratic and political precedents governing US aid and assistance. These assurances were granted by successive administrations not as a result of lobby pressure but on the basis of expediency, and a belief in their being *conducive* to the US's (short-term) political and strategic interests. In this respect, the research agrees with the assertion of Noam Chomsky, as expressed in his text *Fateful Triangle* that 'no pressure group will dominate access to public opinion or maintain consistent influence over policy-making unless its aims are close to those of elite elements with real power'.[20]

Examinations of US support for Israel must therefore account for both 'intangible' and 'tangible' forces, where the former represent the foundational architecture of the relationship, and the latter its 'add-ons'. While the twin pillars of shared values and political affinities provided an important baseline of support, it was this growing overlap between 'interests' and 'values'—with the former still debated by some[21]—that transformed US-Israel ties into a 'special' relationship. It is consequently necessary to analyse all three of the pillars of US support—shared values, political affinities and strategic cooperation—in order to appreciate *how* US ties have developed since 1948 and *why* the relationship, in all its dimensions, looks the way it does today.

2.2 Domestic Constraints, Linkage and the 'Asset/Burden' Debate

Commonly described as 'unwavering', 'steadfast' or 'unshakable' US support for Israel stems from a number of principles and conventional wisdoms that act as parameters within which each successive administration develop policy for the region. Deviation from these parameters is both rare and politically unsound, given the widespread popular support they enjoy and the engrained assumption that they are integral to US interests in the region. It is in response to these concepts—starting with a fundamental US commitment to provide for Israeli security stemming from Truman's 1948 recognition of Israel—that successive US administrations have provided incremental increases of aid and assistance to Israel; and, it is as a result of the perceived political and strategic benefits flowing from such aid that every US administration since Truman has consistently outdone its predecessor in augmented qualitative and quantitative support for Israel.

Perceptions of Israel as an 'asset' or 'burden' were never limited to the regional and international levels, but also included an appreciation of the domestic political costs (or benefits) an administration could

[20] Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, op.cit.,p.17 (quote), pp.9-32.
[21] The most articulated and critical examinations of the 'asset/burden' debate are provided by: Walt and Mearshimer, *The Israel Lobby*, op.cit, pp.49-78; Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., pp.1-67; Chas W. Freeman, Jr., *America's Continuing Misadventures in the Middle East*, Charlottesville, Just World Books, 2016, pp.23-28 & 64-75.

incur if appearing to stray from a commitment to Israeli security. The Israel 'asset/burden' debate therefore relates to *both* the domestic and systemic levels of analysis—a highly important feature that is sometimes overlooked in studies focussing on the Cold War to explain the incremental development of US support for Israel. Indeed, while there is still today some debate as to the real 'strategic' benefits derived by the US from its 'special' relationship with Israel (particularly in the post-Cold War era), there is no questioning the political benefits that support for Israel can deliver to a sitting US administration.

While a majority of the Jewish-American community in the United States have traditionally given their support to the Democratic Party, the bipartisan nature of US support has meant that Republicans are also impacted by these domestic pressures. Differently from their Democratic counterparts, Republican leaders have tended to focus more on the strategic dimension of US-Israel relations. Thus while the Democratic Party has traditionally based its support on the pillars of shared values and political affinities, the Republican Party's increased emphasis on Israeli military deterrence during the 1970s was instead born out of a greater focus on the global Cold War dimension of US foreign policy.

In this context, Republican leaders have traditionally been less constrained by domestic political considerations in supporting Israel, given that Jewish-American voters have tended to be liberal and Democratic-leaning. Yet, by the 1970s and especially the 1980s, this trend began to change, not least in light of the growing identification of conservative US Christian communities with Israel and important socio-cultural and political changes occurring both in Israel and the US. Republicans in the 1970s and 1980s approached the question of Israel with a mixture of emotional and strategic consideration, increasingly coming to view Israel as an important tool of US *deterrence* in the region, a dynamic that would also create some overlap with the views of the right-wing Israeli Likud party, which secured its first electoral victory in 1977.

Such an emphasis on Israeli military might was indeed conducive to the broader objectives of Israeli policy, and Israeli leaders had long lobbied the US to publicly recognize Israel's strategic value for US policy. For Israel, such recognition would help to solidify important linkages with the United States, diminish feelings of dependence on its superpower benefactor while moving Israel closer to its goal of establishing an exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East. Early US leaders tended to see Israeli services as important but not comparable to the strategic significance of the Arab world. They moreover tended to approach this question from more of a self-interested standpoint, seeking to extract concrete assurances from Israel in exchange for increased US aid and support, essentially seeking to co-opt Israel and transform it into a client or proxy of the United States.

Indeed, during the 1950s the Eisenhower administration adopted a narrow interpretation of the US commitment to the survival and independence of Israel, recognizing the territorial integrity and viability of

all states in the Middle East through the adoption of a balanced and even-handed policy in the region. A 1953 Statement of Policy by the NSC declared that the US would:

> Make clear that Israel will not, merely because of its Jewish population, receive preferential treatment over any Arab state; and thereby demonstrate that our policy toward Israel is limited to assisting Israel in becoming a viable state living in amity with the Arab states.[22]

The underlying principles here can be framed in accordance with what has become known as the 'linkage doctrine', which emphasized the tension between US 'values' and 'interests' in the Middle East and the consequent need to pursue a balanced and even-handed policy vis-à-vis both Israel and the Arab states as to block Soviet advances and preserve the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf while also providing for Israeli security. Implicit in this approach was an appreciation of the links and tensions between the two strategic zones of US policy in the Middle East: the Near East (or the central zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict) and the Persian Gulf, the key area of strategic interest for access to oil.

In this context, during the 1950s US planners sought to employ Israel's feelings of insecurity and encirclement as potential levers to moderate Israel's negotiating positions and increase its propensity for compromise with the Arab states.[23] More pronounced however were the risks or potential 'burden' on US policy, as administration officials were well aware that US societal sympathy for Israel could force an administration to come to Israel's assistance in the event of an existential threat. US planners feared such eventualities could lead to a direct confrontation between the two superpowers in the Middle East. It was resulting from these considerations, and the risk that increased Soviet arms to Arab states could result in a new conflict with Israel, that the US gradually ended its policy of ambiguity and began to directly supply it with arms to maintain the military balance in the region.[24]

As a result, what had previously been considered *systemic constraints* preventing overt US-Israeli cooperation would, by the late 1950s and more so during the 1960s and 1970s, be transformed into *systemic justifications* for increased aid and support, given the deepening Soviet presence in Egypt and the growing depiction of Arab nationalism as a threat to US interests. Conceptualizations of Israel's role and value changed as a result, with Israeli military strength being increasingly framed as conducive to wider US interests and concerns, by virtue of being able to preserve the status quo and offset the potential of renewed conflict that would force the US to intervene more forcibly on the side of Israel.[25]

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[22] FRUS, Volume IX Part 1 (1952-1954), Document 145.

[23] The deepening fragmentation between the Arab states—and in particular between Egypt and Saudi Arabia during the mid-1950s and 1960s—would complicate these early diplomatic efforts by the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, eventually facilitating closer US-Israeli cooperation.

[24] While largely of secondary importance for much of the 1950s, given that Israel's security needs were provided for via the French and West Germans with tacit US approval, such ambiguity ended by the early-to-mid 1960s, when such supplies were interrupted forcing the US to step in with direct assistance.

[25] As noted in a 1965 memorandum to President Johnson, 'Israel's aims are rather different from our own. They've consistently felt nervous about US support […] so have long favoured tying us to them publicly (security guarantees, arms aid), regardless of

While during the 1950s and early 1960 US policy had entertained the idea of extending a formal US security guarantee to Israel in exchange for a more accommodating Israeli policy vis-à-vis the US's wider strategic interests in the Middle East, by the late 1960s Israel would receive what amounted to a *de facto* security guarantee without any formal quid pro quo in terms of Israeli policy or strategy in the region.[26] This *de facto* guarantee stemmed from this linkage between Israeli security and military might and the US's broader Cold War interests. While successful in advancing short-term US Cold War interests, and consolidating political support at home, this marriage between 'interest' and 'values' in US support for Israel would gradually have far-reaching implications for US leverage over Israel as the US's own military-strategic posture in the Middle East became increasingly reliant on this Israeli pillar.

In practical terms, the US commitment to directly supply Israel with weapons and aid to offset similar sales of Soviet weaponry to the Arab states represented the first important breakthrough in the history of US-Israel ties. These processes would gradually evolve into another article of faith governing US Middle East policy: a pledge to preserve Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME) through the direct supply of weaponry to offset the combined military, demographic and technological margins of Israel's Arab neighbours.[27]

Early variations of the QME principle are detectable since the Johnson administration and the signing of a first, highly important US-Israel MoU in 1965 (see Appendix A). This agreement emerged as result of a US promise to compensate Israel with superior quantities of weapons in response to a sale of US tanks to Jordan. It also contained important pledges to support Israeli military deterrence and long-term margin, establishing an important precedent that has lasted to this day. In exchange, Israel pledged to abide by its now famous doctrine of nuclear ambiguity, promising that it 'will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Arab-Israel area'.[28]

An element of inducements designed to 'buy' Israeli acquiescence was present in these sales, as was securing important domestic support for the administration. As noted by Robert Komer, a member of

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whether this would throw the Arabs into Soviet hands or cost us our position in the Arab world. We've always felt that such course would be disastrous to Israel as well as us. […] We want to avoid another major Arab-Israeli clash, because we'd probably have to step in to stop it. We'd be caught in the middle again too. The best way to avoid such a clash is to maintain an adequate deterrence balance. I'd now argue that this will sooner or later require us to sell arms to Israel.' FRUS, Volume XVIII (1964-1967), Document 138.

[26] US officials have traditionally been reluctant to offer Israel an official security guarantee. As noted in a 1963 State Department memorandum, 'The security arrangements Israel seeks with the United States would in our judgment harm our interests in the area and weaken rather than strengthen Israel's ultimate security. […these] could result in comparable Soviet-Arab ties, bringing the Soviets back in […] We should retain freedom of decision and action in the Near East […] Advance security arrangements with Israel would tie our hands undesirably. […] In short, we propose that your letter again make clear our concern for Israel's integrity, but convey our strong sense that there must be a balance in our approach to the Near East and that we conceive this, our present approach, as in Israel's best interests.' FRUS, Volume XVIII (1962-1963), Document 327.

[27] A formal and legally binding definition of the QME principle was approved by the US Congress in 2008. Sharp, "US Foreign Aid to Israel," op.cit., pp.1-5.

[28] FRUS, Volume XVIII (1964-67), Document 185.

President Johnson's NSC, in a 1965 memorandum, 'I kept pressing on State [Department] to face up to the fact that if we agree to sell to Jordan, we'd have to sell to Israel too—as the only way of protecting our domestic flank'.[29]

Elements of the QME concept can also be detected earlier, during the Kennedy administration, the first to publicly refer to a 'special relationship' between the United States and Israel, and the first to formally invite a sitting Israeli prime minister to visit the White House (this occurred after Kennedy's death, however, in 1964).[30] Kennedy was also the first president to sell advanced weapons to Israel—the HAWK ground-to-air missiles—in 1962. Like the later sales of F-4 Skyhawk bombers in 1966 or the 1968 sale of Phantom Jets by Johnson[31], pledges contained in the secret 1965 MoU, Kennedy's sale of defensive weaponry also rested on a mixture of efforts to dissuade Israel from going nuclear, consolidate domestic support for the sitting administration and compensate Israel for the sale of Soviet weaponry to the Arab states.

According to David Tal, 'Israel's quest for HAWK missiles was a sham', a means to extract from the United States 'a clear, formal, and preferably public US guarantee of Israel, either a formal security pact or, failing that, an agreement to sell weapons systems'.[32] This would signal the beginning of reoccurring efforts by Israel to employ inflated security concerns as important leverage over US policy.

With the advent of the Republican Nixon administration in 1969, the military dimension of US-Israel ties received a significant boost. US aid was increased from an average of about $100 million annually during the Johnson presidency to $500–600 million under Nixon, meaning that the 'United States was now providing Israel more aid in one year than during the entire Kennedy and Johnson administrations'[33] put together. The 1970s also witnessed the conclusion of a number of important bilateral agreements reflecting this emerging strategic dialogue, establishing important elements of path dependency for future US administrations.[34]

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[29] FRUS, Volume XVIII (1964-67), Document 140.
[30] Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the US-Israel Alliance,* Oxford University Press, 2004.
[31] In 1968 the US and Israel also signed a secret intelligence sharing agreement. Known as the CYR Agreement, it was signed between the Israeli Defence Forces, the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Department of Defence (DoD) and the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI). The agreement would supersede the earlier 1951 unsigned understandings reached with the Eisenhower administration on the topic of intelligence cooperation. The existence of the CYR Agreement emerged in 2014 with the release of NSA documents by Edward Snowden. See, Preamble of 1999 US-Israel Intelligence Sharing Agreement, https://www.eff.org/files/2014/08/04/israel-us-1999-agreement.pdf. The CYR Agreement was subsequently 'adjusted, broadened, reinforced and extended' in a 1988 agreement known as 'Ice Castle', again updated and expanded with the 1996 'Stone Ruby' agreement and finally, in 1999, by the above cited agreement released by Snowden.
[32] David Tal, "Symbol Not Substance? Israel's Campaign to Acquire Hawk Missiles, 1960-1962," *The International History Review*, Vol.22, No.2 (June 2000), pp.304-317, p.304.
[33] Charles Lipson, "American Support for Israel: History, Sources, Limits," in Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), *US-Israel Relations at the Crossroads,* London/Portland, Frank Crass, 1999, p.141.
[34] In the 1970s these included. A December 1970 Master Defence Development Data Exchange Agreement; A November 1971 agreement on 'Production in Israel of US Designed Defence Equipment'; a 1973 joint Weapons Systems Evaluation Group; and finally, by 1975, the key US-Israeli MoA containing unprecedented assurances and preferential treatment for Israel negotiated by Henry Kissinger in the context of the post-1973 war negotiations. See Appendix B for the full text of the 1975 MoA.

In December 1971, the two countries signed the first 'long-term US military supply agreement',[35] consolidating long-term US military sales to Israel. This agreement, which came on the heels of the 1970 Jordanian crisis,[36] led to significant benefits for the US defence industry as US 'military credits to Israel' increased from $30 million in 1970 to $545 million in 1971.[37] As noted by Karen L. Puschel, 'the 1970s would show just how different Israel's value could be perceived […] at the time none of this was ever called strategic cooperation. Yet these were the beginnings of the conceptual process and debate from which the formal strategic cooperation programme [of the 1980s and the Reagan administration] would eventually grow'.[38]

Following the 1967 war, Israel therefore slowly began to be seen as a potential asset in advancing US interests in the region, an important development that points to a significant change of perception in Washington and a slow weakening of the fundamentals of the 'linkage doctrine'. As noted by Joe Stork, the 'asset slogan also served as a cancellation notice: Washington's earlier assumption, that a settlement of the Palestinian question was integral to maintaining the US grip on the Gulf, was misplaced'.[39]

US planners thus began to consider the region as divided into different zones, with Israel representing the bastion of US interests in the Near East (Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) while Iran and Saudi Arabia were transformed into the 'twin pillars' guarding US interests in the Persian Gulf.[40] Such a conceptualization would help to 'de-link' US-Israeli relations from the other key US interests in the region, indicating a slow fraying of the 'linkage doctrine' and the related focus on the tensions between the three central US interests in the Middle East: supporting Israel, preserving the flow of oil and limiting Soviet expansionism.

The added benefits in terms of political capital at home were also significant, particularly to offset domestic pressure in the context of the US war(s) in South-East Asia. This, in turn, would help to solidify the image of Israel as both as 'strategic ally' and 'political asset' for successive US administrations. Once established as Israel's security provider, US policy would be constrained from adopting aid and assistance as levers to extract concessions from Israel. As the US became Israel's sole security provider in the post-1973 era, the impact of this constraint would be further entrenched. 'US policymakers, Republican as well as Democrat, have usually been reluctant to link Israeli financial assistance to political concessions', noted Wolf Blitzer, for many years *The Jerusalem Post*'s Washington Correspondent and today lead CNN news anchor. 'Many of them, of course, might have loved to try such a course of action. But for the most part

[35] Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel," op.cit., p.246.
[36] The Jordanian Crisis in 1970 and the role of Israel (and the US) in helping to deter Syria from intervening on the side of the Palestinians in Jordan would lead to increased rhetorical focus on Israel's 'strategic benefits' for US interests in the Cold War. Many have disputed the actual contribution of Israel. See, Harry J. Shaw, "Strategic Dissensus," *Foreign Policy*, No.61 (Winter 1985-86), pp.125-41.
[37] Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., p.105.
[38] Ibid., p.17.
[39] Joe Stork, "Israel as a Strategic Asset," *MERIP Reports*, No.105 (May 1982), pp.3-13 & 32, p.8 (quote).
[40] Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., p.114.

their hands were tied by a combination of built-in political and military circumstances which have helped to shape the contours of the American-Israeli relationship'.[41]

Even if a given crisis were precipitated by Israeli actions, US policy would tend to reflexively support Israel and work to contain the damage while maximizing Israeli security gains. The thinking behind such an approach relates to the growing juxtaposition between Israeli security and wider US interests and concerns tied to solidifying the status quo in the region and limiting Soviet expansionism. It also relates to a conscious US effort to establish a 'prolonged stalemate'[42] in the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict, allowing the US to downplay those areas of political and strategic disagreement with Israel and instead focus on the global dimension of US policy and interests, both in the region and further afield.

Significantly, this growing emphasis on Israeli security and military superiority was not limited to hard military questions but could (and eventually would) be extended to cover other key areas such as economic security, political-diplomatic security and energy security.[43] It would also extend to Israel's right to self-defence, a concept that has further complicated US strategy given that Israel's policy of military reprisals or the disproportionate use of force has often been cited as a serious concern by US leaders. In the absence of any clear and mutual definition or ranking of these threats, US policy is effectively left in the uncomfortable position of having to recognize Israeli interpretations of its security and self-defence needs, with an understanding that these are routinely inflated and exaggerated by Israel in order to ensure increased US support.

In precipitating a crisis in the region, Israel could rest assured that the United States would be jolted into action and that such action would essentially come down on Israel's side, given the predisposed American sympathy towards Israel and the premising of US policy on the need to preserve Israel's military superiority in accordance with slow emergence of the QME concept. The pervasiveness of this concept has represented a considerable institutional constraint on US Middle East policy. President Obama himself was reported to have asked his advisors why the US should maintain Israel's QME, given the radically changed conventional threats Israel faces in the region, while other officials have repeatedly complained about the impediment this commitment places on US-Arab military cooperation.[44]

This growing linkage between US deterrence and Israeli military strength would be further solidified through a whole series of bureaucratic and institutional agreements approved by the Reagan administration during the 1980s. This would represent a 'transformative moment' for the relationship, a

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[41] Wolf Blitzer, *Between Washington and Jerusalem. A Reporters Notebook*, New York/Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p.12.
[42] Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, op.cit., pp.195-227, p.196 (quote).
[43] These commitments were contained in a 1975 MoA signed by Henry Kissinger. The full text of the 1975 MoA is reprinted in Appendix B.
[44] Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic,* April 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/; Robert Gates, *Duty: Memories of a Secretary of State at War*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

'turning point' that led to the establishment of an 'institutional umbrella for all sorts of cooperation that never existed before [and has been] inherited and built on by all successive administrations', noted Dennis Ross.[45]

In a polemical 1982 article, Steven Spiegel pointed out how diminishing US support for Israel would be 'devastating' for the region's 'stability and our [US] own credibility': 'we would have to become the protector of a weakened Israel, which would place us in a far more uncomfortable position than in the past'.[46] This fear of undermining US prestige, deterrence and credibility in the Middle East because of a diminishing commitment to support Israel's military and economic margin became something of a side-effect of the US's growing emphasis on Israel's military superiority as conducive to US interests. It moreover points to the fundamental weakening of the 'linkage doctrine', with its emphasis on balance and even-handedness in US policy.

While no doubt weakened, the principles contained in the 'linkage doctrine' would still retain explanatory relevance for US policy towards Israel during the Nixon and Ford administrations, as well as that of Jimmy Carter. Indeed, while the US developed a vested interest in strengthening Israel's security and military margin, the fundamentals of this policy towards Israel were still inherently linked to the need to resolve the conflict (on US and Israeli terms) in order for the US to reap the full strategic dividends of this 'Israeli asset'.

The unprecedented increases in US aid and military assistance, including the ground-breaking assurances made by Henry Kissinger to Israel in a 1975 MoA, were all linked to a broader US effort to channel progress in the negotiations according to US and Israeli interests, solidify the status quo and slowly 'prepare the conditions' for peace in the region. The end goal of (bilateral) Arab-Israeli peace agreements was always present in such calculus, as was an appreciation of the underlying hardship and political costs entailed in eventually 'delivering' the territorial concessions needed to seal an Arab-Israeli agreement. It was largely as a result of political expediency, therefore, combined with the prioritization of Cold War interests, that US planners sought to delay progress on the diplomatic track.

While short-term strategic and political interests might have coincided in the late 1960s and 1970s, neither side has ever ignored the existence of fundamental areas of disagreement between the long-term strategic and political visions of the region and Israeli security. In this respect, the growing depiction of Israel as a potential 'asset' for US interests was inherently linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the ability of the US to employ the 'special' nature of US-Israeli ties to attract the Arabs closer to the US. Such considerations were not lost on Israel, which deeply resented such linkage and instead strove for a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East.

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[45] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[46] Spiegel, "The Middle East: A Consensus of Errors," *Commentary Magazine*, 1 March 1982.

Indeed, Israel would use those same territories—and their 'special' significance and linkage with broader US strategic interests and objectives—as bargaining chips to advance Israel's *own* interests' vis-à-vis the US. Chief among these stood Israel's effort to ensure constant and reliable US support and aid. This would translate into an effort to fashion an exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East, one capable of keeping Israeli interests and concerns at front and centre of US policy and thereby providing assurances that US policy would not someday sacrifice Israeli interests in order to bring the numerically superior and energy-rich Arab states closer to the United States.

A significant, yet rarely appreciated dimension of the US-Israel relationship, particularly in the security domain, has therefore been predicated on mutual, and largely covert, efforts to 'Americanize' Israeli policy and 'Israelize' US perceptions, as each actor sought to bring the approaches of the other closer to its own long-term vision and interests. While Israeli leaders had long sought to tie the US to Israel through a quasi-exclusivist relationship based on a supposed complementarity of interests and values, US leaders have tended to push back against these efforts. 'There is much that is in common and parallel in Israeli and US policies', noted US President Gerald Ford in a 1976 letter to his Israeli counterpart, 'but they have never been and cannot be identical'.[47]

It would be in this context that Kissinger, like all previous (and future) US policymakers, would struggle to convince Israeli leaders not to oppose evolving US efforts to co-opt the Arab states through arms sales and increased economic aid and support—not to mention eventual Israeli territorial concessions needed to ultimately seal a peace deal. As candidly noted by Kissinger in one meeting with the leaders of the organized Jewish-American community,

> It is very easy for a group like this to try to say that American and Israeli interests are identical. But this is not exactly so […] Israeli strength does not prevent the spread of communism in the Arab world. Israeli strength provides for Israeli security. The best defence against the spread of communism in the Arab world is to strengthen the moderate Arab governments.[48]

Support for Israeli security, through an early articulation of what would become the QME concept, would therefore replace the previous emphasis on a balanced approach, becoming a means to conceptually justify increased aid and military assistance. Through an increased sense of security and self-confidence, Israeli leaders (as well as US and Israeli society) could presumably be more easily convinced to engage in territorial withdrawals and compromise with Arab states. This would allow US policy to

[47] Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, "Presidential Message to Rabin, January 1976," Box 2 'Israel-Prime Minister Rabin' Folder, National Security Advisor's Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, pp.43-46, p.44 (quote), http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0351/1555818.pdf.
[48] FRUS, Volume XXVI (1974-76), Document 189.

frame aid for Israel as an 'investment for peace' or 'preparing the groundwork' for peace in the region, while the real drivers represented political expediency at home and Cold War interests abroad.

While the end goal of peace was delayed and downgraded during the 1970s and 1980, its key importance as a means to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of US Middle East policy was never ignored. It was in this context that the key themes of leverage and influence would come into play, and it would be in this arena that the Reagan administration would (perhaps unintentionally) depart from the legacy of Henry Kissinger.

During the 1980s, US policy was to continue Kissinger's approach independently from any diplomatic progress in the Arab-Israeli theatre. Indeed there was an acceleration of US support accompanied by a hardening of Israeli negotiating stances and increased evidence of Israel's true intention of never withdrawing from the OPT. As a result, the 'Israel asset' slogan would effectively become 'de-linked' from the Arab-Israeli conflict, a conceptual shift that would have far-reaching implications for future US policy and in particular the theme of leverage and influence between Israel and the US.

2.3 Security and the Paradox of Leverage: Balance vs. Exclusivity

Beneath the surface of the 'special relationship' and other rhetorical flourishes meant to evidence the depth of US support for Israel, the top-level US-Israel relationship has actually been characterized by considerable tensions and disagreements. Robert Gates, who has worked in various capacities with successive US administrations since the 1970s, noted in his 2000 Oral History testimony that 'every president I worked for, at some point in his presidency, would get so pissed off at the Israelis that he couldn't speak. It didn't matter whether it was Jimmy Carter or Gerry Ford or Ronald Reagan or George Bush. Something would happen and they would just [get] so angry and they'd sort of rant and rave around the Oval Office'.[49]

These tensions were particularly pronounced in the context of Israel's opposition to enhanced US-Arab cooperation. All US administrations have clashed with Israeli leadership about Israel's insensitivity to the US's wider concerns and interests. Such dynamics were of particular importance during the 1980s, when US policy sought to build up the strategic defences of key Arab states in close vicinity to the Persian Gulf in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution. Yet, the same dimensions were also on display in the context of Johnson's sale of major offensive weaponry to Israel in 1966 and 1968, undertaken to *compensate* Israel for US arms sales to Jordan while seeking to dissuade Israel from going nuclear, rather than out of a tangible appreciation of Israel's 'strategic services' for the US.

[49] George H.W. Bush Oral History Project, "Interview with Robert Gates – Transcript," 23-24 July 2000, p.88, http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/ohp_2000_0723_gates.pdf.

Ultimately, Israel has pocketed successive increases of support in exchange for only limited, tactical modifications of a given policy—as opposed to revision of certain central tenets of Israeli strategy (nuclear weapons manufacturing, military reprisals, settlement construction, the status of Jerusalem, or opposition to US-Arab strategic dialogue, to name but a few). Opposition to enhanced US-Arab cooperation continued, as Israel viewed such dynamics as a threat to its own 'special' relationship, fearing that US policy would gradually move closer to the positions of the Arab states in exchange for increased commercial access and military basing rights. This would dilute the US-Israel relationship and threaten Israel's quest for an exclusivist alliance with the US in the Middle East.

As much as US leaders have repeatedly pushed Israel to demonstrate a greater sensitivity to the US's wider interests and concerns, essentially requesting a 'quid' in exchange for America's 'quo' of aid and support, these efforts have consistently fallen short. 'I ask [Israeli Prime Minister] Rabin to make concessions, and he says he can't because Israel is weak', lamented Kissinger during the mid-1970s, 'so I give him more arms, and he says he doesn't need to make concessions because Israel is strong'.[50] This is the context in which the first severe, top-level US-Israeli political crisis took shape during the Ford administration—the so-called 'reassessment crisis' of 1975.

The crisis stemmed from Israel's intransigence in the context of the Sinai I and II negotiations that followed the 1973 war, leading the Ford administration to threaten a complete 'reassessment'[51] of US policy towards Israel. The threat was ultimately undermined by the power of domestic constraints and the upcoming 1976 elections. An open letter signed by over three-quarters of the US Senate would call on Ford to repair relations and return US policy to its baseline of support for Israel, leading to Kissinger's unprecedented offering of security, energy and political assurances contained in the secret 1975 MoA.[52]

The significance of that agreement in laying much of the political and institutional groundwork for subsequent US-Israel relations, as well as US negotiating tactics, cannot be overstated. Israeli scholar Avi Shlaim has noted how from that point on the US-Israel relationship was an alliance in 'all but name'.[53] The practice of approaching US-Israeli negotiations through inducements and soft persuasion ('carrots') over sanctions or coercive diplomacy ('sticks') would also become a legacy of this agreement, as would the political lessons of Israel's growing influence in Congress and an unprecedented assurance by the US to consult with Israel before any major policy initiative on the Arab-Israeli conflict (see Appendix B).

[50] Quoted in Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., p.119
[51] FRUS, Volume XXVI (1974-1976), Document 156.
[52] For a detailed account of the 1975 reassessment crisis see, Aaron T. Walter, *The Limits of Influence: Gerald Ford, Yitzhak Rabin and the 1975 Reassessment of US-Israel Relations*, JoySpring (Kindle), 2014 (unpublished PhD); Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*, London, Penguin Books, 2000, pp.325-52.
[53] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, op.cit., p.338.

Similar disagreements have surfaced repeatedly throughout the history of US-Israel relations, and these have regularly been resolved through backchannel dialogue, the *temporary* suspension of military supplies or, in the most extreme of cases as happened in the mid-1950s and in 1975, by the threat of political and economic sanctions accompanied by significant benefits in the event of an Israeli backtrack. Ultimately, the incremental growth in US assistance has never halted, and has often increased exponentially in the wake of severe top-level political disagreements, as indeed would occur in 1975 and during the first two years of the Reagan administration.

Leaders in both Israel and the United States have been well aware of how popular support for Israel could be used to ramp up political pressure on a sitting US administration. This support, and particularly that coming from the US Congress, could serve to either constrain or bolster a given US policy strategy, providing Israeli leaders and their US supporters with a significant means to push back against the clear power asymmetry between the US and Israel. This dimension has created significant frustration among US policymakers, who have consistently had to worry about 'protecting the domestic flank'. From the standpoint of Israel, there is little doubt that such reservoirs of US societal support have represented a considerable 'strategic asset' for the advancement of Israeli interests vis-à-vis the United States.

From the early 1950s onwards, Israeli leaders, representatives and their supporters in the United States have grown exceptionally adept at building on and exploiting this societal sympathy for Israel. After increased attention was given to improving coordination and organization within the America-Jewish community—though the founding of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in the mid-1950s—Israeli leaders and their US supporters gradually came to exert considerable influence over domestic debates about Israel and as a consequence on the development of US policy in the Middle East.[54] The founder of what became AIPAC, Isaiah Kenen once defined the role of the organisation in these terms, demonstrating again the 'bottom-up' nature of early US support for Israel: 'It is our job to lobby the Congress to tell the president to overrule the State Department.'[55]

As a result, US policy towards Israel has largely resorted to the use of 'carrots' through provisions of inducements, soft persuasion and slow, mostly covert, attempts at assimilation or 'Americanization' as a means to increase US leverage and influence. While US administrations, including that of Ronald Reagan, have at times employed elements of negative conditionality vis-à-vis Israel, these have largely been momentary, symbolic moves aimed at sending a signal to the Arab world or international community that the US was still capable of 'playing fair' in the Middle East. Announced with much fanfare, and inevitably

[54] Isaiah L. Kenen, who had worked at the Israeli Office of Information with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the US, founded the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs (AZCPA) in 1951. AZCPA was later rebranded AIPAC in 1963.
[55] Richard B. Straus, "Israel's new Super-Lobby in Washington: Reagan and Co.," *The Washington Post [WP]*, 27 April 1986, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1986/04/27/israels-new-super-lobby-in-washington-reagan-and-co/2cf5362f-5729-4a98-b8f1-83fc8d3b1ac9/.

leading to storms of criticism and pressure on a sitting US administration, these instances of political, economic or military pressure on Israel have been extremely short-lived or cosmetic, with large dimensions of the US-Israel relationship remaining unaffected.

This has not produced significant incentives for Israeli leaders to modify the fundamentals of their policy, and may indeed have further increased Israel's propensity not to compromise on its maximalist objectives. At each crisis point, even in those instances when a continuation of a given Israeli policy was arguably harmful to the country's own interests, Israel could count on the United States to come to the rescue by supplying incentives for a reversal of said policy, thereby offsetting most, if not all, of its costs.

In justifying his threat to 'reassess' US policy towards Israel in 1975, President Gerald Ford noted how this principle of linking Israeli military superiority to increased flexibility and leverage had not materialized, and that some form of coercion was needed to convince Israel to modify its policy.[56] Ford complained that the United States 'cannot be in a position to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world simply in order to stand behind the intransigence of Israel',[57] later writing in his memoirs:

> For the past twenty-five years, the philosophical underpinning of US policy towards Israel had been our conviction—and certainly my own—that if we gave Israel an ample supply of economic aid and weapons, she would feel strong and confident, more flexible and more willing to discuss a lasting peace. […] The Israelis were stronger militarily than all their Arab neighbours combined, yet peace was no closer than it had ever been. So I began to question the rationale for our policy. I wanted the Israelis to recognize that there had to be some quid pro quo.[58]

This same thinking would define the approaches of successive US administrations vis-à-vis Israel, yet, as a result of domestic pressures and a increased reliance on Israeli deterrence and military might, most administrations have been significantly reluctant to engage in prolonged public battle with Israel, unless a key and central US strategic interest is threatened. In this respect, Camille Mansour is right to point out that policy, especially in a time of crisis, is 'made out of expedient measures'[59] rather than clear-cut strategic logic or long-term vision. Given the engrained and predisposed US sympathy towards Israel, decision-makers have often found themselves augmenting the bureaucratic nature of US preferential treatment even while identifying Israeli actions as the cause for the present crisis. Moreover, a highly important trend in US-Israel relations and the theme of leverage relates to the fact that in times of crisis, or military contingencies, US policymakers are inherently constrained from not backing Israel in public, a dynamic that has further limited US and presidential leverage over Israel while supplying Israel's leadership with important indirect means to solidify US support and assistance: that of heightening military tensions

[56] Also see, Nathan Thrall, *The Only Language they Understand: Forcing Compromise in Israel and Palestine*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2017.
[57] FRUS Volume XXVI (1969-1976), Document 150.
[58] Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald Ford*, New York, Harper, 1979, pp.244-45; Also quoted in Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., p.118.
[59] Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., pp.90-95.

or even of catapulting a crisis in the region as a tactical means of returning US policy to its baseline of support for Israel while enhancing tensions in US-Arab relations.

This was the case in the mid-to-late 1950s, when increasingly violent Israeli military raids against Nasser's Egypt would further Cairo's need for arms and security from the Soviets, in turn leading to the increased militarization of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, by 1958, increased US involvement on the side of Israel.[60] A similar scenario was repeated during the 1968–70 War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt, when deep Israeli bombing raids in the outskirts of Cairo led Egypt to install Soviet-made SAM anti-aircraft batteries, in turn forcing the US to increase its military and diplomatic support for Israel (much the same was to occur in Lebanon, with Syria moving Soviet SAM batteries into the country in the early 1980s in response to Israeli military actions).

With regard to this latter event, Kissinger noted in his diary how the US was 'preoccupied with Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, shaken by domestic upheaval, [and] more than half convinced that Israeli belligerence had provoked the Soviet move'.[61] In the end, US policy once again favoured Israel, with Kissinger justifying this approach by noting that 'the question of what causes a Soviet move becomes irrelevant; American policy must deal with its consequences, not with its causes'.[62]

As a result, US policy has gradually come to view preservation of the status quo in the Middle East as holding the fewest (political and strategic) risks for a US administration, given that any more proactive approach would entail pursuit of a diplomatic breakthrough between Israel and the Arabs, which in turn could result in prolonged political crisis with Israel that could be exploited by the Soviet Union.US frustration over Israeli unwillingness to make territorial concessions should not be exaggerated, however. This delay was in fact part and parcel of US policy approach to the region. As articulated by Henry Kissinger, 'it was not in our interest to seek subservience. […] Once it was proved that we could make Israel do *anything*, Arab demands would escalate. Then we would be blamed for Israel's failure to meet Arab terms. […] Our strategy depended on being the only country capable of eliciting Israeli concessions, but also on our doing it within a context where this was perceived to be a difficult task'.[63]

Ultimately therefore, US policy sought become the sole negotiator and guarantor of the Arab-Israeli diplomatic process, employing this process to maximize Israeli security and US influence, while at the same time not assuming the ultimate responsibility for Israeli intransigence and the ensuing diplomatic deadlock. Thus, US policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict in the post-1967 period prioritized 'process' over

[60] Abraham Ben-Zvi, "The July 1958 Jordanian Crisis and the Origins of the American–Israeli Alliance: A New Perspective", *Journal of Israeli History*, Vol.24, No.2, 2005, pp.215-28.
[61] Henry Kissinger, *White House Years Volume One, 1968-71*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979, p.676.
[62] Quoted in Mansour, *Beyond Alliance*, op.cit., p.98.
[63] Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, op.cit,.p.1057; Also (partially) quoted in Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli*, op.cit., p.270-71 [emphasis original].

'peace', and the power of institutionalized precedents, along with the gradual increase in interdependence between the US and Israeli military and security doctrines, has ensured a continuance of this prioritization in the post-Cold War era as well.

Little did it matter that this Israeli intransigence was (and is) made possible through US aid and military support. And, little did it matter that this same support was largely predicated on an effort to diminish Israeli intransigence. Edward Sheehan, who travelled with Secretary of State Kissinger during his frantic shuttle diplomacy in the 1970s, highlighted this fundamental incongruence:

> During the abortive negotiation of March 1975 Kissinger lamented his failure to extract concessions [from Israel] first; immense arms shipments to Israel 'was naïve—my biggest mistake' [Kissinger recalled]. Following the second Sinai agreement, Kissinger argued that the new arms would encourage Israeli flexibility. He had said the same five years before, when he assumed concessions would result once Israel was invincible. Dr. Kissinger had come full circle.[64]

From this early stage therefore it was becoming clear that increasing US leverage over Israel, or even making sure that it would abide by past assurances, would be an extremely difficult task. While some of this was tactical, US leaders could not hide their discomfort when push came to shove and Israel would be called upon to make the necessary concessions.

Indeed, Israel always seemed to demand more and with few or no strings attached. Richard W. Murphy, former Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs between 1983 and 1989, noted in an interview with the author how Israel seemed have a 'bottomless pit of apprehension and fear'[65] when it came to its security. Although much of this was 'justified', it was widely known that Israel tended to exaggerate threats as a means to elicit increased US support. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim has quoted Israel's Defence Minister Moshe Dayan to sum up Israel's general approach to US aid: 'Our American friends give us money, arms and advice. We take the money, we take arms but we decline the advice'.[66]

To explain the apparent lack of leverage over Israel it is therefore necessary to dissect the conceptual frameworks governing US aid and support. It is important here to appreciate how US support for Israeli security and military margin began being framed as a complementary component of a broader strategy aimed at consolidating US hegemony over the region to the detriment of the Soviet Union. It is in the context of this growing reliance on Israeli military strength, and a related effort to downplay the centrality of those areas of incompatibility between US and Israeli strategic interests and long-term visions for the

[64] Edward Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger: A Secret History of American Diplomacy in the Middle East,* New York, Reader's Digest Press, 1976, pp.199-200.
[65] Interview, Richard W. Murphy, op.cit.
[66] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, op.cit., p.316.

region, that the US embrace of a policy predicated mainly on inducements and soft persuasion should be understood.

While this approach would begin to crystallize the notion of Israel being a potential 'asset' for US strategic objectives, the true determinants of this 'asset' related not to Israel's 'strategic services' but rather to its linkage with the Arab-Israeli conflict and ability of the US to employ this conflict in such a way as to advance US Cold War interests while staying true to the US's fundamental commitment to Israel's security. This overlap between shot-term US Cold War interests and domestic pressures to support Israel would facilitate an erroneous portrayal of complementarity in US and Israeli strategic interests in the Middle East. Such portrayals would help to entrench the notion that 'what is good for Israel is good for the US', leading eventually to a policy of support for Israel 'right or wrong' that has significantly weakened the US's professed role as a mediator in the region.

Ultimately, such a scenario has undermined the real 'asset' that Israel provides US policy: providing an entry-point for the US to become the sole guarantor of an Arab-Israeli agreement that could consolidate US hegemony over the Middle East and finally reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of US policy.

By consistently downplaying the very real elements of incongruence between US and Israeli long-term visions for the region and simply assuming that the US could gradually 'save Israel in spite of herself'[67] through a slow process of 'Americanization' of Israeli policies, the US has—perhaps unwittingly—established itself as the ultimate guarantor of Israeli security and survival without any tangible increase in leverage or assurances from its small Middle Eastern ally.

In effect, the US has *lost* potential leverage over Israel as a result of policy options being consistently narrowed by the need to place Israeli security concerns—and Israel's definition of these concerns—at front and centre of US policy. Ultimately, the US would become 'entrapped' in a quasi-exclusivist US-Israeli relationship in the Middle East, precluding it from using its vast potential leverage over Israel as a tool to advance its strategic interests in the region.

While President Carter had tried to direct US policy to a greater focus on the Palestinian question, political tensions with Israel were such as to undermine these efforts. Some form of autonomy was all the US could extract from Israel's leadership and it is indeed here, in the context of the OPT, that the true limits of US leverage—and the power of 'security' as an Israeli trump card over US policy, not to mention Palestinian rights or security—are best demonstrated. Israeli leaders had long refused any notion of a possible withdrawal from these territories on the basis of security concerns, and there appeared little the

[67] George W. Ball, "The Middle East: How to Save Israel in Spite of Herself," *Foreign Affairs*, No.55, (April 1977), pp.453-71.

US could do about the situation. As noted by Moshe Dayan in a 1977 interview with Newsweek Magazine:

> If the US insists on a Palestinian State, I think that any Israeli government would reject it. And if we have to make the choice tomorrow of what to do: have a breach with the US […] or accept a Palestinian state, we would rather have these problems with the US than agree to a Palestinian state, which we seriously think would eventually bring the destruction of Israel.[68]

This soft approach to Israel was further cemented by the Carter administration, which granted Israel another round of unprecedented sweeteners and preferential treatment in the context of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement. The key strategic goal of concluding a peace agreement with Egypt, and thereby solidifying Cairo's passage into the Western camp, would override the value of a prolonged political crisis with Israel over the Palestinian question. As a result, and based on the policy approach developed by Kissinger during the Sinai I and II negotiations, US policy under Carter and even Reagan would proceed along similar path dependency, prioritizing inducements and soft persuasion in negotiations with Israel.

Indeed, many of the same policymakers who worked on Kissinger's team would be called back to serve in the Reagan administration, ensuring a level of continuity in the US's approach to the Middle East during 1980s. Given the widespread—but rather misplaced—perception in Washington that Egypt's Sadat had sued for peace due to the military superiority of Israel and its 'special' relationship with the United States, there was little apparent reason to change this approach.

Yet, there were fundamental differences between the Reagan administration's approach to Israel and that of previous Republican and Democrat presidents. Differently from Nixon and Ford, Reagan, a former democrat, Hollywood actor and native of California, would approach Israel by infusing a potent mixture of populism into *all three pillars* of US support. Reagan and his team would emphasize a 'moral obligation'[69] to support Israel while also elevating the third pillar of strategic cooperation to new and unprecedented heights. Differently from the past, however, this emphasis on Israel as a 'strategic asset' would gradually become de-linked from the Arab-Israeli conflict or diplomatic efforts in that arena, with the Reagan administration more interested in forging a Cold War alliance with an offensive posture in the region.

By the time of the 1980 election, Republican candidate Reagan would highlight the extent to which the old portrayal of Israel as a 'liability' for US foreign policy had effectively been superseded by this new

[68] Quoted in Ben-Zvi, *The United States and Israel*, op.cit., p.116.
[69] Haim Malka, *Crossroads: The Future of the US-Israel Strategic Partnership*, CSIS, Washington DC, 2011,p.3; Helen Cobban, "The US-Israeli Relationship in the Reagan Era," *Conflict Quarterly*, Spring 1989.

emphasis on the strategic benefits of US-Israel cooperation. Speaking at a campaign rally at the annual *B'nai B'irth* forum in September 1980, Reagan said:

> While morality is most frequently given as a motive for actions, the true and abiding motive is self-interest. Well, the touchstone of our relationship with Israel is that a secure, strong Israel is in America's self-interest. Israel is a major strategic asset to America. Israel is not a client, but a very reliable friend. […] While we have since 1948 clung to the argument of a moral imperative to explain our commitment to Israel, no administration has ever deluded itself that Israel was not of permanent strategic importance to America. […] To weaken Israel is to destabilize the Middle East and risk the peace of the world.[70]

This emphasis on the strategic value of Israel was thus born out of a process by which certain fundamental assumptions about US Middle East policy changed in reaction to the interplay between international developments tied to the Cold War, US-Arab relations and domestic pressures to support Israel. In essence these changes would lead to a gradual chipping away of the central principles of the linkage doctrine, pushing US policy to abandon its previous emphasis on balance and even-handedness as the best means to maintain influence and leverage over *both* Israel and the Arabs, and closer to Israel's end goal of a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East.

As the end-game of peace was downgraded below the US's other priorities tied to the Cold War and domestic politics, US policy shifted to focus on those regional, international and domestic 'conditions' that US planners believed promised the best chance of achieving peace. Even-handedness was therefore replaced by an overtly pro-Israel policy justified on the basis of serving the US's geostrategic (and domestic/political) interests. Fundamentally, however, this embrace of strategic rationalizations for US support emerged as a by-product of the US's commitment to Israeli security, a development that in turn materialized as a result of US societal support for Israel and the impact of these intangible feelings on high-level US decision-makers charged with developing Middle East policy.

Conclusion

US support for Israel is derived from a mixture of ideational, religious and moral considerations that in their entirety can be summarized by reference to the twin pillars of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities. Joining these intangible forces, in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and Israel's occupation of large swaths of Arab territory, US planners began to add a further layer of strategic justifications for US support, eventually crystallizing the third, and most controversial pillar in the US-Israel relationship: 'strategic cooperation'.

[70] RRPL, Geoffrey Kemp Files, "Israeli Settlements 1981," Box 3.

This third pillar has never achieved the same level of consensus as the twin pillars of shared norms and values. Shai Feldman has noted how 'the strategic dimension of America's motivation for supporting Israel never comprised the core of these relations. [… It] never approached that of the other elements in the U.S.-Israel relationship'.[71]

This is largely explained by the fact that Israel's potential value for US interests would be linked and *constrained* to the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Near East. Israel began having value for US interests through its *linkage* to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the related efforts by the US to establish its hegemony over the diplomatic process in such a way as to advance key US Cold War interests, not as a result of Israel's 'strategic services' for US interests.

Israel's 'strategic value' for US policy would therefore be inherently linked the US's avowed ability to deliver Israeli concessions to the Arab states that would help to solidify their reliance on the Western camp in the Cold War. Yet, when the moment came for the US to seek to deliver these Israeli concessions, as was the case with Kissinger in the mid-1970s, Carter in the late 1970s, Bill Clinton in the 1990s or Barak Obama and John Kerry in 2014, the significant limits of US leverage and influence over Israel have been manifestly evident.

Constrained from employing hard conditionality, let alone sanctions or cohesive diplomacy, US policymakers have ultimately employed soft persuasion accompanied by a slow, largely covert, effort to 'Americanize' Israeli policies and long-term viewpoints as the best—and most cost effective—means to influence Israeli behaviour. Predicated mainly on political expediency and short-term strategic gain, the translation of such approaches into institutional and bureaucratic commitments granting Israel preferential treatment in the economic, military and political domains would solidify into path dependency for future US policy. The cumulative results of these ad hoc agreements and commitments would establish something akin to a straitjacket determining the policy of successive administrations, even when strategic developments would suggest another course of action.

Each successive administration has thus consistently outdone its predecessor with increased aid for Israel notwithstanding the repeated occurrence of severe top-level disagreements with that country. This incremental development and the related expansion of preferential treatment for Israel have created a distinct dimension to the US-Israel relationship: one defined by repeated (political) crises and (policy) continuity.[72] This continuity is based on the depths of US popular support for Israel and a series of concepts and perceptions developed by elite opinion and executive agency about the best means to

[71] Feldman, *The Future of US-Israel*, op.cit., p.6.
[72] Former US ambassador to Israel, Samuel W. Lewis, has pointed to this dynamic. See, Samuel W. Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Constancy and Change," in William B. Quandt (ed.), *The Middle East. Ten Years after Camp David*, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1988, pp.217-57.

reconcile this commitment with the advancement of broader US interests in the Middle East and the Cold War.

Most fundamentally, however, this policy has survived in light of the politically charged nature of US support for Israel and the engrained notion that a strong and militarily secure Israel is *conducive* to the advancement of other US interests. Commonly described as an 'investment for peace', massive US aid to Israel continues to this day to be predicated on the need to ensure Israeli security as a (pre)condition for peace in the region. After half a century of pursuing this approach, the time has come to reassess the fundamental premise governing US military aid to Israel, analysing its (in)effectiveness as a means to increase US leverage and thereby helping the US to move from a focus on 'conditions' to actual peace in the Middle East.[73]

[73] See, Thrall, *The Only Language they Understand*, op.cit.

Chapter 3

The Reagan Revolution

Ronald Reagan's election as the 40th President of the United States was a watershed moment in US politics. As the first US president to serve two consecutive terms in office since the 1950s, the eight years of the Reagan administration left a deep mark on the US national consciousness and foreign policy style.

Rallying supporters under the banner of a resurgent nationalism and a restored belief in the greatness and exceptionalism of the American experience, the 'Age of Reagan' would herald a new conservative and militarized turn in American politics. From economics, to social policy, the role of government, religion and a renewed emphasis on military might as tool to revive national greatness at home, many of the political and ideological principles introduced by the Reagan administration continue to impact and even define contemporary policy debates in the United States.

Such has become the appeal of Reagan that a cult-like following has formed around the former president, who died of Alzheimer's disease at his ranch in California in 2004. Both Democratic and Republican politicians routinely pay homage to his persona and legacy, seeking in no uncertain terms to assume for themselves a portion of the former president's popularity. During the 2008 Democratic Party primary, Barack Obama described the 1980 election as 'different'; 'Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that […] Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not. He put us on a fundamentally different path'.[1]

During the 2016 presidential election campaign and the Republican and Democratic primaries, Reagan would surface repeatedly in the speeches of various contenders. Republican nominee Donald Trump unabashedly assumed for himself Reagan's election slogan, promising to 'make America great again', while his Democratic rival Hilary Clinton repeatedly asked 'what would Ronald Reagan say?' as a means to remind her audience of the extent Trump had strayed from Reagan's political legacy and philosophy.[2]

More than a decade since the former president's death, Reagan's aura looms large over American politics and state-society relations, often scoring high marks in opinion rankings of the 'greatest US president' in history.[3] Differentiating between the image and reality of Reagan's *personal* legacy is no easy task however. His detached leadership style and tendency to delegate decisions to subordinates have led some to describe Reagan as little more than a figurehead in the so-called 'Reagan Revolution'. Reagan's biographer

[1] "In their Own Words: Obama on Reagan," *NYT*, http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/politics/21seelye-text.html.
[2] Cathleen Decker, "Trump tries to echo Reagan, but leaves out an essential element: Optimism," *LAT*, 28 September 2016, http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-optimism-analysis-20160927-snap-story.html.
[3] Frank Newport, "Americans say Reagan is the Greatest US President," *Gallup Politics*, 18 February 2011, http://www.gallup.com/poll/146183/Americans-Say-Reagan-Greatest-President.aspx.

Lou Cannon recalled how Reagan 'may have been the one president in the history of the republic who saw his election as a chance to get some rest',[4] going further to report how the NSC's morning briefings were moved from the early hours of the morning to 9.30 am.

Reagan's leadership style would lead to significant bureaucratic haggling and personal animosities within the administration. Donald Reagan, the president's Secretary of the Treasury and later Chief of Staff, recalled how 'in the four years that I served as secretary of the treasury, I never saw President Reagan alone and never discussed economic philosophy. […] After I accepted the job he simply hung up and vanished.'[5] Another former administration official, Kenneth Adelman, went further, noting how 'in terms of US foreign policy decision making, the Reagan administration was the messiest I've ever seen'.[6]

Setting aside these controversies, few would dispute Reagan's physiological impact and the broader legacy left by his *administration* after eight years in power. Such was the appeal of Reagan's demeanour, a dynamic also helped by the failed assassination attempt in 1981, that repeated scandals and controversies did little to harm what became known as the 'Teflon presidency'. Indeed, after eight years in office, the Republican Party would defy expectations and secure a virtual third term in the November 1988 elections under the leadership of George H. W. Bush, Reagan's Vice President, a highly unusual feat in American politics and one that has largely been explained by Reagan's popularity. James Baker III, Reagan's first Chief of Staff and a member of the president's famous troika of advisors charged with running the day-to-day business of the White House, would recall in a recent interview how the 'secret to Reagan's success' was simply that he made 'people feel good'.[7]

This chapter will examine the primary political and ideological components of the Reagan administration, tracing their roots back to the significant socio-political, economic and demographic changes occurring in America throughout the 1970s. Having twice failed to secure the Republican nomination in 1968 and 1976, Reagan's election in 1980 was very much a product of the times. In order to understand the administration's ideological inclinations, its strategic vision and priorities, it is therefore necessary to examine the specific ideational and historical context in which Reagan's political career would take shape, leading finally to his successful bid for the presidency in November 1980.

In so doing the chapter will examine the so-called 'Reagan revolution', focusing on the foreign policy dimensions of his administration and the ways in which enhanced militarism abroad was increasingly considered a function of the administration's broader political, psychological and ideological objectives at

[4] Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime,* New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991, p.116.
[5] William Leuchtenburg, "Behind the Reagan Myth," *Salon*, 27 December 2015, http://www.salon.com/2015/12/27/behind_the_ronald_reagan_myth_no_one_had_ever_entered_the_white_house_so_grossly_ill_informed_2/.
[6] "Interview with Kenneth Adelman," Ronald Reagan Oral History Project, 30 September 2003, p.18, http://web1.millercenter.org/poh/transcripts/ohp_2003_0930_adelman.pdf.
[7] Quoted from, CNN Special Miniseries, "The Eighties: The Reagan Revolution (episode 2)," 31 March 2016.

the domestic level. In framing the 'Reagan Revolution' the chapter will examine two slogans—'Kicking the Malaise' and 'Peace through Strength'—that together encapsulate the important interplay between domestic and foreign politics during the Reagan administration.

The chapter will further examine the administration's sources of domestic support and the composition of its foreign policy team, highlighting the emergence of new generation of policymakers and advisors and analysing their impact on the articulation of US foreign policy during the 1980s. The emphasis will be placed on the emergence of a more proactive and militarized American policy on the world stage, but the analysis will examine the existence of significant domestic and bureaucratic constraints to this promised 'revolution' in foreign affairs.

3.1 The 'Age of Reagan': Ideology and Politics

Often referred to as the 'Age of Reagan', the 1980s had a transformative impact on US politics and society. Historians, sociologists, economists and foreign policy specialists have all referred to this decade as a key turning point in the modern history of the United States, contributing to the popularization of the term 'Reagan Revolution' to broadly capture the significance of Reagan's election in 1980. The central and most defining feature of this 'revolution' was its ideological dimension; the extent in which Reagan's election would signal an overturning of traditional political alliances and herald the beginnings of a new, conservative and militarized turn in US politics.

This ideological 'revolution' was on the one hand driven by a renewed period of tension and animosity in US-Soviet relations that began in 1979, but more fundamentally reflected the culmination of a series of socio-political, economic and demographic trends in the US that combined to create the general backdrop to Reagan's political rise. In this regard, Reagan's election and his ideological predispositions was very much a product of the times, a watershed moment that has come to signal the end of one political-ideological era and the beginning of the next.

Known as the 'great communicator', Reagan's most valuable political asset was his ability to connect with the average citizen, instilling a renewed sense of optimism and pride in US society and politico-military capabilities. Synthesizing—or more often oversimplifying—complex realities into potent one-liners, Reagan's rhetorical style was born out of a deep conviction in the moral superiority of US values and way of life and an ardent and seemingly uncompromising anti-Communist worldview. In this respect, Reagan's ideological predispositions and rhetorical style represented a significant departure from the moderate, even tamed leadership of Jimmy Carter.

While Carter talked about a 'crisis of the American spirit', warning that 'a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worst than the past',[8] Reagan would forcibly push back against this general sense of decline. Exonerating the American people, Reagan placed the blame on detached political elites, thereby introducing a new strand of populist politics in the United States that continues to hold sway today. 'Government is not the solution to our problem, it is the problem',[9] Reagan famously declared during his inaugural address in 1981, a statement that in itself represents a vivid representation of Reagan's ideological predispositions. The 'American dream lives'—Reagan exclaimed in a later speech from 1983—'as long as that dream lives, as long as we continue to defend it, America has a future, and all mankind has reason to hope'.[10]

Countering America's perceived sense of decline, creeping isolationism and tendency for self-criticism became the top priorities of the new administration. 'There was indeed a sense of pessimism in the US' on the eve of the 1980 election, recalled Nicolas Veliotes. The economy was suffering from massive inflation and rising energy costs, the civil rights movement and 'culture wars' were leading to mounting social tensions in many US cities and the humiliating defeats in Vietnam and Iran were very much present in the collective mind of US society. 'It was easy to take advantage of this [pessimism] to claim weakness in national security policy', added the former Ambassador to Jordan and Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East in the early years of the Reagan administration.[11]

Reagan and his team therefore quickly worked to distance their administration from Carter's legacy. Human rights and efforts to restrict arms sales were used by the Reagan campaign to accuse the Democratic administration of abandoning US allies, starting from the Shah in Iran who was overthrown in 1979, but also including South Africa, El Salvador and Pakistan to name but a few. In this regard, Reagan's electoral victory came to symbolize a mighty return of the globalist framework in US foreign policy. Regional conflicts and challenges were either ignored or considered in zero-sum terms, in light of their potential to alter the strategic and military balance between the US and the Soviet Union.

Reagan's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, would outline the new administration's policy in his first press conference following the election. On 29 January 1981, Haig declared to the media that 'international terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern'[12], further expressing his view that the Soviet Union was itself the major sponsor of international terrorism. In support of these claims, the Reagan administration would champion the recent work of investigative journalist Clair Starling, who

[8] APP, "Jimmy Carter. Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals: 'The Malaise Speech'," 15 July 1979, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/carter-crisis/.
[9] APP, "Ronald Reagan. Inaugural Address," 20 January 1981, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130.
[10] RRPL, "Ronald Reagan: Remarks at the Annual Washington Conference of the American Legion," 22 February 1983, https://www.reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1983/22283b.htm.
[11] Interview, Nicolas Veliotes, op.cit.
[12] Philip Taubman, "US Tries to Back Up Haig on Terrorism," *NYT*, 3 May 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/03/world/us-tries-to-back-up-haig-on-terrorism.html?pagewanted=all.

in 1981 published *The Terror Network* in which she outlined the role of the Soviet Union in sponsoring the activities of various left-wing movements across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.[13] Using these claims to justify its criticism of détente and arms negotiations with the Soviets, the Reagan campaign and administration would assail Carter for lacking resolve in foreign policy. In one campaign speech in 1980, Reagan would criticise the Carter administration as 'still guided by that same old doctrine that we have nothing to fear from the Soviets—if we just don't provoke them'[14].

Military strength, in both its offensive and deterrent capacity, became the central driving feature of the Reagan administration. Increasing military budgets and employing tough rhetoric in public pronouncements on the Soviet Union also represented an easily quantifiable means to evidence Reagan's departure from the past. 'We should do more', said Alexander Haig during one early NSC meeting where arms sales to Saudi Arabia were discussed, 'we do not want to appear to be merely rubber stamping a Carter policy'.[15] In another early meeting of the NSC, Reagan expressed his opinion that 'we must change the attitude of our diplomatic corps so that we don't bring down governments in the name of human rights. None of them is as guilty of human rights violations than Cuba and the USSR. We don't throw out our friends just because they can't pass the "saliva test" on human rights. […] we need people who recognize that philosophy'.[16]

It was precisely this 'new' philosophy that came to represent the defining feature of the so-called 'Reagan revolution'. 'We certainly changed philosophies', noted former US Ambassador Thomas Pickering in his oral history interview, 'there was a deeply different group coming in'.[17] Significantly, this philosophy was not limited to the more extreme, conservative strands of American society but also included the moderate wings of the Republican Party as well as an increasing number of disillusioned former Democratic voters. 'They were ideologically predisposed but most of them on a particular issue or two not in what one would call a general theory', added the former US ambassador to Jordan, El Salvador, Israel and the United Nations.[18]

This new political coalition would coalesce around the Reagan campaign team, united by Reagan's promise for a radical break from the past and a revived emphasis on military strength abroad as a tool to boost feelings of national pride at home. Announcing an end to America's policy of détente, the Reagan administration promised to revive America's military and return to offensively block Soviet moves in the Third World. 'Détente—isn't that what a farmer has with his turkey until Thanksgiving Day?' Reagan

[13] Clair Sterling, *The Terror Network. The Secret War of International Terrorism,* New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981.
[14] APP, "Ronald Reagan. Address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Chicago," 18 August 1980, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85202.
[15] RRPL, Executive Secretariat: NSC Meeting Files, NSC 00003 2/18/1981.
[16] RRPL, Executive Secretariat: NSC Meeting Files, NSC 00001 2/06/1981.
[17] Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, "Ambassador Thomas Reeve Pickering," Initial Interview Date: 1 April 2003, Copyright 2017, p.150-1. https://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Pickering-Thomas-Reeve-1.pdf.
[18] Ibid.

famously pronounced in a 1978 radio address.[19] 'America has never gotten into a war because we were too strong', Reagan noted during a televised presidential debate with Jimmy Carter on 23 October 1980. As the 'leader of the Free World' American carries the 'burden of maintaining the peace' added the Republican candidate; 'to maintain that peace requires strength'.[20]

While 'kicking the malaise' became an effective slogan to evidence Reagan's domestic priorities—particularly in the realm of economic policy and efforts to curtail inflation—'peace through strength' came to represent the Reagan administration's underlying conception of US foreign policy. The essence of both these slogans related to their ability to synthesize the Reagan administration's priorities, a means to evidence the extent of his departure from Jimmy Carter and transmit a renewed sense of pride in the US's 'divine mission' on the world stage. The deeper psychological and ideological significance of these two slogans and their related emphasis on the interplay between domestic and foreign policy were never far from the surface during the 1980s.[21]

Another theme that united the disparate elements present within the Reagan administration was support for Israel. During the Carter-Reagan campaign, US support for Israel became an important wedge issue in the election. US policymakers and intellectuals who were calling for an increase in US military budgets came to consider Israel, and its network of Jewish-American supporters in the United States, as valuable allies to drive home their policy objectives. By embracing increased support for Israel, these personalities knew they would increase domestic support for their recommendations, while at the same time ensuring that US military industries expand to meet the increased demands for weapons and military aid.[22]

In many respects this was the birth of a new and more consolidated 'alliance of convenience' between ardent, and ideologically driven Cold War hawks, Jewish-American supporters in the United States, and the right-wing Likud government in Israel. This alliance began to emerge during the Nixon years[23] and was also grounded in the growing support of conservative evangelical Christian communities in the US and would gradually transform the 'new' Republican Party into an ardently pro-Israel, and pro-Likud, political force in the US.[24]

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[19] Michale Kramer, "When Reagan Spoke from the Heart," *New York Magazine*, 21 July 1980, p.21.
[20] Commission on Presidential Debates, "The Carter-Reagan Presidential Debate," October 28, 1980", http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-28-1980-debate-transcript.
[21] During the 1984 GOP convention, Richard Darman, a senior aid to Reagan's campaign team summarized their election strategy: 'We should continue to lay claim to the future', paint Ronald Reagan as 'the personification of all that is right with, or heroized by, America. Leave [Democratic candidate Walter] Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself—where a vote against Reagan is, in some subliminal sense, a vote against a mythic "AMERICA".' Quoted in, Jane Blankenship and Janette K. Muir, "The Transformation of Actor to Scene: Some Strategic Grounds of the Reagan Legacy," in Michael Weiler and W. Barnett Pearce (eds.), *Reagan and Public Discourse in America*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2006, pp.135-162, p.146 (quote).
[22] See for instance, Edward Luttwak, "Why We Need More 'Waste, Fraud, and Mismanagement' in the Pentagon," *Commentary Magazine* 73, February 1982.
[23] Noam Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel: Forging a Conservative Partnership*, New York, NY State University Press (Sunny Series in Israeli Studies), 2009.
[24] See for instance, Donald Wagner, "Evangelicals and Israel: Theological Roots of a Political Alliance," *The Christian Century*, November 1998,pp.1020-26; Ibid, "Reagan and Begin, Bibi and Jerry: The Theopolitical Alliance of the Likud Party with the

As noted by American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Reagan's electoral victory 'represented a mighty comeback of messianism in foreign policy'.[25] In this sense, the 1980 Carter-Reagan election can be described as a manifestation of the classical pendulum swing in US politics. This moves between periods of relative retrenchment, often characterized by inward-looking feelings of self-criticism and doubt, to a reinvigorated sense of pride and confidence in the universal appeal of US values and political institutions, beliefs employed to justify a more ideologically driven and proactive foreign policy.

Reagan's election therefore did herald a significant revolution in style, rhetoric and ideology. In terms of its impact on US policy, however, it is important to stress that much of this 'revolution' was in actuality restricted to changes in focus, emphasis and resources. Indeed, when it came to US foreign policy, particularly in the greater Middle East, rather than a 'revolution', Reagan's approach represented more of an 'evolution'[26] from that implemented by the Carter administration during its final years in office. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it was Carter that began laying the groundwork for a militarized turn in American foreign policy in the Middle East, a strategy that was then inherited and considerably expanded by the Reagan administration during the 1980s.

This 'evolution' was driven in the first instance by money, with Reagan ordering an across-the-board increase in the US defence budget, but more fundamentally reflected the rise of a new generation of advisors who shared Reagan's ideological drive and were united in viewing military strength abroad as a function of the administration's broader psychological, economic and political objectives at the domestic level. This political coalition formed gradually, throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, a time that coincided with the formation of Reagan's political career. In order to capture the essence of Reagan's ideological 'revolution', and in turn examine its impact on US foreign policy, it is therefore important to look back to the gradual emergence of this new coalition, identifying its central elements and pull factors while contextualizing them into the broader socio-political, economic and demographic trends occurring in US society in the run-up to Reagan's election.

3.2 Political Coalition and Philosophy

Campaigning on a platform that promised a radical break from the past, the Reagan administration was quickly confronted with a series of institutional and structural constraints that would limit the reach of Reagan's promised 'revolution' in US politics, both foreign and domestic. As has traditionally been the

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Christian 'Right'," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.4 (Fall), pp. 33-51; Tevi Troy, "How the GOP Went Zionist," *Commentary Magazine*, 1 December 2015, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/gop-went-zionist/.

[25] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles of American History*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986, p.55.

[26] In this respect, the thesis embraces Mattia Toaldo's description of the 'Reagan Revolution', understood as a 'profound change in [political] coalitions and ideas, whereas in actual policies it is probably wiser to say that there was an "evolution" from the last years of the Carter administration.' Ibid, *The Origins of the War on Terror. Lebanon, Libya and American intervention in the Middle East,* New York, Routledge, 2012, p.17.

case in American history, rigid ideological convictions and populist rhetoric clash with structural and bureaucratic constraints on executive agency and the vast responsibilities associated with being a superpower on the world stage. These dynamics can in turn help to explain the US's deeply engrained tradition of pragmatic realism, a tendency that has allowed the US to pursue broad, at times contradictory variations in policy depending on the precise context, personalities and objectives involved.

Setting aside the often-constructed depiction of Reagan as a die-hard conservative, the Reagan administration was no exception to this general US tradition, contributing to a more accurate description of Reagan as a 'pragmatic ideologue',[27] willing and able to compromise on his ideals on the basis of political or tactical necessity.

The composition of the Reagan administration, which included Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and moderates, ideologues and realists, was itself proof of the president's embrace of pragmatic realism. This allowed Reagan, differently from other ideologically driven yet unsuccessful presidential hopefuls such as Republican Barry Goldwater or Democrat Henry 'Scoop' Jackson, to reach out and create a broad coalition of political support. After vehemently criticizing established elites from both parties, Reagan would reach an accommodation with the more moderate wings of the Republican Party, while also cultivating important Democratic constituencies throughout its time in office. Reagan 'held ideological beliefs but was pragmatic enough to apply those beliefs selectively',[28] noted Charles A. Hantz in his study of Reagan's worldview.

In summarizing Reagan's political philosophy, John L. Palmer and Isabel V. Sawhill have written that Reagan 'combines the libertarian's distrust of government in the economic sphere with a more traditionally conservative belief in moral absolutes and in the need for a strong defence against external threats'. His philosophy rested on a premise that 'economic growth will flow from the inherent entrepreneurial spirit and enterprise of the American people; that social problems can be largely solved by church, family and neighbourhood; that freedom is our greatest national asset; and that its protection requires, above all, military strength'.[29]

This philosophy represented an amalgamation of various trends and approaches that had been developing in American society since at least the late 1960s. Its central defining elements related to the conservative Jacksonian tradition, but in line with Reagan's underlying pragmatism, the administration would eventually tame these more extreme tendencies.[30] This would allow for a degree of contradictions

[27] Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years*, New York, Columbia University Press, 200, pp.29-59.
[28] Charles A. Hantz, "Ideology, Pragmatism and Ronald Reagan's World View: Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.4 (Fall), 1996, pp.942-49, p.946.
[29] John L. Palmer and Isabel V. Sawhill, *The Reagan Record*, Cambridge, Ballinger Publishing, 1984, pp.1-23, p.2 (quote).
[30] As noted by Walter Russell Mead, 'Jacksonian tradition is embraced by large numbers of people who know very little about the wider world in which the United States finds itself. Jacksonian political philosophy is often an instinct rather than an ideology, a

between Reagan's Jacksonian base and the advice coming from his more moderate GOP advisors and the ideologically driven neoconservatives that made up his team. Indeed, joining the Jacksonian undertones of the Reagan administration was also an underlying attachment to the Jeffersonian tradition and emphasis on American exceptionalism, the political-ideological superiority of American values and a more ardent internationalist vocation that aimed to expand and promote American values of freedom and democracy.[31]

Reagan's political career was launched by his 1964 'A Time for Choosing' speech in support of Republican Senator Barry Goldwater's controversial bid for the presidency against Lyndon B. Johnson. This event was followed two years later by Reagan's successful election as Governor of California. A long-standing Democratic Party stronghold where 'Democrats outnumbered Republicans almost five to three',[32] Reagan's 1966 election as Governor of California was in itself a reflection of wider demographic, social and political changes in the US. These socio-political trends reflected the slow fraying of the liberal coalition that had underpinned Democratic support for a growing federal budget needed to expand on the New Deal policies of the past. On the other hand, they reflected the emergence of a new constituency of Republican politicians who gradually scaled the ranks of the party to emerge as contenders against the more moderate, at times isolationist but domestically liberal wing of the Great Old Party (GOP).

These more traditional Republican elites were centred in the affluent North-western states and are sometimes labelled 'Rockefeller Republicans'. The first challenge to this established elite came precisely from Barry Goldwater's bid for the presidency, pitting the so-called 'Goldwater Republicans' against their Rockefeller rivals. As noted by Republican Senator John McCain, who effectively succeeded Goldwater as Senator of Arizona, Goldwater's unsuccessful bid for the presidency helped transform 'the Republican Party from an Eastern elitist organization into the breeding ground for the election of Ronald Reagan'.[33]

On the other side of the political aisle, Reagan would cultivate important political backing from former supporters of the Democratic Party, particularly a group of liberal intellectuals who had grown disillusioned by their party's anti-war slant and growing reluctance to offensively confront the Soviet Union. Like Reagan, these individuals longed for the more proactive foreign policies implemented by the early leaders of the Democratic Party. It was these early leaders who had launched the global Cold War by moving to embrace a more offensive policy of containment in the late 1940s and early 1950s, leading to the US intervention in Korea in June 1950.

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culturally shaped outlook that the individual may not have worked out intellectually, a set of beliefs and emotions rather than a set of ideas.' Mead, *Special Providence*, op.cit., p.244 (quote), pp.218-64.

[31] Ibid., p.212-20.

[32] Gil Troy, *The Reagan Revolution. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp.12-18, p.18 (quote).

[33] Lloyd Grove, "Barry Goldwater's Left Turn," *The Washington Post*, 28 July 1994, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/may98/goldwater072894.htm.

In this respect, some authors have compared Reagan's election to that of Kennedy in the early 1960s. Gil Troy has described Reagan as the 'conservative Kennedy, charismatic enough for the masses, ideological enough for the partisans and intellectuals'.[34] His greatest achievement according to Troy laid in 'reviving—and transforming—American nationalism',[35] uniting the many strands of US conservatism into a cohesive political movement that would catapult Reagan into power in 1980. Kennedy's election, like that of Reagan, also represented another example of the pendulum swing in US politics.

Reagan and Kennedy were both catapulted into power following a popular wave of perceived decline, particularly in terms of military capabilities and an actual or exaggerated fear of the Soviet's mounting strength. While Kennedy would employ dubious evidence of an impending 'missile gap' to attack the previous administration for being weak on defence, Reagan would use similar language emphasising a so-called 'window of vulnerability' vis-à-vis Soviet capabilities. As noted by Nicholas Veliotes, 'just because something is not true does not mean it cannot be effective politically, […] there is the usual desire of the opposition to be perceived as bringing new policies to the table to overcome real or imagined problems or alleged weaknesses of its predecessors'.[36]

Reagan himself had cited Kennedy, together with other early leaders of the Democratic Party, as important sources of inspiration for his entry into politics. A registered Democrat for most of his adult life, Reagan switched parties in 1962, slowly emerging as the standard bearer of a new strand of US conservatism and the living symbol of a growing generation of Democrats who had grown alienated from their party. 'I was a Democrat once […] but in those days, the leaders of the Democratic Party weren't in that 'blame America first' crowd', exclaimed Reagan in a 1984 campaign speech; 'its leaders were men like Harry Truman, Senator [Henry] Scoop Jackson, John F. Kennedy—men who understood the challenges of the times'.[37]

Alienated Democrats would become an important source of support for the administration. Mostly made up of white male blue-collar workers from the Northern and Midwestern states, these individuals would gradually become known as 'Reagan Democrats', joining the future president in championing a more ideologically driven and militarized foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and its allies. These 'Reagan Democrats' would combine with a revitalized conservative strand in the South, where religion, opposition to big government, workers unions and a greater focus on 'family values' created a strong basis of support for Reagan's political rise. 'A conservative trend had been developing for at least thirty years before it propelled Reagan into office in 1980' wrote Alexander Haig in his memoirs.[38] Other authors have echoed

[34] Troy, *The Reagan Revolution*, op.cit., p.17.
[35] Ibid., p.XVI.
[36] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[37] APP, "Ronald Reagan. Remarks at a Reagan-Bush Rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin," 3 November 1984, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=39376.
[38] Alexander Haig Jr., *Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy*, New York, Macmillan,1984, p.21.

this depiction. In his 2014 study *The Invisible Bridge*, Rick Perlstein noted how Reagan's electoral victory could be described as a continuation—and indeed a considerable expansion—of Richard Nixon's 'southern strategy' focused on attracting the so-called Sun Belt states into Republican ranks.[39]

Further elements of support came from the so-called Christian right and the emerging alliance with southern evangelical Christian communities who were united in their opposition to the Democrats' support for abortion and growing debates on gay rights and 'family values'. Reagan's alliance with the Moral Majority movement led by Southern Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell would help the Republican Party's 'southern strategy', enhancing political support for Reagan's election from the so-called Bible Belt states of the United States.

In November 1980, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin awarded Falwell the Jabotinsky medal in recognition for his support for Israel, the first time such an award was given to a non-Jew. Falwell's support for Israel stemmed from the evangelical Christian's attachment to the Holy Land and represented a growing identification between conservative trends in the US and Israel's right-wing Likud Party. Falwell would not disappoint Israel. 'America's Bible belt, is Israel's safety belt',[40] exclaimed the pastor in one 2003 interview. During a speech in Israel in the early 1980s, Falwell went further, declaring: 'the day is coming when no candidate will be elected in the United States who is not pro-Israel'.[41]

The greatest success of the so-called 'Reagan Revolution' therefore rests in the former president's ability to unite various strands of American conservatism together with a new breed of former Democratic voters who shared Reagan's ideologically driven sense of mission on the world stage. Uniting traditional Republican moderates—such as James Baker III; George Shultz; Caspar Weinberger; and George H. W. Bush—with more ideologically driven Cold War hawks that became known the neoconservative wing of the GOP, would allow for a considerable boost in electoral support for the administration. Chief among these neoconservatives was Reagan's pick for UN Ambassador, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, who shared Reagan's views on downgrading America's focus on human rights and cooperating with autocratic regimes to advance US interests in the Cold War.[42]

Following Kirkpatrick were a number of officials who had coalesced around Democratic Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson during the 1970s. A US Congressman and later Senator from the State of Washington, Henry Jackson was among the few Democratic Senators supportive of the Vietnam War, convinced about the need to employ US economic and military assets to remake the world in America's image.

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[39] Rick Perlstein, *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2014.
[40] Craig Horowitz, "Israel's Christian Soldiers," *New York Magazine*, 29 September 2003, http://nymag.com/nymetro/news/religion/features/n_9255/.
[41] Quoted in, Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out. People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby*, WestPoint, Lawrence Hill, 1985, p.244.
[42] Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary Magazine*, 1 November 1979, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/dictatorships-double-standards/.

Described as the 'patron saint of the neoconservatives',[43] many of Jackson's most successful aids—including Richard Pipes, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams and Douglas Feith—would form a core group of neoconservative policymakers in both the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations. From their new positions of influence, these individuals worked tirelessly to carry forth an ideologically driven sense of America's role in the world and related embrace of a sort of US '*mission civilisatrice*' on a global scale.

Another important thread uniting these former Democratic officials to the Reagan administration was shared support for Israel, both as an ideological, military and political ally in the Cold War and as a kind of Western-liberal outpost in a strategically vital region of the world. As noted by Nicholas Veliotis: 'the Neo-cons had a second agenda, aside from looking to strengthen American defences and project an image of strength, they had an "Israeli agenda". Indeed, they believed that one of the ways to strengthen the US was through Israel. They saw Israel as a "strategic asset" in this way. This was against all odds of reality. There was no true strategic basis to this description of Israel'.[44]

United by a conviction that Soviet capabilities had been purposely underestimated, these individuals had campaigned hard during the 1970s in an effort to convince American political elites and broader society to again embrace a militarized foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. This activism was to form the intellectual foundation of Reagan's foreign policy. In this context, it was the neoconservative wing of the Reagan administration that introduced many of the founding elements of the Reagan Doctrine's support for anti-revolutionary groups in the Third World, and a more general embrace of 'peace through strength', as the guiding principle of Reagan's approach to foreign policy.

3.3 Foreign Policy: 'Peace through Strength'

The intellectual foundations of Reagan's militarized turn in foreign policy therefore reflected the culmination of a series of socio-political trends in the United States. Just like Reagan's warning about a 'margin of vulnerability' represented a rehashing of Kennedy's focus on a 'missile gap', so did Reagan's emphasis on 'peace through strength' grow out of the gradual emergence of a new constituency of experts and concerned citizens who had long been clamouring against a supposed erosion of the US's strategic posture on the world stage.

The roots of this new political coalition can be traced back to the mid-1970s, when increasing numbers of political elites from both parties reacted to the emergence of a new isolationist trend in US politics that followed the disastrous wars in South-East Asia and the Watergate scandal. These events resulted in the

[43] Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans,* op.cit., p.114.
[44] Interview, Nicolas Veliotis, op.cit.

spread of anti-war protests across America and a considerable expansion of legislative 'checks and balances' on executive agency. Meant to rein in the so-called 'Imperial Presidency', Congress's increased oversight powers worried many Cold War hawks. These would organize into public committees that aimed to awaken elites and wider society to the impending threat of increased Soviet capabilities, what Reagan would call the growing 'margin of vulnerability'.

The Vietnam syndrome and the series of laws enacted by Congress to restrain the presidency's authority to deploy military forces were to emerge as considerable constraints on the Reagan administration's promised 'revolution' in foreign policy. In itself this can also explain the above label of 'evolution' as opposed to 'revolution' applied to the foreign policy of the Reagan administration. The 1973 War Powers Resolution, requiring that a US president receive approval from Congress before dispatching US troops into military operations, represents a first example of the rising influence of domestic and bureaucratic constraints on executive agency. The joint resolution also included an important clause that could impose a 60-day time limit on the use of US troops in the event that Congress refused to approve the continuation of military action.[45]

In addition to the War Powers act, another legislative constrain is given by the 1976 Clark Amendment to the US Arms Export Control Act. This effectively prevented the US government from sending military aid to UNITA rebels fighting the MPLA, the Marxist Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. Documents from the Reagan administration reveal how the new president and his cabinet were frustrated by these legislative impediments. In one early meeting of the NSC in February 1981, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David C. Jones, lamented how 'we cannot send more than six [military] advisors into a country without congressional approval. The law ties our hands.' During the same meeting, the newly appointed CIA Director and close friend of president Reagan, William J. Casey, called on the administration to 'seek the repeal of the Clark Amendment'[46] in order for the United States to send Cuba and the USSR a stern message of strength in Africa.

The Clark Amendment was ultimately repealed in 1985, but Congress would pass further restrictions that touched on a signature Reagan policy priority; support for the Contra rebels intent on overthrowing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. These legislative actions took place between 1982 and 1984 and are known collectively as the Boland Amendments. The significance of these legislative restrictions would have been credited with pushing US policy into the covert domain, planting the seeds for the Iran-Contra scandal, in which Reagan and his advisors, with Israeli support, diverted funds from the sale of weapons

[45] The Law Library of Congress, "War Powers", Legal Reports, Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/war-powers.php.
[46] RRPL, Executive Secretariat: NSC Meeting Files, NSC 00001 2/06/1981.

to Iran to continue supporting the anti-Sandinista civil war in Nicaragua in defiance of congressional bans.[47]

In its efforts to overturn congressional and societal opposition to a more militarized foreign policy, the Reagan team drew important backing from a series of expert committees and newly strengthened policy research centres founded throughout the 1970s. Chief among these was the conservative Heritage Foundation, founded in 1973 in Washington DC. In 1980, the foundation published its 'Mandate for Leadership' containing over 2,000 policy recommendations for the next administration, covering everything from domestic and economic policy to defence spending and new military technologies. The document was described in the press as 'a blueprint for grabbing the government by its frayed New Deal lapels and shaking out 48 years of liberal policy'.[48] Over 60% of the 2,000 recommendations were adopted by the Reagan administration, with the president reportedly distributing copies of the document to all of his cabinet members.[49]

Other research centres that would hold influence over US policy, particularly in the US-Israel security domain, would include the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), founded in 1976, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), founded in 1985, as well as AIPAC, which in the 1980s increased funds and personnel dedicated to public diplomacy and detailed research studies on US-Israel relations in many domains.[50] AIPAC's budget grew from around $300,000 in 1973, to $1.4 billion in 1980 and $1.8 billion in 1981. Meanwhile, registered contributors grew from 9,000 households in 1980 to 55,000 in 1987.[51]

Working with or supporting the activities of JINSA and other research centres, were a number of influential individuals who played important roles in the Reagan administration, including Michael Ledeen—a neoconservative intellectual and former executive director of JINSA who together with investigative journalist Clair Sterling was influential in concocting the theory that the Soviet Union was behind the 1981 assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II[52]—Howard Teicher, who served on

[47] Malcolm Byrne, *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power*, University Press of Kansas, 2014.
[48] Andrew Blasko, "Reagan and Heritage: A Unique Partnership," *Commentary*, The Heritage Foundation, 7 June 2004, http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2004/06/reagan-and-heritage-a-unique-partnership; Trevi Troy, "The Dilemma of the DC Think Tank," *The Atlantic*, 19 December 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/presidents-and-think-tanks/548765/.
[49] Molly Ball, "The Fall of the Heritage Foundation and the Death of Republican Ideas," *The Atlantic*, 25 September 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/09/the-fall-of-the-heritage-foundation-and-the-death-of-republican-ideas/279955/.
[50] See, AIPAC Papers on US-Israel Relations, a special series of 14 studies published throughout the 1980s.
[51] Wolf Blitzer, "The AIPAC Formula," *Moment Magazine*, November 1981; David K. Shipler, "On Middle East Policy, A Major Influence," *NYT*, 6 July 1987, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/06/world/on-middle-east-policy-a-major-influence.html. For a detailed account of the Israel Lobby in the 1980s see, Thomas, *American Policy Towards Israel,* op.cit.
[52] In 2002, Jonah Goldberg coined the term "Ledeen doctrine", which he described, quoting from a Ledeen speech, as follows: 'Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business.' See, ibid, "Baghdad Delenda Est, Part Two, *The National Review,* 23 April 2002, https://www.nationalreview.com/2002/04/baghdad-delenda-est-part-two-jonah-goldberg/; Also see, Jessica T. Mathews, "What

Reagan's NSC, and Eugene V. Rostow, former undersecretary of state under Lyndon B. Johnson. Rostow, who signed the founding document of the JINSA[53], was a highly important figure in articulating a legal rational opposing the contention that the Geneva Convention applied to the OPT.

Eugene Rostow was also a founding member of the revitalized Committee on Present Danger (CPD) in 1976. Formed by a group of intellectuals, policy makers and academics, the 1976 CPD was a reincarnation of a previous Committee formed in 1950 to organize and promote public support for Truman's embrace of proactive 'containment' of the Soviet Union. After being disbanded in 1953, the CPD was reorganized in 1976, again uniting a number of concerned private citizens, ex-government officials and academics to warn about the impending Soviet threat.

The revitalized CPD included both Democrats and Republicans, and was convened on behest of Rostow, then director of the Coalition for Democratic Majority (CDM). Described as a 'group of Democratic Party hawks who objected to the increasing influence of progressives and anti-war activists within the party', the CDM had close ties to Democratic Senator Henry Jackson and 13 out of its 18 members, including Jeane Kirkpatrick, would follow Rostow into the CPD.[54] Ronald Reagan was himself a member of the 1976 CPD. By 1988, a total of 50 members of the CPD had served in Reagan's national security apparatus, including his first National Security Advisor, Richard Allen; UN Ambassador, Jeane Kirkpatrick; CIA Director, William J. Casey; and Secretary of the Navy, John F. Lehman, who had previously advised AIPAC and would emerge as among the most prominent supporters of enhanced US-Israeli strategic cooperation in the 1980s.[55]

Other influential personalities that joined the Reagan team and were associated with the work of the CPD were a group of individuals who had drafted a controversial national security estimate of Soviet military capabilities in 1976, shortly before the founding of the CPD. Known as the 'Team B' report, a group of hawkish outside experts were invited by President Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush, at the time director of the CIA, to complete an outside review of Soviet military and strategic capabilities.[56] Driven by an underlying belief that US intelligence agencies had underestimated Soviet capabilities, the Team B report would later be cited as justifications for a massive increase in military spending and more aggressive foreign policy against the Soviet Union.

Trump is Throwing Out the Window," *The New York Review of Books [NRRB]*, 9 February 2917, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/02/09/what-trump-is-throwing-out-the-window/.

[53] Thomas, *American Policy*, op.cit.,p.34-9.

[54] Tom Barry, "US: Danger, Danger Everywhere," *Asia Times*, 23 June 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/HF23Aa01.html.

[55] David Shribman, "Group Goes from Exile to Influence," *NYT*, 23 November 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/23/us/group-goes-from-exile-to-influence.html?pagewanted=all; Blitzer, "The AIPAC Formula," op.cit.

[56] See, "Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis. Soviet Strategic Objectives. An Alternative View," Report of Team 'B', Georgetown National Archives, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB139/nitze10.pdf.

Leading experts who had worked on drafting the report—including the 'team leader' Richard Pipes and Paul Wolfowitz, a member of the Pentagon's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the time—would hold key roles in the Reagan administration. As noted by Tom Barry, these personalities 'shaped the ideological foundation and new directions of the Reagan administration's foreign policy, including its rollback strategies, anti-multilateralism, tactical human-rights policies, democratization programs and the consolidation of the US-Israel strategic alliance through close ties with Likud party hardliners'.[57]

The underlying emphasis on 'peace through strength' was clearly visible in the work of these committee groups. Their alliance with corporate America, ideological Cold War hawks, pro-Israel supporters and the large US arms industry, did much to influence US policy during the 1980s. Among their chief objectives was to overcome the Vietnam Syndrome. Détente had to be replaced up by a menacing conventional deterrence capacity backed up by offensive prodding of the enemy through covert action in areas of the Third World. The authors of the Team B report took particular issue with the declining readiness of US forces. The report criticized intelligence agencies for having a 'tendency to view deterrence as an alternative to a war-fighting capability rather than complimentary to it'.[58]

Their recommendations and public relations activism in the media and universities sat well with Reagan's own objectives. Together they worked to sensitize US society to the need for renewed spending on the military and a restored resolve in confronting the Soviet Union. 'We must not resign ourselves to life as a second-rate power, tempting aggression with our weakness'—stated President Reagan in a 1982 speech—'America has never gotten into a war because it was too strong. We must rebuild our defenses and secure our freedom so that once again America will be second to none in the world'.[59]

These pronouncements were in perfect synergy with the activities of the CPD and the Team B report, and it is no coincidence that many influential members, including the president himself, came to occupy central roles in carrying forth the so-called Reagan revolution. Corporate America and the military-industrial complex stood to profit enormously, as would Israel, its ruling right-wing Likud Party and the networks of organized Jewish-American groups in the United States.

In foreign policy, the testing ground for the Reagan administration's militarized approach to offensive deterrence was the greater Middle East. Together with Central America, these regions quickly became the battleground for the Second Cold War. From Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Persian Gulf and Libya, Lebanon and Syria, the US quickly found itself involved with direct military force in many Middle Eastern settings. The 1980s would thus symbolize a mighty return of the globalist zero-sum framework in US

[57] Barry, "US: Danger," op.cit.
[58] Team B Report, op.cit., p.8.
[59] APP, "Ronald Reagan. Remarks at a Rally for Senator Malcolm Wallop in Cheyenne, Wyoming," 2 March 1982, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=42226.

foreign policy thinking. Localized problems were either ignored or viewed through an east-west prism. All in all, these heightened threat perceptions and increased 'messianism' in the US's approach to foreign policy would propel the United States into a 'Second Coming' to the Middle East.

Conclusion

The 'Reagan revolution' was real and its impact far reaching. Independently from the still raging debate regarding Reagan's leadership style, the chapter has focused on the deeper level of the Reagan administration's legacy; examining its ideological and political components while highlighting their important impact on US foreign policy during the 1980s.

In both foreign and domestic politics, Reagan would symbolize a radical break with the past. The ideological reverberations of the Reagan revolution were felt well beyond America's borders. From the global confrontation with the Soviet Union to the emerging international financial system, the 'Age of Reagan' has had far ranging implications for the post-Cold War international system. While it is correct to describe Reagan's impact on US foreign policy as an 'evolution' from that of the last years of the Carter administration—especially in terms of expanding on Carter's initial focus on the Persian Gulf and working to enhance direct US military capabilities in the Middle East—the ideological predispositions of the Reagan team, combined with the more general sense of 'malaise' and decline associated with the late 1970s would overshadow these important dimensions of continuity from the final years of Carter.

Reagan's fiery rhetoric and the significant personnel changes would facilitate this impression of a radical break from the past. As was noted above, however, a careful scrutiny of the issues shows how the primary elements of this 'revolution' were a shift in focus (embracing the globalist east-west prism), emphasis (away from localized issues such as human rights or restricting arms sales) and resources (most notably in Reagan's comprehensive increase in military budgets). The combination of these three dimensions, and their successful implementation, would earn the president his reputation for successfully positioning the United States to 'win' the Cold War.

Ultimately, however, it was Reagan's ability to form, and maintain, a broad and diverse coalition that represented the greatest ingredient for his success. This success was in turn derived from Reagan's pragmatism and openness to compromise, features of the Reagan presidency that are often overlooked in more partisan and ideologically motivated depictions of the actor turned president.

The Second Cold War and the global confrontation with the Soviet Union remained throughout the 1980s the primary prism applied to foreign policy. This return to zero-sum calculations, balance of power considerations and a related embrace of the doctrine of offensive deterrence would define the Reagan

administration's approach. Yet, the administration was quickly confronted with the harsh realities of institutional and bureaucratic constraints on executive agency. In 1980, the GOP had successfully secured a majority in the Senate for the first time since 1955. This dominance was largely lost following the 1982-midterm elections, when the Democratic Party gained an important majority in the US House of Representatives, from where it would enact a more efficient opposition to Reagan's priorities.[60]

The Vietnam syndrome continued to represent a formidable obstacle to Reagan's promised revolution in foreign policy. This reality, more than any other issue, was to impact the direction and articulation of US foreign action during the 1980s. As a result, the Reagan administration would move to seek reliable allies who could shoulder some of the burden of implementing Reagan's doctrine of offensive deterrence throughout the Third World. Military assistance programmes, combined with covert action, would therefore emerge as key instruments for the Reagan administration to overcome societal and congressional opposition.

Throughout the eight years of the Reagan administration, the White House would repeatedly sanction the direct use of force, particularly in small, contained settings that were thought to be 'easy wins' for the administration. In the Middle East these interventions spanned from the naval exercises off the coast of Libya in 1981, the dispatching of US troops to Lebanon in 1982, the enhanced US military presence in the Persian Gulf during the mid-to-late 1980s, including the 1987-8 US reflagging operation during the 'Tanker War', and the 1986 bombing strikes against Libya's Gheddafi. These interventions fit into a more general twin-pronged strategy and can in certain instances be related to what has been termed the 'Leeden Doctrine'.[61] On the one hand these actions were meant to signal a change of direction in the US's national security strategy, with the adoption of a more militarized and offensive deterrence doctrine in place of détente. On the other, it aimed to gradually (re)sensitize American society and political elites to the use of US military forces abroad.

These were small steps that aimed to overcome the disastrous legacies of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal and restore confidence in the US military and the office of the presidency. In these efforts, Israel and other US allies would emerge as important stakeholders in this return of 'messianism' in American foreign policy. The next chapter will zero-in to focus on Israel and the Middle East, examining the rationales behind Reagan's embrace of Israel as a 'strategic asset' in the Second Cold War and the implications of this gradual institutionalization of US-Israel strategic cooperation were to have on US strategic priorities in the Middle East and, specifically, on US efforts to increase leverage and influence over Israeli policy

[60] Steven R. Roberts, "Democrats Regain Control in House," *NYT*, 4 November 1982, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/11/04/us/democrats-regain-control-in-house.html.
[61] See Note 51. These military contingencies were limited to the greater Middle East, but other important actions also took place in Central America, Africa and South-East Asia. Most important among these were the US invasion of Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1988. All were part of what Fred Halliday has termed the 'Second Cold War' (1917-89).

Chapter 4

The Second Cold War in the Middle East: Strategic Outreach to Israel and the Arab states in the 1980s

The 1980s would herald something of a new beginning for US Middle East policy, a 'Second Coming' to the region that would see the United States lay the groundwork for an enhanced military presence in the Middle East for decades to come. Long considered of secondary importance compared to the strategic theatres of Europe and the Far East, the region was to become a major staging area for superpower competition during the 1980s and the 'Second Cold War'.

Between 1945 and 1980 the United States invoked direct military force in the region on only one occasion, in 1958 when President Eisenhower dispatched US marines to Lebanon to shore up the central government against the rising tide of Arab nationalism. During the eight years of the Reagan administration, US troops would engage in direct combat with no less than five Middle Eastern countries, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Indeed, as recently noted by Andrew J. Bacevich, 'from the end of World War II to 1980, virtually no American soldiers were killed in action while serving in the region. Within a decade, a great shift occurred. By 1990, virtually no American soldiers have been killed in action anywhere *except* in the Greater Middle East'.[1]

Called to react to a radically different strategic landscape as a result of the 1979 revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Reagan administration would inherit and significantly expand on Carter's national security strategy for the region. During the 1980s, US trainers and advisers flowed into the region, and in particular the strategically vital zone of the Persian Gulf, working to develop contingency plans, access agreements and basing rights to allow the US to directly project force into the region.

These efforts resulted in strong degrees of path dependency for future US policy, important for the understanding of subsequent US engagements, commitments and alliance frameworks in the broader Middle East in the post-Cold War era. Many of the central elements of these policies were formalized during the Reagan period, when the geostrategic map of the greater Middle East became consolidated. Indeed, the regional order that emerged from the 1979 revolution in Iran—the key transformative event for the region and harbinger of this American 'Second Coming' to the Middle East[2]—would remain largely unchanged until the 2003 US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, a new rupture with significant implications for the contemporary Middle East.

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[1] Andrew J. Bacevich, *America's War for the Greater Middle East*, New York, Random House, 2016, p.11 [emphasis original].
[2] David W. Lesch, *1979 The Year That Shaped the Modern Middle East,* Boulder, Westview Press, 2001.

Many of the key figures on the Middle Eastern chessboard were set during this period, as were the broad contours of the emerging US policy on terrorism, the consolidation of the US-Israeli, but also US-Saudi and US-Egyptian alliances and the growing animosity between the US, Syria and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Whether it be Lebanon and the formation of Hezbollah, the Gaza Strip and the emergence of Hamas, mounting Palestinian anger and disillusionment manifested in the first Intifada in 1987, the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from the Egyptian Sinai in 1982 or Israel's subsequent invasion and occupation of Lebanon that same year, key developments of the 1980s remain highly relevant today. Further east, in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, efforts to enhance regional cooperation among the US's Arab Gulf allies with the 1981 formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and, later, the formal establishment of CENTCOM in 1983, also implicate this decade as a crucial starting point for unwrapping the many complexities of the contemporary international relations of the Middle East.

Most significantly, the 1980s were formative in the development of the US's overall military-strategic approach to the region. From the US's response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent build-up of US military forces in Saudi Arabia in the context of the First Gulf War, all the way to the formation of Al-Qaeda or the ill-fated decision to invade Iraq in 2003, the origins of these policies, as well as their legal and theoretical justifications, can be traced to the late 1970s and, more so, the 1980s and the Reagan administration.[3]

Rather than providing a chronological analysis of the many developments, crises and interventions involving the US in the region during this period, this chapter will identify three broad priorities and three specific challenges facing US Middle East policy in the 1980s. By assessing the balance between priorities and challenges, the analysis will examine the decision-making processes in the Reagan administration vis-à-vis Israel and the Arab states during the 'Second Cold War'.

While Israel emerged as the chief benefactor of this US 'Second Coming' to the Middle East, the chapter will demonstrate how many of these agreements stemmed not from Israel's 'strategic value' but rather from a need to *compensate* Israel for the US's central strategic concern of the time: outreach towards the so-called 'moderate' Arab states, chief among them Saudi Arabia.

4.1 Strategic Priorities: The Middle East in the 1980s

Three broad priorities can be highlighted in US Middle East policy throughout the Reagan period. These retained a significant influence over the articulation of US policy during the eight years of the Reagan administration and can serve as general 'organizing principles' structuring the subsequent analysis while

[3] Toaldo, *The Origins of the US War*, op.cit., pp.155-66.

avoiding the morass of deep description inherent in chronological or purely historical accounts of the period.

The three priorities are:

- A solid return to the globalist, East-West prism as applied to regional and international developments in the context of the Second Cold War;
- The urgent need to develop enhanced military-strategic plans for the defence of the Persian Gulf based on strategic cooperation with key Arab allies, particularly Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan and Egypt;
- A parallel focus on upgrading strategic cooperation with Israel through enhanced efforts to overtly integrate it into the US's global alliance framework, including through close coordination and complementarity with NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean, a second strategic zone for the Reagan administration.

4.1.1 The Globalist Prism and the 'Second Cold War' (Priority 1)

The first key priority—what may also be described as a general conceptual framework for the Reagan administration—revolves around a solid return to the globalist prism applied to regional and international developments seen from Washington. The Soviet Union and its 'proxies' resumed precedence over all other issues and concerns.[4] Complex phenomena such as terrorism, Palestinian resistance, the Iran-Iraq war, developments in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Iran were all boiled down to their impact on the global distribution of power and influence between the two superpowers.

Sparked by the succession of events that rocked the greater Middle East (and the world) in the fateful year of 1979, the resurgence of the globalist prism rested in large part with the individuals staffing the Reagan administration. Foreign policy, and in particular the need to project an outward image of strength and resolve in international affairs, became an important function of the domestic, political and psychological objectives of the administration.

The implications of the 1979 events were by no means limited to the Middle East. The year is also recognized as the start of the 'Second Cold War', a period of heightened social, political and military tensions between the two superpowers that would lead to significant animosities across the Third World in general, and Latin America, Africa and the Middle East in particular.[5] The greater Middle East was therefore only one theatre in this heightened period of tensions, but one that would become a key testing

[4] Author Interview, Geoffrey Kemp, Washington DC, September 2015. Geoffrey Kemp served in the first Reagan administration as Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the NSC Staff.

[5] Fred Halliday coined the term 'Second Cold War'. Halliday noted the existence of 'four major phases into which post-1945 history can be divided. […] Phase I, the First Cold War, 1946-1953; Phase II, the period of Oscillatory Antagonism, 1953-1969; Phase III, Detente, 1969-1979; Phase IV, the Second Cold War, 1979 onwards'. Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War,* London, Verso Books,1986, p.3.

ground for the Reagan administration's embrace of the concepts of offensive deterrence, 'rollback' and 'peace through strength'.[6]

When it came to the Middle East, the primacy of the globalist prism would translate into an overturning of strategic priorities, the downgrading of regional disputes and a heightened focus on threats to the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. US 'national interests' in the region—protect Israel; ensure access to oil; and limit Soviet advances—remained unchanged. What changed was the balance between competing perceptions and ideological slants in Washington, leading to a different prioritization and sequencing of policies compared to the past.

The need to instil confidence among its Arab allies topped the list of strategic priorities for the administration. The loss of Iran as a major regional ally, coupled with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and followed by the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war, demonstrated the need for enhanced US preparedness in this strategic zone of the Middle East. Fear of an impending Soviet advance into Iran, which would put the USSR on the shores of the strategically vital Persian Gulf, threatening the global supply of oil as well as Saudi Arabia, America's oldest ally in the region, became a nightmare scenario for the US. Policymakers thus rushed to update Carter-era blueprints for the greater Middle East, contributing to the consolidation of a second key priority for the Reagan administration: defence of the Persian Gulf.

4.1.2 The Persian Gulf and US-Arab Strategic Cooperation (Priority 2)

The second central priority of US Middle East policy during the 1980s concerned the urgent need to enhance US strategic preparedness and military access to the Persian Gulf. In this respect, during the 1980s, US threat perceptions shifted from the Near East—the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict and a central concern of the Ford and Carter administrations—back to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, arguably America's original hook or pull factor in the 1930s Middle East.

It was to the Persian Gulf that US planners would dedicate the most resources in an effort to strengthen US capabilities, consolidate alliances and enhance the US's ability to directly project force into the area. And it was here that Reagan officials and planners reached a rare consensus on policy and the need for urgent action.[7] With the exception of the ill-fated US intervention in Lebanon (1982–84), accompanied by the unveiling of Reagan's largely forgotten 'Peace Plan' for the Palestinians in September 1982, this shift in focus to the Persian Gulf was sustained throughout the two terms of the Reagan administration.[8]

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[6] Interestingly, it was events *in* the region—and in particular the Iranian Revolution and subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—that are generally considered as 'sparks' for the Second Cold War, just as tensions in Iran and Azerbaijan in 1946 are credited with launching the Cold War. Fred Halliday, "The Great Powers and the Middle East," *Middle East Research and Information Project* (MERIP), Vol.18 (March/April), 1988, http://www.merip.org/mer/mer151/great-powers-middle-east.
[7] Interview, Geoffrey Kemp, op.cit.
[8] Other exceptions included the US's confrontations with Libya in 1981 and 1986.

The administration's drive to regain the strategic advantage and project an image of force vis-à-vis its adversaries did lead to growing military ties with key Arab allies of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Oman.[9] These states were deemed indispensable to mount a credible defence of the Persian Gulf and were complemented with major expansions of the US military base, port, airstrip and staging area located on the island of Diego Garcia deep in the Indian Ocean.[10]

The goal of obtaining permanent bases in the Arabian Peninsula resumed, yet Arab reluctance continued, leading US planners to place much emphasis on increased coordination and joint military exercises to reassure and strengthen Arab allies with aid, weapons and diplomatic-political support. The consensus within the administration on the need for an enhanced US presence in the Gulf reflects the fact that plans and contingencies for such efforts had been developed during the late Ford and Carter administrations.[11]

Following the 1979 Iranian revolution and the collapse of the US's 'twin pillar' policy of support for Iran and Saudi Arabia, in January 1980 Carter announced the 'Carter Doctrine' declaring the Persian Gulf a 'vital interest' and that America would not permit any 'outside force' to gain control of the area.[12] The announcement was followed in March 1980 by the formal establishment of a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) charged with emergency military interventions in the region and composed of a mixed force including elements from the US navy, marine and air force.[13] By May 1980, Brzezinski was calling for a 'unified command structure for the region; ground forces exercises in the region […]; more basing access (rear base in Egypt, forward basing in the Persian Gulf)' as well as 'institutionalized military and internal stability ties with Saudi Arabia'.[14]

With the election of Ronald Reagan and his entry into the White House on 20 January 1981, Carter's strategic blueprint for the region was considerably expanded. By 1983, the new administration had created a unified military command exclusively focused on the Middle East. The establishment of CENTCOM with its headquarters in Tampa, Florida, and modelled on the similar command centres such as EUCOM

[9] Further bases were secured in Kenya and Somalia. Oman became the first Arab country to grant the US access and use of its military facilities, on 4 June 1980. Joseph A. Kechichian, "The Sultanate of Oman and the US," in Robert E. Looney (ed.), *The Handbook of US-Middle East Relations. Formative Factors and Regional Perspectives*, New York/Oxon, Routledge, 2009, p.442.
[10] Stivers, *America's Confrontation,* op.cit., pp.28-37.
[11] A number of high-level US officials, including Paul Wolfowitz, Dennis Ross and Geoffrey Kemp, would collaborate in drafting a major 1979 strategic report entitled 'Capabilities for Limited Contingencies in the Persian Gulf'. All three individuals held important roles in the Reagan administration. See, Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, op.cit, pp.75-85.
[12] APP, "Jimmy Carter. State of the Union Address," 23 January 1980, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=33079; Also see, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library [JCPL], Presidential Directive/NSC-68, "Persian Gulf Security Framework," 15 January 1981, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd63.pdf.
[13] Discussion on a Rapid Deployment Force dated back to the early years of the Carter Administration, as demonstrated by Carter's Presidential Directive 18 of 24 August 1977. See, JCPL, "Presidential Directives (PD)," https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/presidential_directives.
[14] FRUS Volume, XVIII (1977-1980), Document 80.

focused on Europe, demonstrated the rising importance of the region in the US's national security doctrine.

Both the RDJTF and CENTCOM were directed not only at deterring outside intervention, but also inter-state conflict and internal subversion, as had occurred in the context of the Iranian Revolution or the 1979 siege of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Reagan had given voice to this new American commitment in October 1981, emphasizing that the US 'will not permit' Saudi Arabia to become another Iran.[15] This statement, sometimes termed the 'Reagan Corollary to the Carter Doctrine', effectively expanded the US's commitment to protect the Persian Gulf from 'outside forces' to a commitment to preserve the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and the survival of the monarchy.[16] As noted by George Lenczowski, 'whether by design or by an accident of history, the United States assumed a protective role in the Gulf, and it was hard to imagine how it could abdicate this responsibility without causing a major shift in the power relationships in the world'.[17]

US outreach and engagements in the Persian Gulf would continue throughout the Reagan administration, leading by 1987 to a major military deployment in the context of the US Operation Ernest Will. Aimed at providing protection to Kuwaiti oil tankers in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz during the Iran-Iraq war, the operation represented 'the deployment of the largest contingent of American forces in a crisis situation since the Vietnam war. It constituted both a test and a culmination of the defence policy during the Reagan era'.[18]

Strategic plans were not limited to the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia, however. Jordan had been earmarked as a key location for the pre-positioning of military hardware and the stationing of a Rapid Reaction Force. Efforts to earmark secret funding and arms for the train-and-assist programme had advanced during 1983–84, only to be undermined by Israeli and Congressional opposition. The failure to establish a Jordanian strike force—what at the time was called the Joint Logistical Planning (JLP) agreement—led to significant recriminations by Jordan as to America's double standards in the Middle East.[19]

Having secured basing rights in Kenya and Somalia, Oman fell into place in 1980; and since then US-Arab military cooperation has mushroomed profusely. The Egyptian-US Bright Star military exercises, part of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, kicked off in December 1980, but the following year the

[15] APP, "Ronald Reagan. The President's News Conference," 1 October 1981, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=44327.
[16] Bruce R. Kuniholm, "The Carter Doctrine, the Reagan Corollary and prospects for United States Policy in Southwest Asia," *International Journal*, Vol.41, No.2 (Spring), 1986, pp.342-61; Also see, William Safire, "The Reagan Corollary," *NYT Opinion*, 4 October 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/04/opinion/essay-the-reagan-corollary.html.
[17] George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East*, New York, Duke University Press, 1990, p.283.
[18] Lenczowski, *American Presidents*, op.cit., p.254.
[19] Middle East Contemporary Survey Vol.8, 1983-1984, pp.527-30; J. E. Peterson, *Defending Arabia, Chapter 5: US Military Options in the Gulf*. Online edition from www.JEPeterson.net (posted September 2000), p.4; Laham, *Crossing the Rubicon*,op.cit., pp.121-42.

exercise was considerably expanded with a mock amphibious exercise landing a joint Egyptian-US force on the coast of Oman. Media sources at the time noted how 'the Egyptian phase of Bright Star was given maximum publicity by the Department of Defence. The present [Omani] phase [known as Jade Tiger], which is being carried out in a critical area near the Strait of Hormuz, is receiving far less attention in the Middle East'.[20]

By 1985, the US held its greatest military exercise in the region with the participation of five states. This show of force was meant to send a signal to Iran and the Soviet Union, but was also an indication of support for local Gulf monarchies. In launching Operation Earnest Will in 1987, the US directly intervened in the Persian Gulf and Iran-Iraq war with massive military strength. The Kuwaiti tanker reflagging operation was seen as a significant opportunity for the US military to enhance its direct presence in the Gulf, and a first step towards extracting concessions to allow US access and basing rights.

US-Arab military cooperation only added to Israel's threat perceptions regarding the potential erosion of its privileged partnership with the US. Indeed, in addressing arms sales and military-to-military cooperation with the US's Arab allies, this outreach was bound to cross lines with the longstanding US commitment to provide for Israel's military superiority.

Aware that the US's strategic focus was shifting to the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan, and that any credible defence of the area would necessarily rely on close US-Arab coordination, Israel worried that US policy would slowly move closer to Arab positions. In particular, Israel dreaded the possibility that US policy would move back to the concept of linkage between US-Israel relations, including in the military and assistance spheres, and Israeli actions vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours and the Palestinians. Inherent in the linkage concept was the need to balance relations with Israel and the Arab states, an approach that threatened Israel's preferential relationship with the US. Israeli leaders therefore sought to undermine, to the extent possible, the emerging US-Arab strategic dialogue on the Persian Gulf, striving to promote Israel as the central pillar for this evolving US military strategy in the region.

4.1.3 Strategic Cooperation with Israel and the Eastern Mediterranean (Priority 3)

In conjunction with the first and second priorities of a pronounced return of the globalist prism and a growing strategic focus on the Persian Gulf, a third priority was to emerge in high-level discussions: the Eastern Mediterranean and strategic cooperation with Israel. Here, and largely during the middle-to-late years of the Reagan administration, US planners worried that the balance of forces between the Western

[20] Drew Middleton, "Bright Star: Omanis Play Balancing Act; Military Analysis," *NYT*, 7 December 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/07/world/bright-star-omanis-play-balancing-act-military-analysis.html.

alliance and the Soviets had shifted in favour of the latter and that this sub-region represented a potential source of vulnerability in US global contingencies.

Threat perceptions stemmed from the deepening Soviet-Syrian alliance and Damascus's dominance over war-torn Lebanon as well as the consolidation of the Palestinian and PLO presence in the country.[21] Further afield, increased Soviet influence over the Marxist-leaning government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) and the growing regional activism displayed by Libyan leader Muammar Gheddafi, himself often portrayed as a Soviet 'proxy', also added to this general feeling of a weakened US presence and resolve in the Middle East.

These actors were united in opposing the US-led breakthrough at Camp David that led to the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement in 1979, the full implementation of which was expected for April 1982. In this context, preserving the peace treaty and ensuring that Israel complete its redeployment from the Egyptian Sinai without delay, topped the strategic priorities of the early Reagan administration for the Near East. Stability in the southern area of the Near East—a major dividend of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement—was also considered indispensable to allow the US to concentrate on the Persian Gulf.

Yet, during the electoral campaign in 1980, the Reagan team had made much of his intention to rely on Israel as a 'strategic asset' in the Middle East, even going so far as describing Israel as the natural substitute for the loss of the Shah of Iran.[22] It was in this context, and in seeking to make true on its campaign pledges to enhance US-Israel strategic cooperation, that the third key priority of the Reagan administration would become established. After some tensions and challenges, the Eastern Mediterranean would emerge as the key testing ground for the 'strategic asset' slogan.

Unlike past administrations, which tended to focus on the Near East and would thereby accord some importance to balancing opposing camps (and partners) in the context of Arab-Israeli diplomacy and mediation, the Reagan administration's emerging focus on the Eastern Mediterranean effectively allowed the US to sidestep questions related to the conflict. In part explained by the return of the globalist prism in Washington, during the 1980s efforts moved to rather sterile estimates of the military balance among US allies and partners in the region, comparing these to Soviet capabilities in an effort to discern strengths and vulnerabilities in the event of an all-out war.

[21] Recent media reports have put the number of Russian 'volunteer' soldiers serving in Syria between 1983-84 to about 6,000 units. See, Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia may Aid 'Comrade Tourists' Who Were Really Soldiers," *NYT*, 21 December 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/20/world/europe/russia-may-aid-comrade-tourists-who-were-really-soldiers.html.
[22] In a 1979 *Washington Post* article, Reagan wrote: 'The fall of Iran has increased Israel's value as perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region on which the United States can truly rely'. Ronald Reagan, "Recognizing the Israel Asset," *WP,* 15 August 1979.

In this context, calculations of Israel's geographical positioning, military capabilities and compatibility with the US were made in comparison to other allies and locations, including Greece, Cyprus and Turkey but also others such as West Germany and Italy. Such studies would promote the view of Israel as a 'force multiplier' for US interests as well as a valuable staging area for 'force projection' contingencies, as US support for Israel became more 'explicitly linked to deterrence', noted Dennis Ross.[23]

Significantly, much of the impetus for these calculations, including detailed assessments of the military balance and forces, also came from prominent pro-Israel lobby groups and personalities in the US, who had long argued for an overt integration of Israeli military capabilities into the US's Cold War alliance framework, including though closer relations with NATO.[24] Throughout the 1980s, Israeli leaders and ministers would repeatedly outline Israeli strategic, intelligence and military capabilities, pushing forward the argument that Israel was the natural staging area and key reliable partner in the region.[25]

Such viewpoints did garner support within the administration, notwithstanding a lack of consensus among top planners and military experts regarding the concrete strategic benefits Israel could provide to US interests.[26] Eventually, a fragile consensus, or *compromise*, was reached among sceptics and supporters of US-Israel strategic cooperation within the administration. This revolved on limiting the focus of such cooperation to Eastern Mediterranean contingencies, in order to contain the potential damage such overt forms of strategic cooperation might have on the US's other key interest: outreach to the Arabs and defence of the Persian Gulf.

The consensus also rested on a deeper set of objectives: devising means to restrain Israel's tendency to embark on unilateral military policies vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours, which did much to complicate the emerging US-Arab strategic cooperation. Significantly, it was this belief that by institutionalizing the US-Israel alliance the US would enhance its leverage over Israeli policy, while simultaneously strengthening the administration's pro-Israel credentials in Washington and thereby enhancing US abilities to focus on the Persian Gulf that created the basis for this emerging compromise among sceptics and supporters within the administration.

Beyond the Eastern Mediterranean and in the context of the Near East, the implications of this third priority of enhancing strategic cooperation with Israel led the Reagan administration to 'freeze' developments in the Arab-Israeli theatre, prioritizing the full implementation of the Egyptian-Israeli redeployment scheduled for 1982, while sidestepping the question of the Autonomy negotiations with the Palestinians. When it came to the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict, therefore, US policy during

[23] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[24] See, AIPAC Papers on US-Israel Relations in the 1980s, No.1-13; Steven Spiegel, "Israel as a Strategic Asset," *Commentary Magazine*, 1 June 1983; Steven Spiegel, "US Relations with Israel: The Military Benefits," *Orbis* 30, No.3 (Fall 1986).
[25] Interview, Nicholas Veliotis, op.cit.
[26] Interviews, Geoffrey Kemp; Nicholas Veliotis; Dennis Ross, op.cit.

the Reagan period, essentially boiled down to a continuation of the Kissinger-era strategy of forcing the Arab states to the negotiating table through a massive build-up of Israeli military strength.

This, in essence, was what the administration intended with the phrase 'create more Egypts for Israel to make peace with', a concept repeatedly voiced by Reagan and his administration throughout the 1980s.[27] However, and differently from the Kissinger approach during the 1970s, the Reagan team never effectively used conditionality or pressure on Israel in the context of the Arab-Israeli diplomacy, employing such measures *only* in the event of a clear Israeli violation of US laws or as a means to send a signal to other Arab states about the reliability of the US. This tendency reflected the hierarchy of priorities in the administration, with waging the 'Second Cold War' topping the list, followed by US-Arab and US-Israeli strategic cooperation to advance that goal. As a corollary of this focus, the administration would argue against recognition of the Arab-Israeli conflict or the issue of Palestine as central elements of US Middle East policy, in itself a considerable shift compared to the Carter era approach.

Instead, and as a result of this emphasis on deterrence and the global Cold War, Israel grew to be viewed as an *overt* tool that could help 'rollback' Soviet influence and that of its 'proxies', while helping to alter the balance of forces in the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, and also differently from Kissinger's more cautious, 'step-by-step' approach, the Reagan administration, and in particular Secretary of State Haig, appeared willing to consider a more forceful and proactive strategy, one that would make use of Israel's military muscle to establish new 'facts on the ground', particularly vis-à-vis Lebanon, the PLO and Syria. It was in this context that Secretary Haig, a staunch advocate of close US-Israeli strategic cooperation, pronounced a now-famous quote describing Israel as 'the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk, does not carry even one American soldier, and is located in a critical region for American national security'.[28]

It was in this globalist context of East-West rivalry that discourses about Israel's strategic value to US interests would become consolidated. While ultimately this emphasis on the Eastern Mediterranean represented a more restricted focus than many in Israel had originally hoped for, the tangible economic, military and political dividends that flowed from this recognition would amount to a considerable breakthrough in the history of US-Israel relations, setting the stage for a critical, *institutionalizing* juncture that continues to hold relevance even today.

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[27] Reagan officials, including the President himself, would repeatedly use this phrase. Three examples are given here. On 21 June 1982, during Begin's visit to the United States in the midst of the Lebanon war, Reagan used the term three times. See, RRPL, Near East and South Asian Affairs, NSC Records (Box 12). Also see, APP, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Regional Editors and Broadcasters on the Situation in Lebanon," 24 October 1983, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=40678; APP, "Interview with Representatives of Independent Radio Networks," 26 January 1985, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=38910.

[28] Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, "Is Israel America's Ultimate Ally?" *The Atlantic*, 26 April 2011, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/04/is-israel-americas-ultimate-ally/237864/.

The next chapters will zero-in to focus on the implications of such efforts and the path dependency they created for future US policy towards Israel and the broader Middle East. They will further dissect the competing views and perspectives of key Reagan officials and decision-makers—and in particular between the supporters and sceptics of US-Israel cooperation—in an effort to discern the major rationales, risks and expected benefits that would flow from overt cooperation with Israel.

It is however first necessary to appreciate a number of key challenges facing US policy. Specifically, and stemming from the three broad priorities outline above—a return of the 'globalist' prism in the context of the 'Second Cold War'; the need to build up the defences of the Persian Gulf; and a parallel effort to better integrate Israel into strategic contingency planning for the Eastern Mediterranean, also by adding complementarity between the US-Israel relationship and NATO—there are three deeper challenges that need to be highlighted.

The interplay between these three broad priorities and the consequent challenges facing US policymakers in seeking to integrate them into a coherent strategy will help to frame US policy towards the region during the Reagan era. The fact that Reagan officials only shared consensus when it came to the second priority—defence of the Persian Gulf—and were divided on both the regional policy strategy to wage the 'Second Cold War' and the goal of upgrading strategic cooperation with Israel, would significantly complicate policymaking in the administration, contributing to many inconsistencies and incoherencies present in US policy during the 1980s.

4.2 Squaring the Circle: Reconciling US Middle East Priorities in the 1980s

The three priorities outlined above can be described as a general policy framework ('Second Cold War') followed by two overarching regional priorities governing US policy in the 1980s (the Persian Gulf, and Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean). Yet, the concrete policy implications that flowed from these priorities would quickly present a whole new set of challenges.

The essence of these challenges lay in seeking to enhance the US's military and strategic relations with *both* Israel and the Arab states, without any concrete movement in the realm of Arab-Israeli diplomacy. Such hardships were not new. They simply represented a rehashing of the age-old challenge facing all past and future US administrations. Indeed, and in seeking to square the circle and develop a coherent strategy that would enhance Israel's strategic value as well as the US's wider strategic interests in the Persian Gulf, the Reagan administration would inevitably be confronted with the challenge of reconciling the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US strategic priorities. Moreover, the Reagan administration's fixation with the global East-West divide and consequent tendency to ignore regional disputes and apprehensions would only accentuate the tension between the two strategic zones of US policy: the Near East and the Persian Gulf.

4.2.1 Overcoming Opposition to US-Arab Strategic Cooperation (Challenge 1)

The first challenge concerned the need to overcome significant opposition to the US's central focus on building up the defences of Arab allies in the Gulf. In this context, US policy faced considerable pushback and opposition at both the US domestic level and regionally, complicating the US's parallel pursuit of its three central priorities.

Indeed, while there was considerable consensus within the administration on the need to strengthen the US's strategic posture, and in particular to enhance its capacity to directly project force into the Persian Gulf in the event of a conflict—even representing a rare area of agreement between Secretary of State Haig and Secretary of Defence Weinberger—agreement within the administration did not translate into a political consensus in Washington or a 'strategic consensus' among the US's regional allies.

Significant constraints to this US build-up in the Persian Gulf were evident in the heated congressional debates and hearings on major US arms sales to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and others during the 1980s. Here, Reagan officials struggled to articulate their rationales, often framing them on both strategic and moral grounds. This was done by highlighting the valuable contribution these Arab states could make to US interests in the Cold War and in preserving the flow of Gulf oil, but also in the realm of other US interests tied to the Camp David process and the goal of 'creating more Egypts'.

Thus, major arms packages for such Arab states as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and others would routinely be marketed at home, in Congress and the realm of public opinion, as helping create the 'groundwork for peace' in the region by virtue of rekindling Arab trust in the US while driving a wedge between the Soviet Union and its regional allies. While such marketing worked with US public and elite opinion early in the administration, the challenge was harder to overcome with Israel itself, particularly ruling right-wing Likud government led by Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his first Defence Minister, Ariel Sharon. Israeli misgivings were well known to the administration. Reviving debates about Israeli efforts to consolidate an exclusivist relationship with the United States, Reagan officials recognized that Israeli acquiescence to this enhanced strategic focus on the US's Arab allies was key to its success.

Many had moreover learned from Reagan's past electoral bids, including as Governor of California, the importance of maintaining good relations with elements of the Jewish-American community, whose political and financial support was deemed crucial for the Republican Party and in particular for the so-called 'Reagan Democrats' and neoconservatives who joined his administration. As a result, polishing Reagan's pro-Israel credentials and reassuring Israel and the Jewish-American community of the administration's staunch support were understood as key priorities of the Reagan team. In was in this

context, and even before the actual votes were cast, that the Reagan campaign enthusiastically embraced the 'strategic asset' slogan as applied to Israel, elevating it to a central theme of the electoral campaign.[29]

Indeed, the Reagan campaign did everything possible to deploy Israel as an important wedge issue during the election.[30] An early example included publicly labelling Israel a 'strategic asset' for the US and breaking with previous language to label the PLO a terrorist organization. A similar reversal was applied to the longstanding US policy on Israeli settlement construction. Reagan declared in a *New York Times* interview on 3 February 1981, 'they're not illegal',[31] while conceding that such actions were 'unnecessarily provocative'.[32] Reflecting the prevalence of the globalist prism in the administration, the Reagan administration would repeatedly make reference to the Soviet Union's financial and military support for the Palestinians, as well as the PLO's lack of democratic credentials, as a further rationale for the administration's hostility towards the group.[33]

While administration officials hoped these public platitudes would be sufficient to secure Israel's tacit acquiescence to the US's increased focus on the Arab states, they would soon discover otherwise. Replicating what has been a general trend in US-Israel relations, particularly under Republican administrations that tended to have more of a transactional understanding emphasizing the need for a quid pro quo from Israel in return for US aid and politico-military support, US officials were particularly disturbed by this Israeli rigidity. 'My dedication to the preservation of Israel was as strong when I left the White House as when I arrived there', wrote President Reagan in his biography years after leaving office, 'even though this tiny ally, with whom we share democracy and many other values, was a source of great concern for me while I was president'.[34]

'Support for the peace process must be a prerequisite for arms sales to any Arab state', reads one three-page memorandum dated 24 March 1981 and described as a 'wish list' of Israeli desires in the context of discussions on US sales to Arab states and the need for adequate compensation for Israel.[35] Another example of Israeli opposition emerged from a 1981 meeting in Israel where arms sales to Jordan and

[29] Significantly, by elevating this concept the Democratic Party also moved closer towards the 'strategic asset' slogan, as demonstrated by its 1980 platform.
[30] Samuel W. Lewis, the US ambassador to Israel at the time, has noted how Carter's advisors 'ultimately blamed the New York Jews and Israel for his [electoral] defeat', also noting how 'Begin himself strongly hoped for a Reagan victory'. See, Foreign Affairs Oral History Project [FAOHP], "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," *Oral History Transcript,* 1998, pp.148-9, https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Lewis,%20Samuel%20W.toc.pdf.
[31] RRPL, Kemp Files, "Israeli Settlements 1981," Box 3; Also see, RRPL, Executive Secretariat Country File, Near East and South East Asia, "Israel/Iraq – Book II (4)," Box 37.
[32] Such language gradually became crystallized into the depiction of settlements as 'an obstacle to peace', a standard mantra of US policy until 2017, when President Donald J. Trump seemingly further diluted this statement referring to settlements as 'unhelpful for peace'.
[33] The US's Defence Intelligence Agency study on 'PLO Support to Central American Revolutionaries' had a rather more nuanced interpretation. RRPL, Kemp Files, "Israel (07/24/81-07/31/81)", Box 2.
[34] Reagan, *An American Life*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1999, p.410. As noted by many, Reagan never mentioned strategic rationales in his biography or diary as a reason for the US's support for Israel, limiting such emphasis to shared values, political affinities and the legacy of the Holocaust.
[35] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country Files, "Israel (3/12/1981-4/5/1981)," Box 37.

Saudi Arabia were discussed. In outlining Israel's opposition to the sales, Israel's Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Zipori stressed how 'it was about time that the governments of both Jordan and Saudi Arabia realized that the other (along with the US) guarantor of their continuing existence is Israel',[36] adding in a second meeting that 'the security of Jordan depends more on weakness than on strength'.[37]

Israel wished to guard against an erosion of its preferential relationship with the US. Significantly, this erosion had partially begun in the context of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the emerging development of US-Egyptian military cooperation it entailed. Notwithstanding the inclusion of major US assurances towards Israel—including more aid and more advanced and numerous weapons compared to those provided to Egypt—Egyptian-US cooperation in the strategic and military domain would create some apprehension in Israel, but nowhere near the concern caused by the US's emerging contacts with Jordan or Saudi Arabia.

Such Israeli tendency to guard its exclusivist and preferential relationship with the US created much headache for US military planners. A cable summarizing meetings held by Defence Minister Weinberger in Oman while on a tour of the Middle East in February 1982 shines a light on these frustrations:

> US friendship with one country should not be at the expense of raising antagonisms with other friends. In the past year Israel had taken actions which were disturbing and destabilizing and had not engaged in the requisite consultations with the United States. […] It sometimes seemed that the Israelis were pursuing policies designed to place us in a situation where we must choose between friends.[38]

Such considerations reflect the continuation of the age-old challenge facing US Middle East policy and the inherent tension, if not incompatibility, between the two central strands of US policy in the region. Reagan planners sought to reconcile these policy components through an approach that included the following elements:

- Compensation for Israel to allow for expanded military-supply agreements with Arab states; and
- Efforts to establish a form of 'strategic consensus' between the US's Arab allies and Israel based on shared hostility towards the Soviet Union.

With this Reagan officials hoped to overcome domestic and Israeli concern over the evolving US cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt. Ultimately, the approaches gained momentum because they were considered conducive to advancing the administration's three central priorities: fighting the 'Second Cold War', strengthening military preparedness in the Persian Gulf and building up Israel as a

[36] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country Files, "Israel (02/09/1981-02/20/1981)," Box 37.
[37] Ibid.
[38] RRPL, Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-89, Box 91987.

'strategic asset' for US interests. Compensation for Israel thus became an indispensable component in furthering the administration's goals.

Through compensation for Israel and strengthening its military superiority in the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean, US officials believed they were fulfilling campaign pledges but also advancing the goal of creating 'more Egypts' by discouraging attacks on Israel through the power of US-supplied weaponry. Further benefits were also expected at the domestic level. By polishing the administration's pro-Israel credentials US policy would be free to focus on US-Arab cooperation while also assisting the GOP's objective of driving a wedge between the Jewish-American community and the Democratic Party in an effort to 're-brand' the Republicans as a reliably pro-Israel force in the US. Here, carry-on benefits also played a role, such as the knowledge that pro-Israeli supporters in Congress and in the US-based research and think tank community would make important allies on other Reagan administration priorities, such as increasing military budgets and implementing more proactive military plans to counter Soviet inroads in Central and Latin America, as well as in Africa and in Asia.

It appeared that the Reagan team had successfully developed a coherent strategy for the region and one capable of extracting strategic benefits from both sets of regional allies. It was in this context that the legacy of the Kissinger years and the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement become visible. Inherent in the final conclusion of the peace agreement was a commitment by the US to provide superior quantities and qualities of weapons and aid to Israel compared to Egypt, a dynamic that would be replicated and institutionalized by Reagan, leading finally to the 2008 normalization of the QME concept outlined in Chapter 2.

Yet, by ensuring that Israel's military margin would be consistently upgraded while never 'getting tough' with Israel on a whole series of issues on which the two administrations disagreed, a new set of challenges would emerge for US policy. Indeed, a compelling argument can be made that through this focus on compensation for Israel, Washington was effectively undermining the second approach centred on establishing a 'consensus of strategic concerns' among the US's disparate allies in the region, while essentially moving closer to Israel's wish for a quasi-exclusivist relationship in the Middle East.

4.2.2 Compensation for Israel and the Lack of 'Strategic Consensus' (Challenge 2)

The administration's hopes that compensation and public platitudes for Israel combined with a focus on the shared threat of the Soviet Union would be enough to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US policy proved misplaced.

Compensation might succeed in assuaging Israeli and domestic opposition to enhanced strategic ties with Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, but these latter countries would also expect assurances from the US that it's developing strategic alliance with Israel would not be deployed against Arab states or the Palestinians. Moreover, the propensity of Saudi Arabia and Jordan to agree to overt forms of cooperation and access agreements with the US would also be weakened by open US-Israeli alliance, particularly in the realm of Arab public opinion. Meanwhile, overt US-Israel cooperation could also strengthen the influence of so-called 'rejectionist' Arab states such as Syria, which was also a Soviet ally.

This then was the stage on which US efforts to establish 'strategic consensus' between the diverse set of US allies in the region were played out. 'We believe it is fundamentally important', noted Secretary of State Haig before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in March 1981, 'to begin to develop a consensus of strategic concerns throughout the region among Arab and Jew and to be sure that the overriding danger of Soviet inroads into this area are not overlooked'.[39]

While not based on any formal alliance framework—an eventuality rendered impossible by the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1980s, as it had in the 1950s during US-British efforts to establish a Middle East Treaty Organization—the 'strategic consensus' argument reflected the latest attempt to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US Middle East policy. Specifically, these efforts were directed towards Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, but there was a need to also ensure buy-in and support at the domestic political level in Washington and in Israel, making compensation and the 'strategic asset' slogan crucial complements to this outreach towards the Arabs.

Reagan officials seriously underestimated both the depth of Israeli-Arab rivalry and the fact that threat perceptions in both Riyadh and Tel Aviv were directed more at regional developments (Lebanon, Syria, the Iran-Iraq war and Iran) than at Moscow. Moreover, the second track of this approach, 'strategic consensus', would be undermined by Israel's repeated unilateral military engagements in the early 1980s. While compensation for Israel in exchange for arms and military support could be accepted by the US's Arab allies, the same could not be said about Israel's repeated violations of their national sovereignty or use of US-supplied arms against fellow Arab states.

During the first years of the Reagan administration, and starting even earlier with the announcement of the Jerusalem Basic Law in July 1980, the Israeli government embarked on numerous unilateral actions, culminating in the 1982 invasion and occupation of Lebanon, which effectively buried any hope for consensus between the US's set of allies in the region. Indeed, these events—which included the 1981 bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor, the 1981 bombing of the PLO offices in Beirut, the 1981 annexation of the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights and repeated violations of Saudi, Lebanese, Syrian and

[39] Bernard Gwertzman, "Haig Says US Seeks Consensus Strategy in the Middle East," *NYT*, 20 March 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/03/20/world/haig-says-us-seeks-consensus-strategy-in-the-middle-east.html?pagewanted=all.

Jordanian airspaces by Israel, not to mention settlement construction and the ultimate failure of the Autonomy negotiations—would only enflame Arab opposition to Israel (and the US). This would significantly complicate the US's ability to argue for increased access and basing rights or to counsel patience in Washington's ability to extract concessions from Israel in the context of diplomacy and mediation.

It was precisely for these reasons that US officials had traditionally sought a balanced policy for the Middle East, in accordance with the 'linkage doctrine' and a related understanding that Israel's 'strategic value' for the US stemmed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, not its advanced arms or strategic positioning. These were important, but would not benefit the US until a peace agreement was reached, as such overt displays of alliance would significantly hamper broader US interests that rested with the Arab states.

Moreover, there was a distinct feeling, both in the region and in Washington that the Reagan administration's willingness to label Israel an 'asset' and openness to discussing new forms of strategic cooperation were only contributing to Israeli hubris and tendency to engage in offensive unilateral actions.[40]

It was largely as a result of these events—and in particular the Israeli 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights followed by its 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the bloody siege of Beirut—coupled with the continued opposition to US arms sales to Arab allies such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, that the idea of 'strategic consensus' was officially buried. Once again, a US administration was confronted with the inability of reconciling the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of US Middle East policy, effectively preventing the articulation of a 'grand strategy' for the region and condemning US policy to 'muddling through',[41] as lamented by Secretary of State Dulles back in the mid-1950s.

Resulting from these complexities, US policy effectively reverted to approaching its two strategic zones in the Middle East—the Persian Gulf and the Near East/Eastern Mediterranean—as distinct and separate areas, in which key US allies, Saudi Arabia and Israel, would emerge paramount. Ultimately, these efforts manifested in the establishment of CENTCOM, with its restricted Area of Responsibility that excluded Israel, Lebanon and Syria, and the parallel revival of US-Israeli strategic cooperation in late 1983 centred on the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean.

This realization was not going to come easily for the administration. Indeed, there was also a third central challenge facing US Middle East policy in the 1980s that remained to be addressed: how to restrain Israel and thereby curtail the risk it posed to US priorities in the Persian Gulf. It was indeed amid high-level

[40] David K. Shipler, "Israeli Raids on Lebanon: A Change in US Position," *NYT Analysis*, 18 April 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/18/world/israeli-raids-on-lebanon-a-change-in-us-position-news-analysis.html.
[41] FRUS, Volume XII (1958-1960), Document 4.

debates and disagreements within the administration surrounding this third central challenge that the *institutionalization* of the US-Israel alliance and an increased emphasis on the Eastern Mediterranean emerged as a compromise solution advancing all three of the US's priorities: fight the Second Cold War, enhance strategic preparedness in the Persian Gulf and build on the 'strategic asset' slogan.

4.2.3 Restraining Israel (Challenge 3)

Efforts to restrain Israel in order to focus on the US's strategic goal of enhanced US-Arab cooperation in the Persian Gulf revived debates on how best to employ US leverage over Israel. These debates revolved around two central themes, dynamics that were not born in the 1980s but can be traced back to the earliest days of the US-Israel relationship.

These themes centred on extracting greater Israeli acknowledgement of broader US interests and commitments in the region, engagements that necessarily had a significant Arab component. The US had long argued against an exclusivist US-Israeli relationship, given that US and Israeli interests could not always coincide. At most, therefore, the US-Israel relationship would have to rest on preferential rather than exclusivist treatment, allowing the US to also use its diplomatic, financial and military leverage with other regional actors as well.

The second central theme surrounding efforts to restrain Israel and enhance US leverage and influence had more to do with domestic politics and the ability of Israel and its network of supporters to significantly complicate administration plans, not only in the Middle East and with respect to Israel but on a whole number of other policy issues. In this respect, debates on leverage vis-à-vis Israel also had a political component, as they represented efforts to 'protect the domestic flank', seeking to avoid public clashes or disagreements that could lead to important losses of political capital in Washington.

It was in this context of growing US frustration with Israel's unwillingness to mute its opposition to enhanced strategic ties with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, that the key debate between supporters and sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation took place within the administration. The former group argued for a full-blown integration of Israel into the US alliance frameworks. According to these voices, institutionalization of US-Israel relations represented the most coherent means to advance US interests in the region, while also staying true to Reagan campaign pledges and US moral and ideological support for Israel as a Western-oriented democratic state and close ally in the Cold War. Indeed, supporters of US-Israel strategic cooperation would argue, the best means to restrain Israel was to augment its security and deterrence capabilities by integrating it into the Western alliance framework, providing a security guarantee and even enhancing interdependence with NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The argument was that only a confident and militarily secure and superior Israel would be willing to negotiate territorial withdrawals with the Arabs and Palestinians. Israeli security and military superiority had already become codified as a central tenet of US Middle East policy, yet US-Israel strategic cooperation was all but non-existent in early 1980s, and it was in this realm of *overt* security cooperation that supporters of the concept began arguing for further movement. Meanwhile, efforts to enhance US-Israel strategic cooperation would also be conducive to the US's broader interests and concerns, regionally, internationally and domestically. By building up the defences of Israel, opposition to the central priority of US-Arab strategic cooperation would be overcome, allowing the US to concentrate its resources and diplomatic efforts towards the Persian Gulf.

Fear that the US's Arab allies would be discouraged to cooperate with the US should not represent an obstacle, argued the supporters, as the US remained the only security provider for such states. Moreover, the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict no longer represented the central regional concern, as Arab states in the Gulf were thought to be worried by Iran and preoccupied with assisting Iraq in waging its war against Tehran. 'The major Arab states, notably Saudi Arabia, have no alternative to US support', reads a NSC memorandum drafted by Richard Pipes on 29 July 1981, 'they have nowhere else to go, no matter what they threaten; for this reason they need not be appeased and should be pressured to give up support for the PLO'.[42]

At the domestic level, such openness to recognizing Israel as an asset would help with the administration's broader goals via support in Congress and US public opinion. Public disagreements with Israel's leadership could be avoided by institutionalizing channels of communication and coordination, while Israeli supporters and lobby groups in the US would be more willing to support other US policies and objectives, beginning with the massive increase in US military budgets announced by Reagan.

Opposing such views stood the sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation. Contrary to the supporters, the sceptics argued that a major reason for Israel's recent uptake in unilateral actions and military adventurism stemmed from Israel's impunity and a belief that US support would be forthcoming. Sceptics also believed that such overt forms of cooperation with Israel would irreparably damage US credibility and influence in the region, unless accompanied by a stern and sustained focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict and linked to Israeli policy in such domains.

[42] FRUS Vol.III (1981-1983), Document 77. Richard Pipes had also been 'team leader' of the controversial 1976 Team B report discussed in Chapter 3. His son, Daniel Pipes, also a US official and founder of the pro-Israel Middle East Forum (MEF), has most recently, in April 2017, helped found the Congressional Israel Victory Caucus in the US. As described by the MEF website, 'The caucus calls for a new U.S. approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ending the emphasis on Israel making "painful concessions" and instead putting the onus on Palestinians—they must give up the goal of destroying Israel and recognize Israel as the Jewish state'. See, "Announcing the 'Congressional Israel Victory Caucus,"' MEF, 24 April 2017, https://www.meforum.org/articles/2017/announcing-the-congressional-israel-victory-caucu.

They further argued that the best means to employ US influence and leverage over Israel was to hold out on a full-blown integration of Israel into the US and Western alliance frameworks, keeping such cooperation as the ultimate form of inducement needed to convince Israel to show more flexibility in the context of peace negotiations. Most importantly, these sceptics argued that Israel's strategic value to the US was in all actuality quite limited. Israel could at best provide services in the limited zone of the Eastern Mediterranean, but compared to the vitally strategic Persian Gulf such services were on the whole negligible.

These debates characterized the first years of the Reagan administration, broadly speaking until late 1983, when a high-level decision was made by to resume and further expand on the original push to institutionalize the US-Israel relationship. Importantly, during these long drawn-out debates, there was a moment when the sceptics came out on top, only to then be overcome by the supporters at a later stage. The key variable for these debates was Lebanon and the Israeli invasion of 1982, an event that significantly complicated, if not buried, the US's early efforts to establish some form of 'strategic consensus' amongst its disparate allies. Indeed, the balance between the two groups moved from supporters to sceptics and back to supporters throughout the first years of the administration, a time that coincided with some of the roughest and most serious US-Israeli disagreements.

Against the backdrop of the Lebanon war, and following the US's first, bloody encounter with terrorism and suicide attacks, the sceptics and supporters of US-Israel strategic cooperation came to agree on a fragile compromise and it was this that would lay the groundwork for the critical, institutionalizing juncture of the US-Israel relationship. This consensus was largely based on short-term urgency of extracting the US from the Lebanon conflict, without losing face and while preserving the limited tactical gains made by Israel in that country vis-à-vis the Soviet 'proxies' of Syria and the PLO. It was moreover based on the belief that such institutionalization would enhance US influence over certain fundamentals of Israeli policy, helping to diminish the tension over the US's parallel outreach to the Arabs, while consolidating domestic support for the administration.

More fundamentally however, the basis for this fragile consensus was the opinion shared by both sceptics and supporters that the US's intervention in Lebanon was distracting it from the central priority of the administration's Middle East policy: defence of the Persian Gulf. Once again—and just as had been the case with the issue of compensating Israel in order to allow the US to enhance its agreements with its Arab allies—the US's central priority of a focus on the Persian Gulf and the prevalence of a number of constraints limiting or distracting the US from this focus, would result in an unprecedented upgrading of US-Israel ties. It would be in this context that efforts to integrate Israel into the Western alliance framework, including through enhanced interdependence with NATO, would begin to take shape. In

turn, this growing interdependence between US and Israeli deterrence capabilities in the Near East would gradually make large dimensions of US Middle East policy dependent on Israeli backing and approval.

Motivated by a hope that such institutionalization would limit opposition to US-Arab strategic cooperation and enhance US leverage over Israeli policy, the sceptics did succeed in restricting US-Israel strategic cooperation to the Eastern Mediterranean. From the standpoint of the supporters of US-Israel strategic cooperation, this limited focus still represented a valuable starting point. Indeed, the pre-positioning of US military hardware in Israel, along with a multitude of other agreements and forms of preferential treatment, would fundamentally transform the nature of the US-Israeli relationship, enhancing interdependence while increasingly moving the US closer to Israel's goal of a quasi-exclusivist relationship in the Middle East.

Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted three central priorities governing US foreign policy in the Middle East during the Reagan period, and three challenges facing US policymakers as they sought to develop a coherent strategy capable of advancing these objectives in synergy with one another. The significance of these priorities—a return of the globalist prism in the context of the Second Cold War; a strategic focus on the Persian Gulf; and a parallel focus on enhancing Israel's ability to act as a 'strategic asset' for US interests—would remain unchanged throughout the eight years of the Reagan administration.

The influence of the three challenges facing US policy—overcoming opposition to enhanced US-Arab strategic cooperation; the need to compensate Israel for such cooperation while supporting a 'strategic consensus' among regional allies; and a parallel effort to limit Israel's most adventurist tendencies—all stemmed from the age-old challenge of reconciling the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US Middle East policy, a theme identifiable since the earliest US-Israel relations and indeed even before Israel's formal announcement of independence in 1948.

A key theme emerging from this analysis is the centrality of priorities one and two, and the lack of consensus within the administration on the third objective: enhancing strategic cooperation with Israel and better integrating Israel into the US-led Western alliance framework.

Divergence within the administration would result in contradictory statements and policies. Yet, the fact that compensation for Israel emerged as the key means for the administration to follow through on its priority of building up the defences of Arab allies in close vicinity to the Persian Gulf, demonstrates the influence exerted by Israel over the articulation of US policy. It further highlights how Israel already enjoyed ample leverage to influence US policy in the region according to its own interests, as well as the continued presence of deep disagreements between high-level US and Israeli officials, particularly

revolving around the preferential or exclusivist nature of the US-Israel relationship and a lack of appreciation by Israeli leaders of the US's broader interests and concerns.

Against the backdrop of a 'Second Coming' by the US to the region, both sets of US allies and partners would lock horns in a concerted effort to promote their strategic services and garner support and assistance from the Reagan administration. Israel worried that the shifting strategic focus of the administration from the Near East to the Persian Gulf would endanger its preferential relationship with the US. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and others were concerned by Reagan's early campaign pledge to recognize Israel as a 'strategic asset' and sought assurances that the administration would not completely sidestep issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinians.

Ultimately, however, Arab allies were under no illusions that their relationship might one day supersede that enjoyed by Israel. They were incensed, however, by the inability of the Reagan administration to make true on its commitments to sell weapons due to congressional (and Israeli) opposition. Such instances seemed to confirm that the US had essentially abdicated its responsibilities as a mediator and would no longer be able to restrain Israel and 'deliver' those concessions needed for a peace agreement. Significantly, these were precisely the arguments deployed by the sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation present in the administration.

Paradoxically therefore, despite (or indeed *because of*) the reoccurrence of severe political disagreements between Washington and Tel Aviv during the early years of the administration—and reaching a climax in the context the Lebanon war—and the more general urgency (and consensus) within the administration on the need to focus on the Persian Gulf, a renewed impetus towards strategic cooperation with Israel was consolidated in the battlegrounds of Lebanon. By late 1983, Israel was seeing its relationship with the US institutionalized and upgraded. Meanwhile, the hopes and expectations forming the basis of a fragile consensus between supporters and sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation failed to materialize.

The next chapter will turn to these debates and discussions, introducing the first concrete agreements—and in particular the 1981 MoU on US-Israel strategic cooperation—addressing the implications this embrace of compensation and inducements vis-à-vis Israel would have for US policy in the region

Chapter 5

'Strategic Dissensus':
Debates and Dividends of US-Israel Strategic Cooperation

This chapter[1] will examine the first concrete policy initiatives adopted by the Reagan administration to build on the 'strategic asset' slogan. Centred on the first year of the new administration, the chapter will demonstrate how the administration came into office extremely well disposed towards Israel and ready to consider new areas of cooperation in the military and strategic domain. However, Israel's sustained opposition to the parallel US-Arab strategic dialogue and repeated unilateral actions in the political and military domain between 1981–82 would dampen this enthusiasm, leading to significant debates and turf wars within the Reagan administration on how best to restrain and influence Israeli policy while not harming the administration's wider priorities. Debates took place between sceptics and supporters of closer strategic cooperation with Israel, with each side seeking to advance their own perceptions and priorities vis-à-vis Israel and the broader Middle East.

These debates, which characterized the full first year of the administration, continue to have relevance today. The underlying implications of these approaches—what essentially amounted to a catch-22 in that US policy seemed to have little other option than to successively augment cooperation with Israel as a means to advance broader US interests and concerns—would create significant path dependency, manifested in the slow emergence of a 'policy straitjacket' constraining US policy options in the broader Middle East.

In this context, powerful precedents and path dependency were created in particular by the negotiations over the sale of advanced surveillance aircraft (AWACS) and sophisticated add-ons for Saudi Arabia's fleet of F-15 fighter jets, and the parallel necessity to compensate Israel with superior arms and assistance. This was the beginning of a policy approach that would become set in law decades later, in 2008, with the formalization of the QME concept.

While this compensation approach can be traced to the mid-1960s and the first US-Israel MoU negotiated by the Johnson administration in 1965, it was Reagan who solidified preferential compensation for Israel as standard practice. Building on the legacy of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and motivated by pursuit of the three central priorities of the administration's Middle East policy, the Reagan period created new conceptual and institutional frameworks governing US-Israel relations, whereby Congress and pro-Israel supporters in the US would subsequently be able to further their influence not only on US-Israel relations but on broader elements of US Middle East policy as well.

[1] The term 'strategic dissensus' is borrowed from Shaw, "Strategic Dissensus," op.cit.

5.1 The Early US-Israel Dialogue on Strategic Cooperation

The first discussions on augmenting the US-Israeli strategic relationship took place in the late Nixon and Ford administrations. During this time, and again in the context of severe disagreements between the US and Israel during the post-1973 war negotiations, enhanced efforts to institutionalize strategic dialogue were conducted by Secretary of State Kissinger and, in a more structured fashion, by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld.[2]

The main impetus for such dialogue was to seek understandings, exchange of best practices and advanced planning on Israeli defence and military needs, which in the post-1973 war era became entirely dependent on US supplies and aid. The Israelis' 'dependence on one source, the US, made them uncomfortable', recalled Nicholas Veliotes. 'Israeli leaders decided that having a moral basis for the relationship was no longer sufficient, they had to become important, and this evolved into the idea of being a "strategic asset"'.[3]

Significantly, these early efforts to enhance structured dialogue with Israel, like the more advanced initiatives taken by the Reagan administration, were driven on the US side by an effort to diminish tensions between US-Arab and US-Israeli relations and enhance coordination between the respective policy approaches of Israel and the US. On the US side, there was a need to honour commitments to preserve Israeli security, while also seeking recognition from Israel of the US's *global* interests and responsibilities, including those resting on US-Arab cooperation.[4] In essence, these debates can be framed with reference to Israel's goal of establishing an exclusivist relationship with the US and parallel US efforts to push back against such goal, arguing that preferential but not exclusivist relations served the best interests of both countries.

While structured dialogue between US and Israeli intelligence services, the first institutionalized dimension of US-Israel strategic cooperation, can be traced to the 1950s and 1960s, such efforts were extremely restricted both in scope and in publicity, also facing considerable pushback from the large majority of officials working in the State Department, the Pentagon and across the foreign policy bureaucracy.[5] As the bilateral relationship progressed, intelligence ties were augmented by increased economic and military aid and a number of key political agreements and commitments, most notably the 1975 MoA assurances provided by Kissinger in the context of the Sinai II negotiations and the 1979 side agreements signed in the context of the Israel-Egyptian peace treaty, the 1979 US-Israel MoA (see Appendix B and C).

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[2] Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, op.cit, pp.172-76. Donald Rumsfeld would serve as a part-time administration consultant during the 1980s, then serving as Reagan's Personal Representative in the Middle East between November 1983 and May 1984.
[3] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[4] For a comprehensive analysis of US-Israel strategic dialogue see, Puschel, *US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation*, op.cit., pp.11-32.
[5] Ibid., pp.1-32; Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit, pp.88-98,116-30; Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit., pp.47-80.

The victory of the Israeli Likud Party in the country's 1977 elections, leading to the first right-wing government in Israeli history, would add a further impetus to such efforts. Indeed, a key driver for recognition of Israel's 'ally' status came from Israel, not the US. While previous US administrations had been reluctant to agree to such overt forms of cooperation, this hesitance was swept away by the Reagan administration. The 1980s were a 'transformative' moment for the relationship, recalled Dennis Ross. This represented a turning point, 'not just institutional or programmatic but in terms of a new outlook in the National Security bureaucracy that view Israel in different light'. A 'new sociology was added to the relationship', continued the former Reagan official and a key supporter of US-Israeli strategic cooperation.[6]

The US had long appreciated the 'strategic' nature of its ties to Israel in the context of Arab-Israeli diplomacy and broader US efforts to push the Soviets out of the region (as well as in the US domestic political setting). Such viewpoints restricted the 'strategic' relationship to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Near East, however. This linkage had long worried Israeli leaders, and it was these efforts to 'de-link' the US-Israel relationship from the conflict that motivated Israel's heightened emphasis on its strategic contributions to US interests. This would eventually be mirrored in the US's emphasis on the Eastern Mediterranean as a key zone for US-Israel strategic cooperation, a focus that effectively allowed the US to downplay questions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinians and move to consider Israel in the framework of the Second Cold War and the balance of military forces vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and its 'proxies' in Lebanon and Syria.

While the Israeli left, and in particular Yigal Allon, Israeli Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister until 1977, had begun emphasizing the two-way complementarity that characterized US and Israeli interests in the mid-1970s, arguing that support for Israel served US interests and was not simply a form of 'charity'[7], Prime Minister Begin and the Likud Party took such efforts to a new level, orchestrating, in the words of Karen S. Puschel, a 'full-fledged campaign for US recognition of Israel's strategic value'.[8]

Low-level strategic dialogue did progress in the Carter years,[9] directed by the Secretary of Defence Harold Brown, yet the practical expressions of these efforts were extremely limited.[10] Indeed, the general tendency of the administration was to see such forms of cooperation, such as increased port calls at Haifa by the US navy during the late 1970s, as a kind of 'reward' for Israeli 'good behaviour' in negotiations with the Arabs. As noted by Yehuda Avner, long-term advisor and speechwriter for successive Israeli

[6] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[7] Puschel, *US-Israeli*, op.cit., pp.23-4.
[8] Ibid., p.24. Also see, Ariel Sharon, *Warrior. An Autobiography*, New York, Simon&Schuster, 2001, pp.408-22.
[9] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit..
[10] Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit. pp.90-1.

prime ministers, including Begin, 'Carter had issued explicit instructions to all his aides never to use the terms 'ally' or 'alliance' when characterizing the US-Israel relationship'.[11]

5.2 Reagan and US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation: Sceptics vs. Supporters

With Reagan's election in 1980, both Israel and the US were, for the first time, governed by right-wing conservative governments. The twin concepts of 'peace through strength' and 'offensive deterrence' encapsulated the strong ideological affinity between the two governments and this too would become an important dynamic in the renewed impetus for US-Israeli strategic cooperation. Indeed, the Israeli government of Menachem Begin was aware of the primacy of the Soviet threat in Washington, and Israeli language and proposals would quickly adapt to the new priorities of the US administration.

A number of communications by people close to the Reagan administration would further Israel's expectations about the new leadership in Washington. 'I think […] you'll be pleasantly surprised as to how our new president views the Middle East', Max Fisher, an influential Jewish-American philanthropist, lobbyist and key foreign policy advisor on Israel and the Middle East for successive Republican administrations since Eisenhower, told Prime Minister Begin during a visit to Israel in June 1981.[12] Reagan 'sees the region almost exclusively through Cold War lenses; its black and white', continued Fisher, who founded the National Jewish Coalition in 1985 aimed at strengthening links between American-Jewish community and the Republican party.[13] 'We [the US] stand by Israel because Israel is on our side, while many of the Arab countries are allies of the Soviet Union. It's as simple as that. That's how he [Reagan] views the Lebanon situation, for instance'.[14]

Discussions on the scope and nature of US-Israeli strategic cooperation began early, in the context of efforts to build upon and expand Carter's blueprint for the Middle East Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). The US had secured limited basing rights in Egypt—where intense negotiations were held throughout the early 1980s for access to the Rans Banas military airstrips and naval port[15]—in addition to the already mentioned bases in Oman, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan.

Meanwhile, intense discussions were held with Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf nations to explore potential access agreements. During this period the US also expanded its major military base and airstrips

[11] Yehuda Avner, *The Prime Ministers. An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership,* London/Jerusalem, Toby Press, 2012, p.569.
[12] Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, op.cit., p.560. Max Fisher, commonly referred to as 'Mr. Israel' in pro-Israeli Republican circles at the time, held close ties to the Reagan administration.
[13] Ibid. Today called the Republican Jewish Federation, the National Jewish Coalition was instrumental in deepening ties between the Reagan administration, the GOP and the American-Jewish community during the 1980s.
[14] Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, p.560.
[15] Negotiations for a major 'rear staging base' for the RDF in Egypt dragged on for many years over Egyptian reluctance to allow a major US presence and high run-on costs. Talks were ultimately terminated in 1985.

on the island of Diego Garcia.[16] Documents relating to the subsequent 1983 establishment of CENTCOM, with its headquarters in Tampa, Florida, demonstrate Israel's trepidation towards this evolving US-Saudi relationship. 'A major USCENTCOM presence in Saudi Arabia', reads one such document found at the RRPL, would 'be objectionable to Israel which sees any moves to strengthen the US-Saudi relationship as potentially harmful to its own special relationship with the US'.[17]

Mindful of the need to preserve its special relationship, Israeli leaders were keen to propose Israel as a key staging area for the RDF. 'Israel, as a permanent friend and ally of the US, is ready to cooperate in shaping a greater American role in the Middle East', noted foreign minister Shamir in an early meeting with the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Republican Senator John Tower, during a tour of Israel in early February 1981. 'It is not only possible, but necessary for the US and Israel to have a strong partnership in this regard. […] Israel will be in the Middle East forever, and will remain a democratic, reliable friend.'[18]

While Senator Tower reminded his host that the US would have a 'political problem with the Arab states were we to presume upon Israel to use its facilities', Shamir countered by offering Israeli territory 'for pre-positioning US equipment' to be used by the RDF in the event of an emergency, contending that 'fewer political problems with simply storing equipment' existed. The US was however seeking forward bases in close vicinity to the Persian Gulf, a dynamic that rendered Israeli (and Egyptian) facilities 'far from the area of concern', noted Tower, who quickly moved to reassure Israeli leaders about the US's parallel efforts to remedy the US's 'deficiencies in air and sea lift' in the Eastern Mediterranean but also extending to the Persian Gulf.[19]

Media sources shine further light on the concrete ideas being discussed in the realm of US-Israeli strategic cooperation. As noted by a 1981 *New York Times* article, 'a recent study by American experts for the Pentagon found that simply because of geography, arms stationed in Israel could be flown relatively quickly either to the Persian Gulf or to Western Europe, meaning that whatever was stockpiled in Israel could also be considered for potential NATO use'.[20]

Such studies placed Israel in the context of contingency planning for the Persian Gulf and the RDF, but also with regard to Western Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and NATO, signalling the beginnings of efforts to integrate Israel into the Western alliance framework. These would continue throughout the

[16] Expansion work on the US military base of Diego Garcia began in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution. Described as the 'most dramatic build-up of any location since the Vietnam War era', the new base was operational in 1986. See, "Diego Garcia 'Camp Justice'," GlobalSecurity.org, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/diego-garcia.htm.
[17] RRPL, Near East and South Asian Affairs: NSC Records, "Middle East-Centcom," Box 90585.
[18] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, Israel (02/09/1981-02/09/1981), Box 37, Cable 63568.
[19] Ibid.
[20] David K. Shipler, "US-Israel Strategic Link: Both Sides Take Stock," *NYT*, 2 October 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/02/world/us-israel-strategic-link-both-sides-take-stock.html?pagewanted=print.

Reagan era, with a number of scholars arguing that the vast sums of US aid and military supplies provided to Israel were more than matched by Israeli services provided to advance US interests.[21] Ultimately, by the mid-to-late 1980s, such efforts were translated into debates on 'equal treatment' and the 'NATOization'[22] of Israel, leading ultimately to the recognition of Israel (along with Egypt) as a 'major non-NATO ally' by the US in 1987.

Tangible indications of a new propensity to engage with Israel on strategic and military cooperation are provided by a number of sources and individuals who worked in the Reagan administration. Howard Teicher, who in early 1981 had moved from the Pentagon to the State Department and was to emerge as a key supporter for enhanced US-Israeli strategic cooperation, recalls how he had proposed Israel's Ben Gurion international airport as a staging area for US B-52 bombers for the RDF in the early 1980s.[23]

While the plan was scrapped due to opposition from the highest levels, in particular from Secretary of Defence Weinberger, Teicher emphasized how 'a new receptivity to the notion of strategic cooperation with Israel' was taking shape 'throughout the national security and foreign policy bureaucracy'[24] in the Reagan administration. Teicher describes how there existed 'a broad range of potential benefits for the US military posture in the Middle East if America and Israel could [undertake] genuine strategic cooperation'.[25] 'Israel's geographic location […] air and naval facilities [could serve as] excellent staging areas, depots and distribution points for US forces embarking on various operations in Southwest Asia'[26] and beyond, from the Eastern Mediterranean, in Syria and Lebanon, to the Red Sea and Ethiopia, Yemen and the Persian Gulf.

Yet, by the early 1980s 'Washington's relationship with Israel did not, in fact, have an operative strategic dimension', recalled Teicher; 'not only was there no planning for combined operations, exercise activity or other forms of routine military cooperation, but most US government officials, be they civilian or military, went out of their way to deny reports of US-Israeli military ties and to resist all efforts to promote strategic cooperation'.[27]

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[21] Spiegel, "Israel's Value to the US", op.cit; Steven Rosen, "The Strategic Value of Israel," AIPAC Papers on US-Israel Relations, No.1, Washington DC, 1983.
[22] Global Jewish Advocacy, "Review of the Year 1988," American Jewish Year Book, New York, 1988, p.161, http://www.ajcarchives.org/ajc_data/files/1988_4_uscivicpolitical.pdf.
[23] Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit, pp.114-6. Media reports from 1980 also make reference to this possibility. George G. Wilson, "Egypt Base Could Cost $400 Million," *WP*, 26 August 1980, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/08/26/egypt-base-could-cost-400-million/4a4183fb-303b-4ba3-8339-0d044bff12a9/?utm_term=.8dc0594fd397.
[24] Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit, p.115. Teicher also recounts his relationship with Dennis Ross, noting how 'one area we agreed on in particular was the need for strategic cooperation with Israel' (p.91). Interestingly, following the signing of the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal, Ross called on the Obama administration to send B-52 bombers to Israel to assuage its security concerns, enhance Israel's deterrence capacity and repair damaged relations. Dennis Ross, "Former Obama Advisor: Send B-52 Bombers to Israel," *Ha'aretz*, 17 July 2015, https://www.haaretz.com/former-obama-adviser-send-b-52-bombers-to-israel-1.5307262.
[25] Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit., p.95.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., p.92.

Joining Teicher as a key supporter of strategic cooperation with Israel was Dennis Ross, who worked on the NSC staff and in the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment during the 1980s. Ross, together with Paul Wolfowitz, was also involved in the early strategic dialogue with Israel under the late Ford and Carter administrations and has retained a key role on US Middle East policy and the relationship with Israel in successive administrations ever since.

In an interview with the author, Ross noted how 'a new logic was behind this push to institutionalize the relationship. A group of people, and I was one of them, wanted to counterbalance what had been a traditional viewpoint within the bureaucracy that saw the US-Israel relationship as all costs and no gains. We wanted to show that support for Israel also held important benefits for US interests', emphasizing that 'Israeli capabilities could act as a force multiplier' for US interests and that 'pre-positioning allowed for greater and quicker force projection' into the region.[28]

Yet, on the other side of the debate, the sceptics of US-Israeli strategic cooperation contended that Israeli services and capabilities, particularly in the event of an all-out war with the Soviets, were rather limited. Moreover, any such contribution would likely be more than offset by the expected damage it would cause to US-Arab cooperation. Weinberger, like other Pentagon officials, repeatedly cautioned to 'keep in mind the limitations of Israeli capabilities in the event of a US-Soviet war in the region'.[29] Indeed, the sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation had long argued that a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would be needed as a precondition to allow the US to make full use of Israeli capabilities and strategic location.

Such views were also held by State Department officials, including Nicholas Veliotes, who had worked in the Carter administration and stayed on as Assistance Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in the early Reagan years, before moving to become US ambassador to Egypt in 1984. In an interview with the author, Veliotes explained how 'during the Cold War, in any scenario involving hostilities with the USSR, Israel was a non-factor. During the Iran-Iraq war, Israel would be of no use militarily if we had to deploy to the Gulf in the event of an Iranian break-through in southern Iraq'. Throughout the early 1980s a number of individuals in the administration, the 'neo-cons' as Veliotes described them, 'continued to put forward proposals such as deploying to the Gulf with Israeli troops'. These proposals were 'designed to support their view that Israel was, indeed, a strategic asset. To this idea, I noted that under such circumstances our Arab friends, with tears in their eyes, would fight us! […] The whole illusory concept of Israel as a strategic asset was motivated and sustained by the exigencies of US domestic politics',[30] concluded the former Reagan era official.

[28] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[29] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: National Security Planning Group (NSPG) Records, 1981-1987, NSPG 0073 10/18/1983 [Middle East].
[30] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.

Significantly, there was a degree of overlap between sceptics and supporters for enhanced US-Israel cooperation, where they diverged however was on the sequencing and tactics of this cooperation. The sceptics were not opposed the idea of integrating Israel into the Western alliance framework. They too agreed on the need for the US to stand by Israel and employ this relationship to strengthen US influence in the region, and they too wanted to devise means to limit Israel's adventurist tendencies and increase US leverage over Israeli policy.

A 1981 article by Shai Feldman in *Foreign Affairs* goes some way toward summarizing the views of the sceptics and their underlying embrace of the concept of 'linkage' between US-Israel relations, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israel-Arab relations.[31] 'Israel should be made an integral part of the alliance's system to secure Western interests in the Persian Gulf', argued Feldman. 'Negotiating Israel's withdrawal [from Arab and Palestinian lands] should be linked to its new role in the alliance: only if the latter is achieved would Israel be able to implement the former. […] The United States should welcome such a quid pro quo. […] Without the assumption of such a role, Israel would not make the aforementioned concessions'.

This approach 'would differ markedly from past suggestions that Israel should trade its control of the West Bank for an American security guarantee', noted the author. 'Whereas a guarantee would institutionalize dependence—with a debilitating effect on the nation's moral—the concept advanced here would establish *interdependence*. Israel would be dependent on the Western alliance, but the alliance would also become more *dependent* upon Israel'.[32]

Such an emphasis on linkage was deeply opposed by the supporters of strategic cooperation. These argued that an explicit linkage and quid pro quo would undermine as opposed to increase US leverage over Israel, weakening Israel's sense of security, diluting support for the US's Arab outreach while not succeeding in restraining Israeli unilateral tendencies, which would only increase due to Israel's growing threat perceptions. Documents from the RRPL demonstrate the extent of these debates.

A response to Shai Feldman's article delivered to Douglas Feith, at the time a member of Reagan's NSC, in early May 1981 and written by Marvin Feuerwerger, a member of the Pentagon's Policy Planning staff, is particularly revealing:

> I object to the explicit linkage of cooperation with Israel and negotiations on the future of the West Bank. […] I believe instead that by refusing to move toward cooperation with Israel we [the US] have hurt ourselves in the past and would both hinder out capabilities and endanger the prospect of future movement in the peace process. […] If our goal is to develop Israeli faith in our commitment to Israel's security and in our joint commitment to Western interests, we should first pursue cooperation as the *foundation* for US-Israeli relations in all spheres. Restored US

[31] Shai Feldman, "Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Next Step," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.59, No.4 (Spring 1981), pp.756-780.
[32] Ibid, p.767 [emphasis added].

> credibility within Israel will undoubtedly assist any future negotiation process without the need for explicit linkage to that process.[33]

These passages present the broad contours of the debate between supporters and sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation in the Reagan administration. As a result of the pro-Israel predisposition of many administration officials, the general tendency was to approach questions related to Israeli contributions of US strategic interests in a favourable light. Israeli opposition to Arab arms sales was a challenge, but such opposition was deemed easy to overcome, if only the US could 'sweeten the pot for Israel'[34] with mounting forms of compensation. 'I know the Jewish lobby very well', noted Vice President Bush in one NSC meeting on 1 April 1981 where arms sales to Saudi Arabia were discussed. 'I feel that if there is a range of quid's for the quo, we can get the [Saudi arms] deal if we orchestrate our tactics properly'.[35]

5.3 Expected Dividends of US-Israel Strategic Cooperation

In order to better contextualize the decision-making process and balance of opinions that led to the institutionalization of the US-Israel relationship, there is a need to carefully consider a range of effective benefits and services that Israel could provide the US administration. These ranged from political to strategic and ideational considerations, and a holistic appraisal is necessary in order to clarify the motivating drivers behind this push to institutionalize relations with Israel during the 1980s and the expected dividends in store for the US as it moved forward with this process.

Strategic Dividends

Beginning from the strategic domain, the above passages have highlighted a number of rationales—relating to geographic positioning, advanced military and technological preparedness and interoperability with US forces and technologies—that created the groundwork for enhanced strategic dialogue with Israel. While these services were debated by some, particularly in the Pentagon, few disputed that Israeli covert and intelligence capabilities were important assets for the US, especially when it came to receiving information on developments in Iran or in gathering intelligence on Soviet moves in Syria and Lebanon. Covert and intelligence cooperation would gradually emerge as the most tangible strategic dividends provided by Israel to the US.

While US-Israeli intelligence cooperation stretches back to the early 1950s, growing in particular following the secret 1968 CYR Agreement signed by Lyndon Johnson, during the 1980s the rising threat of terrorism, combined with Reagan's fixation on US hostages in Lebanon, would increase the urgency of this cooperation. This also stemmed from the 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut, which

[33] RRPL, Kemp Files, Israel (05/01/81-05/19/81), RAC Box 2 [emphasis added].
[34] The term was used by Caspar Weinberger in a NSC meeting on 1 April 1980. RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files: Records 1981-88, NSC 00007 04/01/81.
[35] Ibid.

effectively decimated the CIA's capabilities in the Arab world. While intelligence ties and covert cooperation would emerge as tangible areas of US-Israeli strategic cooperation, many within the administration debated whether these 'services' were enough to justify a further upgrading of the relationship as these were commonly framed as the minimum that could be expected from Israel in exchange for the US's generous aid.

When it came to Iran, a number of high-level Israeli officials repeatedly argued during the 1980s that the US should employ Israeli contacts and middlemen to open a secret channel of dialogue with so-called 'moderate' elements within the Islamic Republic.[36] These discussions, which stretch back to the earliest days of the Reagan administration and actually began during the 1980 campaign, would subsequently mutate into the conduit for the Iran-Contra affair.[37] In 1980–81, news broke that Israel was secretly selling Iran military spare parts, actions that clearly contravened stated US policy but which according to some had received tacit, if unofficial, approval by certain officials in the Raegan administration.[38]

Further Israeli services in the strategic domain extended to the Third World, both in Africa—in such places as Chad, South Africa and Angola, where the US and Israel secretly cooperated in seeking to rollback Soviet influence—and in Central America. In both areas, congressional opposition was limiting the administration's ability to fulfil Reagan's campaign pledge to 'win' the Cold War. Israeli services in these domains could help circumvent congressional bans on the sale of weaponry or the sending of trainers. Significantly, many Arab states—including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan—were also involved in assisting the US's covert offensive in the Third World, in particular by providing funding and Soviet arms to US-linked proxies in Central America, Asia and Africa.

While much of this US-Israeli covert cooperation during the 1980s remains classified, a number of authors have begun to dissect this secret cooperation. Media sources from the time also make veiled references to such cooperation.[39] In August 1981, for instance, Israel's Economic Affairs Minister, Yaacov Meridor, was quoted as saying:

> We are going to ask you, the United States government, not to compete with us in arms. […] Don't compete with us in Taiwan. Don't compete with us in South Africa. Don't compete with us

[36] See, Robert Parry, "When Israel/Neocons Favored Iran," *Consortiumnews*, 28 July 2015, https://consortiumnews.com/2015/07/28/when-israelneocons-favored-iran/; A compendium of relevant official documents relating to the Iran-Contra affair is provided by Brown University, https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/documents.php; A comprehensive account is provided by Byrne, *Iran-Contra*, op.cit.

[37] This research does not address the so-called 'October Surprise' scandal and the freeing of US hostages in Iran on the day of Reagan's swearing in as 40th President, due to a lack of primary sources. Nicholas Veliotes described the theory as 'nonsense' in an interview with the author.

[38] Robert Parry, "Rethinking Iran-Contra: A Much Darker Story?," *Global Research*, 30 May 2016, https://www.globalresearch.ca/rethinking-iran-contra-a-much-darker-story/19992.

[39] See for instance, Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, "US-Israeli-Central American Connection," *The Link, Americans for Middle East Understanding*, Vol.18, No.4 (November 1985); Milton Jamail and Margo Gutierrez, "Israel in Central America," MERIP 140, Vol.16 (May/June 1986); Dan Goodgame, "Israel Asks US to Finance Sales to Latin America," *Miami Herald*, 13 December 1982.

> in the Caribbean or in other countries where you couldn't directly do it. […] Let us do it. […] You sell the ammunition and equipment by proxy. Israel will be your proxy. And this will be worked out with a certain agreement with the United States where we will have certain markets […], which will be left for us.[40]

A leaked copy of an official US General Accountability Office report on US assistance to Israel in 1983 demonstrates how US arms deliveries to Israel had been consistently downsized in official published figures, with the extra material most likely being sent or sold by Israel to third parties across the many hotspots in the Third World.[41]

Political Dividends

Moving to the political domain, benefits were expected not only in the form of assuaging Israeli and congressional opposition to enhanced arm sales to the Arabs, but also in the consolidated support of these same actors in aiding US efforts to overcome congressional restrictions such as the Clark and the Boland Amendments discussed in Chapter 3. It was the covert domains, and Israeli 'subsidiary services'[42] in support of Reagan's promised 'revolution' in foreign affairs, that became particularly attractive for high-level Reagan officials. While the US's Arab allies could provide money and arms, they could not compete with the vast influence enjoyed by Israel in the US domestic political setting, one important dynamic when weighing and comparing the potential dividends that could flow from the parallel US-Israel and US-Arab strategic dialogues.

Moreover, and in light of Reagan's success in attracting 40 percent of the Jewish-American vote in 1980, officials believed there were a number of deeper political benefits in store if the US progressed with strategic cooperation with Israel. In this respect, GOP officials had long sought to attract votes and funding from the traditionally Democrat-leaning Jewish-American community. It was in this domain that personalities like Max Fisher and his National Jewish Coalition as well as Reagan's successive Special Representatives for Jewish Affairs would become indispensable for the administration's objectives of maintaining close relations with the Jewish-American community and Israel. As noted by Thomas Pickering in an interview with the author, the objective was to 'peel away some votes from the Democratic Party'[43] and, in particular, seek to secure funding for the administration and the Republicans from major Jewish-American organizations which had moved to assume a more conservative outlook matching the priorities of both Reagan and the Israeli Likud.

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[40] Mel Laytner, "Israel hopes to double arms sales—with US assist," *United Press International*, 17 August 1981, http://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/08/17/Israel-hopes-to-double-arms-sales-with-US-assist/7425366868800/.
[41] See, Claudia Wright, "US Assistance to the State of Israel Report by the Comptroller General of the United States," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.13, No.1 (Autumn 1983), pp.123-36.
[42] Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle*, op.cit., pp.23-7.
[43] Author Interview, Thomas Pickering, Washington DC, September 2015. Thomas Pickering served as US ambassador to Israel between 1985 and 1988.

Documents from the private Max Fisher archive demonstrate these efforts. One memorandum dated 3 February 1981 and entitled 'Liaison Between the American Jewish Community and the Reagan Administration' sent to Edwin Meese III, White House Counsellor to President Reagan (1981–85), is particularly revealing. It lists four priorities for this dialogue, including 'to provide a mechanism for planning how to enlist the political support of the American Jewish community on matters of concern to the Administration' and to 'further the effort to broaden the base of the Republican Party in the Jewish Community'.[44] To achieve these goals Fisher proposed the establishment of an 'ad hoc Jewish Advisory Committee' made up of high-level administration officials, including the President, Vice President, and Secretaries of State and Defence, that could meet on a regular basis with key members of the organized Jewish-American community, and in particular those who shared the administration's ideological inclinations. Such contacts, noted Fisher, would serve as 'indication to the Jewish community that the Administration recognizes the importance of the Jewish vote and the necessity for maintaining this in the future'.[45] 'This committee should be composed principally of the key leadership of the [Reagan] Campaign […] who could again be very helpful in the campaigns for the future'.[46]

When weighing the expected dividends that would flow from these efforts to institutionalize the US-Israel relationship, domestic political considerations must also be taken into account. Indeed, as noted previously, depictions of Israel as a 'asset' for US policy always maintained both a 'political' (domestic) and 'strategic' (systemic) dimension, with the former generally being more influential than the latter.

Moral-Ideational Dividends

Given the traditional weight of the twin pillars of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities in US support for Israel, a number of moral-ideational rationales also need to be considered in the context of these efforts to institutionalize the relationship under Reagan. These related in the first instance to the need to support a reliable and democratic ally, Israel, but were also connected to a deeper set of considerations tied to US efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict as a necessary condition for regional stability and enhanced US influence across the Middle East. Indeed, and under the broad category of ideational considerations, the institutionalization of US-Israel strategic cooperation was framed as a means to advance the US's interests and 'prepare the ground' for peace in the region. By enhancing Israeli security and military edge, and demonstrating that support for Israel would remain a constant of US foreign policy, US officials believed they were moving towards the creation of 'more Egypts' for Israel to make peace with.

[44] The Max Fisher Archives, "Ed Meese III Memorandum", 3 February 1982, p.1, http://maxmfisher.org/resource-center/document/ed-meese-iii-liaison-between-american-jewish-community-and-reagan.
[45] Ibid.pp.2-3.
[46] Ibid.p.3. Max Fisher was also involved in the so-called 'Operation Independence', a private initiative to raise funds to help Israel's ailing economy in the mid-1980s, at precisely the same time as US and Israeli officials were intent on negotiating the US's first ever FTA with Israel. See, "Prominent Businessmen Launch Worldwide Initiative to Help Develop Israel's Economy," *JTA*, 1 May 1985, https://www.jta.org/1985/05/01/archive/prominent-businessmen-launch-worldwide-initiative-to-help-develop-israels-economy.

Moreover, by strengthening Israel's capabilities and military might, US officials also believed they would enhance Israel's propensity to engage in territorial withdrawals needed for such peace agreement with the Arabs, thereby ostensibly enhancing US leverage over Israeli policy. This is what administration officials meant when they framed arms sales to both Israel and the Arab states as being 'conducive to peace'.

A Fragile 'Compromise': Restraining Israel

As a result of these considerations, a growing number of officials in the Reagan administration became convinced that overall a range of potential benefits—political, strategic and ideational—were in store for the US if it moved to institutionalize its relationship with Israel. While there was no debating that the US's true strategic priorities lay with the numerically superior and energy-rich Arab states, a holistic appraisal of potential dividends of US-Israel strategic cooperation cannot be ignored, particularly in the covert, intelligence and political domains. Such considerations would go some way towards bridging the gaps between supporters and sceptics of US-Israel strategic cooperation, as both sides of this debate could take solace in a number of expected dividends from these processes of institutionalization.

The recommendations outlined by Max Fisher were therefore taken up by the administration, particularly following the first 'crisis' year of 1981, when Israel and the US repeatedly clashed in public on the Reagan administration's efforts to approve major arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and on a series of Israeli unilateral military actions in the Middle East. Indeed, another key rationale behind the institutionalization of ties included avoiding public crisis with Israel. As noted by Daniel C. Kurtzer, 'the idea of strategic cooperation was also born out of a desire to replicate something of the understandings the US has with Europe and European allies'. Here, and even in the midst of 'top-level political crises and tensions, the relationship persists and does not collapse' or spill into the domestic political scene, noted the former US ambassador to Egypt and Israel (2001–05) and State Department official during the Reagan administration, during which time he also served in Israel between 1982 and 1986.[47]

There was indeed an urgent need to limit and contain the occurrence of public spats with Israeli leadership. These revolved around a number of unilateral Israeli actions that took place in coincidence with the US's efforts to restore credibility with its Arab allies in the first year of the administration. First came the Israeli-Syrian missile crisis (April–May 1981), then the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor on 7 June, followed on 17 July by a major bombing raid on the PLO offices in Beirut, which caused over 120 dead and 550 wounded according to media sources at the time.[48] These events, like the subsequent Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights in December 1981 and the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon in June 1982, caused consternation in Washington, not least in light of the fact

[47] Author Interview, Daniel C. Kurtzer, New York City, September 2015.
[48] David B. Ottaway, "Israeli Jets Bomb Beirut; Palestinian Toll Heavy," *WP*, 18 July 1981.

that the US was also relying on Saudi Arabia to mediate with Syria and PLO factions in Lebanon, while seeking to coax it (and Jordan) to join the Camp David process.

Israel's military raid to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osirak, employing US-supplied fighter jets and violating Saudi Arabian airspace on route to Iraq, reinforced US requests for prior consultation by Israel. While no doubt secretly admiring Israel's resolve and military prowess,[49] Reagan officials were 'thunder-struck',[50] fearing the action would bury US efforts to convince Arab states to agree to US basing rights and increased access. 'From the standpoint of the Saudis, the Israeli attack can only be regarded as an act of war also involving violations of their sovereignty',[51] noted one diplomatic cable from the US embassy in Riyadh. 'Unless it gets the right message, Israel may feel it can do anything', complained Arab ambassadors to the US in a joint meeting with President Reagan on 11 June 1981.[52]

In the wake of the Israeli raid on Iraq, administration officials momentarily suspended the delivery of F-16 jets, to send a signal to both Israel and the Arab states and seek to restore US credibility. 'We did the minimum we could do under our law', noted President Reagan during a tense meeting with Israeli ambassador to the US Ephraim Evron on 11 June. 'You should understand we are not re-evaluating our relations with Israel; we are not engaged in any reassessment of our relations', continued Reagan, referring to the 1975 'reassessment crisis' during the Ford administration. 'We were, however, caught by surprise. […] We are concerned about the impact of the air strike on our ability to proceed with the peace process. […] We must maintain credibility with both sides'.[53]

Israel, however, was seeking assurances that the suspension of F-16 deliveries would soon be lifted. 'Israel considers the suspension of arms supplies in the pipeline to be a grave step—a kind of ultimate step. […] It will be perceived that there is deterioration in US-Israel relations', said the Israeli ambassador. This will 'weaken Israel in the eyes of Arab leaders. They may harden their negotiating stances and engage in a series of moves that challenge Israel'.[54] Significantly, the same conceptual approach would later be adopted by Reagan himself, as evidenced by his diary entry for 9 June, in which he noted that the US will not be 'turning on Israel' as 'that would be an invitation for the Arabs to attack'.[55]

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[49] An embassy cable by Samuel Lewis, US ambassador to Israel, notes how the attack will 'instil a healthy fear of Israel's military capabilities'. RRPL, Near East And South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-1989, "Israeli Raid Crisis (Cables)," Box 91141. In a 2010 article, Richard Allen, foreign policy advisor to Reagan during the 1980 campaign and his first NSC Advisor, recalled how Reagan's reaction upon hearing of Israel's raid on Iraq was to exclaim 'boys will be boys'. See, Richard Allen, "Reagan's Secure Line," *NYT Opinion*, 6 June 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/opinion/07allen.html.
[50] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit, p.161.
[51] RRPL, Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-1989, "Israeli Raid Crisis (Cables)," Box 91141.
[52] RRPL, Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-1989, "President's Meeting with Five Arab Ambassadors re Israeli Raid," Box 91141.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, op.cit., p.24.

These points encapsulate the underlying catch-22 of US policy towards Israel. On the one hand Israeli support was needed to allow the US to focus on the Arabs and overcome domestic and congressional opposition. As a result, Israel would be amply compensated for arms sales to Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies, but there was an expectation that Israel's opposition would be muted.

Yet, by compensating Israel, the US was effectively enhancing Israeli capabilities for unilateral action, which in turn was further harming US-Arab dialogue.[56] When the US then sought to restrain Israel, or put daylight between Washington and Tel Aviv in an effort to strengthen US credibility, Israel would contend that the US was weakening an ally, inviting an Arab attack and undermining prospects for peace. Supporters of US-Israel strategic cooperation in the administration would add to the debate, emphasizing that Israel's propensity for unilateral action actually increased in times of US-Israeli tensions, due to feelings of Israeli isolation. As a result, the most that presidents have mustered against Israel in terms of accountability and conditionality has generally been restricted to temporary suspension of a given arms delivery or, in the most extreme cases, a decision to abstain in the UN on a resolution critical of Israel.

This catch-22 helps explain the 'tail wagging the dog' scenario, a dynamic that is often present in US-Israeli relations, as it clarifies the extent to which Israel can resist and even undermine elements of US policy it deems counter to its interests. Indeed, this dynamic was slowly but surely cemented during the 1980s in the context of the bourgeoning strategic dialogue between the two actors, a dialogue that would considerably augment the grounds on which Israel could influence or undermine emerging US policy towards the region.

5.4 Compensation, Linkage and the Search for Leverage

The decision to delay the delivery of F-16s to Israel in the wake of the Iraqi and Beirut bombings, both of which used US arms and were therefore in violation of export laws, also came in the midst of complex negotiations with Congress (and Israel) over a $8.5 billion sale of weaponry, including AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia.

The largest US military sale to date, talks on the sale almost consumed the full first year of the Reagan administration. The negotiations would result in significant degrees of path dependency for future US policy vis-à-vis Israel, becoming a test of US resolve in backing its primary strategic priority in the Middle

[56] An article published by the CIA's Centre for the Study of Intelligence notes how Israel used satellite imagery obtained from the US to plan and carry out the bombing raid on Iraq. Increased access to the intelligence had been granted in the context of negotiations for the approval of the US-Saudi arms package. The US realized that Israel had been obtaining intelligence and moved to restrict Israeli access to US satellite imagery following the raid. Reagan's CIA Director would ignore the regulation, providing raw intelligence to the Israelis with little oversight. See, E. L. Zorn, "Expanding the Horizon. Israel's Quest for Satellite Intelligence," Centre for the Study of Intelligence, Vol.44, No.5 (1991), https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol44no5/html/v44i5a04p.htm.

East—defence of the Persian Gulf—with considerable political capital and the active intervention of president Reagan.

Indeed, while Reagan was conducting preparatory talks with Congress over the proposed Saudi sale, he was also deflecting criticism for having delayed the shipment of F-16s to Israel. The suspension was ultimately lifted on 17 August. As noted by one media source at the time, 'had President Reagan tried to penalize Israel for the Iraq and Beirut raids by holding up the impounded planes any longer, he almost certainly would have been defeated in the Congress'[57] on the proposed Saudi package.

The Saudi arms deal was officially announced on 24 August 1981 and approved on 28 October by a slim but hard-fought margin of 52 to 48 votes.[58] The deal, itself the a practical expression of the Reagan-Carter Doctrine of building up the defences of the Persian Gulf, would establish an important precedent, becoming a forerunner to the $60 billion 10-year Saudi arms deal signed in 2010 by the Obama administration, followed by further sales to Saudi Arabia by the Trump administration in 2016.[59] The precedent was not only limited to the US-Saudi relationship or the Persian Gulf, however. It also included Israel, which received ample compensation by way of superior quantities and qualities of weapons in accordance with the emerging QME commitment.

The AWACS sale would therefore create considerable degrees of path dependency in both the US-Saudi and US-Israeli relationships, solidifying a practice of compensation for Israel that remains in place today. Indeed, following the approval of the 2010 multibillion US arms sale to Saudi Arabia, the Obama administration embarked on long and complex negotiations with Israel over the next 10-year military supply agreement, ultimately signed in late 2016 and amounting to $38 billion between FY2019-FY2028.[60]

The Reagan administration was quick to internalize the lessons drawn from the AWACS experience. Indeed, while numerous new arms sales were proposed, negotiated and even approved by the administration, these would rarely receive go-ahead from Congress, and never did the administration expose itself in the way it did during 1981 on the AWACS issue.[61] Rather, promised sales were delayed or cancelled altogether, causing deep annoyance among Arab allies. Towards the end of the administration in 1988, Frank C. Carlucci, Reagan's second Secretary of Defence, was

[57] Joseph C. Harsch, "Why Reagan chooses Saudi arms deal for test of strength with begin," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 August 1981, https://www.csmonitor.com/1981/0828/082847.html.
[58] The deal would be formally submitted to Congress on 1 October 1981 and approved on 28 October. A prior announcement of the sale had been made on 21 April, but the official submission was delayed. On 24 August, the package deal is again announced by the State Department. "Following is a Chronology of the events that led…," *UPI*, 28 October 1981, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/10/28/Following-is-a-chronology-of-the-events-that-led/9550373093200/.
[59] Deborah Jerome, "Is Big Saudi Arms Sale a Good Idea?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 24 September 2010, https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/big-saudi-arms-sale-good-idea.
[60] Sharp, "US Assistance," (2018) op.cit.
[61] See, Charles R. Babcock, "Pro-Israel Lobbyists Target Sale of US Arms to Arabs," *WP*, 7 August 1986, https://goo.gl/nVGKr4; Bernard Gwertzman, "New Arms Sales to Mideast Ended for a Few Months," *NYT*, 31 January 1985.

quoted in the media as lamenting, 'I see foreign soldiers and advisers on Jordanian and Saudi installations, providing training and maintenance assistance, where American servicemen have served until now. […] The real casualty, if the Congress ultimately deals the United States out of a military partnership in the Arab world, will be the peace process itself—a result equally damaging to Israel as well as moderate Arab states'.[62]

The Israeli government would therefore receive ample compensation and inducements every time new proposed arms sales for the Arabs were discussed, even when congressional opposition ultimately undermined these sales. While justified on the basis of the QME concept and the 'peace process', the underlying rationale remained that of convincing Israel to mute its opposition to US-Arab cooperation, the key central priority of the Reagan administration. When this did not occur, the US could not renege on its commitments, as such efforts would cause a storm of contestation, potentially undermining other US priorities or policies. Instead, a further round of inducements and compensation would have to be approved, even though officials were well aware that such approaches essentially amounted to 'kicking the can down the road', as increased Israeli accommodation would only be short-term and largely cosmetic in form.

Indeed, by the time the US officially petitioned Congress on the Saudi AWACS deal in mid-August 1981, Israel had already received significant forms of inducement from the US. These included a grant of 15 F-15 fighter jets, a commitment by the Pentagon to buy $200 million in Israeli-made equipment every year, increased access to US satellite intelligence, an agreement to allow Israel to export its Kifir fighter jet (which contained US technology) to third countries, beginning with Ecuador, and a hesitant agreement by the US to gradually transform yearly US foreign military financing from loans to outright grants.[63] Once the formal AWACS package was sent to Congress, however, further forms of compensation were expected by Israel.

As this complex balancing effort progressed, the administration was careful to 'decouple' sales to Israel and the Arab states, never linking them in public.[64] Reagan officials, particularly Secretary of State Alexander Haig, avoided using the word 'compensation' when framing the issue of US military supplies to Israel. During his first trip to Israel in April 1981, Haig refused to endorse the word 'compensation' in a joint press conference with Begin. In a letter to Reagan dated 13 April 1981, the Israeli leader thanked the

[62] Melissa Healy, "Carlucci Chides Foes of US Arms Sales to Arab World," *LAT*, 22 October 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-10-22/news/mn-288_1_arms-sales.
[63] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files: Records, 1981-88, "NSC 00003 02/18/1981"; "NSC 00004 02/27/1981"; "NSC 00007 04/01/1981". Also, Bernard Gwertzman, "Israel Asks US for Gift of Jets, Citing Saudi Sale," *NYT*, 4 April 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/04/world/israel-asks-us-for-gift-of-jets-citing-saudi-sale.html.
[64] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files: Records, 1981-88, "NSC 00003 02/18/1981".

Secretary of State for his language, particularly his reference to a 'permanent alliance' with Israel. Haig's 'replies to questions put to him during our meetings with the media were gratifying', noted Begin.[65]

Such examples demonstrate the difficult balancing act facing US policymakers as they sought to augment the strategic relationship with Israel on the basis of US priorities and objectives. From the standpoint of the US these objectives included: (a) overcoming opposition to US-Arab strategic dialogue, (b) limiting domestic political costs of this outreach to the Arab states, or of clashing with Israel in public on the extent of this outreach and (c) enhancing US influence and ability to restrain Israeli unilateral tendencies while staying true to the US's commitment to provide for Israeli security and QME. Such an approach would therefore also prove conducive to advancing the US strategic, political and ideational objectives outlined above, while allowing the US to better balance and perhaps even reconcile through 'strategic consensus' the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of its foreign policy.

Ideally, the best means of advancing this set of objectives while deriving the expected benefits of enhanced US-Israel strategic cooperation, would see the US and Israel negotiate a formal treaty of alliance. Here the respective roles and responsibilities of the two actors would be clearly delineated, as would accountability mechanisms for potential violations. Yet a number of obstacles prevented the US from pursuing this approach. Indeed, Israeli leaders had long objected to any formal alliance framework, which they feared would constrain Israel's freedom of action and excessively irk the Soviet Union, potentially endangering Jewish communities living in Soviet territory. Moreover, the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict prevented the US for providing clear security guarantees, not least due to an absence of agreed and recognized borders delineating the State of Israel, while the US's relations with a number of Arab countries that remained in an official state of war with Israel further prevented the pursuit of this option.

As a result, debates focussed on more flexible arrangements, capable of meeting Israeli requests for support while facilitating the US aim of muting Israeli opposition to US-Arab strategic relations and enhancing (it was hoped) the US's ability to influence Israeli policy. Implicit in such debates was also the hope that by assuaging Israeli security fears, and increasing US leverage over Israeli policy, US actions were 'preparing the ground' for peace by enhancing Israel's propensity for compromise while working to create 'more Egypts'.

Yet, from the standpoint of Israel, the expected benefits of strategic cooperation did not match those of the US. Indeed, Israeli leaders had opted against a formal alliance treaty with the US *precisely* because they wished to preserve freedom of action, not be restrained by their superpower patron or risk being sacrificed on the altar of US-Arab interests. As noted by Dan Raviv and Yossi

[65] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Head of State File: Records, 1981-89, "Israel: Prime Minister Begin (8103572-8106360)," Box 16.

Melman, Begin and Sharon believed that 'strategic cooperation should add to Israel's freedom of action. They argued that the United States should trust Israel to protect Western interests in the Middle East—adding that the United States might well be spared embarrassment if Israel did not turn to it for permission every time action was needed'.[66]

With these fundamental (miss)appreciations in mind the two sides prepared for the first face-to-face meeting between Prime Minister Begin and President Reagan in early September 1981. Reagan officials—particularly from the State Department—had already conducted a number of meetings with their Israeli counterparts by the time of Begin's visit to Washington. These parallel channels of dialogue had been used to explore what Teicher describes as 'creative thinking'[67] on the Middle East and US-Israel relations, including the topic of strategic cooperation. These channels would also grow out of the contacts developed between the Reagan campaign team and members of the Israeli government, the same contacts and personalities that Max Fisher had referred to in his February 1981 memorandum to the White House.

As a result, when Begin arrived in Washington preparatory discussions had been held on what to propose to Israel in an effort to 'buy off' its opposition to the AWACS sale. It was from this meeting between Reagan and Begin that the first official US-Israel MoU on strategic cooperation emerged. It would be an extremely short-lived document, suspended by the US in December 1981 following Israel's unilateral annexation of the occupied Golan Heights and subsequently cancelled with much fanfare by Begin in reaction to this US suspension.

The process by which the 1981 MoU was negotiated, approved and ultimately suspended encapsulates the contrasting expectations held by Israel and the US on strategic cooperation. It moreover serves as evidence for the key US interest and expected dividend that would stem from this agreement: a more cooperative Israel, one that would feel secure under a *de facto* US security umbrella and therefore less prone to oppose US-Arab strategic dialogue or embark on dangerous military actions that proved damaging to the US's wider priorities.

Begin's reaction to the suspension of the MoU was so strong precisely due to apparent linkage made by the US between its strategic dialogue with Israel and US-Arab relations, a linkage that deeply disturbed Israel's leadership. From Israel's stand point, this linkage served to diminish the strategic nature of US-Israel ties, weakening the quasi-exclusivist relationship while consolidating the image of Israel as the junior partner—an asset but also and more fundamentally a US 'proxy'—in the US's evolving strategic plans for the region.

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[66] Raviv and Melman, *Firends in Deed*, op.cit., pp.167-207, p.203 (quote).
[67] Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit., pp.141-65, p.157 (quote).

5.5 The 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation

The visit by Prime Minister Begin to the US in September 1981 was billed as a moment for the two countries to set aside their differences on the evolving US-Arab strategic dialogue. The visiting Prime Minister was welcomed to the US with full honours as the leader of a major US ally, a dynamic that was carefully prepared by US ambassador Samuel Lewis and deeply appreciated by Begin.[68]

Begin was convinced that shared ideological inclinations would allow him to convince Reagan to expand ties with Israel, transforming it into a major launching pad for the US's strategic plans. Much to his dismay, the one-on-one meeting with the president consisted of a very brief exchange of platitudes—read directly from Reagan's talking points—with little or no time for Begin to outline his own views.[69] Mindful of Reagan's tendency to stray off script, his advisors had been careful to limit the on-on-one time between the two leaders.

On the US side, the overarching priority was to reassure Israel of the US's commitment to its qualitative military edge and receive assurances that Israel would not overtly oppose the US's security dialogue with the Arab world, in particular the sale of AWACS aircraft and F-15 add-ons to Saudi Arabia. While Begin did not hide Israel's opposition to the sale, as the leaders moved toward the meeting with respective cabinet members and advisors, the Israeli leader is said to have remarked to Reagan:

> You, Mr. President, kindly referred to my country just now as a strategic asset. While that certainly has a positive ring to it, I find it, nevertheless, a little patronizing. Given the bipolar world in which we live—democracy versus communism—the cherished values we share, and our confluence of interests on so many fundamental issues, might I suggest the time has come to publicly acknowledge that Israel is not just a strategic asset, but a fully fledged strategic ally.[70]

Reagan's response was more than welcoming. 'I would be happy to acknowledge you in public anywhere, anytime'. Encouraged, Begin proposed 'that consideration be given to an agreed document on this matter—on the strategic relationship between our two countries. […] I do not mean for our own defence, what I do speak about is strategic cooperation in defence of our common interests, in a region which is the target of Soviet expansionism'. Reagan agreed, instructing his Defence Minister to proceed with bilateral discussions on hammering out the details of the document.[71]

Between September and November 1981, numerous meetings were held to translate this idea into reality. The result was the 1981 MoU on US-Israel Strategic Cooperation (see Appendix D), a rather bland and

[68] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit, pp.171-5.
[69] Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, op.cit., pp.567-8.
[70] The contents of the meeting are reported by Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, op.cit., pp.565-72, p.569 (quote); also see, FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit,pp.170-81; FAOHP, "Ambassador Nicholas A. Veliotes," *Oral History Transcript*, 29 January 1990 (published 1998), pp.127-30, https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Veliotes,%20Nicholas%20A.toc.pdf; Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.; Teicher, *Twin Pillars*, op.cit., pp.141-57.
[71] Avner, *The Prime Ministers*, op.cit., p.570.

sterile document, but one that would establish a significant precedent for future US-Israel relations. As noted by Samuel Lewis in his Oral History testimony, 'this [first Reagan-Begin] meeting set the tone for our relationship for the next two years and perhaps even until today'.[72] Negotiations on the 1981 MoU would not be easy however. These reflected the contrasting understanding between Israel and the US on the dividends and responsibilities contained in the document, but also the deep divisions among US officials on the topic of strategic cooperation with Israel. By handing the task of negotiating the MoU to the Defence Department and Weinberger, Reagan had fuelled the ongoing turf wars between Secretary Haig—a key supporter of strategic cooperation with Israel—and the Pentagon, which made no secret of wanting a document 'so general and so empty of content'[73] that it would not seriously risk jeopardizing the US's Arab relations.

US officials were deeply worried by Ariel Sharon's subsequent presentation during the Begin-Reagan meeting in Washington on Israel's military and strategic capabilities. Nicholas Veliotes, who was present at the meeting, recalled in an interview how Sharon 'had maps and many papers and talking points. I remember seeing that all the Arab and Muslim countries were coloured in red and he was saying that Israel could assist US interests throughout this area. All the way from Africa to Iran and the Persian Gulf. Even Egypt was coloured in red. I had to interrupt the Secretary of Defence to remind him that Israel had just signed a peace treaty with Egypt', recalled the former US official. 'To the surprise of the US officials present, Sharon referred to Israel's successful bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor and suggested that Israel could bomb Pakistan's nuclear facilities. That such an action might somehow be in US interest just neglected the long US-Pakistan military relationship and our close cooperation in fighting the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan."[74]

Sharon would add to US concerns over the course of the next months.[75] During these negotiations, US officials were repeatedly subject to his bombastic and grandiose plans regarding US-Israeli strategic cooperation. While discussions also included efforts by the US to support and bankroll Israeli agricultural, medical and politico-military relations with African and Central American countries,[76] the key focus remained on the Eastern Mediterranean and the potential to use Israeli facilities to pre-position military hardware as well as potential exchanges in the medical realm and in R&D technologies. Discussion also included the Autonomy negotiations as well as developments in Syria, in Lebanon and regarding the PLO, as officials began getting worrying signals from Israel about the growing potential for direct military campaign in Lebanon.[77]

[72] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit., p.173.
[73] Ibid., p.174.
[74] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[75] Teicher, *Twin Pillars,* op.cit., pp.148-57.
[76] Ibid., p.153.
[77] Ibid., p.155.

Israel was seeking assurances that it would be made an integral part of US plans for the defence of the region including in the Persian Gulf. US officials pushed back against the most extreme ambitions of Israel, and especially Ariel Sharon, but were also careful to not overly alienate the Israeli leadership, as this could jeopardize other key US interests and concerns. The result was an uneven balance between competing interests not only among the two sides involved in negotiating the MoU, but also and more fundamentally within the US side, with the State Department and Pentagon effectively working at cross purposes. Nicholas Veliotes, who was involved in the negotiations on the US side, was called upon to act as a middleman in the difficult relations between State and the Pentagon on the MoU, which was finally signed in a closed-door ceremony by Weinberger and Sharon on 30 November.[78]

As described in a joint statement given to the media, the MoU was 'designed to enable the two countries to act cooperatively, to provide each other military assistance to cope with threats to the security of the entire region caused by the USSR or Soviet-controlled forces introduced from outside the region into the region'.[79] Significantly, the full text of the agreement was public and appeared in print in major international newspapers. This emphasis on Soviet-controlled forces 'from outside the region' reflected the US's concern that the MoU would be interpreted by the Arab world as also directed against them. Indeed, the official text of the memorandum (Appendix D) contained the following clarification: 'the strategic cooperation between the parties is not directed at any state or group of states within the region. It is intended solely for defensive purposes against the above-mentioned [Soviet] threat'.

The most significant elements envisioned by the document included military-to-military cooperation, join naval exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean and cooperation in the establishment and maintenance of 'joint readiness activities'. In essence, many of these elements of strategic cooperation matched those the US was implementing with the Arab states, such as the military exercises Bright Star or Jade Tiger involving troops from the US, Jordan, Egypt, Oman and others. This dimension also serves to underscore how much of this bourgeoning US-Israel strategic cooperation had more to do with *compensation* than a real assessment of Israeli strategic services.

Also important was the establishment of a number of joint working groups for R&D cooperation, defence trade, pre-positioning of military hardware and a whole number of other potential spheres of cooperation 'as agreed upon by the parties'. It would be these working groups that would gradually transform the nature and depth of the US-Israel relationship, diffusing cooperation into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries while establishing the groundwork for enhanced interdependence between their respective foreign and security approaches towards the Middle East.

[78] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[79] Bernard Gwertzman, "US and Israel Sign Strategic Accord to Counter Soviet Threat," *NYT*, 1 December 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/01/world/us-israel-sign-strategic-accord-counter-soviet-text-memorandum-page-a14.html.

Yet, there was more to the MoU than was discussed in the media. Howard Teicher has outlined how the original 1981 MoU also laid the groundwork for other forms of compensation. These included 'support for the manufacture of the Israeli-designed LAVI fighter aircraft [with US funds], increased US military assistance and the agreement to negotiate a free-trade agreement between the United States and Israel'.[80] These commitments would become codified gradually, between 1983 and 1989. Writing years after the event, Dennis Ross noted how a 'fundamental threshold had been crossed' with the MoU; 'from this point forward we had a framework that would allow us to build a genuine military partnership'.[81]

A memorandum dated 24 November 1981 goes further in demonstrating the underlying rationales advanced by these supporters. Drafted by Jack Stein, Reagan's first Special Advisor on Jewish Affairs, the memorandum notes how 'Israel is very nervous about its security in the aftermath of the Saudi Arms sale [AWACS]'.

> In the absence of substantive agreements with the US, I believe it likely that Israel will move in a decisive military action to remove the PLO threat [from Lebanon]. I believe it will also move to tighten her control of the West Bank and will be most reluctant to make any concessions during the Autonomy talks. Our national security interests are best served by stability in the Middle East. An essential element is an Israel that feels secure and remains confident that we take our commitment to her security seriously. I believe the President's commitment to Israel's security can be best made evident by building a US "safety net" under Israel. […] Only a close Israeli-American partnership […] can provide Israel with the required sense of security so that she can negotiate peace with confidence.[82]

Building a 'safety net' beneath Israel was precisely what would occur. Yet, while Israel would garner significant tangible benefits, it is debatable whether the US ever saw its side of the bargain fulfilled. If the US had hoped to receive assurances regarding Israel's opposition to US-Arab strategic cooperation, administration officials, including the president himself, would soon find otherwise. Indeed, while both Begin and Sharon were under no illusions about the way Weinberger's Department of Defence had actively worked to limit the extent of practical cooperation envisioned by the MoU, the prime minister attached much political and symbolic importance to the document. It had, in Teicher's words, codified 'shared strategic interests without infringing on Israel's freedom to manoeuvre'.[83] Indeed, the unforeseen consequences of this agreement, and its subsequent resurrection and expansion in late 1983, would effectively further constrain US presidential freedom of action vis-à-vis Israel *and* the broader region while effectively 'entrapping' the US in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East.

Conclusion

[80] Teicher, *Twin Pillars,* op.cit., p.162.
[81] Ross, *Doomed to Succeeed,* op.cit., p.190.
[82] RRPL, Jacob Stein Files, Series III: Correspondence and Schedules, "Memos to Richard Allen," OA10852 (continued).
[83] Teicher, *Twin Pillars,* op.cit., p.162.

The chapter has introduced the broad contours of the early US-Israeli dialogue on strategic cooperation. It has evidenced the risks and expected dividends for the US and Israel of such institutionalized forms of cooperation, and the continuation of different views and understandings as to the respective roles and responsibilities of the two sides. The deep internal divisions within the Reagan administration on the topic of US-Israel strategic cooperation also had a significant impact on this early dialogue, including most notably in the drafting of the 1981 MoU.

Israeli services in the strategic domain are not enough to explain the administration's push to institutionalize the relationship and agree to US-Israeli strategic cooperation. Such considerations must be paired with a broader set of expected dividends—political and ideational—that were hoped to flow from such institutionalization processes. Aside from assisting US efforts to 'create more Egypts' and advance the peace process, it was hoped that compensation for Israel, including the MoU, would free the administration's hand to build up the military capabilities of Arab allies, muting domestic and Israeli opposition to such sales while helping the administration and broader GOP reap the full political benefits such pro-Israel policies entailed.

Israel wished to preserve, and even enhance, its freedom of action, while the US sought to restrain Israel in order to focus on the Persian Gulf. Israeli leaders were well aware of these US priorities. Israeli Major General Avraham Tamir, a close associate of Ariel Sharon's when the latter headed the Israeli defence ministry in the early 1980s, recalled, 'Sharon thought he was going to be the strategic ally […] we had strategic dialogue talks, here and in the US. I was the head of the Israeli delegation, but I said to Sharon, "the United States is not being nice to you because of your blue eyes". Sharon didn't understand that the whole American policy was to draw the *Arabs* to the West'.[84]

It was this fundamental incongruence between Israeli and US leaderships that would set the stage for the rapid unravelling of the agreement. When Begin moved to annex the occupied Golan Heights on 18 December 1981, the Reagan administration was forced to respond. The Arab world rose in condemnation, and the administration quickly moved to suspend the MoU. Israel reacted to the suspension—and linkage between Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Arabs and its strategic cooperation with the US—with rage, abrogating the agreement altogether on 20 December. Begin called US ambassador Lewis to his residence, launching into an assault on the US in what became known as Begin's 'banana republic' speech, the full contents of which were subsequently passed to the media, a significant breach of diplomatic protocol.[85]

[84] Quoted in Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison. The Inside Story of the US-Israel Covert Relationship*, New York, HarperCollins Publisher, 1991, p.322 [emphasis original].
[85] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit., p.188-91.

The contents of the speech evidence the depths of the divide between US and Israeli viewpoints when it came to the expected dividends of US-Israeli strategic cooperation and Israel's deep opposition to any form of linkage between the US-Israeli relationship and Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Arab world or US-Arab relations.

> Over the last six months, the United States Government has punished Israel three times. […] You don't have the right, from a moral perspective, to preach to us regarding civilian loss of life. We have read the history of World War II [...] we have also read the history of the Vietnam War, and your concept of "body counts". […] Are we a vassal state of yours? Are we a banana republic? Are we 14-year-olds who, if we misbehave, we get our wrists slapped? […] You will not frighten us with punishments. […] You are trying to make Israel a hostage to the memorandum of understanding. […] The people of Israel have lived 3,700 years without a memorandum of understanding with America and will continue to live without it another 3,700 years. […] As to the future, kindly inform the Secretary of State that the Golan Heights law will remain in force. There is no power on earth that will bring about its repeal. As to the claim that we surprised you, the truth is that we did not want to embarrass you.[86]

As recalled by Samuel Lewis, Washington was 'furious at this broadside attack'.[87] If anything, the brazen statements by Begin proved that US hopes of restraining Israel through compensation and increased strategic cooperation would not be easily realized. The speech also caused significant embarrassment for the US in the Arab world, particularly in light of the absence of any real follow-up or accountability for the statement. Aside from the planned dialogues contained in the MoU, US-Israel relations progressed as normal. The White House soon received many angry letters and petitions by members of the organized Jewish-American community complaining about the president's decision to suspend the MoU.

To one such letter sent from the President of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington on 21 December, the White House responded on 5 March 1982. 'The spirit of that agreement [MoU] obliged each party to take into consideration in its decisions the implications for the broad policy concerns of the other', read the White House response. 'We do not believe that spirit was upheld in the case of Israel's decision on the Golan. […] We have stressed however that we are in no way interrupting the flow of military equipment to Israel'.[88]

While US-Israel relations entered a 'deep freeze'[89] at the end of 1981, the subsequent years—while still rife with challenges and deep disagreements—would demonstrate the extent to which new ground was being broken in US-Israel relations. The fundamental catch-22 of US policy was also implicit in Begin's forceful rejection of the US suspension. Indeed, directly following his meeting with Ambassador Lewis, Begin is reported to have requested a cabinet meeting to approve his plans to invade Lebanon and

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[86] "Transcript of Prime Minister Begin's Statement to the US Envoy to Israel," *NYT*, 21 December 1981, https://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/21/world/transcript-of-prime-minister-begin-s-statement-to-the-us-envoy-to-israel.html.
[87] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit., p.189.
[88] RRPL, Jacob Stein Files, Series I: Subject Files, "Golan Heights," OA9242.
[89] FAOHP, "Ambassador Samuel W. Lewis," op.cit, p.191.

destroy PLO and Syrian presence in the country.[90] The Israeli cabinet refused, resulting in its postponement until June 1982, when Israel did invade Lebanon, dragging the US into the conflict along the way.

As noted by Dennis Ross, in proceeding immediately with an effort to garner approval for the Lebanon operation 'it was as if he [Begin] intended to show us [the US] that if you penalize us [Israel], we have little to lose and we will take other steps that might draw your wrath but will solve the problem we face'.[91] This passage clearly demonstrates how Israel retains significant capacity to influence US policy whereas US freedom of action is rather limited. Indeed, in the context of the negotiations over a loose and somewhat ill-defined concept of strategic cooperation, it was Israel not the US that appeared to have the most leverage and influence. Moreover, it demonstrates how Israel was aware of the US's alternative motives in seeking to institutionalize the relationship, and would lose no opportunity to push back against any semblance of 'linkage' between US-Israel and Israeli-Arab relations.

If the US hoped to restrain Israel and buy its approval for US-Arab cooperation through the MOU, the Israeli government would be quick to demonstrate otherwise. Prior coordination or consultation with the US would be refused on the grounds that Israel did not want to 'embarrass' the US, or rather did not want to be put in a position in which the US said 'no' and Israel would go ahead anyway. This should have run alarm bells in Washington that its expected dividends would not in fact materialize. However, and again demonstrating which side in the relationship held the most influence and leverage, notwithstanding this growing realization among US officials, US policy did not have any alternative to that of an incremental increase in compensation for Israel, given that the risks inherent in taking a different path were considered more grave, particularly from a domestic political perspective.

Coming from a key supporter of US-Israeli strategic cooperation, and an individual who had long promoted this line of 'hugging Israel closer' in order to limit political disputes and ostensibly enhance US leverage over Israeli actions, the above passage from Dennis Ross's book speaks volumes about the catch-22 affecting US policy towards Israel. The fact that US policy was effectively going around in circles, unable to extract minimum assurances from Israel that it would indeed use greater caution in its regional policies, did not serve to further US credibility in the region. Meanwhile, the US was effectively becoming locked into a game of successive, incremental forms of compensation for Israel every time it sought to pursue its wider strategic interests in the Middle East.

[90] Ibid., pp.190-5; Amir Oren, "With Ariel Sharon Gone, Israel Reveals the Truth about the 1982 Lebanon War," *Ha'aretz*, 17 September 2017, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/with-sharon-gone-israel-reveals-the-truth-about-the-lebanon-war-1.5451086.
[91] Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, op.cit., p.191. Throughout Ross's book it is often confusing (or telling) the way the US official interchanges the 'us' referring to *both* Israel and the US.

Highlighting such characteristics may today seem almost naïve. However, it was the period of the 1980s that would solidify the format of US-Israeli relations in the post-Cold War era. It was under Reagan that the policy of compensation, later codified into the QME doctrine, was first institutionalized as standard practice in US policy. It was under Reagan that Israeli efforts to formalize Israel's quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US would make headway in US policy, foreshadowing the 'tail wagging the dog' scenario and ultimately the slow 'Israelization' of US policy and approaches to the Middle East. Significantly, while Begin complained about the US's intention to 'make Israel hostage'[92] to the MoU, the outcome of these processes of US-Israeli institutionalization between 1981 and 1989 would have the opposite effect; further augmenting the political, strategic and ideational straightjacket constraining US policy towards Israel and the wider Middle East.

These latter dimensions would become more salient in the context of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the US's decision to reinstate strategic cooperation with Israel beginning in late 1983. It is to these dimensions that the next chapter now turns.

[92] "Transcript of Prime Minister Begin's," op.cit.

Chapter 6

A Baptism of Fire: The Lebanon War and the Rebirth of US-Israel Strategic Cooperation

The Israeli annexation of the occupied Golan Heights and the subsequent suspension of the MoU on strategic cooperation in late December 1981 would set the stage for two difficult years in US-Israeli relations. Marked by a further deepening of bilateral tensions, the 1982–83 period nonetheless resulted in a new push to institutionalize the US-Israel relationship, resuming and expanding on the cooperative strategic planning that had begun early in the first year of the administration.

The administration entered 1982 having made little or no progress on the three central priorities of US Middle East policy. Efforts to focus on the global dimension of fighting the Cold War and create a form of 'strategic consensus' among the US's regional allies were undermined by Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, which returned the question of Palestine and the Autonomy negotiations to centre-stage in the region and internationally. This, combined with the succession of unilateral Israeli actions during 1981, reignited Arab-Israeli tensions and raised Arab concern as to the inability of the US to restrain its ally Israel, damaging US credibility and weakening Washington's strategic plans for the defence of the Persian Gulf and the containment of Iran.

The US had secured an important victory in Congress over the sale of advanced weaponry to Saudi Arabia, but the battle came at significant political cost, and the Reagan White House would think carefully about confronting Israel and its supporters in the court of US public opinion. While the sale had resulted in a hesitant Saudi willingness to publicly outline its principles for Arab-Israeli negotiations through the unveiling of the eight-point Fahd Plan in early August 1981, Israel's vehement opposition to these principles would quickly dampen the administration's enthusiasm regarding efforts to attract Saudi Arabia into the peace process. Ultimately, it was the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, and the need to compensate Tel Aviv, that created the impetus for the signing of the 1981 MoU, but on US terms.

The deep divisions between the State Department and Pentagon had defined this early dialogue on US-Israeli strategic cooperation. The resulting document, the 1981 MoU, fell well short of Israeli desires. Its provisions were more reflective of US concerns: to not overtly irk its Arab allies and to restrain Israeli unilateral actions, even while simultaneously allowing the administration to reap the expected dividends of amicable US-Israeli relations.

Israel was well aware of these US efforts and would resist what it considered an infringement on its freedom of action. Israel's leadership was particularly worried about a slow dilution of its 'special' relationship with the US. Mindful of agreeing to the 1981 MoU in light of its political and symbolic

significance, Israel would continue its efforts to convince the US of the centrality of Israeli services and capabilities for strategic planning in the Middle East, including in the Persian Gulf. Faced with sustained reluctance by a number of Reagan officials, the Israeli government would move to consider other, more indirect means to achieve its objectives.

Israel never muted its opposition to arms sales for the Arab states or agreed to a formal exchange of assurances for prior consultation or coordination with the US. Indeed, the Likud government of Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon would never miss an opportunity to drive home the point of Israel's independence, developing a tendency to respond forcibly to any indication of potential conditionality in US policy towards Israel or, even worse, a linkage between US aid and Israeli actions vis-à-vis the Arabs and Palestinians.

Resulting from these failures, the original MoU on strategic cooperation was quickly suspended, setting the stage for a stubborn Israeli reaction aimed at demonstrating the dangers implicit in a US policy of pressure or conditionality, particularly if undertaken in an effort to reassure the Arab world. Embrace of the 'linkage doctrine' threatened Israel's quest for a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East, augmenting the risk that the US would someday sacrifice Israeli interests in order to advance its strategic ties with the Arabs.

The US's suspension of the MoU in December 1981 was indeed deemed necessary as a public display of displeasure with Israeli actions and an effort to drive home the importance the US placed on the principle of coordination, prior consultation and 'no surprises' in the US-Israeli relationship. The Department of Defence, where Caspar Weinberger was particularly incensed by the Israeli move, actually demanded more serious repercussions, but these requests were diluted by the State Department and NSC, leading to the limited decision to suspend the MoU without touching other elements of US assistance.

Media reports at the time noted how Prime Minister Begin had informed the Israeli Parliament that he did not consult with the US prior to the Golan move due to the likely 'no' from Washington. 'I say again to our American friends, we shall continue to be allies, but no one will dictate our lives to us, even the United States of America'.[1] More significantly still, Begin had denounced the US's suspension of the MoU due to what he described as Washington's attempts to make 'Israel a hostage' to the agreement, and consequently lost no time in seeking to demonstrate the futility of US efforts to restrain Israeli actions and orchestrate what essentially amounted to a patron-client relationship under the guise of strategic cooperation.

[1] David K. Shipler, "The Golan Height Annexed by Israel in Abrupt Move," *NYT*, 14 December 1981, http://events.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/1214.html.

Mutual efforts to protect respective interests, while enhancing the ability to influence or constrain the policy initiatives of the other, therefore continued to define US-Israeli dialogue on strategic cooperation in the 1982–83 period. Having embraced a policy of inducements and compensation for Israel throughout 1981, in the wake of the Golan Heights annexation and Begin's public assault on the US, the Reagan team shifted momentarily to a policy of pressure on Israel. While motivated by the need to send a signal to 'convince the Arabs that we [US] could be fair'[2] in the Middle East, US policymakers were well aware of the costs that freezing strategic cooperation with Israel could entail for its wider priorities.

US officials thus lost no time in seeking means to restore US-Israeli ties and overcome political differences that had matured over the course of the first year of the administration. Yet, the one fundamental driver motivating the original US decision to upgrade US-Israeli ties in the strategic domain—assurances from Israel of a greater appreciation of the US's wider interests and concerns—was never resolved and would soon resurface with a vengeance in the context of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982.

Indeed, if US-Israel ties had entered a 'deep freeze' as a result of the Golan Heights annexation and the suspension of the MoU, these tensions would be dwarfed by the unprecedented disagreements over Lebanon. If the objective of the original 1981 MoU and parallel agreements was to ensure a greater degree of consultation and coordination between the US and Israel, the Lebanon war and Israel's campaign of misinformation vis-à-vis the US would demonstrate the catch-22 of US policy and the difficulties inherent in a policy of pressure or restraint on Israel. Banking on almost automatic US support in the event of hostilities, the Begin government appeared to be orchestrating a series of events that would 'entrap' the US in a joint war effort that would severely damage US-Arab relations, thereby helping to revamp the preferential US-Israeli relationship.

6.1 Entrapment vs. Exclusivity: Strategic Cooperation beyond the 1981 MoU

Two years passed between the signing of the original MoU on 30 November 1981 and its revival in the midst of the joint US and Israeli deployment in the Lebanon war on 29 November 1983. During this period, debates on how best to strike a difficult balance between restraining Israel and increasing US leverage while securing the expected dividends of close US-Israel cooperation would consume the internal workings of the Reagan administration.

Disagreements between State and DoD continued, with the latter insisting that Israeli commit to an explicit exchange of services for the US's willingness to revive the MoU, delaying US policy responses

[2] Reagan, *An American Life*, op.cit., p.412.

and resulting at times in contradictory statements and proposals that only added confusion to public perceptions of US Middle East policy.

There was consensus within the administration on the need to signal the US's displeasure with Israeli actions on the Golan Heights, yet the Reagan White House was divided on the extent of this 'punishment'. Ultimately, the decision was made to suspend the MoU and, after some hard negotiations at the UN, support a watered down Security Council resolution (UNSC 497) calling Israel's annexation 'null and void'[3] while refraining from imposing sanctions on Israel.

'While the Israelis will be pressing us to lift the MoU suspension', reads a recently declassified memorandum from Secretary of State Haig to President Reagan dated 5 January 1982, 'maintaining it for some time is important to US-Arab relations. The Saudis have indicated that the success of Cap's [Weinberger] visit in early February [1982] to lay the groundwork for closer security cooperation […] is linked to some extent to our suspension of the MoU remaining in effect at least beyond the time of Cap's visit. How we proceed with the MoU will involve a delicate balancing of several important interests, above all the need to restore confidence into the basic US-Israeli relationship'.[4]

The administration was aware that Israel and the Jewish-American community did 'not view the agreed Memorandum of Understanding as substantive'.[5] The White House was soon inundated with angry letters calling on it to reinstate the agreement and repair US-Israel relations. Letters would specifically reference Israel's growing isolation in the region and the need to restore Israeli confidence in the US's commitment to its security and self-defence, lest Israel feel compelled to take action on its own behalf.

The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in early October 1981 combined with the heightened Arab-Israeli tensions that followed Israel's unilateral military actions, caused concern in Washington that Israel's redeployment from the Egyptian Sinai might flounder. These considerations added further constraints to a policy of pressure vis-à-vis Israel for fear that it might lead to collapse of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, or a renewed round of hostilities in Lebanon.

Incidentally, these were precisely the reactions that Begin was hoping to cause with his decision to annex the Golan Heights.[6] Israel had repeatedly sent signals to the US administration, both during and after the negotiations over the 1981 MoU that it intended to strike Syrian SAM-batteries in Lebanon, an action that was likely to precipitate a wider military crisis and further complicate US objectives.

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[3] UNSC Resolution 497, 17 December 1981, http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/497.
[4] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Head Of State File: Records, 1981-1989, "Israel: Prime Minister Begin – Cables," Box 16 (declassified in 2013).
[5] RRPL, Jacob Stein Files, 1981-82, Series III: Correspondence and Schedules, "Memos to Elizabeth Dole," OA10852 (continued).
[6] Oren, "Wish Sharon Gone," op.cit.

Following the suspension of the MoU in late December 1981, Begin's failure to garner Cabinet approval for an attack on Lebanon would offset these risks, at least momentarily. US officials were consequently pleased to receive assurances that Israel would refrain from unilateral measures in Lebanon or vis-à-vis Syria. 'Begin has blinked', wrote Secretary Haig in a memorandum to the President on 5 January 1982. 'Begin's emissary gave me two significant assurances: first, that Israel will not move into Lebanon militarily unless attacked from Lebanon on a significant scale; second, that Israel will not strike the Syrian missiles in Lebanon as long as Israel is not attacked by the Syrians'.[7]

On the basis of these assurances, the State Department prepared a 'firm but friendly'[8] letter to Begin, outlining the US stance on the MoU and planned actions at the UN, while reassuring Israel of the US's commitment to Camp David and Israel's security. 'Israel is an ally, not a vassal state', noted Reagan's letter dated 8 January 1982:

> My belief is that a just peace is the greatest boon that could be bestowed upon the people of Israel. […] Our task has not been made easier, however, by the Israeli decision about the Golan […] The Israeli action has brought international focus on this issue in a way that will continue to pose problems for us both. […] I continue to believe that Israel in the period ahead should help ameliorate the current situation and also view the relationship with the United States in its true light. In this regard, […] I was particularly gratified to learn […] of your assurances [on Lebanon and the Syrian SAM missiles]. […] It is my hope that the spirit in which our Memorandum of Understanding was signed can be restored over time. It is important that each of our governments take into consideration the broad policy concerns of the other.[9]

Less than ten days after the suspension of the MoU, efforts were being made to restore the US-Israeli relationship on the basis of short-term expediency and the need to both restrain and reassure Israel. Significantly, in the State Department memo outlining the contents of the letter, Haig explicitly noted the limited US leverage over Israel: 'While we have no guarantee that there will be no new 'surprises', this [assurance on Lebanon and Syria] is the most that we can get Begin to give at this juncture. At the same time, Begin has a way of slipping off the hook and it is important that we pin him down in writing in at least this general way'.[10] The warning seems ominous and indeed was soon justified, with Israel making a new bombing raid in Lebanon on 21 April 1982 (and again on 9 May) in retaliation for the death of an Israeli soldier on patrol in South Lebanon.[11] During the raid on PLO training camps, Israeli jets downed

[7] RRPL, "Israel: Prime Minister Begin – Cables," op.cit.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid. A summary of Begin's response is contained in the same box at the RRPL in a memorandum for the president dated 21 January 1982. Under the heading 'US-Israel Strategic Cooperation', the memo outlines how Begin had complained that 'the initial US proposals for strategic cooperation with Israel were very one-sided, e.g., Israel was expected to provide military assistance to the US but not vice versa'.
[10] Ibid.
[11] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Agency File, Records, 1981-85, "Secretary Haig's Evening Report (03/15/1982-04/21/1982)," RAC Box 6 (Box 91377); "Israel and the PLO: 7 Years of Strife," *NYT*, 8 June 1982, https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/08/world/israel-and-the-plo-7-years-of-strife.html.

two Syrian MIG-23s, in what amounted to a clear violation of the US-mediated ceasefire agreements concluded in 1981.[12]

As Secretary Haig travelled to Israel and Egypt in late January 1982, new talks were held with Sharon and Begin on efforts to reinstate the MoU and repair US-Israel relations. The US delegation was treated to a new set of threats from Sharon regarding plans for a Lebanon invasion, but Haig reiterated the US's position that Washington would support a limited operation *only* if there was a prior and commensurate provocation. This position was restated in late May 1982 in Washington, just weeks before the Israeli invasion and by which time media reports were openly talking about the administration's intention to reinstate the MoU.[13]

Meanwhile, shortly after Haig's Middle East trip, Secretary of Defence Weinberger travelled to the region, for talks with Saudi Arabia, Oman, Jordan and other Arab states on strategic planning for the RDF and CENTCOM, but not Israel (this was the trip to which Secretary Haig had made reference in his memorandum to Reagan in January 1982, expressing the need to maintain the suspension of the MoU to ensure the success of Weinberger's meetings).[14]

During the trip, media sources attributed to Weinberger a number of critical statements on Israel and reported an impending US decision to supply military hardware to Jordan, which caused a storm of controversy that necessitated significant damage control in Washington.[15] Indeed, it was during this trip that Weinberger complained to his Omani guests about Israel's tendency to pursue 'policies designed to place us [the US] in a situation where we must choose between friends', as reported in the official cable back to Washington found at the RRPL. Explaining Washington's tepid reaction to Israel's annexation of the Golan, the Secretary of Defence reminded his Arab counterparts that they had to 'realize how difficult it is to take actions in the US Congress which appear to be against Israel'.[16]

A letter containing the signatures of more than 120 leaders of Jewish-American groups in the US was delivered to President Reagan on 24 February 1982 condemning the proposed sale to Jordan.[17] In an effort to dampen Israel's concerns, extracts from a letter to Begin were released in the media. Reagan reassured Israel 'that recent reports have presented incorrect and exaggerated commentary regarding US

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[12] These were the first bombing raids in Lebanon since 1981. RRPL, "Secretary Haig's Evening Report (03/15/1982-04/21/1982)," op.cit.
[13] Haig, *Caveat*, op.cit., pp.329-30; Hendrick Smith, "US Willing to Revive Israeli Accord," *NYT*, 14 May 1982, http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/14/world/us-willing-to-revive-israeli-accord.html.
[14] Israel was originally included as one of the countries Weinberger was due to visit. Following the Golan annexation, the Secretary of Defence opted to cancel the stop in Israel, further infuriating the Israeli leadership.
[15] RRPL, Near East and South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-1989, "Sec Def Trip to the M.E.," Box 91987; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Says US Has Not Altered Policy on Israel," *NYT*, 17 February 1982, https://www.nytimes.com/1982/02/17/world/reagan-says-us-has-not-altered-policy-on-israel.html.
[16] RRPL, "Sec Def Trip to the M.E.," op.cit.
[17] "Leaders of 120 Jewish Agencies Assail US Arms Sales to Arabs," *JTA*, 25 February 1982, https://www.jta.org/1982/02/25/archive/leaders-of-120-jewish-agencies-assail-u-s-arms-sales-to-arabs

military assistance policies for the Middle East. […] There has been no change regarding our military supply relationships with Jordan. […] Israel remains America's friend and ally. However I believe it is in the interest of both our countries for the United States to enhance its influence with other states in the region. I recognize the unique bond between the United States and Israel and the serious responsibilities which this bond imposes on us both'.[18]

The above clearly demonstrates how Israel and the United States were still approaching the question of strategic cooperation and the institutionalization of US-Israel ties from their respective standpoints and with little appreciation for the inconsistencies between these two approaches. From the US standpoint, the central concern had not changed from early 1981, and rested on the urgent need to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US Middle East policy in such a way that one did not undermine the other. During Weinberger's February 1982 trip to the Middle East, he was given hesitant assurances that Saudi Arabia would support US strategic plans in the region—including by overbuilding its military bases to be used by the US in the event of an emergency.

During his meetings in Saudi Arabia, Weinberger reported back to Washington that Crown Prince Fahd saw 'Israel offering only friendship and alliance with US against Soviets. While Arabs possessed extensive strategic territory, major oil reserves and growing economic opportunity for US business'. The cable added that 'Fahd considers it possible for US to enjoy *both sets of benefits* if it refrained from supporting either side in actions against the interests of the other [... and] followed a fairly balanced even-handed program in Mid-East'.[19]

Such expressions no doubt represented tactical means of attracting greater US support and assistance, and demonstrated a willingness on behalf of Saudi Arabia to acknowledge the wider dimensions of US policy and interests, including Washington's need to stand by Israel. Such understandings were precisely what US leaders hoped to extract from Israel, yet these efforts would clash with Israel's own primary concern: preserving its quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US in the Middle East. In this respect, tensions and heightened threats of military clashes represented the best means to rekindle close and increasingly quasi-exclusivist relationship between the US and Israel in the Middle East.

The developing US-Saudi dialogue was particularly troubling to Israel's leadership. Threat perceptions were further compounded by the hesitantly supportive reception the US granted to the eight-point Fahd Plan on Arab-Israeli peace, unveiled by Saudi Arabia in early August 1981, just prior to the formal US announcement of the AWACS arms package deal. The 1981 Fahd Plan, which received Arab League approval in a slightly modified form on 9 September 1982 (and in concomitance with the unveiling of Reagan's own plan for Arab-Israeli negotiations on 1 September), was vehemently opposed by Israel.

[18] Reprinted in, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, "Ronald Reagan: 1982 [Book 1]," p.177.
[19] RRPL, "Sec Def Trip to the M.E.," op.cit. [emphasis added].

The Reagan administration viewed the document as a slow movement by Saudi Arabia towards a greater willingness to accept Israel's existence and negotiate on the basis of agreed UN resolutions. The fact that the Fahd plan was announced concurrently with the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia only heightened Israel's concern, seemingly indicating that the US was moving closer to Arab positions in the context of growing strategic planning for the Persian Gulf.

It would be these efforts by Israel to undermine the nascent US-Arab strategic dialogue and thereby deepen its preferential and quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US that would define its approach to the Reagan administration in the post-1981 MoU environment. While the administration had sought, in Begin's words, to 'make Israel a hostage' to the MoU, the Israeli government lost no time in orchestrating a number of events—beginning with the Golan annexation and extending to the 1982 Lebanon War—that would result in a rekindled US-Israeli relationship and a deepening of US-Arab animosities.

From Israel's standpoint, capitulating a crisis in the region—particularly if related to Palestine or involving Israeli-Arab military hostilities—was the best means to undermine US efforts to co-opt the Arabs. By returning the question of Palestine to centre stage, Israel could drive a wedge between the US and the Arab world. Washington would no doubt be angry at Israel, but it would also be hard pressed not to push back against the Arab reaction—as indeed had happened in the case of Israel's bombings of Iraq and Beirut in 1981 as well as the annexation of the Golan Heights.

Such a crisis, and the expected Arab reaction, would also complicate US efforts to garner congressional approval for US arms sales, particularly given that the administration was 'marketing' these sales by framing them as conducive to Arab-Israeli peace. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights was followed shortly thereafter by major hostilities between Israel, Syria and the PLO in Lebanon. Coming on the heels of the Fahd Plan and the US sale of advanced weaponry to Saudi Arabia, Israel's move to annex the Golan Heights has indeed been described as tactical ploy aimed at catapulting a regional crisis that would scuttle Israeli redeployment from the Egyptian Sinai, undermine the Autonomy negotiations and likely result in sufficient provocation by Syria or the PLO to warrant a major Israeli assault on Lebanon.[20]

Knowing full well that the US administration would be hard pressed domestically not to come to Israel's aid in the midst of a war and that Israel's adversaries in Lebanon—Syria and the PLO—were both considered Soviet 'proxies' by the administration, Israeli leaders were banking on almost automatic US approval. This dynamic was also no doubt strengthened by the Reagan administration's willingness to publicly label Israel a 'strategic asset'. Indeed, the processes by which Israeli leaders would purposely

[20] Oren, "With Ariel Sharon Gone," op.cit.

mislead the Reagan administration, concealing the true nature and extent of their military plans in Lebanon, while playing on the administration's fixation with the Soviet Union and fear that criticism of Israel would scuttle the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, lend further support to this hypothesis.

There is more to the hypothesis, however. A number of documents found at the RRPL demonstrate that members of the Reagan administration were secretly conducting a dialogue with the PLO through intermediaries and the auspices of Saudi Arabia during 1981–82.[21] Nicholas Veliotes recalled how he requested, and received, personal approval from Reagan to open a secret dialogue, notwithstanding the official assurances provided by Kissinger to Israel in the 1975 MoU that the US would not talk (directly) to the PLO unless the latter first recognized Israel and UN resolution 242.[22]

Israel was aware of these secret talks. The fact that these were also being brokered by Saudi Arabia would have been of serious concern to Tel Aviv, indicating a potential dilution of Israel's 'special' relationship with the US. A further motivation for Israel's invasion of Lebanon—particularly in light of Begin's efforts to obtain Cabinet approval in December 1981—may therefore have been preventing the US-PLO, as well as the more general US-Arab dialogue from progressing and potentially bearing fruit. As the fundamental fault line in the region, no single issue held greater potential to disrupt nascent US-Arab dialogue than the question of Palestine and the future ownership of the lands occupied by Israel in 1967.

6.2 Reagan's National Security Strategy and Policy Review on the Middle East

Reagan's National Security Strategy (NSDD-32) released on 20 May 1982 described the importance of security assistance to allies and partners as a 'vital, integral component' of US strategic planning and an 'essential complement' to the US's efforts to augment its 'own force structure' to meet US security interests abroad.[23] When it came to the Middle East (or Southwest Asia as it was called at the time), the NSDD-32 noted that the US 'will support the development of balanced and self-contained friendly regional forces and will emphasize assistance to certain key states for regional contingency roles'.[24]

[21] Bruce Weber, "John Edwin Mroz, Clandestine Envoy to Arafat, Dies at 66," *NYT*, 20 August 2014, https://goo.gl/K6s2q9.
[22] Author Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit. On top of these conditions, which US Congress formalized into law in 1985, the Reagan administration added a third condition for recognition of the PLO: denouncing terrorism and ending its armed struggle against Israel. This condition was included in the 1985 law, heavily criticized by Reagan, as was a subsequent law passed in 1987 that called for the shutting of PLO offices in New York and Washington. See, Robert Pear, "Effect of a PLO Shift on US Policy Unclear," *NYT*, 13 November 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/13/world/effect-of-a-plo-shift-on-us-policy-unclear.html; APP, "Ronald Reagan: Statements on Signing the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989," 22 December 1987, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=33853; Dov Lieber, "Mission Impossible: How an old US law could scotch peace talks before they start," *The Times of Israel*, 20 November 2017, https://www.timesofisrael.com/mission-impossible-how-an-old-us-law-could-scotch-peace-talks-before-they-start/.
[23] FAS, NSDD-National Security Decision Directives Reagan Administration, "US National Security Strategy," NSDD-32, 20 May 1982, p.6, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf.
[24] Ibid., pp.3-4.

Documents relating to the internal discussions on the drafting process for NSDD-32 provide further details of the evolving US military and strategic planning for the region. US planners focussed on 'access, improvement of facilities, HNS [Host-Nation Support], and prepositioning in Egypt and Oman. In Saudi Arabia', reads the draft document, 'we should seek through contingency discussions to identify the facilities available to deploying US forces'—i.e., the overbuilding of military bases. Pakistan was also mentioned as possible staging area for US forces in the event of a crisis. 'Israeli capabilities', however, were relegated to a secondary plane. These 'could provide a considerable benefit during *direct* Soviet attacks in SWA [Southwest Asia] or in a US-Soviet war which involves hostilities in the *Mediterranean*'.[25]

The Reagan administration's emphasis on security assistance and arms transfers—in some ways a return to the Nixon Doctrine's 'Vietnamization' strategy—would stand out as a significant area of discontinuity with the Carter administration.[26] Yet, the administration also faced a number of challenges in seeking to expand the use of such assistance. In an NSC meeting on 27 April 1982 the contents of the NSDD-32 were discussed. As noted by the NSC official in charged with chairing the meeting, 'the major problem is that though there are more than 150 nations in the world, 60 percent of our security assistance goes to two countries—Israel and Egypt. If you add Turkey and Greece, 75 percent of our security assistance goes to four countries. […] A second problem is that we are hamstrung in Congress'.[27]

Secretary Haig and Weinberger both agreed on the urgent need to expand the US's ability to provide assistance, and on quick notice. '[We must] straighten out the confusing set of legislative restrictions and the inability to respond responsively to valid security assistance requests', noted Haig. CIA Director Casey highlighted during the meeting how 'eleven countries located near chokepoints are being threatened [by Soviet proxies]' across the globe; 'they do not require sophisticated arms. They need light weapons and communication gear. We must remember that a little gets a lot done when it comes to security assistance'.[28]

It was also in these contexts that the administration began expanding its covert offensive throughout the Third World. Here, the assistance of allies and partners—and incidentally both Israel and a number of Arab states—became increasingly important. Thanks to Israel's influence in Congress, however, Tel Aviv maintained a significant advantage in making its case with the Reagan administration, a dynamic that would become increasingly important for the decision to restore formal strategic cooperation in 1983. Meanwhile, and in coincidence with the planning phases for NSDD-32, it was clear that US policy had reached an impasse in the Middle East and consequently a major policy review was undertaken by the

[25] Documents relating to the drafting process for NSDD-32 are available online via: The Reagan Files archive collection by Jason Saltoun-Ebin. See, "NSSD 1-82, Part III, Section B. The Role of Allies and Others. Conclusions," pp.2-3 [emphasis added] http://www.thereaganfiles.com/nssd-1-82-part-iii-b.pdf.
[26] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files: Records, 1981-88, "NSC 00047 04/27/1982," p.4.
[27] Ibid., pp.3-4.
[28] Ibid., p.8.

administration through National Security Study Directive (NSSD) 4-82, approved by Reagan on 19 March 1982.[29]

The review took eighteen months to come to a conclusion, demonstrating the deep divisions within the administration on the necessary steps to take in the region. The length of the review is also explained by the fluidity of events in the Middle East and the reoccurrence of 'mini-crises' that necessitated quick reaction and damage control by the US. Ultimately, NSSD 4-82 resulted in the approval of NSDD-99, signed by Reagan on 12 July 1983.[30]

The review would rekindle debates on how best to precede vis-à-vis Israel on the suspended MoU and US-Arab relations. Weinberger insisted that Israel agree to mute its opposition to arms sales to Jordan as the needed quid for the US quo of reinstating the MoU.[31] This was opposed by Secretary Haig and his team at the State Department, who argued against overt linkage, as this would further Israel's concerns and thereby undermine the desired effects of the memorandum. According to the State Department, the best means to enhance influence and restrain Israel's unilateral tendencies was by reassuring Israel, building a 'safety net' beneath Israel while and 'hugging it closer'.

Israel's bombing raids on Lebanon and military engagements with Syria on 29 April 1982 and 9 May respectively, just as the administration was preparing the ground for the sale of arms to Jordan in an effort to dissuade it from seeking Soviet arms, would further complicate these internal debates.[32] Ultimately, when in late May the US was already publicly talking about reinstating the 1981 MoU and moved to approve a $2.5 billion sale of 75 F-16 fighter jets to Tel Aviv[33], it was unable to push through even a more limited Jordanian request for security assistance.

The Israeli quid for the American pro was again a resounding 'no'. 'Israel will not be reconciled to these steps', noted Foreign Minister Shamir on 26 May 1982. 'Supplying the advanced missiles and airplanes to Jordan is a continuation of the policy of supplying sophisticated AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia'.[34] Arms sales and increased security assistance for Jordan would remain a major sticking point in US-Israeli

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[29] FAS, National Security Study Directives of the Reagan Administration, "US Strategy for the Near East and Southwest Asia," NSSD 4-82, 19 March 1982, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nssd/nssd-4-82.pdf.
[30] FAS, NSDD of the Reagan Administration, "US National Security Strategy for the Near East and South Asia," NSDD-99, 12 July 1983, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-99.pdf.
[31] Dated 12 May 1982, just prior to the arrival of Ariel Sharon in the US, a memorandum from Howard Teicher to Jack [Geoffrey] Kemp reads: DOD: 'does not believe that a decision in principle has yet been made to implement the MOU. Sec. Def. apparently believes that the purpose of his meeting with Sharon will be to extract a quid—possible acquiescence of F-5Gs [planes] for Jordan, moratorium on settlements, etc.—that will then allow for the MOU's implementation." RRPL, Howard Teicher Files, "Chron May 1982," Box 91667.
[32] Madiha Rashid al Madfai, *Jordan, the United States and the Middle East Peace Process, 1974-1991*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp.79-81.
[33] Ann Shutt (ed.), "US to sell Israel 75 F-16 fighters," *CSM*, 27 May 1982, https://www.csmonitor.com/1982/0527/052724.html.
[34] Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Remarks by FM Shamir on US Arms Sales to Jordan," 26 May 1982, http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook5/Pages/130%20Remarks%20by%20Foreign%20Minister%20Shamir%20on%20US%20Arms.aspx.

relations for much of the Reagan administration. US officials had earmarked Jordan as a major staging area for the Middle East RDF, and plans for a smaller rapid reaction force in Jordan for deployment in the Persian Gulf were particularly troubling for Israel.

Indeed, it was during this period that US diplomacy was doing everything possible to attract Jordan into the Camp David process, a plan that came close to fruition in the mid-1980s, but ultimately got nowhere in light of the internal divisions in Israel's coalition government and the inability of the Reagan administration to extract Israeli concessions. The US's failure to approve sales to Jordan would also lead the Kingdom to become an important Soviet arms purchaser, with Moscow overtaking Washington as Jordan's largest arms supplier in the late 1980s.[35]

6.3 War in Lebanon: Deception, Hubris and the Revival of US-Israel Strategic Cooperation

Much has been made of the 'amber light' allegedly provided by US Secretary of State Alexander Haig to Israel's Defence Minister Ariel Sharon in the run-up to the 1982 Lebanon war.[36] While the US was most definitely misled about the true extent of the impending Israeli operation, there is no debating that a number of US policymakers were secretly quite content to see Israel deal a strategic blow to Syria and the PLO in the context of Lebanon.

Was the Lebanon war, and the US's decision to come to Israel's aid with the deployment of a peacekeeping force separately from the UN mission already in the country, the first public expression of overt US-Israeli strategic cooperation? Had the US privately given Israel the go-ahead for the Lebanon invasion, believing that Israel's US-supplied arms could serve US interests in weakening Soviet influence by hitting its so-called 'proxies' in Syria and the PLO? Had Israel succeeded in convincing Washington that a Lebanese government headed by Bachir Gemayel, leader of the Lebanese Christian Phalanges and a key Israeli ally in Lebanon, would transform Lebanon into the 'next Egypt' for Israel to make peace with? Could the US move into the post-war environment and orchestrate a new breakthrough for peace as had been done by Henry Kissinger in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War?

These questions began circulating in public debate, in the wake of Israel's invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982. Similar debates were also taking place within the Reagan administration, as it sought to navigate the fallout from the Israeli invasion. In this context, the administration was caught between its deep antagonism towards the Soviet Union and its regional 'proxies', and the continued urgency to convince Arab allies in close vicinity to the Persian Gulf to agree to access agreements and basing rights for the US.

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[35] Anthony H. Cordesman, *After The Storm: The Changing Military Balance in the Middle East*, London/New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, pp.291-30.
[36] See; Ze'ev Schiff, "The Green Light," *Foreign Policy*, No.50 (Spring 1983), pp.73-85; David Hirst, *Beware of Small States. Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East*, London, Faber & Faber, 2010, pp.116-73.

'The war in Lebanon represents a major setback for US diplomacy which requires a fundamental and immediate review of our Middle East policy',[37] reads a memorandum for the president dated 14 June 1982.

Yet, once the war was underway, the administration immediately sought to make the most of the situation and indeed there were a number of deeper rationales favouring US support for Israel in the context of Lebanon. These revolved around the political costs that would be incurred by any sustained US pressure on Israel for a unilateral withdrawal—as experienced by President Carter in the context of the limited 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, when the US threatened sanctions on Israel—and a belief that while the Israeli operation had damaged US credibility with the Arabs, a unilateral Israeli withdrawal—like the one demanded by Eisenhower in the 1956 Suez Crisis[38]—would be interpreted as a victory for Soviet-backed forces in Syria and Lebanon.

Preferable, from the US standpoint, would be to transform the crisis into an opportunity—in itself a reoccurring theme in the history of (re)active US policy in the Middle East—in terms of weakening Soviet influence, changing the balance of forces in the Eastern Mediterranean and reviving a US willingness to deploy military force abroad. It was in this context, and particularly within the State Department, that US officials sought to make the most of crisis, including buying into the Israeli-promoted view that Lebanon could be transformed into the 'next Egypt' and thereby brought into the Camp David format.

The Reagan administration had made no secret of its deep hostility to the PLO and Syria. Documents from the RRPL demonstrate the extent to which a number of administration officials viewed the PLO as Soviet-sponsored 'international terrorists who are working against US interests'.[39] Another example is provided by Richard Pipes, who drafted a memorandum in the NSC on 29 July 1981, outlining how the Soviet Union was seeking to 'transform the PLO gunmen in Lebanon from a hit-and-run force into a modern army that would spearhead an assault on Israel.'[40] Yet, as noted above, Reagan was also secretly conducting a dialogue with the PLO, through intermediaries and with the assistance of Saudi Arabia.[41]

The dialogue represented a continuation of previous efforts, and in the wake of the Reagan electoral victory the PLO had sought to make contact with the administration. Dated 5 March 1981, a

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[37] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: National Security Planning Group (NSPG): Records, 1981-1987, "NSPG 0039 06/14/1982," Box 91305.
[38] A document found in the Dennis Ross files at the RRPL made specific reference to Eisenhower's 1956 decision to force a unilateral Israeli withdrawal and the fact that 'the Soviets, and not we [the US], were the big beneficiaries as a result. Paradoxically, Soviet support, resupply and threats of intervention during the 1973 war didn't pay off because we were seen as the only one capable of stopping the Israelis and then delivering on Israeli withdrawals'. These were the beginnings of the doctrine of support for 'Israel, right or wrong'. RRPL, Dennis Ross Files, 1986-1988, "Lebanon: Dennis Ross," Box 1.
[39] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: NSC Meeting Files, "NSC 00057 08/04/1982." The phrase was used by UN ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick.
[40] FRUS, Volume III (1981-1988), Document 77.
[41] Author Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit; Also see, David Ignatius, "The Secret History of US-PLO Terror Talks," *WP*, 4 December 1988, https://goo.gl/VTvpeC.

memorandum found at the RRPL contains a number of points the PLO wished to transmit to the Reagan administration that would form the basis for a 'plan' by which 'the PLO would be prepared to recognize Israel' in exchange for a Palestinian state encompassing 'all of the West Bank and Jerusalem' and 'dedicated to peaceful purposes'.[42]

The points raised by the PLO included a reassurance that a Palestinian state would 'live in coexistence with Israel' and that the PLO were 'not leftists or Marxists but nationalists' whose future state would 'not be in alliance with the Soviet Union or give bases to it or to anyone else'.[43] While President Reagan had personally authorized these contacts, the secret dialogue with the PLO would ultimately be buried by the Lebanon war and the PLO's exile to Tunisia in the wake of its evacuation from Beirut under US auspices.[44]

The possibility that Israel was spurred into action in Lebanon in order to undermine this evolving US-PLO dialogue cannot be discounted out of hand. This may well have been a further objective of the Israeli operation, together with broader efforts to complicate US-Arab strategic dialogue on the Persian Gulf, undermine the eight-point Fahd Plan while seeking to push back PLO and Syrian influence from Lebanon.

The US's premier CIA operative in the Arab world, Robert Ames, was also key to this evolving dialogue with the Palestinians, and the PLO had indeed been particularly cooperative in helping to provide security for US officials and embassy staff in Lebanon since the mid-1970s.[45] Ames's death in the 1983 bombing of the US embassy in Beirut on 18 April would give a serious blow to US intelligence capabilities and contacts across the Arab world, also leaving the US in a position of having to rely more heavily on Israeli intelligence—a dynamic that would help to spur closer US-Israeli strategic cooperation but would result in the US increasingly assuming Israeli viewpoints and assessments.[46]

In the run-up to the Israeli invasion, Secretary of State Haig had called Israel to 'exercise complete restraint'[47] in Lebanon and not retaliate militarily unless provoked. Yet, while the US was obviously

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[42] RRPL, Geoffrey Kemp Files, "PLO 1981," RAC Box 7-Kemp (Box 90220).
[43] Ibid.
[44] Recent reports have indicated how Ariel Sharon sought to assassinate Arafat during the Lebanon war notwithstanding expressed instructions from the Reagan administration to spare the Palestinian leader. Ronen Bergman and Ronnie Hope, *Rise and Kill First. The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*, Penguin Books, 2018.
[45] See, Kai Bird, *The Good Spy. The Life and Death of Robert Ames,* New York, Crown Publishers, 2014; Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes. The History of the CIA*, New York, Doubleday, 2007, pp.93-5.
[46] As noted by Tim Weiner, 'The obliteration of the Beirut station and the death of Robert Ames destroyed the agency's capability for gathering information in Lebanon and in much of the Middle East, "leaving us with too little intelligence for a long time thereafter," said Sam Lewis, the American ambassador to Israel at the time. "It made us very dependent on Israeli intelligence." The CIA would see the Islamic threat in the Middle East through an Israeli prism for the rest of the cold war'. Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, op.cit., p.93.
[47] Haig, *Caveat*, op.cit., p.330, quoting a letter to Begin on 28 May 1982. Begin's answer included the following statement: 'Mr. Secretary, my dear friend, the man has not been born who will ever obtain from me consent to let Jews be killed by a bloodthirsty enemy and allow those who are responsible for the shedding of this blood to enjoy immunity'.

concerned about the potential fallout from a war in Lebanon and particularly its likelihood of complicating US-Arab strategic dialogue, further documents from the RRPL demonstrate that some in the administration did consider the possibility of employing Israel's military muscle to defeat the PLO, thereby helping to eliminate a major irritant in US-Arab relations.

A heavily redacted, unsigned and undated document found in the Geoffrey Kemp files at the RRPL in a folder box titled 'PLO 1981' outlined a twin-pronged approach including 'diplomacy' and 'force', 'to lay the groundwork for diplomatic progress by launching a multifaceted campaign against the PLO'. The document advised a diplomatic campaign to discredit the PLO and highlight its links to the Soviet Union and lack of democratic credentials. Under the heading 'force', the document reads: 'A "green light" to Israel to destroy the PLO's military capabilities'.[48]

While this is not the place to enter into an extensive investigation as to the true nature and extent of US-Israeli coordination in the context of the Lebanon war, it remains beyond doubt that Israeli leaders purposely misled the administration about their intentions in Lebanon. There is also no doubt that a number of more pro-Israeli voices in the administration were supportive of Israeli views and became convinced that from the ashes of Beirut a new set of realities would be created that could represent an opportunity for US (and Israeli) interests in the region.

Nicholas Veliotes, who took part in many of the meetings between Haig and Sharon, recalls how Haig inadvertently provided what amounted to an 'amber light'[49] to Israel by not clarifying forcibly that the US opposed a military intervention in Lebanon. While Sharon was described by the former Reagan official as having 'lied all the way to Beirut',[50] divisions within the administration and signals coming from the State Department are sure to have increased Israel's self-confidence that US support would be forthcoming. One UK diplomatic cable sent from Washington to London on 15 June 1982 demonstrates the extent of internal divisions in the administration and the significant influence of the more pro-Israel voices in the Reagan White House: 'The Americans are concerned at the extent to which the Israelis have misled them at every stage of their Lebanese operation […] but it looks increasingly likely that, as usual, the pro-Israeli faction will have its way'.[51]

On the whole, therefore, it is likely that Israel's government was banking on US support in the war. Even more likely was the Israeli calculation that such a crisis would result in a further weakening of US-Arab cooperation, an end to the covert US-PLO dialogue and closer US-Israeli relations, particularly in the military realm. As it turned out, these were precisely the outcomes of the war, even though at first it

[48] RRPL, Kemp Files, "PLO 1981" op.cit.
[49] Author Interview, Nicolas Veliotes, op.cit.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Margaret Thatcher Foundation, "UKE Washington to FCO ('Lebanon')", Documents Archive, 16 June 1982, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/124637.

appeared as if Israel had grossly miscalculated, risking the wrath of the US administration while triggering a hesitant and short-lived US return to the underlying concepts of the 'linkage doctrine'.

Indeed, following the Israeli assault on Lebanon, and with Israeli forces encircling Beirut and engaging in combat with Syrian forces, the US realized the extent of the operation—far beyond the assured 40 KM waypoint that had been originally outlined as the Israeli objective. While the US was willing to back Israel in the war effort and in public opinion, a number of Israeli concessions, both in Lebanon and, more importantly, in the context of the Autonomy negotiations and the Arab-Israeli conflict, were expected in return.

This momentary embrace of linkage—encapsulated in the unveiling of the Reagan Plan for Arab-Israeli negotiations on 1 September 1982—was quickly overtaken by events and the deepening of the US's military engagements on the side of Israel and its allies in Lebanon, which in turn transformed US troops from peacekeepers to active participants (and targets) in the conflict. This dynamic would in turn emerge as a further impetus for closer US-Israeli cooperation in the midst of the Lebanon morass, particularly following the twin bombings of the US embassy complex and marine barracks in April and October 1983 and the considerable uptake in US and foreign hostages abducted in Lebanon.

However, during the initial Israeli push towards Beirut and between June and September 1982, the US administration was largely on the same page in terms of seeking to extract a concession from Israel in exchange for coming to its aid in the Lebanon war. Knowing that support for Israel in the conflict was necessary for political reasons, US officials moved to the second-best option, employing US support for Israel in the war as a 'positive inducement' to extract the same concessions and assurances that Reagan officials had in 1981: diminished Israeli opposition to the US's Arab outreach and increased 'flexibility' in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In Washington, a fragile consensus of opinion therefore formed around the notion of linkage between the war and Israeli policy in the OPT, an approach that received the backing of the NSC, State and the Pentagon, as well as the CIA.[52] Divisions existed regarding the pursuit of positive or negative conditionality with Israel, with the Pentagon demanding more forceful measures. Indeed, the Department of Defence was entirely opposed to the notion—promoted by Israel—that the US should dispatch troops to Lebanon as a peacekeeping force, and given that this seemed inevitable Weinberger and the Pentagon were pushing for a concrete quid for the US quo of coming to Israel's aid.

'In the process of discussing the pros and cons of linking our Lebanon policy to the West Bank and autonomy negotiations', reads a memorandum prepared for an National Security Planning Group

[52] RRPL, NSPG: Records, 1981-87, "NSPG 0039 06/14/1982," Box 91305.

(NSPG) meeting on 14 June 1982, 'it is critically important to keep in mind how to exploit our leverage over Begin to the maximum extent without provoking counterproductive Israeli actions'.[53] In seeking US leverage over Israel, NSC staff, like the State Department, counselled against the use of 'punitive sanctions', as these would likely further increase Israel's noncompliance. As a result, Weinberger's request to 'use the supply of US military assistance to Israel as a lever to extract concessions' was discarded by the administration.

Instead a 'variety of positive inducements' were outlined. While these were described as 'costly in political, military and economic terms', they also held the potential to 'yield significant strategic benefits for us throughout the Middle East, including the [Persian] Gulf'. In turn, it was hoped that the US's 'willingness to help Israel deal with its northern security needs and the stabilization of Lebanon will provide us with significant leverage that you [Reagan] can use with Prime Minister Begin over Israeli occupation policies in the West Bank and concessions in the autonomy negotiations'.[54]

Such hopes were grossly misplaced however, and notwithstanding the Reagan administration's efforts to 'extract a price from Begin for pulling his chestnuts out of Lebanon',[55] the short-sightedness of this approach rested on a belief that US leverage over Israel was 'inherent in Begin's own need to leave Lebanon', and 'not […] out of any particular threats we might make'.[56] The underlying fallacy of this approach vis-à-vis Israel is captured by one sentence contained in a memo drafted by Howard Teicher, Geoffrey Kemp and Oliver North in occasion of the above meeting: 'The President should make clear how difficult it will be for us to deliver without Begin's full agreement to our 'linkage' approach'.[57] It is difficult to see how Begin would be convinced to agree to such linkage, given that he and his government—as well as the Israeli Labour party before him—had made opposition to 'linkage' a major constant of Israeli foreign policy.

This momentary US embrace of linkage would climax—and quickly deflate—following the unveiling of the 'Reagan Plan' for Arab-Israeli peace on 1 September 1982.[58] The plan was quickly overtaken by events, as the US failed to press for its implementation after Israel's adamant rejection of the initiative.[59] Israel's refusal to provide any such assurances was put on clear display during the second Reagan-Begin meeting in the midst of the Lebanon war, on 21 June 1982. A full summary of the meeting was declassified by the RRPL in 2010 and provides much insight into the nature of US-Israeli relations.

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid. Significantly, during the same meeting officials noted how ex-President Nixon and Henry Kissinger also backed this approach of 'positive inducements' for Israel.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid. (Talking Points, NSPG Meeting on Lebanon, 14 June 1982).
[57] Ibid.
[58] The plan called for Palestinian autonomy in association with Jordan and an Israeli settlement freeze as a gesture of goodwill for the negotiations. APP, "Ronald Reagan. Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East," 1 September 1982, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=42911. Also see, Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit*, op.cit.pp.1-29.
[59] David K. Shipler, "Israel Rejects Reagan Plan," *NYT*, 3 September 1982, https://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/03/world/israel-rejects-reagan-plan-for-palestinians-self-rule-terms-it-serious-danger.html.

Indeed, similar discussions had been held during 1981, yet to little avail. In 1982, in the midst of Lebanon and following Israel's completion of the Sinai Redeployment, the Reagan administration still could not muster sufficient political will to stand up to Israel. In fact, throughout the Lebanon war the most that the administration could approve in terms of negative conditionality vis-à-vis Israel boiled down to a momentary suspension of cluster bomb munitions and the now-famous Reagan threat to review the entire US-Israeli relationship if Begin did not order an immediate halt to the bombing of Beirut in August 1982, which Reagan described as a 'holocaust' over the phone with Begin.

Yet, on the twin US strategic goals of seeking to extract greater Israeli acquiescence to the evolving US-Arab strategic dialogue, let alone an agreement to show more flexibility in the context of the Autonomy negotiations or its occupation policies in Palestine, the Israeli government never backed down, including during the tense face-to-face meeting between Reagan and Begin.

'I was genuinely shocked', noted Reagan as he met with Begin in the White House on 21 June 1982. 'Israel has lost ground to a great extent among our people as a result of your action'. He went on,

> 'Your actions in Lebanon have seriously undermined our relationships with those Arab governments whose cooperation is essential to protect the Middle East. […] I am prepared to expend considerable political capital in order to help meet Israel's basic needs in Lebanon […] However, I must have from you explicit commitments that Israel will take those steps necessary to achieve a breakthrough in the autonomy negotiations. […] I may take actions with which you do not agree. For example, […] providing military equipment to those Arab nations who have come to rely on us. […] I believe this strengthens Arab confidence in us, improves our strategic position, and encourages them to take risks for peace. I don't expect you to come out and approve this, but for heaven sakes, please don't oppose us. […] I would hope that your reactions reflect an appreciation that the vital interests of both our nations are served by mutually beneficial relations between the United States and key Arab nations'.[60]

Begin's response completely skirted the issue of assurances and flexibility, and instead emphasized Israel's contribution to US Cold War interests. 'There were ten times more Soviet weapons' in Lebanon than expected, noted Begin, 'we now realize that this area had been turned into a Soviet base, the principal center of Soviet activities in the Middle East. […] A true international terrorist base'. Promising to share with the US all the intelligence gathered from Lebanon, Begin emphasized how the Israeli action had 'rendered a great service to the United States and to the free world'. Outlining how Israel had successfully 'shot down over 100 [Syrian] MIGs with not one Israeli loss', Begin promised to share Israel's technology used to destroy Soviet SAM-batteries in Lebanon, noting how 'the prestige of US weapons vis-à-vis Soviet weapons went up'.[61]

[60] RRPL, Near East and South Asian Affairs, NSC Records, Box 91987 (box 12).
[61] Ibid. Significantly, Ariel Sharon would refuse to share much of this information, dragging his feet with the Reagan administration. Such reluctance would end when Shorn was replaced by Moshe Arens as Israel's Defence Minister in February 1983.

Without ever mentioning the Palestinians, Begin requested US assistance and aid for Zaire and Sudan, two countries that were hesitantly moving towards recognizing Israel, as well as further increases in bilateral aid for Israel. Brushing aside Reagan's point that public opinion in the US was moving against Israel, Begin complained about an alleged media 'bias' against his country, while finding solace in the fact that, beyond the media, 'public opinion is not so bad'. 'Your Jewish citizens are strongly behind us', continued Begin, 'there are millions of Christians in the US supporting us. […] I think we do indeed have a lot of support and understanding'.[62] Such statements amounted to a veiled threat against the Reagan administration and represent a clear indication of Israel's unwillingness to be pressured into agreeing to a quid pro quo with the US.

The administration's true priorities were also outlined in this meeting. No significant pushback occurred on Palestine, while some discussion was held on the topic of US arms sales to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Notwithstanding Reagan's efforts to assure Israel that the 'US would not sell these arms and then stand back and see the weapons used against Israel', the response from Begin and Moshe Arens, Israel's Ambassador to the US, was less than forthcoming. 'The US should not arm the Arabs', said Begin, pointing to the erosion of Israel's QME, while Arens expressed his view that 'arms should not be sold to the Arabs before they join the peace process'.[63]

The results of the meeting were less than satisfactory for the US.[64] The administration's support for Israel, particularly in public, continued however, even in the midst of severe political crises and recriminations surrounding Israel's repeated breaches of ceasefires, overwhelming use of force in Lebanon, the Sabra and Shatila massacre and the mounting instances of Israeli harassment against US marines dispatched to Lebanon to oversee the evacuation of the PLO.[65] Reagan's public support for Israel throughout the early months of war even led AIPAC to send the president a private letter, saying the organization was 'proud of the stand you and your administration took during the Lebanon crisis. It was clear that your administration, unbending to foreign pressure and true to your commitment to combat terrorism, permitted Israel to effectively carry out its operations',[66]

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] In a subsequent conversation between Reagan and Senator Percy, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Reagan outlined how 'Begin was pretty uncompromising. […] I kept telling him again and again that Israel's attitude towards the moderate Arabs was self-defeating and they had to understand our policy, namely that the only way to get further progress in the peace process is to get the moderate Arabs, particularly Saudi Arabia and Jordan, to follow Egypt's example. This requires that the United States have good relations with them and this required arms sales'. RRPL, Howard Teicher Files, "Chron June 1982", Box 91667.
[65] On the IDF's harassment of US troops in Lebanon see, Donald Neff, "Israel Charged with Systematic Harassment of US Marines," *Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs*, March 1995, https://www.wrmea.org/1995-march/israel-charged-with-systematic-harassment-of-u.s.-marines.html; Richard Halloran, "A Marine, Pistol Drawn, Stops 3 Israeli Tanks," *NYT*, 3 February 1983, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/02/03/world/a-marine-pistol-drawn-stops-3-israeli-tanks.html.
[66] RRPL, Max Green Files, Records 1985-88, "AIPAC (1)-(4)," Box 30.

Resulting from these initial US reactions to the Lebanon war, the fundamental components of US policy towards Israel, its embrace of compensation and positive inducements, and consequent avoidance of pressure or negative conditionality would become entrenched. These would remain largely unaltered for the remainder of the administration, leading the US to abandon its hesitant embrace of linkage following the issuing of the September 1982 Reagan Plan, and proceeding to work on strengthening US-Israeli relations as the foundation for US-Israeli dialogue and cooperation in all fields.

Indeed, having failed to garner Begin's approval of a quid pro quo, or support for the Reagan Plan, the US administration essentially reverted to revamping US-Israeli strategic cooperation as a form of 'positive inducement' in exchange for tactical Israeli actions in the context of the Lebanon negotiations and US efforts to enforce a phased Israeli (and Syrian) withdrawal from the country as called for by the 17 May 1983 agreement negotiated by the US and signed by Israel and Lebanon (but not Syria).

The US's complete abandonment of the concept of linkage was put on clear display with the issuing of Reagan's NSDD-99 on 12 July 1983, completed a little over a year after the Israeli invasion and two months after the signing of the 17 May agreement that would create the key impetus for the resumption of US-Israeli strategic cooperation. Representing an initial outcome from the internal review of the US's national security strategy for the Middle East, NSDD-99 outlined US strategic objectives, relations with allies and potential threats to US interests. Under the heading 'cooperation with Israel', NSDD-99 reads:

> I acknowledge that our ability to defend vital interests in the Near East and South Asia would be enhanced by the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, in recognition of Israel's strategic location, developed base infrastructure, and the quality and interoperability of Israeli military forces, we will undertake to resume cooperative planning with Israel expanding on the work begun earlier. To this end, we should conduct an internal review on where we could profit militarily from cooperative planning for major Soviet involvement and aggression which threaten vital western interests in the Near East and South Asia.[67]

NSDD-99 would therefore formalize the decision to resume strategic cooperation with Israel, prompting a further set of debates as the administration launched a review assessment of Israeli capabilities to support US interests. Such efforts ultimately resulted in the approval of NSDD-111 on 28 October 1983, followed shortly thereafter by NSDD-115.[68] This latter document, entitled 'visit of [Israeli] Prime Minister Shamir' and approved on 26 November 1983, would set the groundwork for the formal resumption of US-Israel strategic cooperation, leading between 1984 and 1989 to a considerable expansion of bureaucratic and institutional frameworks governing US-Israel relations, which will be addressed in Chapter 7.

[67] FAS, NSDD of the Reagan Administration, "NSDD-99," 12 July 1983, p.4, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-99.pdf.
[68] Ibid. "NSDD-111," 28 October 1983, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-111.pdf; Ibid. "NSDD-115," 26 November 1983, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-115.pdf.

While considered indispensable in order for the US to pursue a number of short-term interests in the context of the Lebanon war, the decision to 'develop a more mature strategic relationship with the Government of Israel'[69] as outlined by NSDD-115 would have far-reaching implications for the future, the theme of US leverage and influence over Israeli policy and the growth of domestic and increasingly bureaucratic constraints on US decision-making. Most significantly, the decision to reinvigorate cooperative planning with Israel would set the stage for the formalization of the quasi-exclusivist US-Israeli relationship in the Middle East, securing an important victory for Israeli policy by virtue of this agreement's potential to place Israeli concerns and interests front and centre of US Middle East policy well into the future.

6.4 US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation Revived: The 1983 MoU

On 29 November 1983, Yitzhak Shamir, Israel's new Prime Minister, visited Washington to discuss developments in Lebanon and the resumption of formal US-Israeli strategic cooperation. The meeting would formalize the revival of the 1981 MoU, yet the two participants would also draw a number of lessons from these previous efforts.[70] Differently from 1981, no official document was issued to the public, with details of the agreements being limited to brief public remarks by Reagan and Shamir following two days of intensive talks in Washington. The agreement would however become a launching pad for much broader elements of US-Israeli cooperation, setting in motion an accelerated growth in bilateral ties that were by no means limited to the strategic or military realm.

The 1983 agreements included a commitment to negotiate an FTA with Israel, the approval of US funding for the Israeli Lavi fighter jet (including through the use of US FMF through offshore procurement of Lavi components manufactured in Israel that was heavily opposed by the Pentagon), allowing Israeli companies to 'participate in the production of US weapons systems', and increasing US 'security assistance to Israel'.[71] Further elements included the revival of the previous commitment by the US DoD to purchase $200 million a year of Israeli made equipment and further efforts to strengthen Israel's economy and defence sector, particularly for export purposes, through the approval of export sales to third countries.

Yet, arguably the most important competent of the revived MoU was the formal establishment of a 'joint political-military group [JPMG] to examine ways in which we can enhance U.S.-Israeli cooperation'.[72] The

[69] "NSDD-115," op.cit.,p.1
[70] For a detailed examination of the differences between the 1981 MoU and the 1983 revival based on the viewpoints of key Israeli and US officials involved in the negotiations, see, Policy Focus, "US-Israeli Strategic Cooperation," Newsletter of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), September 1986, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus3.pdf.
[71] APP, "Ronald Reagan. Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel Following Their Meetings," 29 November 1983, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=40815.
[72] Ibid.

JPMG would become the first in a series of important bilateral working groups that would meet on a periodic basis to discuss wide-ranging issues of a strategic, military, economic and political nature. At the time Reagan described the group as giving 'priority attention to the threat to our mutual interest posed by increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Among the specific areas to be considered are combined planning, joint exercises, and requirements for prepositioning of U.S. equipment in Israel'.[73]

The group was in fact charged with developing detailed plans for joint exercises, prepositioning of military equipment in Israel, the negotiation of joint R&D ventures and the exchange of best practices in countering mutual threats ranging from Soviet weaponry to the sharing of intelligence and the organization of covert US-Israeli cooperation across the Third World. Held under a strict aura of secrecy, the joint meetings of the JPMG would begin in January 1984, setting the stage for a considerable expansion in people-to-people contacts among the respective bureaucracies and expert practitioners in the two countries.

Through these channels the Reagan White House and the Israeli government continued their mutual efforts to inform each other's policies. For the US, the benefits lay primarily in creating a venue for high-level dialogue on mutual concerns but also for disagreements, in an effort to avoid their spilling over into the public domain where they could cause considerable political damage. The group also represented a locus for more long-term planning for Israeli aid and security requests, and an avenue to influence Israeli policy and long-term viewpoints. From Israel's standpoint, the benefits were more tangible and direct. They not only included the abovementioned political, economic and military commitments, but also a direct route to influence US perceptions and policies about the Middle East, setting the stage for a slow but sustained process whereby Israeli tactics, viewpoints and concerns vis-à-vis Middle East developments and actors were increasingly adopted by the US. The JPMG would therefore become a means to reinforce the preferential and quasi-exclusivist nature of the US-Israeli relationship, a key avenue to strengthen this gradual process of 'Israelization' of US viewpoints and approaches to the Middle East.

Yet, what was the basic motivation for the administration's reversal away from linkage, and how could the US justify this volte-face in the absence of concrete Israeli assurances in the peace process or US-Arab relations? We have seen how the preliminary decision to reinstate US-Israeli strategic cooperation was already contained in NSDD-99 of 12 July 1983, and was further articulated in NSDD-111, signed by Reagan on 28 October 1983, about a month before the formal revival of the MoU in November 1983. The contents of NSDD-111 go some way towards elucidating a number of key rationales that would lead the US to revamp US-Israeli strategic cooperation.

[73] Ibid.

Coming on the heels of the August 1982 evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, the 17 May 1983 agreement between Lebanon and Israel (ostensibly meant to lay the groundwork for a Lebanon-Israel peace deal and the simultaneous withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces from Lebanon), realities in Lebanon represented the first rationale for the US's return to close cooperation with Israel. In this respect, the US sought to cut its losses in Lebanon, limit the political fallout and use Israel as 'cover' for a hasty withdrawal. By October 1983, the realities in Lebanon had become unbearable for the administration, particularly in light of the original hopes that a quick and successful campaign in Lebanon would be a morale-booster that could help kick the Vietnam-syndrome. By that time, the US had also in effect taken sides in the Lebanon war, largely as a result of Israeli actions at Sabra and Shatila and the ensuing decision to return US troops to Beirut. Moreover, Syria's refusal to endorse the 17 May agreement, which effectively stonewalled US policy in Lebanon, would create a further impetus for stronger cooperation with Israel.

The main architect of the deal, George Shultz, who in the meantime had replaced Alexander Haig as Reagan's second Secretary of State, had neglected seeking Syrian participation in the 17 May agreement, even though the terms called for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, effectively placing the Syrian presence in the country on par with that of the invading Israeli army. Such an outcome, with Syria opposing the agreement, leading to its collapse, followed shortly thereafter by the collapse of the confessional government of Lebanon, left the US facing a humiliating disaster in Lebanon, leading to a hasty US retreat by March 1984.[74]

It may be an irony of history that this turn of events was predicted in one of Reagan's talking points for an NSPG meeting in April 1983 found at the RRPL. 'The approach of offering Israel a great deal merely in return for a signature on an agreement with Lebanon does not go far enough. We run the real risk that Israel will indeed sign an agreement with Lebanon [i.e., the 17 May agreement], but it will be unacceptable to Moslem elements in Lebanon and the moderate Arabs. We will then have given away things to Israel, but the agreement will be unacceptable to Syria; Syria will not withdraw, and the Israelis will stay in Lebanon as well. This will be the worst of all worlds for us'.[75]

As if out of prophetic wisdom, the talking point matches the succession of events in the context of the Lebanon war and the gradual means by which the US would become 'entrapped' in a vicious circle of incremental increases in sweeteners for Israel while receiving very little in return. If 'entrapping' the US in a semi-exclusivist US-Israeli relationship by orchestrating the crisis in Lebanon was indeed among Israel's plans, these were advancing beyond its wildest dreams.

[74] Micah Zenko, "When Reagan Cut and Run," *Foreign Policy Colum*, 7 February 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/02/07/when-reagan-cut-and-run/.
[75] RRPL, NSPG Meeting Records, "NSPG 0062 04/22/1983," Box 91306.

As a result, the US moved—even before the formal conclusion of the 17 May agreement—to 're-establish the basis sense that we share fundamental common interests [with Israel] and […] relegate differences to a lower plane',[76] as noted by Shultz in a memo for the same NSPG meeting on 22 April 1983. But there was more at stake for the US than the conflict in Lebanon, mounting US casualties and hostages, fuelling its need for a quick and face-saving withdrawal from Lebanon. There were developments in the Iran-Iraq war, which by late 1983 was moving further towards Iran's advantage, and the upcoming US presidential elections of 1984.

The combination of these developments would give the final and unrelenting push to formalize US-Israeli strategic cooperation on the occasion of Shamir's visit to the US in November 1983. Iran's effective counterattack against Iraq caused significant concern in Washington, as well as among those same 'moderate' Arab allies the US was courting for access agreements and basing rights. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states were highly concerned about a potential Iranian victory and turned to the US for assistance. This, for many in the administration, eased the prospect of the US moving to 'widen and enhance' its 'strategic cooperation with Israel'[77] as called for by NSDD-111, and of granting assurances of cooperation in the strategic realm.[78]

Indeed, it was during this period that the US was moving to create CENTCOM and establish a forward basing presence for its logistical and contingency planning needs. Eventually, by mid-1984, Bahrain was identified as the location for this base—first in the form of a floating naval operations room and eventually as the major contemporary US military and naval facilities dotting the Arabian Peninsula. Meanwhile extensive airfield and bases were 'overbuilt' by Oman and Saudi Arabia for US use in the event of an emergency. Such preparatory planning would eventually come to fruition during the 1987–88 Tanker War (Operation Earnest Will), when the US military deployed en masse to the Persian Gulf and more so during the 1990-1 Gulf crisis.

While developments in the Iran-Iraq war diminished fears about alienating the Arab world, the upcoming 1984 elections would add a significant impetus for a quick revival of strategic cooperation with Israel. The fundamental question of a quid pro quo, or the need for Israel to 'desist from active campaigns in the United States against our arms sales to the Arabs' as noted in NSDD-111, remained unfulfilled, and yet the US moved wholeheartedly towards Israel. Most importantly, the Reagan administration effectively formalized the rejection of linkage, let alone negative conditionality, as official US policy, noting in NSDD-111 that:

[76] Ibid.
[77] "NSDD-111," op.cit.
[78] Laham, *Crossing the Rubicon*, op.cit., pp.143-50.

> Strategic cooperation should not become a bargaining chip for specific ends. [...] Specifically, this means that we should not hold hostage progress on our strategic planning with either Israel or the moderate Arabs to progress on Lebanon or the peace process.[79]

The document amounted to an abdication of responsibility on the side of the US in terms of Israeli obstructionism. Instead, the US would revert to delaying the inevitable, pushing back areas of US-Israeli disagreement while simultaneously moving to 'give the store to Israel' in the hope of gaining a number of short-term tactical benefits while ostensibly accumulating leverage and credibility with Israel that could be cashed in at a later date.

This statement was contained in a diplomatic cable sent by Charles H. Price, US ambassador to the UK. Upon hearing of the public resumption of US-Israeli strategic cooperation, Price sent a worried cable to Reagan's NSC Advisor Robert McFarlane, complaining that the agreement amounted to a 'last minute decision to "give the store" to Israel for political reasons'.[80] McFarlane's response was to highlight how the administration had implemented a 'thorough, systematic' eighteen-month review of US strategy in the Middle East and that the decision therefore could not be linked to the upcoming elections or to political calculations.[81]

That fact that the outcome of this 'thorough, systematic review' of US policy boiled down to a decision (and implicit admission) that the only way the US could hope to make Israel budge was through incremental increases in aid, and that such assistance was needed in order to limit the tendency for Israel to oppose US-Arab strategic cooperation—which Israel would go on opposing anyway—speaks volumes about the nature of US-Israel ties and the distribution of leverage between the sides. That the only way in which the US would be able to salvage even this limited and arguably unsatisfactory policy was through a further declassing of the Palestinian issue and a complete disavowal of linkage and negative conditionality, would only further the perception that it was the Israeli tail that was wagging the US dog when it came to the Middle East.

Indeed, the 'tail wagging the dog' allegory was explicitly made by Nixon's former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Joseph P. Sisco, almost at the onset of the Lebanon war. During a meeting with Secretary of State Shultz, Sisco counselled the newly appointed Secretary to explore a number of means to increase US sway over Israel, including through linkage and negative conditionality, in order to dispel the growing view of the US-Israeli relationship as one of 'the tail wagging the dog'. 'Much of America's political strength in the area had been based on the perception in the Arab

[79] "NSDD-111," op.cit.
[80] A copy of the cable, including McFarlane's response dated 20 December 1983, is available from, Robert Perry, "How the Neocons Messed Up the Middle East," *Consortiumnews*, 15 February 2013, https://consortiumnews.com/2013/02/15/how-neocons-messed-up-the-mideast/.
[81] Ibid.

world, that while the Soviets can help them militarily to use force, only the US can help them make peace. This means "producing" Israel'.[82]

Yet, by 1983, it appeared that the US had all but abandoned its efforts to 'produce Israeli concessions', particularly if these were construed as an explicit exchange for US support. Instead, US policy essentially turned this approach on its head, seeking to 'reassure' Israel and build a 'safety net' below its Middle Eastern ally as had been advised by Jack Stein back in late 1981, while postponing the expected Israeli concessions to an ill-defined future. It was first necessary to augment the US-Israel strategic, political, military and economic relationship as the foundation of US-Israel relations. This, it was hoped, would establish a grounding of goodwill with Israel that would somehow translate in the long term to greater US leverage over Israel, out of a misplaced belief that once Israel's feelings of insecurity and encirclement were addressed, it would show greater willingness to follow the US lead in the Middle East. Such expectations demonstrate on the one hand how the US administration misread or underestimated Israel, and on the other the extent to which Israel was able to come out on top of this mutual struggle for influence and leverage.

Ultimately, by sidestepping the deep areas of disagreement if not incompatibility between long-term US and Israeli interests in the Middle East—most clearly evidenced in the US belief that peace and not Israeli military superiority represented the best insurance for Israel's long-term security as well as a means to finally reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' strands of US policy—the US was essentially diluting its own leverage over Israel, weakening US arguments that could be used to extract Israeli concessions.

Indeed, when the moment came for the US to cash in on this sustained demonstration of goodwill and support for Israel—whether for the approval of arms sales to Jordan or Saudi Arabia, or increased Israeli flexibility in the occupied territories and in negotiations with the Palestinians or its Arab neighbours—there was little left for the US to offer Israel that it had not already gained through compensation or inducements. The systemic catch-22 of US policy was becoming crystallized. No matter how unresponsive to US concerns and wider interests, Israel could rest assured that more sweeteners would soon flow from Washington to Tel Aviv, either to overcome a momentary crisis in the relationship or to compensate Israel for the US's wider interests and concerns.

Ultimately, therefore, this building of a US 'safety net' under Israel was only furthering the creeping incrementalism of this policy straightjacket that prevented Washington from employing the full weight of its leverage over Israel to extract needed concessions. Instead, and largely in result of these two phases of debate on US-Israeli strategic cooperation, US policy would become locked in an incremental game of inducements and compensation, even in those instances when Israeli policy was running counter to US

[82] RRPL, Kemp Files, "Arab-Israel Peace Process-Memos, September 1982 (1)-(6)," RAC Box 1.

interests. Meanwhile, it was Israel's own central concern, a quasi-exclusivist relationship with the US that would benefit most from this policy.

Conclusion

The decision to reinstate formal US-Israeli strategic cooperation taken by NSDD-99 and formalized by NSDD-111 of 29 November 1983 established the groundwork for a considerable blossoming of US-Israeli cooperation. More important than the quantitative nature of US support however, was the qualitative and conceptual significance of this agreement. It was these elements that would establish the greatest degrees of path dependency for future US policy.

The tangible benefits in store for Israel, in the economic, military and political domains would result in a mushrooming of people-to-people contacts, joint ventures, military exercises and the considerable blurring of boundaries between Israel and the United States. The degree to which Israel is recognized today as the '51st state' can be traced back to this period, representing the climax of a long and gradual familiarization process that would result in a considerable normalization of US-Israeli relations in various domains.

The 1981 MoU was based on a US effort to extract clear Israeli assurances and quid pro quo from Tel Aviv. The 1983 MoU was altogether different. It almost appears as if the roles of the two players had changed, with Israel, not the US, holding most leverage and consequently succeeding in developing a set of relationships that came closer to meeting its concerns and desires. While in 1981 the US pushed back against Israel's most ambitious desires, and essentially sought to establish a patron-client relationship with Israel under the guise of strategic cooperation, by 1983 the priorities had changed. The urgency of reassuring 'moderate' Arab states of the US's credibility had diminished due to heightened fears of a potential Iranian victory in the Iran-Iraq war. Meanwhile, in the midst of the Lebanon morass, it was the US's short-term goals of hastening an honourable exit from Lebanon, while consolidating domestic political support in Washington in preparation for the 1984 elections that took precedence in the context of negotiations with Israel over the revival of strategic cooperation.

As a result, the US was more willing to move closer to Israeli desires. The compromise was reflected in the fact that no official document was issued containing the details of the 1983 memorandum. Details were kept vague and the extent of this US-Israeli cooperation was left open, expanding on the basis of mutual need and interest through the high-level dialogues contained in the JPMG and associated working groups. This approach would essentially open the floodgates of US-Israeli cooperation, placing no limits on the dialogue and thereby ensuring its eventual extension to other domains and issues.

While the JPMG was originally conceived as a forum to voice concerns and repair political disagreements, it would soon evolve into a venue for broad discussion and coordination between Washington and Tel Aviv. Indeed, the JPMG would soon be augmented by a whole new set of bureaucratic agreements and bilateral working groups. These included a Joint Security Assistance Planning group (JSAP), a Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) and, finally in 1988, the launching of Joint Political Consultations (JPC) (see Appendix D and E).

As noted by Dennis Ross, following the 1983 decision to revive US-Israeli strategic cooperation, 'the political intention was created and formalized'[83] and it was hard to see how such agreements could be pulled back by the administration. 'The formal undertakings that Reagan established with Israel strategically in the area of military, intelligence, counterterror, and security cooperation would create a baseline for all subsequent American presidents. Indeed, even those subsequent presidents who might not have instinctually viewed Israel as a strategic asset would respect these undertakings and build on them'.[84]

It is to this blossoming of US-Israeli bureaucratic agreements and working groups, and their broader implications on US policy and the path dependency they created for the future that the research now turns.

[83] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[84] Ross, *Doomed to Succeed*, op.cit., p.181.

Chapter 7

From Theory to Practice: Institutionalizing the US-Israel 'Special Relationship'

The revival of the US-Israel MoU on strategic cooperation in late 1983 would signal a final 'coming out' stage for the bilateral relationship, emerging into the open as a *de facto* geostrategic alliance. Progressing in an incremental manner between 1984 and 1989, an expanding web of interpersonal, economic, bureaucratic, military and covert ties would transform both the conceptual foundations governing US policy towards Israel and the tangible expressions of US-Israeli cooperation, opening a new phase in the bilateral relationship.

On the one hand, this phase would be characterized by an unprecedented institutionalization of the relationship, and a normalization of Israel's long-term dependence on the US. On the other, it would signal the beginnings of an accelerated process of interdependence and assimilation between the respective viewpoints and approaches of Israel and the United States in the Middle East. These reflected what was a growing process of 'Americanization' of Israel, leading certain dimensions of Israeli society, economy and politics to grow closer to US models of state-society relations and a parallel increase in the 'Israelization' of US approaches and viewpoints on the Middle East.

Such processes were welcomed by the US. Washington believed them conducive to the twin goals of enhancing Israeli security while increasing US leverage. In essence, the US hoped that by institutionalizing the US-Israeli relationship, Washington was enhancing future leverage over Israeli policy, increasing its ability to counsel Israeli restraint while fulfilling US commitments to preserve Israeli security and wellbeing. Through the establishment of a number of bilateral working groups charged with discussing various dimensions of the relationship, the Reagan administration also believed it was shielding US policy from unwanted influences of Congress and domestic politics. This would enhance the ability of the administration to directly coordinate policy with Israel and representatives of the organized Jewish-American community, thereby limiting public disagreements that did much to harm the administration's domestic standing.

Conceptually, this approach rested on a belief that by consistently demonstrating US goodwill towards Israel, without expecting a direct and tangible exchange of services as had originally been sought by the Reagan administration in 1981–82, the US was 'preparing the ground' for peace, reassuring Israel's security fears by providing it with a 'safety net' that would ensure that Israel's traditional mistrust of the US's motives in the Middle East be finally put to rest.

This would ostensibly provide the US with leverage that could someday be employed to orchestrate a peace agreement, understood as indispensable to allow Washington to reconcile the 'Arab' and the 'Israeli' components of US policy while ensuring Israel's long-term security and survival. Such an approach stemmed from political expediency, and a reluctance to employ negative conditionality on Israel, as this risked undermining wider components of US policy without providing any assurance of progress in the negotiations or change in Israeli policy.

Preferable, therefore, would be to delay progress on the diplomatic track—as this would inevitably lead to a clash with Israel's leadership—and continue the Kissinger-era step-by-step approach, predicated on supplying weapons to Israel to force the Arab states and the Palestinians to capitulate to US and Israeli desires. However, while Kissinger understood the need for an outward image of balance and did employ a careful mixture of carrots and sticks vis-à-vis *both* Israel and the Arab states in the post-1973 period, such subtleties were lost on the Reagan administration, particularly following the revival of US-Israel strategic cooperation after 1983. As a result, during the latter half of the 1980s, balance would be replaced by a policy of 'hugging Israel closer' and a related upgrading of overt forms of bias and preferential treatment for Israel that would signal the slow emergence of a policy of support for Israel 'right or wrong'.

Indeed, and in parallel with this slow 'Americanization' of Israeli state-society relations, these processes of assimilation were having deeper, perhaps unforeseen, consequences. Such processes of assimilation were not one-sided. Just as US models and experiences were being carried over into Israel, the opposite was also bound to occur. Thus, along with the institutionalization of ties during the second half of the 1980s came a process of 'Israelization' of US policy and viewpoints on the Middle East as a by-product of an increased reliance on Israel in the strategic zone of the Near East.

As noted by a scholar who has closely followed these parallel processes of 'Americanization' of Israel and 'Israelization' of US Middle East policy: 'This liberalization and militarization of Israel society in the 1980s […] re-created the Israeli society in the image of the United States. When US aid to Israel reached $3 billion a year, the relationship between the two countries became intertwined, with Israel dependent on the US, and with people and officials living off this relationship,' noted Marwan Bishara in a 2003 interview. 'With the Americanization of Israel, […] three faucets of power, Christian fundamentalists, neo-conservatives and Israeli lobbyists became important factors in the Israelization of American foreign policy. They grew along with the relationship […] Israelis were following the example of America, economically and culturally,

while Israel's right-wing friends (in the US) were asking Washington to take the example of Israel. Hence the marriage; the Americanization of Israel and the Israelization of America.'[1]

The bilateral working groups charged with high-level dialogue and consultation on a whole number of strategic, military, economic and political issues would become particularly important vehicles for Israel to increase its own influence over US policy. By virtue of being consulted in the development of US strategy, and mindful of the administration's aversion to public crises, Israeli officials enjoyed ample means to transmit their desired policy approaches to the US and to limit, dilute or even undermine certain elements of US policy that were deemed to run counter to Israeli interests.

Most importantly, the administration's embrace of compensation and 'positive inducements' for Israel and the articulation of what would become a US commitment to preserve Israel's QME would bring the US closer to establishing a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East. As Israeli concerns, first and foremost the ill-defined concept of Israeli security, were placed at front and centre of US policy, Israel's leadership was effectively granted a semi-veto power over large dimensions of US Middle East policy, particularly in the strategic zone of the Near East.

This outcome was precisely what had motivated successive Israeli governments to seek closer relations with the US. Yet, Israel had repeatedly stood firm against unwanted interference over Israeli policy, insisting that it would never compromise on Israel's freedom of action or fall prey to a classic patron-client relationship. Significantly, establishing a *de facto* patron-client relationship with Israel had long represented a US objective, the clearest means to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US policy in such a way as to advance US interests while fulfilling the domestic political need to support Israel.

This objective, and the related need to compensate Israel to allow for a greater US strategic focus on the 'moderate' Arabs, had informed the original efforts of the DoD and the Reagan administration to negotiate the 1981 MoU with Israel. By calling out this intention, and refusing to allow itself to become 'a hostage' to the MoU, while subsequently catapulting a crisis in the region that would result in much closer US-Israeli cooperation and ultimately even a revival of the MoU, Israel succeeded in achieving two major strategic goals: securing and institutionalizing a *de facto* geostrategic alliance with the US, complete with overt forms of strategic cooperation of greater significance and depth than those bestowed on the US's Arab allies, without compromising on the fundamentals of Israeli policy that the US had long opposed.

[1] George S. Hishmeh, "America and Israel: best of allies, worst of friends," *The Daily Star*, 9 October 2003, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/ArticlePrint.aspx?id=42084&mode=print.

It is to this blossoming of US-Israeli cooperation between 1984 and 1989 that the chapter will turn, placing significant emphasis on the conceptual rationales underpinning these approaches and assessing their continued path dependency for future US policy towards Israel and the broader Middle East.

7.1 The Blurring of Boundaries: Compensation, 'Equal Treatment' and the NATOization of Israel

Between 1984 and 1989 the US-Israel relationship would expand to previously unforeseen extents. All dimensions were affected, building on the already 'special' nature of ties and elevating them to the standing of 'unique'. As the Reagan administration moved to disavow linkage and downplay the principles of balance and reciprocity, the floodgates of cooperation opened, providing a considerable windfall of benefits to Israel, which finally found official recognition in its status as ally and partner of the United States.

The revived MoU on US-Israeli strategic cooperation, and the conceptual foundation on which it rested, would set the stage for an unprecedented normalization and institutionalization of the relationship. Cooperation was diffused into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries, as the establishment of a number of key bilateral working groups forged permanent channels of dialogue, facilitating an accelerated process of familiarization between expert practitioners in the two countries. Professional contacts and exchanges of visits became particularly important, helping to create friendly and supportive constituencies of experts within various branches of the federal government, in particular the US Department of Defence, State Department and Intelligence Communities. Such constituencies would gradually counterbalance the traditional scepticism towards overt forms of US-Israeli cooperation present among older generations of practitioners in these branches of government. 'In these human encounters, both sides benefit', noted James G. Roche, a former US navy captain and future secretary of the Air Force; 'we train them, and they train us. We learn from them, and they learn from us. And the more the two sides work together, the more they like each other'.[2]

Contacts became especially important in the military domain, both at the highest level, where generals and Joint Chiefs of Staff would begin to visit Israel on a reoccurring basis, and at the societal level, where thousands of US soldiers, particularly from the navy, began spending prolonged periods of leave in Israel. The Israeli port of Haifa, was transformed into the major docking area for the US's Sixth Fleet, emerging as a significant demonstration of this new phase

[2] Quoted in, Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit., pp.245-6 (quote), pp.225-51.

of overt cooperation.[3] Joint military exercises, particularly between the navy and air force, began in the mid-1980s, while joint medical cooperation and drills became another important dimension of the evolving relationship. By 1989, the US and Israel had conducted at least 29 different joint military exercises.[4]

By 1987, the US had approved almost $70 million of pre-positioned military hardware in Israel for use in eventual emergencies, including by Israel's own forces in the event of need, with funding increasing to $100 million in 1989.[5] Financial and military aid swung upward, and by the mid-1980s began stabilizing at just over $3 billion annually, with all assistance transferred from loans to grants from FY1985 onwards.[6] Moreover, all aid was provided to Israel in the first month of the year, a unique Israeli benefit that began in 1985 and allows Israel to re-invest the extra money and make a sizable profit on the interest.

That same year, the two countries also concluded a free trade agreement, the first bilateral FTA entered into by the US, which consolidated financial, trade and economic links between the two countries. Called for in the original 1981 MoU on strategic-cooperation, the FTA has had an important impact on US-Israeli relations. Since its conclusion in 1985, bilateral trade has increased tenfold, reaching $49 billion in 2016.[7] The significance of the FTA is also found in joint ventures and R&D research, which by the end of the 1980s reached a value of $2.9 billion for a total of 321 joint ventures.[8]

The FTA was considered indispensable to save Israel from economic disaster. Indeed, during 1984–85, US Secretary of State Shultz would essentially commandeer Israel's economy, pushing through structural reforms while providing emergency assistance and the conclusion of an FTA to boost Israeli exports and self-sufficiency. Interestingly, such efforts—which included approval of a $1.5 billion emergency aid package for Israel in FY1986 that brought total US aid that year to a whopping $3.66 billion[9]—were described domestically and in Congress as indispensible not only to save Israel's economy and 'prepare the groundwork for peace' in the region, but also to allow Israel to slowly decrease its dependence on foreign—i.e., US—aid and to increase its ability to repay loans.

[3] Dov S. Zakheim, "The United States Navy and Israeli Navy. Background, Current Issues, Scenarios and Prospects," CNA Strategic Studies, February 2012, https://www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/D0026727.A1.pdf.
[4] Feldman, *The Future of US-Israel*, op.cit., p.15.
[5] Sharp, "US Assistance," op.cit., pp.18-19; Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit., pp.242-5.
[6] Sharp, "US Assistance," op.cit. (December 2016 version), p.37, http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/586f57444.pdf.
[7] US Embassy in Israel, "Fact Sheet US-Israel Economic Relationship," https://il.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/fact-sheet-u-s-israel-economic-relationship/.
[8] Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit., p.249.
[9] Sharp, "US Assistance" (2016), op.cit., pp.37-8.

Also significant was the US's demands for Israeli structural and economic reforms in exchange for this aid, forms of conditionality that were never brought to bear on other issues of long-standing political concern, such as Israel's occupation policies or its sustained opposition to US arms sales to Arab states. Significantly, during the prolonged negotiations for the FTA, the FBI opened a number of investigations into the alleged leaking of classified information related to the US's economy and negotiating stances, including investigation of the pro-Israel lobby group AIPAC for having allegedly passed information to the Israeli government.[10]

This, combined with the now-famous Pollard Affair, exemplifies the extent to which these processes of institutionalization were also increasing Israel's ability to access sensitive information, blurring the boundaries between the US and Israel and providing ample means for Israel and its supporters to mould and influence US policy.[11] The victory of the administration in pushing through the FTA, in the face of ample opposition from US industry, further highlights the important role of the pro-Israel community in the US, in particular AIPAC, which was especially instrumental in rallying support for the agreement in Congress.[12]

Indeed, this was a prime example of how the Reagan White House would increasingly rely on pro-Israel groups in Congress to push through desired policy initiatives—a dynamic that conversely also goes some way towards explaining the considerable growth in influence and access enjoyed by groups such as AIPAC during the 1980s.[13]

Meanwhile, the FTA would enable joint US and Israeli ventures in various domains and a considerable expansion of investments provided to Israel's high-tech sector, which together with the defence industry was identified by US and Israeli economists as key to Israel's economic revival and export potential. These efforts would transform Israel's economy, propelling it to its current status as a 'start-up' nation and pioneer in cutting-edge technology. The importance given

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[10] A collection of documents relating to this affair is available online from, The Israel Lobby Archive. The Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, "AIPAC, Espionage and the US-Israel Free Trade Agreement," http://www.israellobby.org/fta/.

[11] Indeed, there is a marginal constituency in the US which has long argued that the FTA was imbalanced in favour of Israel, with many noting how the US trade deficit with Israel skyrocketed in the years that followed. See, "Israel 'free' trade agreement delivers $144 billion deficit to US," *Institute for Research: Middle East Policy*, https://www.irmep.org/05122016_IsraelFTA.asp.

[12] See, John Haldane, "The Price of Free Trade," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* [WRMEA], 7 October 1985, https://www.wrmea.org/1985-october-7/the-price-of-free-trade.html. Significantly, according to Martin Indyk, an ex-AIPAC official who then founded the WINEP in 1985, just as the FBI was investigating AIPAC over the alleged transfers of classified information to Israel, 'the US-Israel Free Trade Agreement served as a wedge that opened up the Congress to Free Trade Agreements throughout the world, including the NAFTA agreement. No doubt there are some downsides to it, but otherwise it's been a very positive thing'. Quoted in, "Israel 'free' trade," op.cit.

[13] Documents from the RRPL provide examples of this growing tendency to rely on pro-Israel lobby groups in Congress. Examples include efforts to overcome congressional bans on weapons sales to the third world, or increased military budgets, but also efforts to garner support in Congress for the dispatch of US marines to Lebanon. RRPL, Presidential Handwriting File: Presidential Telephone Calls: 1981- 1989, "10/13/1983 Call to Tom Dine," Folder 75. Also, "Lobby Activities," *WRMEA*, 20 February 1984, https://www.wrmea.org/1984-february-20/lobby-activities.html.

to high-tech, R&D and the defence sector were evident in another set of sweeteners provided to Israel, including an agreement that allowed Israel to use FMF for offshore procurement of Israeli-made components for the Lavi jet fighter as well as an agreement for the US to purchase $200 million worth of Israeli military equipment annually.

Provisions for offshore procurement of Lavi components, which amounted to $250 million in 1983, would remain another established feature of the uniquely preferential US-Israeli relationship. When the decision was ultimately made to cancel joint US-Israeli production of the Lavi fighter in 1987—with costs increasingly being covered by US funds and thereby essentially supporting a market competitor to the US's own domestic defence sector[14]—Israel convinced the Reagan administration to increase offshore procurement funding to $400 million to offset the cancellation, allowing the use of these funds for other projects and items.[15]

By 1988 the offshore procurement clause was 'incorporated into the annual Foreign Assistance Act',[16] thereby becoming another institutionalized dimension of US preferential treatment for Israel. Significantly, by 2009 Congress had increased the proportion of offshore procurement to 26.3 percent of annual US FMF to Israel. This figure is in reality closer to 40 percent, as costs for the purchase of jet fuel and other military combustibles are also included. In 2015–16, the Obama administration included a specific clause in the newly signed ten-year military supply agreement with Israel that would gradually phase out offshore procurement benefits. The efforts caused a storm of criticism in Israel, and ultimately the administration succeeding in approving only a very slow and gradual phase-out that is expected to last until FY2028.[17]

Further boosts to the Israeli defence and high-tech sectors were provided by Israel's inclusion in Reagan's signature Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), announced in May 1986, and Israel's recognition as a 'major non-NATO ally' in December 1987. This latter agreement would provide Israel access to more funds and exemptions, and became a further means to increase US support to Israel without increasing official bilateral aid. As noted by Helen Cobban, the major non-NATO 'category had been created by Congress the previous year [in 1986]. It was publicly listed as including Israel, Egypt, South Korea, Japan, and Australia; however, when the House of

[14] John W. Golan, *Lavi: The United States, Israel, and a Controversial Fighter Jet*, Potomac Books, 2016.
[15] Significantly, following the cancellation of the Lavi programme, a number of other countries, including China, developed jet fighters with significant similarities to the original Lavi model, raising questions as to whether Israel had secretly sold components or technology to China, a major adversary of the US. Jim Mann, "US Says Israel Gave Combat Jet Plans to China," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 1994, http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-28/news/mn-13774_1_combat-planes.
[16] Dov S. Zakheim, "Fund Israel's Military, Not its Settlements," *The National Interest*, 9 August 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/fund-israels-military-not-its-settlements-17295?page=show.
[17] Sharp, "US Assistance" (2018), op.cit., pg6.

Representatives tried to list specific weapons systems to receive funding under this program, all six of these systems were Israeli'.[18]

The 'NATOization' of Israel, as it was originally termed before the formal establishment of the 'major non-NATO allies' category, represents the clearest indication of the continued efforts to integrate Israel into the Western alliance framework. Yet, it also highlights how compensation, rather than recognition of Israeli services, was the major driver. 'There was a kind of strategic imbalance between the two', noted Thomas Pickering in an interview with the author. 'We were very aware of this, but we always approached the issue [of strategic cooperation] "as equals". Yes, Israel could be and had been helpful for us in some domains, but this was not the determining factor for our strategic capabilities in the region', recalled the former US ambassador.[19]

Indeed, given the US reluctance to integrate Israel into strategic plans for the defence of the Persian Gulf, there was a need to find another collocation for Israel's strategic services, leading to a prioritization of the Eastern Mediterranean and finally NATO. Recognizing Israel as a 'major non-NATO ally' could go some way towards assuaging Israeli concerns and allow the US to find other means of augmenting the military and strategic relationship. It was in this context that AIPAC and a number of other recently founded research centres and think tanks, such as the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) and the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), as well as a some figures in Congress and within the academic community, began preparing detailed studies of Israel's strategic capabilities in the military domain.[20]

One such example is Steven Spiegel, who wrote a paper on 'Israel's Value to the US' in 1984 in which he contended that Israel 'has saved the United States at least $125.6 billion since the country's birth in 1948—an average of approximately $3.5 billion per year' given that 'Israel has fulfilled the exact responsibilities America has had to shoulder in other regions'.[21] Other examples are provided by a number of detailed studies produced by the conservative Heritage foundation, outlining the benefits in store for the US from enhanced US-Israeli strategic cooperation, or by the writings and campaigns run by the conservative *Commentary Magazine* headed by Norman Podhoretz.[22]

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[18] Cobban, "The US-Israeli Relationship," op.cit., p.13.
[19] Interview, Thomas Pickering, op.cit.
[20] See, AIPAC Papers on US-Israel Relations, No.1-13.
[21] Spiegel, "Israel's Value to the US," op.cit, p.1; Similar arguments were made by A. F. K. Organski in his 1990 text, *The 36 billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in US Assistance to Israel.*
[22] See, Charles Brooks, "High Dividends From a US-Israeli Partnership on Strategic Defence," *Backgrounder*, The Heritage Foundation, 4 November 1986, http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf_media/1986/pdf/bg543.pdf; James A. Philips, "America's Security Stake in Israel," *Backgrounder*, The Heritage Foundation, 7 July 1986, http://s3.amazonaws.com/thf_media/1986/pdf/bg521.pdf; Benjamin Balint, *Running Commentary. The Contentious Magazine That Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right*, New York, Public Affairs, 2010, pp.131-79.

Aside from the symbolic importance, there were significant tangible benefits in store for Israel's economy and defence sector from this recognition as 'major non-NATO ally'. 'Israeli government sources', noted a media report from 1987, expected 'important economic advantages' from the recognition, including 'lower prices for U.S. weaponry, access to some NATO research and development funds and preferential status in bidding on NATO contracts for equipment, spare parts, and military services'.[23]

While the significance of these initiatives has been downplayed by US officials and practitioners—with both Nicholas Veliotes and Thomas Pickering noting in separate interviews how such recognitions were motivated by 'domestic politics'[24] and amounted to 'window dressing'[25]—in the long term these agreements would have far-reaching and largely unforeseen implications for future US policy.

Efforts to find 'creative' ways to increase US aid and preferential treatment for Israel became particularly important during this period, both as a result of Israel's economic crisis and out of a growing need by the US to mask the true nature and extent of US-Israeli cooperation, particularly in the covert domain. Thus, Israel's inclusion in the SDI programme, its recognition as a major non-NATO ally, agreements for offshore procurement and the purchasing or leasing of Israeli equipment for the US army, as well as other accords allowing Israel to export military hardware with US technology, or to purchase US companies involved in military procurement in the US defence sector, were all sought out as means to augment the preferential relationship with Israel while not increasing official US aid.

As noted by Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, obtaining major non-NATO ally status represented a significant breakthrough for Israeli diplomacy. In its quest to garner such recognition, the pro-Israel AIPAC group was also very significant. The two authors quote an unnamed Israeli diplomat as saying, 'we were looking for ways to increase US military aid, with the $1.8 billion annual assistance on something like an "automatic pilot." It was approved year after year, but we also knew that it would be difficult to ask for an increase. So we initiated the idea of turning Israel into a Major Non-NATO Ally. We told AIPAC, which started rolling the idea up and down Capitol Hill corridors until it was accepted'.[26]

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[23] Dan Fisher, "US Is Granting Israel Non-NATO Ally Status," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-02-16/news/mn-2391_1_egypt-non-nato-ally.
[24] Interview, Nicholas Veliotes, op.cit.
[25] Interviews, Thomas Pickering, op.cit.
[26] Quoted in, Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit., p.248.

Yet, as with the original 1981 MoU, the fundamental rationale for these initiatives remained inexorably linked to the US's key central priority of the time: defence of the Persian Gulf through enhanced forms of US-Arab strategic cooperation. As a result, most of these elements of preferential treatment for Israel boiled down to forms of *compensation*, not recognition of Israel's strategic value for US interests.

Tangible contemporary expressions of joint cooperation in the military and R&D sector that can be traced back to decisions taken during the latter half of the Reagan administration can be found in close US-Israeli cooperation in missile defence and in particular in the joint development of the Arrow programme, a direct outgrowth of the SDI project, as well as sustained US support for Israel's multi-tier missile defence system, which also includes the Iron Dome and David Sling systems.[27] The US was indeed building a 'safety net' below Israel, yet it appeared that such forms of compensation and reassurance were never enough to reassure Israel of the US's motives.

There was a degree of resentment on the Israeli side that the US opposed overt forms of US-Israeli cooperation in the strategically vital Persian Gulf. 'For us Americans', noted Nicholas Veliotes in an interview, 'the enemy was the Soviet Union. But many Israelis saw the strategic notion as aimed at Syria. The American focus in that region was defending the oil in the Gulf. And try as we might, we couldn't come up with a role for Israel'.[28] Here, US planners continued to rely on US-Arab cooperation, while Israel services were relegated to a secondary 'back-up' role in the (unlikely) event of a direct US-Soviet conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. This continued to be an irritant in US-Israeli relations, although in the post-1984 period, Israeli fears of a possible dilution of the 'special' US-Israeli relationship were offset somewhat by the unprecedented degrees of preferential treatment granted by Washington.

Such reluctance continued to worry Israeli leaders. 'Where's the meat?' exclaimed Ehud Olmert, Israeli Cabinet member and close associate of Prime Minister Shamir at the time. 'We wanted more tangible results from the alliance. They [the US] wanted symbolic gestures'.[29] Yet, with patience, Israel was reaping benefits that would far outstrip any joint military exercise or overt cooperation.

Indeed, the significance of the revival of US-Israeli strategic cooperation extends beyond tangible expressions of military cooperation. It holds a more holistic and conceptual significance, one that

[27] Andrea Dessì, "La Sicurezza di Israele e il Sistema di Difesa 'Iron Dome'," Atlante Geopolitico 2013, Treccani; Yaakov Katz, *The Weapons Wizards. How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower*, New York, St. Martins Press, 2017.
[28] Quoted in, Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit.,p.242.
[29] Ibid.,p.241.

would take time to mature but would have a revolutionary impact on the relationship and US policy. As noted by Thomas Dine, the executive director of AIPAC, in a 1986 speech in Washington:

> This relationship has entered a revolutionary era. We are no longer talking about a transformation in the relationship, we are talking about a revolution. The old order in which Israel was regarded as a liability, a hindrance to America's relationship with the Arab world, a loud and naughty child—that order has crumbled. In its place, a new relationship is being built, one in which Israel is treated as—and acts as—an ally, not just a friend, an asset rather than a liability, a mature and capable partner, not some vassal state. […] I submit to you, these changes in the strategic, economic, and diplomatic spheres will be felt for decades to come. […] The whole story of this revolution in strategic cooperation cannot yet be told, because many of the most important steps are in an embryonic stage and both countries feel that greater progress can be achieved without an undue burden of publicity. Let me, however, share with you what Secretary of State George Shultz recently explained. He said the point of strategic cooperation is, and I quote, "to build institutional arrangements so that eight years from now, if there is a secretary of state who is not positive about Israel, he will not be able to overcome the bureaucratic relationship between Israel and the U.S. that we have established".'[30]

Thomas Dine was implicitly referring to the significant conceptual changes occurring in US policy towards Israel during this time, correctly identifying this dimension, instead of the tangible expressions of increased US aid or joint military cooperation, as the most important aspect of this 'revolution in US-Israeli relations'. This was most clearly reflected in the US's disavowal of the linkage doctrine and its related embrace of exclusivity and bias vis-à-vis Israel as a policy prescription in its own right.

As noted by Dennis Ross, the important 'turning point' established by Reagan revolves around the overturning of previous conceptions about Israel and the Middle East and the slow emergence of a 'constituency of experts that looks at Israel through a different lens'.[31] While the alliance was still devoid of a formal and legally binding treaty agreement, the blossoming of US-Israeli cooperation and the establishment of whole number of bilateral working groups would essentially come close to this outcome, albeit without the implicit responsibilities and constraints that a legal alliance would have imposed. While 'not a legal alliance', continued Dennis Ross, 'these groupings have created a number of institutional forums and trappings, that have subsequently taken on a life of their own and these have gradually created the conditions for the relationship to assume much of the equivalent characteristics of legality'. With the revival US-Israeli strategic cooperation in 1983, 'the political intention was created and formalized', 'people began meeting and became involved. These were gradually exposed to the details and tangible

[30] Dine, "A Revolution in US-Israel Relations," op.cit., pp.134-43.
[31] Interview Dennis Ross, op.cit.

benefits that could emerge from this cooperation', helping to sensitize US bureaucracies and thereby gradually increase the balance of viewpoints supportive of US-Israeli cooperation.[32]

Thomas Dine, like Dennis Ross and others within the Reagan administration, had long been promoting the line of 'hugging Israel closer' as the best means to allay Israeli security fears and thereby increase US leverage and influence over Israeli policy. Such viewpoints tended to emphasize that the Arab-Israeli conflict did not represent the major faultline in the Middle East, and that any pressure on Israel or overt linkage between US-Israeli relations and Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Arab world would ultimately prove counterproductive for US interests.

This would not result in US leverage or moderating Israeli policy—which instead would be more prone to take unilateral action out of its feelings of insecurity—and it would not result in more Arab concessions, as these states would only harden their demands in times of crisis in the US-Israeli relationship. In would be in this context, and even in the midst of some of the most severe top-level political crises between Israel and the US, that sympathetic supporters of Israel in the Reagan administration would counsel against any public indication of a weakening of the US-Israeli relationship. Even in the midst of the Palestinian Intifada, when Israel's disproportionate use of force was causing international outcry, Dennis Ross counselled the Reagan administration that the US could help by 'standing by Israel so that others cannot put a wedge between us'.[33]

An opinion article entitled 'Pressuring Israel is Dumb' and penned by Thomas Dine in February 1983 for *The Washington Post* outlines the conceptual approach against linkage and balance. 'It's time for the administration to open its eyes to the realities of the Arab world, instead of being blinded by the myth of "moderation"'.[34] 'Although the administration denies that it considers massive pressures an appropriate way to deal with an ally like Israel, it has in fact invoked more sanctions over a longer time period than any preceding administration', complained Dine in reference to the rocky years of tensions between 1981 and 1983. 'Officials in Washington are dreaming that they can impose dramatic changes on Israeli policy [...]. This foolish attitude has produced grave errors in U.S. policy'.[35]

'We should put to rest the myth of a "balanced" US policy in the Middle East', Democratic Senator Alan Cranston from California exclaimed in a speech quoted by media sources in 1986. 'We should tell all the nations in the region that we will not take a "balanced" view of PLO

[32] Ibid.
[33] RRPL, Dennis Ross Files, "Chron File, January 1988," Box 8.
[34] Thomas A. Dine, "Pressuring Israel is Dumb," *WP*, 13 February 1983, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1983/02/13/pressuring-israel-is-dumb/9835460e-7023-48a3-be98-29376d0634c3/?utm_term=.46f7f51a3848.
[35] Ibid.

terrorism or those who aid and abet terrorism, or of Syrian or Libyan or Iraqi extremism'.[36] Further demonstrations of the influence and pervasiveness of such approaches are provided by a number of think tank reports and media analyses of US-Israel relations and US policy in the Middle East. One such study, written by Dennis Ross and entitled 'Acting with Caution: Middle East Policy Planning for the Second Reagan Administration', provides examples of the shifting nature of expert debates on US Middle East policy in this period.

Published in 1985 as the first policy paper prepared by the newly founded WINEP, a research think tank with close ties to the pro-Israel community, the document listed a number of policy recommendations for the administration on key issues such as the peace process, arms sales to Arab states and the role of the Soviet Union. Under the heading 'peace process', the author noted the US needs to 'adopt our own strategy of motion while patiently awaiting real movement from local parties'.[37]

Such an approach amounted to purposely delaying diplomacy and mediation, as a means to avoid hard discussions with Israel, while placing all the onus on a prior Arab recognition of Israel, thereby essentially excusing the US from any responsibility for the diplomatic stalemate. The conceptual rationale contained in this approach towards Israel would over the years become codified in a conventional wisdom repeatedly affirmed by US officials and policymakers dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This dictum—that the US cannot want peace more than the parties involved and consequently cannot be expected to impose a solution on the parties[38]—represents a rehashing of these efforts to excuse US policy from its inability to orchestrate a peace agreement, masking this lack of US leverage (or political will) vis-à-vis Israel under the guise of preparing the 'groundwork for peace' while delaying negotiations out of short-term expediency and political calculations.

A further recommendation listed by Dennis Ross under the heading 'peace process' included the appointment of a 'non-Arabist special Middle East envoy to give the impression of seriousness while conveying the clear message that the ball is in the Arabs' court and that the U.S. objective is

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[36] Charles R. Babcock, "The Special Relationship," *WP*, 5 August 1986, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/08/05/the-special-relationship/99f36dfb-786f-4ebc-bb98-65148eef59a1/?utm_term=.6dd693db37ec.

[37] Dennis Ross, "Acting With Caution: Middle East Policy Planning for the Second Reagan Administration," Policy Paper No.1, WINEP, 1985, p.iv, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PP_1_ActingwithCaution.pdf.

[38] This dictum has been repeated by all US administrations since Reagan. Significantly, this same language, present in a number of official US declarations and speeches from the 1980s, also appeared in a second WINEP report published in 1988 in which the authors—including Martin Indyk, Dennis Ross, Donald Rumsfeld, Joseph S. Nye Jr., Frank Fukuyama, Richard Haass and many other foreign policy luminaries in the US—expressed their view that 'the US cannot make peace for these parties; it can only assist them once they are willing to do so'. *Building for Peace. An American Strategy for the Middle East*, WINEP Presidential Study Group on US Policy in the Middle East, 1988, p.xii, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Building_for_Peace.pdf.

to get Jordan—not the PLO—to negotiate with Israel'.[39] This criticism of so-called 'Arabist' viewpoints on US Middle East policy would become a major theme in WINEP studies, in itself an indication of the emergence of new constituencies of expert practitioners as a result of generational changes and broader socio-political developments at the domestic level in the US. A further example of WINEP seeking to overturn traditional viewpoints on Israel and the Middle East is a 1986 paper written by Michael Lewis in which the author criticized the preeminent US foreign policy journal, *Foreign Affairs*, for leaning 'toward the Arab and "Arabist" perspective on how the conflict should be understood and what solutions should be adopted'.[40]

Moving to the issue of arms sales—a key component of US strategy to coax Jordan to recognize the Camp David process while sidelining Arafat and the PLO, and yet a policy which Israel consistently refused to support—Dennis Ross's policy recommendations emphasized that 'it is no longer credible to claim that [arms sales for Arab states] will encourage moderation', a reference to the US's 'marketing' of these sales in the court of US public opinion (and with Israel) as conducive to advancing the groundwork for peace. Rather, it was necessary for the 'Saudis and Jordanians [to] first take positive steps to advance the peace process', before being provided with weaponry. In this respect, the US's 'primary concern', noted Ross, was to 'avoid an all-consuming fight with Congress that will damage the domestic consensus, humiliate the Arabs, alienate Israel, and prevent the development of a coherent strategy'.[41] Preferable therefore was to simply coordinate everything with Israel and its supporters prior to such formal notifications to Congress or the Arabs, as this would offset most of the political risks for Washington.

The possibility that such overt siding with Israel would alienate the Arab world was discarded by Ross, who argued—as had Richard Pipes at the NSC in July 1981[42]—that 'Saudi Arabia's policy is driven by weakness not strength. The Saudis will press us to move on the peace process but are not interested in real movement if it requires taking sides and supporting us'.[43] The need for a complete Arab capitulation to US demands is implicit in this recommendation.

It was in these domains that the institutionalization of the US-Israeli relationship under the guise of 'strategic cooperation' and the establishment of the JPMG, JSAP, JEDG and, finally, by 1988, the launching of Joint Political Consultations (JPC) would become so important. In this respect, and when dealing with Israel in the context of US efforts to garner approval for US arms sales to

[39] Ross, "Acting with Caution," op.cit., p.iv.
[40] Michael Lewis, "Foreign Affairs on the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Retrospective Analysis," *Middle East Review*, Vol.19,No.1 (Fall 1986), p.21,pp.21-9. In, RRPL, Howard Teicher Files, "Israel 1986 (2)," Box 91664; Post-9/11, WINEP published an extensive monograph on similar themes. See, Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand. The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*, Washington, WINEP, 2001.
[41] Ross, "Acting with Caution," op.cit., p.iv.
[42] FRUS, Volume III (1981-1988), Document 77.
[43] Ross, "Acting with Caution," op.cit., p.iii

the Arabs, a final Ross recommendation was to 'avoid any linking of economic aid to Israeli acquiescence [of US arms sales for the Arabs] because it will be counter-productive'.[44]

With this advice, and the extent to which it would be followed for the remainder of the Reagan administration (and beyond), the US's disavowal of linkage and overturning of the principle of balance and impartiality was complete. Indeed, it should come as no surprise that decades after these events, in 2016, Martin Indyk, one of the founders of WINEP and a key US diplomat on US-Israel relations who had just ended his term as Secretary of State Kerry's Special Envoy to the Peace Process, could claim that the 'United States is pro-Israel and that's what gives it its influence in the peace process, and that's the heart of the matter. We are not neutral. We don't claim to be neutral'.[45] Even James Baker III, Reagan's Chief of Staff and later Secretary of State in the George H.W. Bush administration, has recently described the US role as a mediator, admonishing the US not to act as 'Israel's lawyer' but at least as a 'semi-honest broker'.[46]

7.2 The Perils of Exclusivity: Supporting Israel, 'Right or Wrong'

As the US moved to enhance various dimensions of the US-Israeli relationship, with many of these sweeteners included in the US package agreement to revive the MoU, a number of 'services' were provided by Israel to the US. Mostly tactical, short-term and covert in nature, these services were welcomed by the Reagan administration.

Agreements ranged from the key decision taken by Moshe Arens, Israel's Ambassador to the US and later Israeli Defence Minister following the ousting of Ariel Sharon in 1983, to speed up the sharing of intelligence and technology employed by Israel against Soviet weaponry in the Lebanon war.[47] Also important was Israeli covert assistance to secure US and foreign hostages in Lebanon, particularly during the TWA hijacking incident in 1985. As noted by one media source in 1989, 'Reagan quietly encouraged Israel to make a deal with the terrorists, to exchange Israeli-held detainees for American hostages—and that is how the TWA captives were released, as the first step in a massive swap of prisoners across Israel's northern border'.[48]

Further examples of covert cooperation included an elaborate scheme in which Israel provided the DoD and CIA with PLO weaponry captured in Lebanon to be used in the Central American

[44] Ross, "Acting with Caution," op.cit.,p.iii
[45] "Transcript: Martin Indyk on Israel and the US," Head to Head, *Al-Jazeera*, 11 September 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/headtohead/2016/06/transcript-martin-indyk-israel-160613082408332.html.
[46] Susan B. Glasser, "Jim Baker: The Full Transcript," *The Global Politico*, 6 February 2017.
[47] RRPL, Near East And South Asia Affairs Directorate, NSC: Records, 1983-1989, "Middle East-Briefing Papers 1983," Box 90585.
[48] Doyle McManus, "Hostage Crisis in Lebanon: Deal With Terrorists? US Policy Not Totally Clear," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 August 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-08-02/news/mn-571_1_hostage-crisis; Raviv and Melman, *Friends in Deed*, op.cit.,p.236-9.

covert Cold War. Code-named Tipped Kettle, the operation began in 1983 and continued through to 1986, in coincidence with the breaking of the Iran-Contra scandal. Documents relating to the operation also point to the role of Defence Minister Arens. It was he who 'made the final decision that these weapons were to be provided on a gratis basis to DoD. This was one of MOD Arens' first actions [...] and was clearly a signal of his desire to improve U.S./Israel relations',[49] reads one Pentagon document. In a telling turn of events, Israel subsequently sought payment for future shipments of weapons. Ultimately, a 'secret arrangement' was concluded, explains veteran Israeli journalist Amir Oren: 'in return for Israel waiving the payment, the U.S. defence contractor Numax was to retain its security clearance and government contracts after being purchased by Israel'.[50]

It was against this general 'no-strings attached' atmosphere of support that US policymakers were particularly frustrated by Israel's stubborn opposition to US-Arab strategic cooperation. While Shultz focused on improving the 'quality of life' in the occupied territories, leaning on Jordan to join the Camp David process and negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, Israel relentlessly pursued its settlement expansion project. The US was well aware of these policies, and documents from the RRPL, some only declassified in 2015, outline a clear picture of how Israel's government sought to make any future withdrawal from the territory an almost impossible task.[51] Yet, as had occurred with Israel's covert nuclear arsenal in the late 1960s, the administration chose to look the other way, prioritizing Israeli security as the first building block to reassure Israel and a key pre-condition for establishing the 'groundwork for peace' in the region. After all, the counsel coming from US Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis was precisely that pressure on Israel would be counterproductive.[52]

By presuming that a more secure Israel would be more willing to follow US desiderata, the US was in fact sowing the seeds for its future failures in the region. For the remainder of the 1980s, US repeatedly failed to orchestrate a breakthrough in the peace process, or to convince Jordan and Saudi Arabia to yield under pressure.[53]

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[49] A collection of official documents can be found at, "Tipped Kettle – Man Portable Weapons Captured by Israeli Forces in Lebanon," Cryptome, 9 November 2010, https://cryptome.org/dodi/tipped-kettle/tipped-kettle.htm.
[50] Amir Oren, "The Truth About Israel, Iran and the 1980s US Arms Deals," *Ha'aretz,* 26 November 2010, https://www.haaretz.com/1.5145188.
[51] RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Country File, "Israel (02/09/1981-02/20/1981)," Box 37. Cables 63572 and 63581 especially.
[52] RRPL, Geoffrey Kemp Files, "Israel/Lebanon Phase II, 1982 (1)," RAC Box 4.
[53] Reference can be made here to an embarrassing scheme by Reagan and advisors to surprise the Saudi King while on visit to the US in 1985 with a speech that would have seemed to indicate a Saudi willingness to directly engage in negotiations with Israel. The speech, to be delivered by Reagan during dinner, had not been cleared with the Saudi delegation. The Saudi ambassador realized what was about to happen and a severe diplomatic crisis was avoided at the last moment when Reagan was convinced to scrap the speech in order to not offend his guests. See, Patrick Tyler, *A World of Trouble. America in the Middle East*, London, Portobello Books, 2009, pp.310-14. As noted by the author, 'It was hard to look at Reagan's aborted dinner remarks and not see a biased American outlook or an Israeli-inspired effort to embarrass him [the Saudi King]. Saudi influence was rising in Washington and the pro-Israeli forces were alarmed by it' (p.313).

Jordan was particularly incensed by the US's inability to stand firm in its commitments, support the peace process and provide promised arms. Jordan had been instrumental in supporting the 1982 Reagan Plan in the midst of the Lebanon war, a stance that had come at considerable personal risk for the Jordanian King. In that instance, Jordanian authorities had exhorted US diplomats about the King's need 'for absolute assurance from the President that the US would persevere and see this process through despite strong Israeli reaction and problems this could cause the administration domestically. He stressed that failure to stay the course could prove fatal for him and politically devastating for the US'.[54]

As it turned out, the US did just that, abandoning the Reagan Plan under Israeli pressure only to then return to Jordan through 1984–86 with massive pressure for it to publicly enter negotiations on behalf of the Palestinians. Meanwhile, Jordanian requests for weapons would be repeatedly denied or delayed by congressional opposition. US credibility was seriously damaged and yet not clear change to this policy materialized.

Given the administration's reluctance to clash with Israel or approve 'negative conditionality', and Israel's ability to rely on its network of pro-Israeli supporters in the US in the event of a disagreement, the distribution of leverage and influence remained heavily tipped in Israel's favour. Israel would in fact retain its ability to catapult a public crisis with a sitting US administration in the event of a disagreement, while US administrations would be particularly reluctant to do the same in the event of Israeli obstructionism.

Moreover, in light of the diffusion of US-Israeli cooperation into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries, and the growing constituencies of expert practitioners that would emerge as key supporters of this cooperation within different branches of the federal government, it is debatable whether these processes of institutionalization actually increased or decreased the influence of the executive branch vis-à-vis the bureaucracy or Congress. Indeed, rather than help to consolidate decision-making power in the White House, the diffusion of cooperation would actually result in a diffusion of potential US leverage over Israel, providing a further set of constraints on presidential authority while increasing Israel's ability to shape US initiatives to better suit its interests.

A second implication would be increased consultation and coordination between the respective governments and expert constituencies. The major vehicles for this were the JMPG, JSAP, JEDP and the 1988 JPC. These would form the core structure for the growing web of relations,

[54] RRPL, Kemp Files, "Arab/Israel Peace Process: Memos, September 1982 (5)," RAC Box 1.

preferential treatment and cooperation between the US and Israel, the institutional architecture for an increasingly interdependent and exclusivist US-Israel relationship in the Middle East. The last of these working groups, the JPC, were launched in April 1988, by the signing of a new US-Israeli document, a MoA on Joint Political, Security and Economic Cooperation that would further institutionalize the importance of these working groups and joint dialogues (see Appendix E). In an interview with the author, former US ambassador Daniel Kurtzer noted how the JPC, turned out to be the least effective and consolidated bilateral working group to be established during the 1980s.[55] This reflected the persistence of deep political disagreements between the top-level political leaderships in the two countries, a dynamic that reinforces the point of a growing compartmentalization of the relationship and the diffusion of cooperation into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries. The mere fact that the JPC was the last of the working groups created during the Reagan era, following those in the military-strategic, economic and development domains, points to the bizarre nature of the bilateral relationship, which continues to grow and expand independently from reoccurrence of severe political tensions and disagreements.

Through the JSAP, long-term Israeli security needs could be negotiated in the hope that Israeli opposition to arms sales for Jordan or Saudi Arabia would diminish. The JEDG would serve similar purposes but tied to the Israeli economy, devising creative schemes to boost Israeli growth and exports, particularly in the high-tech and defence sectors. By 1986, the Israel entered the top-ten ranking of world arms exporters, a position that it has retained more or less consistently since the mid-1980s.[56] The US's role in bankrolling and supporting Israel's arms industry as a vehicle towards economic recovery represents another dimension of these efforts to build a 'safety net' beneath Israel.[57]

Yet, the impact of this tendency for prior consultation with Israel was also clear. Given the US's reluctance to clash with Israel in public—as had happened in the context of the arms suspensions in 1981 or the unveiling of the Reagan Peace Plan in September 1982 and again over the administration's failed efforts to block a move by Congress to add a further $200 million grant on annual US aid to Israel in the midst of the Lebanon war in December 1982—this tendency often amounted to granting Israel *de facto* veto power over US policy in the Middle East.[58]

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[55] Interview, Daniel C. Kurtzer, op.cit.
[56] Thomas L. Friedman, "How Israel's Economy Got Hooked on Selling Arms Abroad," *NYT*, 7 December 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/12/07/business/how-israel-s-economy-got-hooked-on-selling-arms-abroad.html.
[57] Bishara A. Bahbah, "The US Role In Israel's Arms Industry," *The Link,* Vol.20, No.5, December 1987, http://ameu.org/getattachment/a937e6d4-2196-42c0-b57a-da9bb1207787/The-US-Role-in-Israel-s-Arms-Industry.aspx; Katz, *The Weapons Wizards*, op.cit.
[58] Significantly, this last incident regarding Congress's decision to add a further $200 million to an aid package that already contained an increase of $300 million over the previous year, would serve as an important 'lesson' for Shultz, who had recently assumed leadership of the State Department—or his 'AWACS moment'. He would be much more reluctant to repeat a similar clash again. Even more significant was the reaction of the Israeli government. Foreign

The risks that overreliance on prior consultation with Israel could entail for US policy should have become apparent in the context of the negotiations over the 17 May 1983 agreement on Lebanon. The US experimented with a policy that has now become almost standard practice in the Middle East: consulting with Israel and essentially aligning negotiating positions with it prior to bringing a policy document to the Arab counterparts. The outcome of this agreement, which as the administration had aptly predicted could become so slanted towards Israel that it would become irreconcilable with Arab positions, would be similar to dozens of other 'peace plans' and position documents US administrations have presented to the Palestinian and Arab leaders in the post-Cold War era.[59]

While US administrations have repeatedly complained about a supposed Arab tendency to stick to 'maximalist positions' on Israel, rarely has the US asked itself if US policy has over the years moved sufficiently close to Israel's own 'maximalist positions' to render its mediation efforts so biased and unrealistic that they prevent any concerted movement towards reconciliation.

This policy of supporting Israel 'right or wrong' has also arguably been harmful for Israel's own interests. As noted by Thomas Pickering, 'in light of the present challenge of how Israel will be able to remain Jewish and Democratic, one can point at this period [of the 1980s] as having shielded Israel from having to engage in this debate and make the hard choices that are necessary'.[60]

Indeed, the policy of 'hugging Israel closer' while disavowing negative conditionality, or even the potential to criticize Israel in public, arguably freed Israel from any accountability or costs from its policies. This would fuel more uncompromising stances by Israeli governments and arguably even serve as a political boon for the Israeli right wing, which incidentally has moved to consolidate its dominance over Israeli politics. As noted by one senior Israeli figure in the midst of the 1982 Lebanon invasion, 'we can do anything we want now in the [occupied] territories and

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Minister Shamir reacted strongly to the administration's opposition, noting on Radio Israel on 4 December that 'the reason for the opposition to the increase of aid is more important and harmful than the opposition itself', because the US administration was 'linking economic aid with political moves in the region'. 'This is the danger', noted Shamir; 'their very attempt and effort to convince Arab elements by hurting Israel'. There could be no clearer evidence of Israel's efforts to undermine the principles of the 'linkage doctrine', efforts that would be carried forth by policymakers like Dennis Ross, Howard Teicher and Martin Indyk among others as well as the network of think tanks and research centres in the US, chief among which stood the WINEP. A transcript of Shamir's radio address is available from, RRPL, Kemp Files, Israel 1982 (2/12/82-12/12/82), RAC Box 3.

[59] See for instance, Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "How Not to Make Peace in the Middle East," *The New York Review of Books*, 15 January 2009, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/01/15/how-not-to-make-peace-in-the-middle-east/.

[60] Interview, Thomas Pickering, op.cit.

no one will be able to stop us. If they didn't stop us from going to Beirut, then we will certainly be able to install an order favourable to us in Judea, Samaria and Gaza'.[61]

Harold Saunders was quoted in the media in the mid-1980s as observing how the growing normalization of the US-Israeli relationship represented a double-edged sword for *both* the US and Israel. 'There's a cancer growing on the relationship', noted the former Carter official, describing ties as a 'one-way street' and suggesting that Congress had given Israel a 'virtual blank check'. 'You can say there is more money being given to Israel, more cooperation. [...] So it looks closer. But it can't be close if it is mindlessly close. It is closer when people on both sides are grappling with the tough issues',[62] lamented Saunders, with clear reference to the peace process and the outstanding reality of significant differences between the long-term strategic interests of Israel and the US in the Middle East.

Instead, the conceptual approach that gained hold in Washington—and continues to be propagated to this day by pro-Israel lobby groups and a growing number of affiliated think tanks and research centres such as WINEP among others—simply boiled down to the simplistic belief that 'what is good for America is good for Israel, and what strengthens Israel equally strengthens America',[63] as Thomas Dine put it in his AIPAC speech in 1986.

Conclusion: Israel, the 51st State

The tangible outcome of the eighteen-month major review of US Middle East policy would therefore be a refashioned and considerably expanded US-Israeli relationship. While framed under the guise of 'strategic cooperation', the implications of these moves to institutionalize and normalize the bilateral relationship would extend far beyond the military or strategic domain.

All dimensions of the US-Israeli relationship were affected, including broader elements of US policy towards the region that did not directly touch upon US-Israeli relations. Indeed, the general process through which the relationship would become institutionalized, with cooperation becoming diffused into the respective bureaucracies and US policy increasingly moving closer to Israeli viewpoints and concerns, would represent the key outcome of this critical, institutionalizing juncture for the US-Israeli relationship. The impact of this period, and the degrees of path dependency that would flow from the underlying conceptual approaches governing US policy towards Israel, would have far-reaching implications for future US policy, retaining considerable explanatory value for contemporary dynamics in US-Israeli relations and

[61] Quoted in, Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, op.cit., p.139.
[62] Babcock, "The Special Relationship," op.cit.
[63] Dine, "A Revolution in US-Israel Relations," op.cit., p.11.

the continued inability (or unwillingness) of the US to confront its ally Israel on policies that Washington has long opposed.

The two-year interval between December 1981 and November 1983 would emerge as the epicentre of these processes of institutionalization. This was a time when the US administration engaged in trial and error vis-à-vis Israel, hesitantly applying short-term pressure and linkage before moving to embrace compensation and 'positive inducements'. By the summer of 1983, and in the midst of the Lebanon war and the growing realization that US policy would be unable to achieve its stated objectives in the conflict, the Reagan administration decided to revert to the traditional baseline of support for Israel, agreeing to augment the US-Israeli relationship on the basis of short-term expediency and the related appreciation of Israel's ability to help (or hinder) wide dimensions of US policy. As noted by Dennis Ross, after 1984, 'Reagan went back to his instincts'[64] and moved to institutionalize the relationship with Israel.

On the basis of these calculations, and after having repeatedly failed to change Israeli policy or to convince it to mute its opposition to US-Arab arms sales, the Reagan administration chose to cut its losses, prioritize domestic political calculations in the run-up to the 1984 elections, and move to repair its relationship with Israel. This was done by reviving and further expanding on the preferential nature of US support, while renouncing, once and for all, its professed neutrality.

While the US had always maintained a degree of preferential treatment for Israel as a result of twin pillars of shared Judeo-Christian values and political affinities, all previous administrations—and even including Henry Kissinger—acknowledged that to achieve US interests in the region Washington needed to preserve credibility with both sides. Implicit in these older approaches to Israel and the Middle East was a refusal to embrace an exclusivist US-Israeli relationship, considering such relations a threat to US interests and freedom of action in the Middle East. Indeed, up until the 1980s, the 'strategic' nature of the US-Israel relationship had always been considered as a function and therefore largely constrained to the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, a resolution of which would be needed in order to allow the US to overtly draw closer and formalize its alliance with Israel.

Explained in part by the global nature of US interests and the significant political weight Israel carries in US domestic politics, this growing tendency to 'hug Israel closer' even in the midst of fundamental disagreements or in the context of efforts to induce Israel to modify elements of policy would hamstring future US policy. Indeed, and contrary to the view outlined by Martin Indyk in the above quote on the need for the US to be pro-Israel in the Middle East, the US's

[64] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.

disavowal of any semblance of balance would fundamentally hamper the US ability to make full use of the one true 'strategic asset' that Israel provided US interests in the Middle East: its *linkage* to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

As a result, the US was again condemned to 'muddling through', preventing reconciliation between the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' components of US policy and limiting the US to a reactive policy in the region. Indeed, as aptly noted by Chas W. Freeman, former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, 'this disconnect' between the two strategic zones and interests of US Middle East policy—Israel in the Near East and Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf—'has precluded' the articulation of a US 'grand strategy' for the region.[65] Significantly, this state of affairs has also kept the US from employing its full toolkit of 'soft' and 'hard' power to win hearts and minds and consolidate US influence over the strategically vital Middle East.

While the US did emerge from the Cold War as the undisputed external hegemon in the region, its inability to deliver on the 'soft' dimensions of its power and orchestrate a just and lasting peace in the Middle East has significantly weakened US influence and credibility across the Arab-Muslim world. Instead, US influence is largely limited to the 'hard' dimensions of US military and economic power. While this might work to co-opt leaders and elites, it has never seeped down into society and thereby cannot succeed in establishing a strong and lasting groundwork on which to build US strategy or influence in the long term.

While the end of the Cold War could have allowed the US to trace a new approach to the conflict and the broader region, institutionalized precedents and the growing weight of domestic constraints (including the rising role of the Israel lobby in Congress and vis-à-vis the executive branch) had established strong degrees of path dependency, particularly in the realm of prior-consultation with Israel and the growing tendency to 'hug it closer' even in the midst of severe top-level disagreement.

The US abandonment of linkage along with the principles of balance and professed neutrality would therefore emerge as the most significant conceptual (or qualitative) precedents of the post-1983 institutionalization of the US-Israel alliance. It would be these new emerging conventional wisdoms entrenched in the series of agreements and commitments provided to Israel during the remainder of the Reagan administration, rather than the actual tangible benefits derived from the revival of the MoU, that would result in the most significant degree of path dependency for future US policy. This approach was (and still is) predicated on a misplaced belief that US policy was building future leverage over Israel through incremental demonstrations of goodwill and

[65] Chas W. Freeman, "Grand Waffle in the Middle East," in *America's Continuing Misadventures in the Middle East*, Charlottesville, Just World Books, 2016, pp.69-74, p.69.

support that could someday be cashed in by the US in the eventuality that a final resolution of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts appeared within reach.

The strategy also rested on another, deeper, misreading of Israeli policy. In essence, the US believed that Israel shared its understanding that Middle East peace represented the best, if not only, means to preserve Israeli long-term security and survival. Consequently, the US and Israel were believed to be on the same page when it came to key UN documents such as Resolution 242 and the ultimate need for Israeli withdrawals from Arab and Palestinian lands. Such hopes have been proven misplaced, not least in light of the subsequent history of the US-led MEPP and Israel's continued reluctance to entertain territorial withdrawals or compromises for peace, particularly in the OPT.

Indeed, US and Israeli interpretations of UN Resolution 242 were (and still are) at odds with one another, yet out of expediency and the short-term reactive nature of US policy in the Middle East, the US has never confronted Israel head-on to address this fundamental gap. Successive US administrations have instead preferred to postpone the inevitable crisis such discussions will cause, while seeking to mask this US hesitance under the guise of a gradual approach seeking to 'prepare the ground' for peace in the Middle East predicated on massive Israeli military and technological superiority.

In banking on the misplaced belief that Israel would indeed someday agree to major territorial withdrawals as called for by UN Resolution 242, and that such withdrawals would occur because Israeli leaders would consider them conducive to resolving the country's security and demographic concerns, US policymakers fundamentally misread Israeli objectives. Israeli governments have long used security as reason to *not* withdraw from Arab and Palestinian lands. Israel's whole 'settlement-industrial complex' was itself based on a lie that such settlements were needed for Israeli defence.[66] By institutionalizing a 'safety net' beneath Israel, the US would fail to address with these fundamental gaps between the long-term US and Israeli viewpoints and interests in the Middle East, thereby undermining future US leverage over Israel and further strengthen the US's entrapment in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East. These approaches would moreover weaken Israel's own need for compromise vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours, given that Israel's security was already being addressed by the US, as were the military and economic costs of sustaining the occupation.

Indeed, just as US diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli conflict had moved from the initial proactive approaches of the mid-1950s to more hesitant and tamed efforts to delay negotiations in order to

[66] Yotam Berger, "Secret 1970 Document Confirms First West Bank Settlements Built on a Lie," *Ha'aretz*, 28 July 2916, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-document-confirms-first-settlements-built-on-a-lie-1.5416937.

first establish a more conducive 'groundwork for peace', the Reagan administration in the mid-1980s was now also moving to delay the use of leverage vis-à-vis Israel, believing that such leverage was best preserved for an ill-defined future. Once the groundwork was ready, the US could then move to orchestrate a peace agreement, one that would ostensibly produce Israeli concessions *without* the US having to employ negative conditionality.

Such an approach would essentially provide Israel with a semi-veto power over large dimensions of US policy, given that it would be Israel, not the US that would decide on the nature and severity of security threats in the region, thereby entrapping US policy in a circular, incremental process of compensation and inducements, without any clarity as to what would represent a sufficiently secure Israel. Thus, ever since the second Reagan administration the White House has had a tendency to repeatedly defer to Israeli interests in the articulation of US Middle East policy, particularly with regards to the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Near East.[67]

Yet, by repeatedly postponing the inevitable, and consistently prioritizing short-term tactical gains over a long-term and holistic strategy making full use of the US's extensive toolkit of carrots and sticks vis-à-vis *both* Israel and the Arab states, the US has fundamentally undermined its professed role as a mediator in the conflict, harming US interests and influence. It has moreover undermined its ability to employ the festering Arab-Israeli conflict and the 'special' nature of US-Israel ties as strategic levers to advance US interests in the region. Instead, it was Israel that increasingly was able to use its 'special' relationship with the US to advance its own interests and concerns, and often in such a way as to actually damage the US's own objectives.

Such a policy of 'hugging Israel closer' and refraining from employing (and sustaining) negative conditionality, has also effectively postponed the need for Israel to engage in its own internal debates, shielding Israeli society and politics from the adverse effects of long-term occupation and the continued reliance on seemingly bottomless US aid and military support. Such approaches were also providing cover for more conservative, militaristic and nationalist-religious elements within Israeli politics (and the US), which could argue against the need for concessions or territorial withdrawals without any fear of tangible repercussions from the US.

[67] A pertinent example of the way US administrations consistently defer to Israeli interests and consult Israeli officials in the articulation of Middle East policy is provided by a leaked US cable outlining a number of Israeli reactions to specific US proposed arms sales for Arab states. Dated 13 March 2006, and released by *Wikileaks*, the cable outlines the work being conducted in the JPMG and the process by which US administrations negotiate with Israel over the approval of US policy in the Middle East. Stating stringent Israeli opposition to US arms sales to Arab states, the cable includes a detailed list of technology and armaments that Israel was opposed to. See, "Leaked Cables on Israel: Israeli Response to Proposed US Defence Sales to Middle East," Jewish Virtual Library, 13 March 2006, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/leaked-cable-israeli-response-to-proposed-u-s-defense-sales-to-middle-east-march-2006.

Israeli security was thus elevated to a (pre)condition for the success of much broader dimensions of US policy not necessarily limited to Israel or indeed the Middle East. Replacing the previous US emphasis on balance and mediation, the centrality of Israeli security and military edge was consolidated in US policy out of a belief that this would to create the 'groundwork for peace' in the Middle East while allowing the US to reap the expected short-term benefits flowing from close and amicable US-Israeli relations.

Ultimately, the set of conventional wisdoms that became entrenched in the US body politic as a result of the revival of US-Israeli strategic cooperation in 1983, goes a long way in accounting for the US's bias towards Israel and inability (or unwillingness) to put sustained pressure and negative conditionality on its small ally. These provide more convincing explanations compared to narratives of the quasi-mystical influence and power of the pro-Israel lobby over US Middle East policy.

Significantly, and as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, the willingness of the administration to upgrade the strategic dimension of the relationship stemmed not from Israel's tangible contributions to US strategic interests but the need to compensate and restrain Israel to avoid tensions spilling over to harm wider US objectives. As a result, and independently from the views of supporters and sceptics who tended to consider Israel as an asset or a burden for US policy, the final policy prescription that flowed from this centrality of Israeli security would largely remain the same. If Israel was an asset, then it deserved further US aid and assistance. If it was a burden, then it needed aid and assistance to diminish the weight of this burden, and limit potentially adverse effects on broader US interests and concerns.

The now-forgotten September 1982 Reagan Plan, containing many of the fundamental elements of the linkage doctrine and proposing balance and mediation between the warring parties, is notable as the last time the US would publicly announce a plan for Arab-Israeli peace that also contained a number of 'surprises' for Israel. Indeed, the Reagan Plan is also the last US document dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict that was not previously coordinated with Israel. Rather, the text represented the internal workings of the Reagan administration, in coordination with a number of Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, as well as the Europeans. All future US plans and proposals would by contrast be coordinated with Israel, helping to explain why US approaches have generally been defined as unbalanced and consequently unacceptable for the Arab and Palestinian side.

Incidentally, a first example of prior consultation with Israel can be found in the negotiations over the 17 May 1983 agreement between Lebanon and Israel, an accord that would effectively

engage the US in Israel's 'war of choice' in Lebanon, bringing it into the conflict an active participant on the side of Israel. From building a 'safety net' below Israel, US policy was gradually developing a tendency to act 'as Israel's lawyer' in the context of negotiations with the Arabs and Palestinians, as described by long-term US negotiator Aaron David Miller in *The Much Too Promised Land*.[68] As Miller aptly noted in a subsequent *Washington Post* op-ed in 2005, '

> With the best of motives and intentions, we listened to and followed Israel's lead without critically examining what that would mean for our own interests, for those on the Arab side and for the overall success of the negotiations. The "no surprises" policy, under which we had to run everything by Israel first, stripped our policy of the independence and flexibility required for serious peacemaking. If we couldn't put proposals on the table without checking with the Israelis first, and refused to push back when they said no, how effective could our mediation be?[69]

Such would be the ultimate, if unforeseen, implications of the Reagan administration's efforts to normalize US-Israeli relations. In light of the continued expansion of domestic political and increasingly bureaucratic and conceptual constraints impacting US policy towards Israel—the need for prior-consultation, the security-first approach and the disavowal of linkage or negative conditionality vis-à-vis Israel—it has become almost impossible for the US to change its stance. As a result, all future administrations have continued 'hugging Israel closer' as a means to simply 'kick the can down the road', incrementally augmenting US preferential treatment for Israel in exchange for tactical, short-term expediency on other issues.

Yet, the cumulative result of this approach of supporting Israel 'right or wrong' and agreeing to augment the preferential nature of the relationship with successive increases of aid and support even in the midst of severe disagreements over policy and strategy—as most recently happened under the Obama administration regarding US policy towards Iran or the settlements issue—has essentially 'entrapped' US Middle East policy in a pro-Israeli straitjacket that has done much to harm US (and arguably Israeli) long-term interests in the Middle East. Until acknowledged and addressed at the highest levels of the US establishment, this policy straightjacket will continue to prevent the US from adopting a holistic and comprehensive policy strategy for the Middle East. It may in fact even accelerate contemporary processes of US global decline and retrenchment.

Indeed, the sequencing and prioritization of the bilateral working groups—starting with the strategic and military realm with the JMPG, then extending to the economic and development domains with the JSAP and the JEDG—, and only finally touching on the political domain with the launching of JPC reflects the unbalanced nature of the relationship, the US embrace of

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[68] Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land. America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, New York, Bantam Books, 2008, pp.75-125.
[69] Aaron David Miller, "Israel's Lawyer," *WP*, 23 May 2005, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/22/AR2005052200883.html.

expediency and its related abdication of responsibilities. Politics—where disagreements are profuse—should instead represent the starting point for the institutionalization of the relationship and the key locus of high-level bilateral talks on the future of the relationship and the broader Middle Eastern region, not an afterthought. It is no coincidence in this regard that the JPC are the least functioning of the four bilateral working groups established during the 1980s. Indeed, the Joint Political Consultations are generally constrained—or held 'hostage'—by the other institutionalized dimensions of the relationship. Yet, it is here at the level of politics that the US and Israel must engage in an honest and forward looking dialogue to reconcile what remain fundamentally incompatible long-term visions of the regional order in the Middle East and the best means to ensure Israel's security and survival in the region.

With the Middle East often portrayed as the 'graveyard of empires', and the processes of US global decline stemming at least in part from its reoccurring policy blunders in the region, this scenario may not be so farfetched. The 'end of America's moment in the Middle East'[70] has no doubt begun. While the US is likely to remain a major external actor in the region for years to come, future historians may well cite the emergence of a quasi-exclusivist US-Israeli relationship in the Middle East—and its broader impact on US 'soft power' and credibility—as among the fundamental variables explicating the long and gradual process of US decline in the Middle East and perhaps even the world.

[70] Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East. The End of America's Moment?*, op.cit.

Conclusion

All of us can take satisfaction, as well, from the new plateau, which the Israeli-American relationship has reached. It is correct to speak of a 'plateau', rather than a 'summit', because we have attained a new, high level upon which we continue to build, rather than a peak from which we will descend.
Ronald Reagan, Written Message to AIPAC's Annual Policy Conference, 6 April 1983[1]

This thesis has made a number of contentions about the institutionalization of the US-Israel relationship during the Reagan administration and the 'Second Cold War'. It has analysed the complex decision-making processes within the administration and the broader US domestic setting on the key themes of influence, leverage and *interdependence* in US-Israel ties. In so doing, it has emphasized that 'strategic rationales' do not stand the test of motivation for this institutionalizing juncture. Rather, this push to formalize the relationship was motivated by a mixture of political and tactical expediency, complemented by the traditional need of US administrations to protect their 'domestic flank'.

The research has argued that a central outcome of this juncture would be the further the development of a conceptual and bureaucratic straitjacket for US policy, one that has 'entrapped' the US in an increasingly one-sided and exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East. While the beginnings of these processes began to emerge in the late 1950s, and would follow a process of incremental development throughout the key decades of the 1960s and 1970s, the Reagan administration would inherent and further build upon these institutional frameworks, normalizing the relationship while formalizing what had previously been ad hoc and largely covert forms of cooperation. The Reagan period would therefore cap and establish new grounding in the institutional history of the US-Israel relationship, representing a climax of a long process of maturation and a 'coming out' period for the *de facto* geostrategic alliance that exists today.

New degrees of interdependence and assimilation would be added to the relationship as Israel was further integrated into US military-strategic plans and deterrence posture in the region. While Israel's dependence on the US would become formalized, so would growing elements of US policy become reliant on this Israeli pillar. Indeed, US policy would find itself caught in a circular game of inducements and compensation for Israel each time the US sought to promote a policy action in the region. These periodic upgrades in preferential treatment would serve to tighten this policy straitjacket, constraining presidential authority while compartmentalizing the top-level political relationship away from its deeper and institutionalized elements of cooperation and assistance.

[1] RRPL, Max Green Files, 'AIPAC (2)', Box 30.

There is an inherent paradox in this outcome. A central argument of this study has been to identify efforts to *enhance* US leverage and influence over Israel—or to respond to and satisfy domestic political constraints on US Middle East policy—as key motivating drivers for those processes of institutionalization carried out by the Reagan administration during the 1980s. A key objective in this respect was to consolidate US decision-making on Israel and the Middle East in the executive branch and away from Congress or public opinion, ostensibly increasing executive authority while shielding the administration from the political costs of disagreeing with Israel in public.

US officials during the 1980s—like others before them in the 1960s and 1970s—wanted to establish new 'ground rules' for the relationship, seeking to extract assurances of prior consultation and no surprises from Israel and the leadership of the organized Jewish-American community in the United States. These were important in order to limit the political costs of disagreeing with Israel while enhancing the ability of the administration to reap the full political, strategic and moral-ideational benefits that would accrue from polishing its pro-Israel credentials. Most importantly, these efforts were understood as indispensable to allow the US to pursue its major strategic priority of the time: enhanced US-*Arab* cooperation in defence of the Persian Gulf.

Yet, these processes of institutionalization would result in further constraining presidential authority while increasingly making large dimensions of US Middle East policy *dependent* on Israeli approval and backing. Indeed, it appeared it was Israel, rather than the US, that would receive assurances of 'no surprises' and 'prior consultation' from Washington. Rather than enhancing US leverage over Israeli policy or helping resolve outstanding areas of disagreement between the US and Israel, the outcome was a tighter 'policy straitjacket', 'entrapping' the US in a quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East, and in particular in the Near East, or the strategic zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict

It is hard to discern the extent to which this 'entrapment' was by design or emerged as an unintended consequence of the US's prioritization of political expediency and the related need to compensate Israel with ever-increasing forms of preferential treatment and assistance. What is certain, however, is that the *institutional architecture* that would produce an ever more interdependent and exclusivist US-Israel relationship in the post-Cold War era was completed and formalized during the 1980s.

Support for Israeli security was thus elevated to front and centre of US policy as a key national interest in its own right, *not* a means to carefully lubricate diplomacy or US efforts to coax the warring parties into moderating their positions. Drawing on important intellectual and political support from a growing number of conservative think tanks and research centres—such as the WINEP, the JINSA and the Heritage Foundation—and establishing close links with the leaderships of the organized Jewish-American community—chief among which stood Tom Dine's AIPAC—these pro-Israel constituencies would emerge as a powerful domestic force in the US bureaucracy and foreign policy establishment, retaining considerable influence over the articulation of US Middle East policy well into present times.

A key by-product would be to diffuse and compartmentalize broader elements of cooperation and assistance *away* from the White House and deeper into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries. This would constrain US administrations from employing the expanding elements of this military-supply relationship as potential levers to influence Israeli policy, thereby largely limiting the US's toolkit of policies to 'carrots' (inducements and soft persuasion) instead of 'sticks' (conditionality or coercive diplomacy), approaches that would only further this bureaucratic and institutional straitjacket on future US policy.

Ultimately, while a degree of authority *was* concentrated in the White House, this was mainly restricted to a growing tendency for prior consultation and coordination with Israel (and its network of supporters in the US) ahead of a major announcement of policy. Yet, by negotiating everything with Israel ahead of time, the US was implicitly granting its small Middle Eastern ally the means to influence and object to large dimensions of US policy. Moreover, once a decision was made and new forms of compensation or inducements provided to Israel, the executive branch would *lose* control over this inducement, which would become institutionalized and implemented by the US bureaucracy, rendering it an established precedent that future administrations would follow but also a new plane on which Congress and pro-Israel groups in the US could argue for further increases in aid and support.

In conceptual terms, three central dimensions can be highlighted as important elements of path dependency that can be traced back to the Reagan administration: a changing conceptualization of Israel's role and value for US interests; an overturning of traditional viewpoints and approaches in terms of the best means to enhance US leverage over Israel; and the emerging tendency to separate the top-level political relationship from its deeper elements of institutionalized cooperation and military-supply agreements, preventing US policymakers from employing the latter in support of the former.

- The first conceptual legacy relates to the 'strategic asset' slogan and the degrees to which it departed from previous conceptualizations of Israel's role and value for US interests.

While the US had long appreciated Israel's 'strategic' value in the context of Arab-Israeli diplomacy and US efforts to employ the 'special' nature of US-Israel ties as a lever to consolidate the status quo and slowly attract the Arab states into the US orbit, in the 1980s this linkage with the Arab-Israeli conflict was severed. By de-linking the relationship from diplomatic efforts on the conflict, the US's traditional emphasis on a modicum of balance and even-handedness between Israel and the Arab states was also overcome.

These shifts reflected the changing geostrategic landscape in the Middle East since the 1979, but more fundamentally stemmed from the slow emergence of new constituencies of experts and policymakers that joined the administration and were instrumental in promoting new frameworks based on closer and increasingly overt demonstrations of US-Israel alliance. Emerging as a loosely defined epistemic community in the United States, these constituencies would act as a powerful counterbalance to other, more traditional viewpoints within the US domestic setting, federal government and foreign policy bureaucracy, helping to overturn previous conceptualizations of the US-Israel relationship and the best means to enhance US leverage and influence over Israel.

Based on a complementarity of 'interests' and 'values', these constituencies would argue that the US-Israel relationship should indeed be considered 'special', more important than other US regional partnerships and consequently given precedence over them. The US should no longer be ashamed to be openly pro-Israel as such support was essentially equivalent to a pro-American policy in the Middle East. Consequently, the US should not hold back from more overt forms of cooperation and *institutionalization* in the US-Israel relationship, as these would actually be conducive to broader US interests and concerns, including, paradoxically, that of enhancing leverage over Israel, by 'hugging it closer' and building US credibility as a security provider.

- In this respect, the second conceptual legacy that can be traced back to the Reagan administration and the 1980s relates precisely to the theme of leverage and the best means for a US administration to promote its interests vis-à-vis Israel while not risking its political survival at home.

While previous US approaches had tended to view emerging elements of US-Israeli cooperation or other forms of preferential treatment as a means to 'reward' Israeli behaviour, or a quid pro quo in exchange for a given Israeli concession or commitment, the Reagan administration, and

the pro-Israel constituencies within it, would overturn these approaches. These would argue that any overt linkage between US aid and cooperation with Israel and Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Arab states or the Palestinians would be counterproductive, as such action would indicate that US support was not 'sincere', but rather a tactical means of extracting Israeli concessions. Pointing to the short-lived 1981 MoU as an example of these abortive US efforts to co-op Israel, these constituencies would see to it that the revived 1983 agreement contained no such references to an explicit exchange of services between the two countries.

In this respect, overt cooperation and alliance should represent the *foundation* of the US-Israeli relationship in all spheres, an essential (pre)condition for the attainment of key US interests, including that of restraining Israel's unilateral tendencies or succeeding in bringing about a diplomatic breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli theatre. By reassuring Israel and 'hugging it closer', Israel's underlying mistrust of US motives and objectives in the Middle East could be finally put to rest, thereby providing the US with the needed leverage *without* it having to risk political capital by employing hard conditionality or coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis Israel. Reassuring Israel and building up its military superiority and technological margin would therefore be akin to 'preparing the groundwork for peace' in the region, according to the viewpoints promoted by these constituencies.

The US's traditional focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict as a central irritant to US foreign policy objectives in the Middle East and the key avenue to reconcile the 'Arab' and 'Israeli' dimensions of US policy was downgraded below the broader strategic and psychological objectives of the Reagan administration. Indeed, *any area* of disagreement between the US and Israel should be downplayed according to these viewpoints, as public disagreements could be construed as a potential weakening of the US-Israel relationship, which in turn would not only lead to a hardening of Arab demands and the potential for renewed instability in the Middle East but also in a *loss* of US leverage, given that Israeli confidence in the US would be weakened.

Israel's value for US interests was therefore no longer considered as a function of the broader diplomatic process, but elevated to a higher strategic and Cold War plane and institutionalized accordingly. Here, Israel's geostrategic location, advanced military forces and reliability as a democratic and Western-oriented ally in the Middle East could serve US interests in fighting the 'Second Cold War' as well as reawakening US society to the superiority of America's political-military capabilities on the global stage.

The impact and legacy of these changes would occur gradually, in a fluid and non-linear fashion well after the Reagan administration. Pro-Israeli constituencies would never retain a monopoly

over the debate, and elements associated with the 'linkage doctrine' are indeed detectable well beyond the Reagan administration. But the political and institutional precedents created by the administration's efforts to normalize the US-Israel relationship, paired with the consolidation and *intellectual organization* of this constituency of pro-Israel experts in the US, cannot be overstated. From the 1980s onwards, pro-Israeli elements in the US could count on a constituency of expert practitioners who could speak the language of foreign policy and articulate a set of coherent rationalizing principles to back up their support for Israel, 'right or wrong'. This is what Dennis Ross was pointing to when he noted that 'a new sociology was added to the relationship' during the 1980s.[2]

As the US moved to prioritize consultation and coordination with Israel ahead of a major announcement of policy, US perceptions and approaches came to assume an Israeli colouring and slant. This would set in motion a concerted process of 'Israelization' of US Middle East policy, paralleled by an 'Americanization' of the Israeli society, politics and economic system, entrapping the US in quasi-exclusivist relationship with the Israel in the Middle East. This brings us to the third and final conceptual legacy of this institutionalizing juncture for the bilateral relationship.

- This relates to the compartmentalization of the US-Israel relationship, the diffusion of US-Israeli cooperation into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries and the consequent declining presidential authority to direct policy towards Israel and the broader Middle East.

This trend would emerge as a key by-product of those processes of institutionalization that took place during the 1980s and the Reagan administration, gradually constraining the executive branch from employing the expanding elements of this military-supply relationship as potential levers to influence Israeli policy. Indeed, particularly in the post-Cold War era, the extent of US leverage often appears limited to 'asking' Israel to make concessions and, failing that, simply offering Israel increased forms of preferential treatment and inducements as a means to 'buy' its acquiescence to a given US policy approach.

This tendency was put on clear display in late 2010, for instance, when the Obama administration offered Israel a striking inducement of 20 F-35 jet fighters worth an estimated $2.7 billion in exchange for a limited 90-day *extension* of a partial Israeli settlement freeze.[3] The offer is but one example of the bizarre and often paradoxical nature of US policy towards Israel. After all, the US

[2] Interview, Dennis Ross, op.cit.
[3] Mark Landler, "US Drops Bid to Sway Israel on Settlements," *NYT*, 7 December 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/08/world/middleeast/08diplo.html.

was offering to double a previous Israeli order of 20 F-35s in exchange for a *limited* agreement to comply with international law and longstanding US policy on the issue.

The anecdote is but one example among many that demonstrate the degree to which US leverage over Israel is constrained by a combination of domestic political considerations and the murky array of political precedents, commitments and ad hoc assurances towards Israel that each administration inherits from its predecessor. Many other examples exist, with US policy essentially entrapped in an incremental game of inducements and compensation for Israel in exchange for limited, short-term and tactical changes to Israeli policies the US has long opposed.

The offer of F-35 fighter jets was all the more striking considering the serious political disagreements between the top-level leaderships in the two countries and Benjamin Netanyahu's repeated flouting of stated US policy during the Obama administration. This may demonstrate the extent of this policy straitjacket, predicated as it is on a compartmentalization of US-Israel relations and a division between the top-level political relationship and the deeper levels of institutionalized military-supply arrangements. It further evidences the significant constraints on presidential freedom of action towards Israel that stem from this compartmentalization of the relationship and the diffusion of cooperation into the respective bureaucracies of the two countries.

Such developments reflect the gradual consolidation of a quasi-exclusivist US relationship with Israel, one that has resulted in prioritizing Israeli security concerns and interests in US Middle East policy. In essence, given US efforts to 'protect the domestic flank' and increase coordination and prior consultation with Israel on broad dimensions of US Middle East policy and US-Arab relations, US policy has— perhaps unintentionally—granted Israel (and its network of supporters in the US) what amounts to a semi-veto power over broad aspects of US Middle East policy.

This mismatch between the top-level political relationship—where disagreements are profuse—and the deeper levels of institutionalized commitments and assistance explains the appearance of an inverse relationship between growing Israeli dependence on the US and declining US willingness to employ this leverage to change policies it has long opposed. It also explains the trend of repeated (political) crises resolved through forms of (policy) continuity and further increases in preferential treatment for Israel, a dynamic that is particularly evident in the post-Cold War era, but was clearly present also during the Ford, Carter and particularly the Reagan administration where political crises have consistently been resolved—or more precisely papered over—through further increases of aid and preferential treatment for Israel.

Indeed, while the Reagan administration sought to consolidate decision-making on Israel in the executive branch, even agreeing to negotiate emerging policy directly with Israel and the representatives of major pro-Israel lobby groups in the US, the concrete effects of this institutionalization process would in actuality increase the influence of Congress and the broader bureaucracy over the articulation of policy.

Examples of this growing power of Congress (and declining influence of the executive branch) are provided not only by the legalization of Kissinger's 1975 assurances toward Israel regarding the PLO and the diplomatic process in 1985, or the 1987 law that called for the shutting of PLO offices in the United States, a legislation that was approved over Reagan's objections.[4] Many more recent examples are available, such as the Jerusalem Relocation Act of 1995, the formalization of the QME concept in 2008, the *United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014*[5], negotiations over the new 10-year military supply agreement with Israel (FY2019–28) and, most recently, the 2018 introduction of the *United States-Israel Joint Drone Detection Cooperation Act*, pending approval in the US Congress but likely to be embraced in a bipartisan manner by US lawmakers.[6]

Stemming from the institutionalized legacy of preferential treatment and cooperation, these agreements are commonly justified in terms of an 'unbreakable bond, forged by over sixty years of shared interests and shared values', as noted in the official text of the 2014 'strategic partnership act' that has formally elevated Israel's standing to that of a 'major strategic partner' of the United States.[7] This may serve as an indication of the extent to which these conceptual frameworks and strategic justifications have become engrained in the US political system and foreign policy bureaucracy, replicated across administrations even when strategic developments would seem to indicate the need to revisit these assumptions.

Indeed, US policy has essentially been reduced to avoiding the inevitable, delaying the key necessity of 'getting tough with Israel' to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict while excusing this inaction behind a smokescreen of strategic justifications and rhetorical embellishments that frame US aid and support for Israel as an 'investment in peace'. This smokescreen obfuscates the reoccurrence of severe political disagreements that have been a constant feature of the top-level political relationship and the persistence of serious doubts in certain—now admittedly minoritarian—quarters of the US foreign policy establishment relating to Israel's tangible

[4] Robert Pear, "Effect of a PLO Shift on US Policy Unclear," *NYT*, 13 November 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/13/world/effect-of-a-plo-shift-on-us-policy-unclear.html.
[5] *S.2673 – United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014,* United States Congress, 113th Congress (2013-2014), Full Text, https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2673/text.
[6] "Crist Proposal to Combat Drone Attacks in Israel Included in Defence Act," *Tampa Bay Reporter*, 17 May 2018, http://www.tbreporter.com/politics/crist-proposal-combat-drone-attacks-israel-included-defense-act/.
[7] *S.2673 – United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014,* op.cit.

contributions to US strategic interests in the Middle East. It serves to mask the US's fundamental inability (or lack of political will) to confront this policy straitjacket and disentangle the US from its institutionalized parameters of support for Israel, 'right or wrong'.

By repeatedly postponing the inevitable, and consistently prioritizing short-term tactical gains over a long-term and holistic strategy making full use of the US's extensive toolkit of carrots and sticks vis-à-vis *both* Israel and the Arab states, the US fundamentally undermined its professed role as a mediator in the conflict. It moreover undermined the ability of US administrations to employ the festering Arab-Israeli conflict and the 'special' nature of US-Israel ties as strategic levers to advance US interests in the region. Instead, it was Israel that increasingly was able to use its 'special' relationship with the US to advance its own interests and concerns, often in such a way that was harmful to the US's own objectives.

It is also as a result of these processes, and building on the institutionalized precedents stemming from the increasingly overt integration of Israel into the US's global military-deterrence posture, that pro-Israel lobby groups have become the formidable domestic political force they are today. Acting as something akin to an 'enforcement mechanism', and increasingly finding strong supporters within various branches of the foreign policy establishment, these lobby groups would arguably stand to benefit the most from this institutionalization of the relationship and increasingly public US portrayals of Israel's ally status.

Ultimately, a further element of path dependency is the growing tendency to approach the Middle East as divided into separate strategic zones and partnerships: Israel in the Near East and Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf. As the US began to rely on Israel and Saudi Arabia as the (new) 'twin pillars' of US policy in the 1980s and the broader post-Cold War era, it would establish distinct military-strategic contingencies for the two strategic zones of US policy in the Middle East.

Largely established in parallel with one another in the fateful year of 1983—through the creation of CENTCOM in the Persian Gulf and the concurrent revival of US-Israeli strategic cooperation in the central zone of the Near East—US planners appeared to have finally found a means to reconcile the two strands of US policy. In this context, the traditional focus on diplomacy and Arab-Israeli peace was replaced by expanding military-supply relationships and the US's growing commitment to superior aid for Israel as affirmed in the QME doctrine.

This has not only undermined the US's professed role as a mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby weakening US international prestige and credibility and in turn the very legitimacy of

continued US monopoly over the diplomatic process. It has also created a situation in which US (and Israeli) interests in the region have become dependent on and therefore largely tailored toward the maintenance of an authoritarian status quo in the Arab world. This latter dimension became increasingly apparent in the post-Cold War era and has more recently been reflected in the US's largely abortive support for the 2010–12 Arab uprisings and ultimate return to its traditional support for conservative and counter-revolutionary forces, whether these be in Israel or Saudi Arabia. Such approaches have fundamentally hampered US influence and credibility, transforming the US from a distant and largely undisputed mediator and security provider into an active participant in the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and a major impediment not only to a resolution of these conflicts but also to the broader stabilization and democratization of the Middle East.

Long-term Significance and Legacy

While US Middle East policy during the Cold War can generally be framed as a struggle to reconcile contrasting commitments, interests and values in the context of the parallel partnerships with Israel and Saudi Arabia, these trends began to change towards the late 1980s and the subsequent end of the Cold War. While the Reagan administration had sought to establish a 'consensus of strategic concerns' between these disparate alliances focussed on the Soviet and Iranian threat, these efforts only truly began bearing fruit in the post-Cold War era. In some ways replicating what had occurred in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, when the emerging forces of Arab nationalism were posing a threat to *both* Israel and Saudi Arabia, by the end of the 1980s the US had established something akin to an informal understanding capable of reconciling these parallel military-supply agreements.

This mechanism would be based on parallel—yet always unbalanced—assurances towards both partners. Israel received its formal ally recognition, copious amounts of aid and technical support and the key US commitment to preserve and augment its Qualitative Military Edge against any combination of threats in the region. Saudi Arabia received what amounted to a US security guarantee for survival of the monarchy, while ensuring that its oil wealth be spent on US armaments that in turn would create an opening for the stationing of growing numbers of US military personnel and trainers in Saudi Arabia.

The long-term—albeit perhaps unintended—implications of these understandings would make US policy and deterrence posture in the post-Cold War Middle East dependent on these twin relationships, a dynamic that has further constrained US presidential freedom of action. While during the Cold War the US maintained some degree of leeway by being able to play one

relationship off against the other, employing such tensions to maintain a degree of distance and impartiality between the sides, as threat perceptions and political or economic interests of both Israel and Saudi Arabia began to coincide, these partnerships would increasingly be able to pool their respective leverage over their superpower benefactor, increasingly joining forces to impose on the US their own viewpoints and priorities in the Middle East.

Today, it is becoming increasingly clear that US Middle East policy is caught in two key relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. While welcomed by US planners as a means to solidify US standing and influence in the two strategic zones of the Middle East, such a dynamic has increasingly made US policy reliant on these twin pillars. As noted by Karen L. Puschel in the early 1990s with respect to US-Israel relationship, 'strategic cooperation is now widely viewed as an essential element of the US commitment to Israel's security. Thus, even if the US wishes to go back, this would be at the risk of undermining deterrence in the region and, thereby, strategic stability as well'.[8]

Academic literature has long appreciated the risks of entrapment associated with alliances, and examples of small states co-opting and influencing the policies of their external benefactor are widespread. Yet, none of these examples come close to the 'special' US-Israel relationship and the extent to which Israel has been able to preserve its unique partnership with the US while at the same time repeatedly flouting US policy and stated objectives in the Middle East. With the growing (covert) meeting of minds between Israel and Saudi Arabia, this influence and leverage over US policy has been further enhanced, as both US partnerships have joined forces in an effort to co-opt and influence Washington's policies in the region.

While the Obama administration did seek to disentangle the US from both these exclusivist relationships in the Middle East, the extent to which its original designs were constrained and ultimately undermined by both sets of partners in the region is clear for all to see. Such a development has resulted in a further sidelining of dissenting views or alternative approaches in the Middle East. With the advent of the Trump administration in 2016, US policy was quickly returned to its familiar baseline of support for Israel and Saudi Arabia against their shared rival Iran.

Indeed, the Trump administration represents the apex of a gradual normalization process for the intrusion of domestic politics over the articulation of US foreign policy priorities in the Middle East. In this, the Trump administration—and beneath it, broad elements of the Republican Party—have essentially outsourced large portions of US Middle East policy to Israel and (less so)

[8] Puschel, *US-Israeli Strategic*, op.cit., p.4.

Saudi Arabia. This is again done on the basis of short-term political expediency and economic gain, particularly in the realm of US arms sales and the further augmentation of these parallel military-supply relationships with Israel and Saudi Arabia (and their respective extensions, such as Egypt, Jordan and the other Gulf states).

As aptly noted by Bruce Riedel in a recent analysis for the US-based Brookings Institution regarding Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 Iran Nuclear deal—a decision that has been universally condemned, with the exception of both Israel and Saudi Arabia—'the American people would be wise to lose their cool if the [Trump] administration listens to those who are all too eager to send Americans into harm's way to pursue fantasies. The administration made a bad decision to violate the JCPOA [i.e., the Iran nuclear deal]. The road to a repetition of the 1982 [Lebanon war] and 2003 [Iraq war] disasters has been opened'.[9]

The warning sounds ominous and reflects the extent to which US policy in the post-Cold War era has become entrapped in and interdependent with two exclusivist partnerships in the Middle East that have precluded the US from devising alternative approaches to the region, contributing instead to its militarization, the deepening of authoritarianism and in turn the spread of instability. While arguably damaging to US interests, such instability and the hardening of battle lines and intra-regional rivalries is arguably beneficial to both Israel and Saudi Arabia. Instability helps to maintain the US's focus on the region; aids their efforts to garner more security assistance from Washington; and ultimately enhances the US's reliance on these twin partnerships for the protection and advancement of US interests. Such dynamics have tied the US to two of the most conservative, anti-democratic and militaristic states in the Middle East, harming American soft power and international credibility as a result. US planners, researchers and academics would do well to address these dynamics and return US Middle East policy to a more balanced, differentiated and values-oriented plane, one that looks beyond contemporary security threats and instead seek to address the root causes for these phenomena.

When the United States—the ostensible leader of the 'free world'—is seen allying in international fora with a handful of small countries against the overwhelming majority of the international community in order to support Israeli (or indeed Saudi) intransigence that the US itself has long opposed, the harm to US credibility and international standing are clear to all. As aptly noted by Former Secretary of State John Kerry in a heated 2016 speech at the end of the Obama administration, 'it is vital that we [the US and Israel] have an honest, clear-eyed conversation about the uncomfortable truths and difficult choices. […] Regrettably, some seem to believe that

[9] Bruce Riedel, "Don't Let Israel and Saudi Arabia Drag the US into Another War," *Order from Chaos*, Brookings Institution, 15 May 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/05/15/dont-let-israel-and-saudi-arabia-drag-the-u-s-into-another-war/.

the US friendship means that the US must accept any policy, regardless of our own interests, our own positions, our own words, our own principles, even after urging again and again that the policy must change. Friends need to tell each other the hard truths, and friendships require mutual respect.'[10]

A fundamental condition that needs to be achieved is that of disentangling the US from its quasi-exclusivist relationship with Israel in the Middle East, one that is based on an erroneous portrayal of complimentary interests but in actuality has transformed the US into the ultimate guarantor for an Israeli promoted vision of the regional order in the Middle East characterized by perennial conflict and instability. As noted by the US's former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Chas W. Freedman, in a 2010 speech at the Nixon Centre in Washington DC, 'to flourish over the long term, Israel's relations with the United States need to be grounded in reality, not myth, and in peace, not war.'[11]

[10] US State Department, "Remarks on Middle East Peace. John Kerry," The Dean Acheson Auditorium, Washington DC, 28 December 2016, https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/266119.htm.
[11] Chas W. Freeman Jr., "The Role of the Israel-Palestine Conflict," Remarks at the Nixon Center, Washington DC, in Freeman, *America's Continuing Misadventures*, op.cit., pp.23-27, p.27 (quote).

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Appendix

Appendix A

US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding, 10 March 1965[1]

I. The Government of the United States has reaffirmed its concern for the maintenance of Israel's security and has renewed its assurance that the United States firmly opposes aggression in the Near East and remains committed to the independence and integrity of Israel.

II. The Government of Israel has reaffirmed that Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Arab-Israel area.

III. In view of the importance of an effective Israel deterrent capacity as a major factor in preventing aggression in the area, the United States will of course continue, as in the past, to be ready to discuss with Israel its needs and problems.

IV. The United States has informed the Government of Israel that it may sell quantities of arms and military equipment to Jordan in order to preclude the Soviet supply of arms through the UAC to Jordan. King Hussein has assured the United States that if he purchases US tanks, he intends to keep his armor on the East Bank of the Jordan. The United States also has made clear to King Hussein that if he purchases Soviet arms there will be no sales from the United States. The United States will keep Israel informed of the completion of any deal with Jordan for the provision of US arms and equipment.

V. It is understood that Israel is not interested in buying some of the particular items sold to Jordan. Instead the United States will sell Israel on favorable credit terms, or otherwise help Israel procure, certain arms and military equipment as follows:

A. The United States will ensure the sale directly to Israel at her request of at least the same number and quality of tanks that it sells to Jordan.

B. In the event of the Federal Government of Germany not supplying to Israel the remainder of the 150 M48 tanks outstanding under the German-Israel tank deal of 1964, the United States will ensure the completion of this program.

C. The United States is further prepared to ensure an opportunity for Israel to purchase a certain number of combat aircraft, if not from Western sources, then from the United States.

VI. The Government of Israel intends to provide the Government of the United States with a list of its requirements in the near future and requests that discussions on this list take place in Washington at a mutually convenient time.

VII. The Governments of the United States and Israel agree that full secrecy shall be maintained on all matters referred to herein and all subsequent actions taken in this connection, until the two governments agree on how and when to divulge them. The Government of the United States has explained to the Government of Israel that premature publicity on the matters covered under this understanding could create serious complications for the United States in its relations with other states in the area. The Government of Israel has informed the Government of the United States that it understands this concern and will be guided accordingly.

[1] Source: FRUS Vol. XVIII (1964-67), Document 185.

Appendix B

US-Israel Memorandum of Agreement, 1 September 1975[2]

The United States recognizes that the Egypt-Israel Agreement initialed on September 1, 1975, (hereinafter referred to as the Agreement), entailing the withdrawal from vital areas in Sinai, constitutes an act of great significance on Israel's part in the pursuit of final peace. That Agreement has full United States support.

United States-Israeli Assurances

1. The United States Government will make every effort to be fully responsive, within the limits of its resources and Congressional authorization and appropriation, on an on-going and long-term basis to Israel's military equipment and other defense requirements, to its energy requirements and to its economic needs. The needs specified in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 below shall be deemed eligible for inclusion within the annual total to be requested in FY76 and later fiscal years.

2. Israel's long-term military supply needs from the United States shall be the subject of periodic consultations between representatives of the United States and Israeli defense establishments, with agreement reached on specific items to be included in a separate United States-Israeli memorandum. To this end, a joint · study by military experts will be undertaken within 3 weeks. In conducting this study, which will include Israel's 1976 needs, the United States will view Israel's requests sympathetically, including its request for advanced and sophisticated weapons.

3. Israel will make its own independent arrangements for oil supply to meet its requirements through normal procedures. In the event Israel is unable to secure its needs in this way, the United States Government, upon notification of this fact by the Government of Israel, will act as follows for five years, at the end of which period either side can terminate this agreement on one-year's notice.

(a) If the oil Israel needs to meet all its normal requirements for domestic consumption is unavailable for purchase in circumstances where no quantitative restrictions exist on the ability or the United States to procure oil to meet its normal requirements, the United States Government will promptly make oil available for purchase by Israel to meet all of the aforementioned normal requirements of Israel. If Israel is unable to secure the necessary means to transport such oil to Israel, the United States Government will make every effort to help Israel secure the necessary means of transport.

(b) If the oil Israel needs to meet all or its normal requirements for domestic consumption is unavailable for purchase in circumstances where quantitative restrictions through embargo or otherwise also prevent the United States from procuring oil to meet its normal requirements, the United States Government will promptly make oil available for purchase by Israel in accordance with the International Energy Agency conservation and allocation formula as applied by the United States Government, in order to meet Israel's essential requirements. If Israel is unable to securer the necessary means to transport such oil to Israel, the United States Government will make every effort to help Israel secure the necessary means of transport.

Israeli and United States experts will meet annually or more frequently at the request of either party, to review Israel's continuing oil requirement.

[2] Source: Gerald Ford Presidential Library [GFPL], "August 21 - September 1, 1975 - Sinai Disengagement Agreement - Vol. III (9)", Box 5. Available online: https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553989.pdf

4. In order to help Israel meet its energy needs and as part of the overall annual figure in paragraph 1 above, the United States agrees:

(a) In determining the overall annual figure which will be requested from Congress, the United States Government will give special attention to Israel's oil import requirements and, for a period as determined by Article 3 above, will take into account in calculating that figure Israel's additional expenditures for the import of oil to replace that which would have ordinarily come from Abu Rodeis and Ras Sudar (4.5 million tons in 1975).

(b) To ask Congress to make available funds, the amount to be determined by mutual agreement, to the Government of Israel necessary for a project for the construction and stocking of the oil reserves to be stored in Israel, bringing storage reserve capacity and reserve stocks now standing at approximately six months up to one-year's need at the time of the completion of the project. The project will be implemented within four years. The construction, operation and financing and other relevant questions of the project will be the subject of early and detailed talks between the two Governments.

5. The United States Government will not expect Israel to begin to implement the Agreement before Egypt fulfills its undertaking under the January 1974 Disengagement Agreement to permit passage of all Israeli cargoes to and from Israeli ports through the Suez Canal.

6. The United States Government agrees with Israel that the next agreement with Egypt should be a final peace agreement.

7. In case of an Egyptian violation of any of the provisions of the Agreement~ the United States Government is prepared to consult with Israel as to the significance of the violation and possible remedial action by the United States Government.

8. The United States Government will vote against any Security Council resolution which in its judgment affects or alters adversely the Agreement.

9. The United States Government will not join in and will seek to prevent efforts by others to bring about consideration of proposals which it and Israel agree are detrimental to the interests of Israel.

10. In view of the long-standing United States commitment to the survival and security or Israel, the United States Government will view with particular gravity
threats to Israel's security or sovereignty by a world power. In support of this objective, the United States Government will in the event of such threat consult promptly with the Government of Israel with respect to what support, diplomatic or otherwise, or assistance it can lend to Israel in accordance with its constitutional practices.

11. The United States Government and the Government or Israel will~ at- the earliest possible time, and if possible within two months after the signature or this document, conclude the contingency plan for a military supply operation to Israel in an emergency situation.

12. It is the United States Government's position that Egyptian commitments under the Egypt-Israel Agreement, its implementation, validity and duration are not conditional upon any act or developments between the other Arab states and Israel. The United States Government regards the Agreement as standing on its own.

13. The United States Government shares the Israeli position that under existing political circumstances negotiations with Jordan will be directed toward an overall peace settlement.

14. In accordance with the principle or freedom of navigation on the high seas and free and unimpeded passage through and over straits connecting international waters, the United States

Government regards the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Strait of Gibraltar as international waterways. It will support Israel's right to free and unimpeded passage through such straits. Similarly, the United States Government recognizes Israel's right to freedom of flights over the Red Sea and such straits and will support diplomatically the exercise of that right.

15. In the event that the United Nations Emergency Force or any other United Nations organ is withdrawn without prior agreement of both Parties to the Egypt-Israel Agreement and the United States before this Agreement is superseded by another agreement, it is the United States view that the Agreement shall remain binding in all its parts.

16. The United States and Israel agree that signature of the Protocol of the Egypt-Israel Agreement and its full entry into effect shall not take place before approval by the United States Congress of the United States role in connection with the surveillance and observation functions described in the Agreement and its Annex. The United States has informed the Government of Israel that it has obtained the Government or Egypt agreement to the above.

US-Israel Memorandum of Agreement, 1 September 1975[3]

The Geneva Peace Conference

1. The Geneva Peace Conference will be reconvened at a time coordinated between the United States and Israel.

2. The United States will continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestine Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognize or negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. The United States Government will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy at the Geneva Peace Conference on this issue with the Government of Israel. Similarly, the United States will consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy with Israel with regard to the participation of any other additional states. It is understood that the participation at a subsequent phase of the Conference of any possible additional state, group or organization will require the agreement of all the initial participants.

3. The United States will make every effort to ensure at the Conference that all substantive negotiations will be on a bilateral basis.

4. The United States will oppose and, if necessary, vote against any initiative in the Security Council to alter adversely the terms of reference of the Geneva Peace Conference or to change Resolutions 242 and 338 in ways which are incompatible with their original purpose.

5. The United States will seek to ensure that the role of the co-sponsors will be consistent with what was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Government and the Government of Israel of December 20, 1973.

6. The United States and Israel will concert action to assure that the Conference will be conducted in a manner consonant with the objectives or this document and with the declared purpose or the Conference, namely the advancement of a negotiated peace between Israel and each one of its neighbors.

[3] Ibid.

Appendix C

US-Israel Memorandum of Agreement, 26 March 1979[4]

Recognizing the significance of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Egypt and considering the importance of full implementation of the Treaty of Peace to Israel's security interests and the contribution of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace to the security and development of Israel as well as its significance to peace and stability in the region and to the maintenance of international peace and security; and

Recognizing that the withdrawal from Sinai imposes additional heavy security, military and economic burdens on Israel.

The Governments of the United States of America and of the State of Israel, subject to their constitutional processes and applicable law, confirm as follows:

1. In the light of the role of the United States in achieving the Treaty of Peace and the parties' desire that the United States continue its supportive efforts, the United States will take appropriate measures to promote full observance of the Treaty of Peace.

2. Should it be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the United States that there has been a violation or threat of violation of the Treaty of Peace, the United States will consult with the parties with regard to measures to halt or prevent the violation, ensure observance of the Treaty of Peace, enhance friendly and peaceful relations between the parties and promote peace in the region, and will take such remedial measures as it deems appropriate, which may include diplomatic, economic and military measures as described below.

3. The United States will provide support it deems appropriate for proper actions taken by Israel in response to such demonstrated violations of the Treaty of Peace. In particular, if a violation of the Treaty of Peace is deemed to threaten the security of Israel, including, inter alia, a blockade of Israel's use of international waterways, a violation of the provisions of the Treaty of Peace concerning limitation of forces or an armed attack against Israel, the United States will be prepared to consider, on an urgent basis, such measures as the strengthening of the United States presence in the area, the providing of emergency supplies to Israel and the exercise of maritime rights in order to put an end to the violation.

4. The United States will support the parties' rights to navigation and over flight for access to either country through and over the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba pursuant to the Treaty of Peace.

5. The United States will oppose and, if necessary, vote against any action or resolution in the United Nations which in its judgment adversely affects the Treaty of Peace.

6. Subject to Congressional authorization and appropriation, the United States will endeavour to take into account and will endeavour to be responsive to military and economic assistance requirements of Israel.

7. The United States will continue to impose restrictions on weapons supplied by it to any country which prohibit their unauthorized transfer to any third party. The United States will not supply or authorize transfer of such weapons for use in an armed attack against Israel and will take steps to prevent such unauthorized transfer.

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[4] Source: "The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, March 26, 1979," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.8,No.4 (Summer 1979),pp.189-213.

8. Existing agreements and assurances between the United States and Israel are not terminated or altered by the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace, except for those contained in Articles V, VI, VII, VIII, XI, XII, XV' and XVI of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of the United States and the Government of Israel (United States Israeli Assurances) of September 1, 1975.

9. This Memorandum of Agreement sets forth the full understandings of the United States and Israel with regard to the subject matters covered between them hereby, and shall be carried out in accordance with its terms.

US-Israeli Memorandum of Agreement on Oil, 26 March 1979[5]

The oil supply arrangement of September 1, 1975, between the Governments of the United States and Israel, annexed hereto, remains in effect. A memorandum of agreement shall be agreed upon and concluded to provide an oil supply arrangement for a total of 15 years, including the 5 years provided in the September 1, 1975, arrangement.

The memorandum of agreement, including the commencement of this arrangement and pricing provisions, will be mutually agreed upon by the parties within 60 days following the entry into force of the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel.

It is the intention of the parties that prices paid by Israel for oil provided by the United States hereunder shall be comparable to world market prices current at the time of transfer, and that in any event the United States will be reimbursed by Israel for the costs incurred by the United States in providing oil to Israel hereunder.

Experts provided for in the September 1, 1975, arrangement will meet on request to discuss matters arising under this relationship.

The United States Administration undertakes to seek promptly additional statutory authorization that may be necessary for full implementation of this arrangement.

Annex

Israel will make its own independent arrangements for oil supply to meet its requirements through normal procedures. In the event Israel is unable to secure its needs in this way, the United States Government, upon notification of this fact by the Government of Israel, will act as follows for five years, at the end of which period either side can terminate this arrangement on one year's notice.

(a) If the oil Israel needs to meet all its normal requirements for domestic consumption is unavailable for purchase in circumstances where no quantitative restrictions exist on the ability of the United States to procure oil to meet its normal requirements, the United States Government will promptly make oil available for purchase by Israel to meet all of the aforementioned normal requirements of Israel. If Israel is unable to secure the necessary means to transport such oil to Israel, the United States Government will make every effort to help Israel secure the necessary means of transport.

(b) If the oil Israel needs to meet all of its normal requirements for domestic consumption is unavailable for purchase in circumstances where quantitative restrictions through embargo or otherwise also prevent the United States from procuring oil to meet its normal requirements the United States Government will promptly make oil available for purchase by Israel in accordance with the International Energy Agency conservation and allocation formula, as applied by the

[5] Ibid.

United States Government, in order to meet Israel's essential requirements. If Israel is unable to secure the necessary means to transport such oil to Israel, the United States Government will make every effort to help Israel secure the necessary means of transport.

Israeli and United States experts will meet annually or more frequently at the request of either party, to review Israel's continuing oil requirement.

Letter From Egyptian Prime Minister And Foreign Minister Mustafa Khalil To Us Secretary Of State Cyrus Vance, March 26, 1979.[6]

Dear Secretary Vance:
Pursuant to my letter of yesterday concerning the proposed Memorandum of Agreement between US and Israel I wish to inform you of the following:

While Egypt does not contest the right of the United States Government, or any other government for that matter, to take the decisions it deems compatible with its foreign policy, the Government of Egypt maintains the right not to accept any decision or action which it considers directed against Egypt. I would like to state that the contents of the proposed Memorandum will have a direct bearing on the Peace Treaty.

You are certainly aware of the keen desire of Egypt to strengthen the friendly relations between our two countries as well as to establish peace and stability in the whole region. This will be furthered by achieving a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel as an important step toward a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East. Bearing this in mind, I want you to know that we were deeply disappointed to find the
United States accepting to enter into an agreement we consider directed against Egypt. The Memorandum does not serve any useful purpose. On the contrary, its contents and purport would adversely affect the whole process of peace and stability in the area.

Egypt rejects the Memorandum for the following reasons:

1. It is contrary to the spirit existing between our two countries and does not contribute to the strengthening of relations between them. I wish to put on record that Egypt was never consulted on the substance of the proposed Memorandum.

2. The contents of the proposed Memorandum are based upon alleged accusations against Egypt and providing for certain measures to be taken against her in that hypothetical case of violations, the determination of which is largely left to Israel.

3. We have been engaged in the final process of negotiating the Treaty for over a month now, however, we have not been notified of the intention of the United States to agree on such a Memorandum. Moreover, we learned of it by way of information and not consultation. Ambassador Eilts gave it to me at 2 p.m., March 25, only 24 hours before the scheduled ceremonies for signature of the Treaty.

4. The United States is supposed to be a partner in a tripartite effort to achieve peace and not to support the allegations of one side against the other.

5. The proposed Memorandum assumes that Egypt is the side liable to violate its obligations.

6. The proposed Memorandum could be construed as an eventual alliance between the United States and Israel against Egypt.

[6] Ibid.

7. It gives the United States certain rights that were never mentioned or negotiated with us.

8. It gives the United States the power to impose measures, or to put it bluntly, punitive measures, a matter which raises doubts about the future relations and could affect the situation in the whole region.

9. The proposed Memorandum even uses dangerously vague terms as "threats of violations" against which certain measures would be taken. We consider this to be a matter of grave consequences.

10. It implies that the economic and arms supply are subject to the sole judgment of the United States Government in connection with the alleged threats of violations being attributed to one side.

11. It makes certain aspects of Egyptian-American relations to be subject to elements extraneous to those relations and its commitments made to a third party.

12. It implies the United States' acquiescence to Israel's embarking on measures, including military measures, against Egypt on the assumption that there are violations or threats of violation of the Treaty.

13. It gives the United States the right to impose a military presence in the region for reasons agreed between Israel and the United States, a matter which we cannot accept.

14. The proposed Memorandum will cast grave doubts about the real intention of the United States, especially in connection with the peace process. It could be accused of collaboration with Israel to create such circumstances that would lead to American military presence in the area, a matter which would certainly have serious implications, especially on the stability in the whole region.

15. It will have adverse effects in Egypt towards the United States and would certainly drive other Arab countries to take a harder position against the peace process, and would give added reasons for them not to participate in that process.

16. It would also pave the way for other alliances to be formed in the area to counter the one whose seeds could be found in the proposed Memorandum.

For all these reasons, I hereby inform you that the Government of Egypt will not recognize the legality of the Memorandum and considers it null and void and as having no effect whatsoever so far as Egypt is concerned.

US State Department Response to Khalil Letter[7]

We have had an expression of unhappiness from Egypt about the Israeli memorandum of agreement. We believe this is based upon a misreading of that document. We advised Egypt well in advance that assurances would be given to Israel. Egypt in fact frequently indicated that it would have no objection to security assurances or guarantees in the context of peace. The Israeli memo of agreement does not assume that Egypt is likely to violate the treaty. On the contrary, we have full confidence that Egypt and Israel are determined to honour their treaty obligations. A similar document was offered to Egypt. This was refused. The offer remains open. The sole purpose of the Israeli memorandum of agreement along with that offered to Egypt is to facilitate the maintenance of peace in the area.

[7] Ibid.

Appendix D

US-Israel Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation, 30 November 1981[8]

Preamble

This memorandum of understanding reaffirms the common bonds of friendship between the United States and Israel and builds on the mutual security relationship that exists between the two nations. The parties recognize the need to enhance strategic cooperation to deter all threats from the Soviet Union to the region. Noting the longstanding and fruitful cooperation for mutual security that has developed between the two countries, the parties have decided to establish a framework for continued consultation and cooperation to enhance their national security by deterring such threats to the whole region.

The parties have reached the following agreements in order to achieve the above aims.

Article I

United States-Israel strategic cooperation, as set forth in this memorandum, is designed against the threat to peace and security of the region caused by the Soviet Union or Soviet-controlled forces from outside the region introduced into the region. It has the following broad purposes:

A. To enable the parties to act cooperatively and in a timely manner to deal with the above-mentioned threat.

B. To provide each other with military assistance for operations of their forces in the area that may be required to cope with this threat.

C. The strategic cooperation between the parties is not directed at any state or group of states within the region. It is intended solely for defensive purposes against the above-mentioned threat.

Article II

1. The fields in which strategic cooperation will be carried out to prevent the above-mentioned threat from endangering the security of the region include:

A. Military cooperation between the parties, as may be agreed by the parties.

B. Joint military exercise, including naval and air exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, as agreed upon by the parties.

C. Cooperation for the establishment and maintenance of joint readiness activities, as agreed upon by the parties.

D. Other areas within the basic scope and purpose of this agreement, as may be jointly agreed.

2. Details of activities within these fields of cooperation shall be worked out by the parties in accordance with the provisions of Article III below. The cooperation will include, as appropriate, planning, preparations, and exercises.

[8] Yale Law School ,"The Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy," Lillian Goldman Law Library, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/pal03.asp

Article III

1. The Secretary of Defense and the Minister of Defence shall establish a coordinating council to further the purpose of this memorandum.

A. To coordinate and provide guidance to joint working groups.

B. To monitor the implementation of cooperation in the fields agreed upon by the parties within the scope of this agreement.

C. To hold periodic meetings, in Israel and the United States, for the purposes of discussing and resolving outstanding issues and to further the objectives set forth in this memorandum. Special meetings can be held at the request of either party. The Secretary of Defense and Minister of Defence will chair these meetings whenever possible.

2. Joint working groups will address the following issues:

A. Military cooperation between the parties, including joint U.S.-Israel exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

B. Cooperation for the establishment of joint readiness activities including access to maintenance facilities and other infrastructure, consistent with the basic purposes of this agreement.

C. Cooperation in research and development, building on past cooperation in this area.
D. Cooperation in defence trade.

E. Other fields within the basic scope and purpose of this agreement, such as questions of prepositioning, as agreed by the coordinating council.

3. The future agenda for the work of the joint working groups, their composition and procedures for reporting to the coordinating council shall be agreed upon by the parties.

Article IV

This memorandum shall enter into force upon exchange of notification that required procedures have been completed by each party. If either party considers it necessary to terminate this memorandum of understanding, it may do so by notifying the other party six months in advance of the effective date of termination.

Article V

Nothing in the memorandum shall be considered as derogating from previous agreements and understandings between the parties.

Article VI

The parties share the understanding that nothing in this memorandum is intended to or shall in any way prejudge the rights and obligations which devolve or may devolve upon either government under the charter of the United Nations or under international law. The parties reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations and their aspiration to live in peace with all countries in the region.

Appendix E

US-Israel Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Joint Political, Security, and Economic Cooperation, 21 April 1988[9]

Preamble

The parties to this Memorandum of Agreement reaffirm the close relationship between the United States of America and Israel, based upon common goals, interests, and values; welcome the achievements made in strategic, economic, industrial, and technological cooperation; recognize the mutual benefits of the United States-Israel Free Trade Agreement; take note of United States economic and security assistance to Israel; and note that Israel is currently designated, for the purposes of Section 1105 of the 1987 National Defense Authorization Act, as a major non-NATO ally of the United States. The parties wish to enhance their relationship through the establishment of a comprehensive framework for continued consultation and cooperation and have reached the following agreements in order to achieve this aim.

Article I

The United States and Israel recognize the value of their unique dialogue and agree to continue frequent consultations and periodic meetings between the President and the Prime Minister, between the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, between the Secretary of Defense and the Minister of Defense, and between other Cabinet-level officials. In these meetings, international and bilateral issues of immediate and significant concern to both countries will be discussed as appropriate.

Article II

A. The Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs will meet regularly for a Joint Political Consultation (JPC) to discuss a wide range of international issues of mutual interest with a view toward increasing their mutual understanding and appreciation of these issues.

B. The United States Agency for International Development and Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Division of International Cooperation (Mashav) meet periodically to coordinate and facilitate, as appropriate, programs of cooperative assistance to developing countries.

Article III

The United States and Israel reaffirm the importance of the following U.S.-Israel Joint Groups:

A. The Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) is the forum in which the two states discuss and implement, pursuant to existing arrangements, joint cooperative efforts such as combined planning, joint exercises, and logistics. The JPMG also discusses current political-military issues of mutual strategic concern.

1. The JPMG is a bi-national, interagency group co-chaired by the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Politico-Military Affairs.

2. The JPMG normally meets biannually, alternating between Israel and the United States.

B. The Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAP) is the forum in which the two states review Israel's requests for security assistance in light of current threat assessments and U.S.

[9] Source:

budgetary capabilities and agree upon proposed levels of security assistance. The JSAP also discusses issues related to security assistance, such as industrial and technological cooperation, as well as issues related to Israel's inclusion among those countries currently designated as major non-NATO allies of the United States for the purpose of cooperative research and development under Section 1105 of the 1987 National Defense Authorization Act.

1. The JSAP is a bi-national, interagency group co-chaired by the Director General of the Ministry of Defense and the Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science, and Technology.

2. The JSAP currently meets annually, in Washington, D.C.

C. The Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) is the forum which discusses developments in Israel's economy. With a view to stimulating economic growth and self-reliance, the JEDG exchanges views on Israeli economic policy planning, stabilization efforts, and structural reform. The JEDG also evaluates Israel's requests for U.S. economic assistance.

1. The JEDG is a bi-national, interagency group co-chaired by the Director General of the Ministry of Finance and the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. The group includes private U.S. and Israeli economists invited by their respective countries.

2. The JEDG currently meets biannually, alternating between the United States and Israel.

Article IV

This Memorandum of Agreement does not derogate from any existing agreements or undertakings between the two states nor in any way prejudices the rights and obligations of either state under the Charter of the United Nations or under international law. In accordance with the above, the parties reaffirm their aspirations to live in peace with all countries. This agreement shall come into effect upon signature, shall be valid for an initial period of five years, and shall thereafter be renewed for additional periods of five years unless either party notifies the other prior to the expiration of a five year period that it wishes to terminate the agreement.

Appendix F

US-Israel Intelligence Agreement, 15 July 1999[10]

1. (S) PREAMBLE: in 1968 President Cohncon and Prime Minister Eshkol agreed that an intelligence exchange would take place between the United States and Israel. This understanding resulted in an intelligence exchange arrangement between the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Department of Defense (DoD) and. the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), Israel Defense Forces (IDF), known as the CYR Agreement. In 1988 the CYR Agreement was adjusted, broadened, reinforced, and extended and the new Agreement was named "ICE CASTLE". In 1996, the agreement was updated and renamed "STONE RUBY."

Over the years the scope of the intelligence exchange developed both in substance and in depth, contributing significantly to the national security of the U.S. and Israel.

This revised Agreement gives expression to the developments in the intelligence exchange relationship that have occurred since its inception, and provides the means and procedures for the continuation and enhancement of that exchange for the mutual benefit of both countries.

All exchanges of military intelligence whether by meeting, conference, ad hoc gatherings, or via any communications medium between any DoD organization and any IDF organization, shall be conducted under the auspices of this Agreement and shall be subject to the policies and procedures contained herein. Exchanges between DoD and IDF organizations involving only signals intelligence have been upgraded to the TOP SECRET level. All other intelligence exchanged will be at the SECRET level and below. DIA and the DMI, as the parties to this Agreement, represent DoD and the IDF, respectively, in carrying out its provisions.

This Agreement supersedes the STO$E RUBY Memorandum of Agreement dated 19 August 1996.

2. (S) PURPOSE: In the spirit of defense cooperation between the governments of Israel and the United States of America, noting mutually beneficial intelligence exchange arrangements that have taken place within that cooperation, and recognizing the benefits from an exchange of intelligence in areas of mutual interest, the parties to the Agreement enter into the following Memorandum of Agreement on the exchange of intelligence.

3. (S) SCOPE: The scope of this Agreement is defined in Annex 1.

4. (S) OBJECTIVE: It is the objective of this Agreement to establish the means and procedures by which intelligence is exchanged between the parties in fulfillment of the scope of the Agreement. This Agreement does not address contingencies for combined intelligence cooperation. Combined intelligence cooperation under contingency/crisis situations will be as directed on a case-by-case basis by the respective national command authorities.

5. (S) RESPONSIBILITIES: The parties to the Agreement shall:

a. Participate in military intelligence exchange conferences and ad hoc meetings. The procedures concerning these exchanges are contained in Annex 2 to this Agreement.

b. Participate in the combined exploitation of military materiel and materiel having potential military uses as described in Annex 3.

[10] Snowden Surveillance Archive, "Israel US Intelligence Agreement," (released August 2014), https://goo.gl/CazNJ6.

c. Honor written requests for intelligence information from the respective intelligence agencies through each country's defense attaches and/or liaison officers in accordance with the disclosure policies of each country and procedures outlined in Annex 4 to this Agreement.

d. Allow attaché-to-analyst discussions on a face-to-face basis within the scope of the Agreement and in accordance with procedures at Annex 5 to this Agreement.

6. (TOP SECRET/HVCCO) SECURITY:

a. The existence of this Agreement is TOP SECRET/'HVCCO, and the contents are TOP SECRET/HVCCO. The existence and terms of this Agreement will not be disclosed to another nation without the permission of both parties to the Agreement.

b. All classified information or material provided or generated pursuant to this Agreement shall be stored, handled, transmitted, and safeguarded in accordance with the General Security of Military Information Agreement between Israel and the United States of America, dated 10 December 1982, as amended, and including the Industrial Security Annex thereto, of 3 March 1983 and shall be in conformance with the procedures contained in Annex 6 to this Agreement.

c. In addition, all classified information or material involving signals intelligence provided or generated pursuant to this Agreement shall be stored, handled, transmitted, and safeguarded in accordance with the "Guidelines for SIGINT Cooperation" between the United States National Security Agency and the Israeli SIGINT National Unit, dated 1989, as amended November 1992.

7. (C) INTERPRETATION: Any disagreement regarding the interpretation or application of this Agreement will be resolved by consultation between the parties and will not be referred to an international tribunal or third party for settlement.

8. (C) DURATION OF THE AGREEMENT: This Agreement will expire 20 years from the date it comes into force and it may be extended for additional periods upon mutual Agreement of the parties. The parties will review the terms of the Agreement every 5 years.

9. (C) FISCAL OBLIGATIONS: Each party will assume all costs it incurs in carrying out this Agreement, including expenses for transportation, lodging, and meals of its participants at the conferences and special meetings provided for in annexes to this Agreement. Other expenses related to hosting conferences and special meetings, provided for in annexes to this Agreement, will be borne by the hosting party. The obligations of each party are subject to the availability of funds. Each party will notify the other immediately if funds available to it are not sufficient to carry out all the provisions of the Agreement.

10. (C) AMENDMENTSt The Agreement may be amended at any time upon the mutual Agreement of both parties. In accordance with applicable laws, procedures, and regulations governing each party additional annexes may be added, with the consent of both parties, to cover areas of cooperation that may evolve in the future. Requests for amendments to this Agreement, will be referred to the Directorate for Policy Support in DIA and the External Relations Department in the DMI.

11. (C) TERMINATION: The Agreement may be terminated at any time by either party after a written notice is forwarded to the other party.

12. (C) DATE AGREEMENT COMES INTO FORCE: This Agreement comes into force 011 the date of last signature. It supersedes all previous oral and written Agreements or understandings covering the exchange of intelligence between the DIA and the DMI.

ANNEX 1
SCOPE OF THE AGREEMENT

(S) Within the disclosure policies of each party, the scope of this Agreement shall encompass:

a. Military and military-political developments, to include order of battle, in the countries of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Iran and activities of the above countries within Lebanon; the intentions of the above countries to use military force against Israel or the United States; and the development of weapons of mass destruction by and long-range delivery systems of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Iran.

b. International terrorism and radical Islamic organizations and activities directed against the U.S. or Israel worldwide and terrorist and terrorist-related issues in the Middle East. Topics include indications and warning of terrorist operations against U.S. and/or Israeli interests, information on activities and capabilities of Middle Eastern State Sponsors of Terrorism, and data on organizations that threaten U.S. and Israeli interests, e.g. organizations' capabilities, facilities, methods of operation, and biographies. Intelligence on narcotics activities by military or political-military figures and organizations in Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Iran, and Iraq will be exchanged where appropriate.

c. Military and/or military intelligence activities undertaken by the following countries in the geographic area of the Middle East and North Africa which have an impact on the mutual security interests of Israel and the United States: Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Slovakia, former Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, North Korea, the Peoples' Republic of China, and Vietnam, hereafter referred to as Countries of Interest (COI). Also included are tactics and doctrine applicable to Middle Eastern forces trained by the COI.

d. Characteristics of weaponry introduced into; or developed, produced or upgraded within Syria, Iraq, Libya, or Iran; or which jointly agreed intelligence indicates will be introduced from the COI into Syria, Libya, Iran, and Iraq within the next 4 years. Discussions on this will include sharing, on a case-by-case basis, information on military production infrastructures of the COIs. In each case the infrastructure to be discussed must relate directly to specific weapon systems which are mutually agreed upon to be introduced into Syria, Iraq, Libya, or Iran. This will be in accordance with each country's disclosure guidelines and with the provision that intelligence or characteristics data provided by a third country will only be shared if that country has expressly authorized release of the information.

[Annex 2-6 not reprinted.]