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From Controversy to Consensus: Cultural Conflict and the Israeli Debate Over Territorial Withdrawal

ABSTRACT

For many years, the debate over whether Israel should withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza dominated Israeli public discourse and aroused intense passions and hostilities. This is no longer the case. This debate is far less divisive and bitter than it once was. In Israel there is broad public support for a withdrawal from much of the occupied territories, and the debate is mostly about the extent, manner, and timing of this withdrawal. This article explains why the policy of territorial withdrawal has become less controversial in Israel in recent years. It examines the debate over the future of the West Bank and Gaza during the years of the Oslo peace process and argues that the debate over territorial withdrawal was then part of a broader cultural conflict. Although this cultural conflict has not been resolved, the issue of territorial withdrawal is no longer at the center of this conflict. The removal of the issue of the territories from this broader cultural conflict has allowed for the emergence of a broad domestic consensus over a policy of territorial withdrawal.

INTRODUCTION

It took only six days for Israel to conquer the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, but it has taken the country forty years to decide what it should do with these territories. During this time, the issue of the future of the West Bank and Gaza (Judea, Samaria, and Gaza), has been at the top of Israel's national agenda, overshadowing all other domestic and foreign policy issues.

At the heart of this long-running debate were two rival visions. One was the vision of a 'Greater Israel' according to which Israel would permanently rule over the territories since they rightfully belonged to the Jewish people and could never be forfeited. The other vision was of 'Land for Peace' according to which Israel would withdraw from the territories in exchange for Arab-Israeli peace. These two conflicting visions gave rise to an enduring political cleavage between supporters of 'Greater Israel' and supporters of 'Land for Peace'. Two broad political camps emerged—the 'Left', primarily represented by the Labor party, comprised supporters of withdrawal from the territories; and the 'Right', led by the Likud party, comprised opponents of territorial withdrawal. The Left/Right divide over the future of the territories became the most important, and seemingly most intractable, divide in Israeli politics. The divide defined political allegiances, decided numerous electoral outcomes, and determined the policies and fortunes of successive governments.[1] Moreover, since both sides of the divide had roughly equal public support, the result was political deadlock. Thus, for decades the Israeli polity was unable to reach agreement on the issue of the future of the territories.

This is no longer the case. Israelis are now finally in greater agreement over the future of the West Bank and Gaza and where their state's permanent borders should be. The heated and often vitriolic domestic debate over the future of the territories that dominated Israeli politics for so long has abated. Although it still persists, the debate is no longer as encompassing and intense as it once was. There is now broad public support for a policy of Israeli withdrawal from the territories, and the domestic debate is mostly about the extent, manner, and timing of this withdrawal. An overwhelming majority of Israelis support a two-state solution to the conflict with the Palestinians, and accept that a Palestinian state covering the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank is inevitable. A solid majority wants Israel to annex certain areas in the West Bank (the large blocs of Jewish settlements) and give the rest to the Palestinians. In line with these attitudes, Israeli public opinion has also become significantly more supportive of the evacuation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

There are still large numbers of Israelis who adamantly oppose Israel's withdrawal from the territories, and some who are determined to prevent a future evacuation of West Bank settlements. However, opponents of territorial withdrawal are now clearly in the minority, whereas until recently they amounted to about half of the Israeli public. During the years of the Oslo peace process, Israeli society was divided into two almost equal camps. One half supported the peace process with the Palestinians and a policy of

gradual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza; the other half opposed the peace process and rejected the policy of territorial withdrawal.[2] In the 1990s, the schism over the policy of territorial withdrawal generated much animosity and the two opposing camps generally regarded each other with hostility, if not outright loathing. Relations between them were so volatile that there were even widespread concerns of a civil war erupting over the issue of Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. These fears climaxed with the assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 by a right-wing Jewish extremist opposed to his policy of territorial withdrawal.[3] Rabin's assassination underscored the dangerous polarization between Israeli Jews over the issue of the territories. For many Israeli Jews, it seemed that their greatest enemy was no longer the Palestinians, but their domestic opponents.[4]

The article explains why the debate over territorial withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza was so contentious in Israel in the 1990s and that only by examining the complexities of this debate during the years of the Oslo peace process can we understand why the debate has become less divisive and bitter in recent years. It argues that underlying the debate over the future of the occupied territories was a debate over Israeli national identity—who Israelis are and who they should be—and over the identity of the State of Israel—what kind of a state Israel was and should be.[5] The territories were a symbol in a domestic struggle over the definition of Israel as a state and the Israelis as a nation. The debate over territorial withdrawal in Israel in the 1990s was thus part of a broader cultural conflict. Animating the domestic division over the future of the territories were profound cultural disagreements, and it was these disagreements that inflamed passions and made the debate over territorial withdrawal so intense. Although these disagreements persist to this day and the debate over Israeli national identity and the identity of the State of Israel is still far from being resolved, the issue of the territories is no longer at the center of this debate. The gradual removal of the issue of the territories from this cultural conflict has therefore, allowed for a consensus to develop on the territorial issue.

THE OSLO ERA: PEACE AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Questions of identity were at the heart of the domestic debate in Israel over the territories, which had been going on since the end of the 1967 war.[6] Although the debate was often couched in terms of security, it was not just a debate over security, but also a debate over identity.[7] Fundamentally,

it was the identity of the state and the nation, rather than just defensible borders or territorial depth, which was perceived to be at stake for Israelis as they debated the future status of the West Bank and Gaza. What is Israel's identity? What does it mean to be a 'Jewish state', and how can Israel truly remain one? How important should Judaism be in a 'Jewish' state? How important should Jewishness be in Israeli national identity? These questions were by no means new.[8] They were first raised by Zionist ideologues (such as Ahad Ha'am's critique of Herzl's vision of a Jewish state in *Altneuland*[9]) before Israel's founding, and they have been regularly voiced by Israeli intellectuals ever since.[10]

By the 1990s, however, these questions were not merely of concern to a small clique of intellectuals. Rather, they were a central part of the national debate over the future of the West Bank and Gaza. This debate assumed a new urgency and intensity with the initiation by the Rabin government in 1993 of the Oslo peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. The Oslo Accords did not resolve the future political status of the West Bank and Gaza, and the Oslo peace process meant that a decision over the ultimate status of the territories could no longer be indefinitely deferred. Consequently, the Israeli debate over the territories reached its climax. The result of this was unprecedented domestic turmoil as Israelis engaged in a bitter struggle over the peace process.

No issue aroused greater domestic controversy in Israel in the 1990s than the Oslo peace process. While many Israelis enthusiastically supported the peace process with the Palestinians, many others were just as strongly opposed. The Oslo peace process exposed the depth of the schism within Israeli society over the territories. As Hillel Halkin wrote: "Like a man in great torment who breaks psychologically in two, Israel [. . .] went, or was dragged, to Oslo as two nations, each willing to risk what the other was not and unwilling to risk what the other was; neither able to communicate with or to understand the other but only to blame the other rancorously; thesis and antithesis, each half of the now-fractured personality of the Jewish people in its homeland."[11]

The division in Israel over the territories meant that the Rabin government could not secure a public consensus behind its policy of peacemaking with the Palestinians and was unable to get a decisive majority of Israelis to support the Oslo peace process.[12]

Although both Oslo agreements ('Oslo I' and 'Oslo II') were supported by a majority of the general public, in both cases the margin of support was very narrow.[13] Between 40–50% of Israelis consistently opposed the Oslo Accords,[14] and even more expressed dissatisfaction with the Oslo

peace process over time. According to a March 1995 public opinion survey, 62% of Israelis expressed dissatisfaction with the peace process, compared to only 11% who felt satisfied.[15] The situation was the same in the Knesset, where the Rabin government received only minimal majority support for its peace policy with the Palestinians. It was barely able to ratify the 'Oslo I' and 'Oslo II' agreements, and did so only with the help of an Arab party and the mostly Arab ex-communist party.[16] Instead of legitimizing the Oslo Accords, the Knesset votes ratifying them only highlighted the extent of the opposition to them, and the fact that the government lacked a so-called Jewish majority. By relying upon non-Zionist and non-Jewish votes in the Knesset, the Rabin government was denounced by its critics for ignoring the wishes of the Jewish, Zionist, public.

Critics of the Oslo peace process pointed to the continuing acts of terrorism committed against Israelis by Palestinians as proof that territorial compromise with the Palestinians would not bring Israelis peace and security. They argued that withdrawing from the territories would only increase the dangers Israel faced by creating a Palestinian state that would allow terrorists and foreign armies to enter Israel. This security argument against an Israeli withdrawal from the territories often masked a deeper and more fundamental objection to the Rabin government's policy of territorial withdrawal. The territories, the West Bank in particular, were not just land, but land that had a profound emotional and symbolic value.[17] As the site of the biblical Jewish kingdom and the cradle of early Jewish civilization, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) have a religious and nationalistic significance for many Israeli Jews, not merely for a devout minority. Hence, it was not just the security risks of territorial withdrawal that concerned many of the Rabin government's domestic critics (although these security risks were certainly real and frequently invoked); what they really objected to was giving away part of the Jewish people's homeland to the newly created Palestinian Authority.

Opponents of the Rabin government's policy of territorial withdrawal regarded the territories as an integral part of the 'Land of Israel', which rightfully belonged to the Jewish people (whether by virtue of history or divine covenant). Withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza, they charged, was contrary to the fundamental purpose of the Zionist project— the return and resettlement of the Jewish people in its homeland. Not only was abandoning part of the nation's homeland a rejection of Zionism, but also it amounted to a rejection of the Jewishness of the state. A Jewish state, they believed, is one that is inextricably tied to the Jewish religion and the Land of Israel. It was therefore incumbent upon Israel as the Jewish state

to possess the entirety of the Land of Israel. To abandon parts of the Land of Israel would go goes against everything that a Jewish state represents. Thus, for many of its opponents in Israel, the Oslo peace process was seen as a betrayal of Israel's Jewish and Zionist identity.

In contrast to this view, the Rabin government publicly defended the Oslo peace process as supporting Zionism and Israel's Jewish identity. In his speech to the Knesset on September 21, 1993, shortly after the signing of the "Declaration of Principles" between Israel and the PLO, PM Rabin declared: "This is the victory of Zionism, which has also won the recognition of its most sworn and bitter enemies."[18] The Rabin government tried to justify withdrawing from the territories by arguing that it was the only way of ensuring that Israel remained a Jewish and democratic state. "The annexation of 1,800,000 Palestinians [in the West Bank and Gaza] would cause the State of Israel to lose its Jewish and democratic character," Rabin told the Knesset when presenting the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in May 1994. By pointing to the demographic threat of annexing the territories to the perpetuation of Israel's Jewish character, withdrawing from the territories was presented as a means to safeguard Israel's Jewish identity. Rabin defended his government's decision to sign the Oslo Accords:

> We had to choose between the Greater Land of Israel, which means a bi-national state and whose populations would comprise, as of today, 4.5 million Jews and more than 3 million Palestinians [. . .] and a state smaller in area, but which would be a Jewish state. We chose to be a Jewish state.[19]

Although the Oslo peace process was presented to the Israeli public as a means to secure Israel's Jewish and Zionist identity, it was still widely believed to entail a threat to this identity. While those responsible for the peace process claimed that their intention was to defend Israel's Jewish and Zionist identity, and argued that an Israeli withdrawal from the territories was the only way of ensuring this identity, their detractors were not convinced. They saw the Rabin government's willingness to withdraw from the territories as symptomatic of its lack of commitment to Zionism, the Jewish state, and the Jewishness of Israeli national identity. As Yehiel Leiter, the spokesman for the settler's organization *YESHA* (the Judea, Samaria and Gaza Council) put it: "Holding on to Yesha [Judea, Samaria and Gaza] and building it forces a particular identity on the nation, one which emphasizes the uniqueness of the Jewish people—one that many in Israel's current left-wing government [the Rabin government] and the people they represent are trying to escape."[20] To its right-wing opponents, withdrawing from the

territories was an act of defeatism, signaling national weakness and even spiritual bankruptcy.

What made the Oslo peace process so controversial in Israel was its linkage with divisive cultural issues concerning the definition of Israeli national identity, the relationship between religion and the state, and the future of Zionism and the Jewish State. All these were subjects of growing debate and controversy in the 1990s. During this time, profound cultural changes were taking place in Israel. Globalization was transforming not only Israel's economy, but also the lifestyle of many Israelis.[21] The massive influx of Western, especially American, cultural products, consumer goods, fashions, etc, as a result of Israel's increasing integration into the global economy generated a growing cultural unease, especially among the religious and traditionalist Jewish public. In their eyes, untrammeled globalization threatened to erase Israel's Jewishness and erode Israeli national identity.

The rise of identity politics within Israel also fuelled this concern over Israeli identity. The increasingly vociferous expression of cultural differences highlighted the heterogeneity of Israeli society, and called into question the common characteristics that supposedly defined Israeli national identity. The 'tribalism' that appeared to characterize Israeli politics and society in the 1990s gave rise to a widespread sense of internal fragmentation and lack of social solidarity. Israeli society was no longer seen as united, but as rife with internal divisions (between, for example, religious and secular, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, Jews and Arabs).[22]

Israeli society's collective identity and beliefs were also challenged by the widely discussed and highly controversial work of Israel's so-called 'new historians' and 'critical sociologists'.[23] The demythologizing of Israeli history carried out by these revisionist historians and sociologists was part of a growing 'post-Zionist' intellectual trend that questioned and criticized cherished Zionist tenets and beliefs. Some post-Zionists argued that Zionism was illegitimate and fundamentally misguided from the outset,[24] others that it had outlived its purpose and become anachronistic.[25] Whether they thought Zionism was inherently flawed or just no longer relevant, post-Zionists argued that Israel should abandon Zionism and cease to be a Jewish state (abolishing all the laws, institutions and national symbols that expressed Israel's identity as the state of the Jewish people). In place of a Jewish state, post-Zionists called for Israel to become a completely secular state oriented to the universal values of liberal democracy.

The rise of globalization, consumerism, multiculturalism, identity politics, and post-Zionism in Israel in the 1990s all contributed to a pervasive

sense of cultural anxiety. The country was undergoing rapid and dramatic changes that threatened to undermine the national identity and culture, especially its Jewish aspects. The Oslo peace process was part of this domestic upheaval and it became associated with the rise of a secular Israeli identity, a materialistic, Americanized culture, and a post-Zionist *zeitgeist*. As such, it was perceived by many Israeli Jews to be a threat to Israel's Jewish identity (regardless of the claims to the contrary made by the Rabin government).

While right-wing opponents of the Oslo peace process worried about the "de-Zionization" and "de-Judaization" of Israel,[26] its left-wing supporters enthusiastically looked forward to the emergence of a more progressive Israel. For them, withdrawing from the territories was essential in order for Israel to be a modern, democratic and liberal state, and for the Israeli nation to be the peace-loving, humane, tolerant and enlightened nation they wanted it to be. To those on the Left, Israel's occupation of the territories was unnecessary and unjust. Rather than symbolizing national return and renewal, the territories symbolized the perversion of the national project and the dangers of Jewish fundamentalism and national chauvinism. Israel's occupation of the territories was immoral, corrupting Israeli society and damaging its image internationally. It was a political, economic, and security burden for Israel. Above all, the occupation prevented Israel from being able to live in peace with its neighbors. Israel's withdrawal from the territories, Oslo's supporters confidently believed, would usher in a new age of peace and prosperity for Israel. Withdrawing from the territories would bring about Israel's normalization—meaning that Israel could become a country much like those in the West. Israel would no longer be an international pariah, but a respected member of the international community; and like people elsewhere, Israelis would finally be able to be free from the threats of wars and terrorism.

The bitter domestic conflict over the Oslo peace process, therefore, involved a conflict between two clashing visions of Israel. One was a vision of Israel as a Jewish state with a Jewish nation loyal to its heritage and living in its ancestral homeland. The other was a vision of Israel as a modern, secular, Western state (albeit nominally Jewish) with a prosperous Israeli nation living at peace with its neighbors. The issue of Israel's withdrawal from the territories was central to this conflict and essentially a hostage to it. Without resolving this conflict, there seemed to be little hope for a public consensus to emerge on the issue of the territories. The lack of such a consensus seriously hindered the ability of Israeli policy-makers to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians in the framework of the

Oslo peace process. They had great difficulty securing solid support and legitimacy for the peace process, and especially for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories.

THE POST-OSLO ERA: THE NEW ISRAELI CONSENSUS

The cultural and identity issues that divided Israelis in the 1990s remain unresolved. The place of Jewishness in Israeli national identity, the relationship between Judaism and the state, the implications of Israel's identity as a 'Jewish state,' and the purpose and future of the Jewish state and Zionism are all still subjects of concern and controversy in Israel. Although agreement on these thorny issues remains a distant prospect in Israel, in recent years Israelis have finally reached a broad agreement on the issue of the future of the territories. Numerous opinion polls over the past few years have consistently shown that a clear majority of Israelis now favor an Israeli withdrawal from much of the West Bank.[27] There is also greater public support for dismantling many West Bank settlements.[28]

The results of the 2006 general election provide further evidence of the Israeli public's support for a policy of territorial withdrawal. In the run-up to the election, acting PM Ehud Olmert, the leader of the newly formed Kadima party, presented his "realignment plan" (later renamed "convergence"), which involved an extensive unilateral withdrawal from much of the West Bank by 2010.[29] According to the plan, Israel would annex three settlement blocs (Ariel, Ma'ale Adumim, and Gush Etzion) where the majority of the settlers live, and evacuate the rest of the settlements in which somewhere between 20,000–80,000 settlers live. The proposed withdrawal would give between 65–90% of the West Bank to the Palestinians. Olmert's realignment plan became the central issue in the 2006 election. The election was in large part a referendum on Kadima's avowed intention to pursue a policy of withdrawal from the West Bank. The results of the election indicated that a majority of Israeli voters supported that proposed withdrawal. Not only did Kadima win the election gaining twenty-nine Knesset seats (albeit less than expected), but also the parties opposing a West Bank withdrawal lost seats in the Knesset, especially the Likud who dropped from thirty-eight to only twelve.

The Israeli public is no longer as divided on the issue of the territories as it was in the 1990s. In place of the ideological polarization of the past, there is now a centrist consensus that wants Israel to establish its final borders and end the occupation. It wants Israel to withdraw from most of

the West Bank, while keeping the large settlement blocs and it is willing to abandon the smaller and more isolated Israeli settlements and evacuate settlers to accomplish this. The emergence of this consensus represents a historic turning point in Israeli politics and effectively signals the end of the debate over the future of the territories that dominated Israeli politics since 1967. For Israelis, all that remains to be decided is when and how the withdrawal will take place, and exactly how much West Bank land Israel will seek to annex.

What is so remarkable about this consensus is that it exists despite the fact that the cultural conflict that underpinned the Israeli debate over the territories in the 1990s has not been resolved. There is still no agreement on the kind of nation Israelis should be and the kind of country they should live in, especially concerning what the nation's and the state's relationship to Judaism should be, but this no longer prevents Israelis from agreeing on where Israel's final borders should be.

What has enabled Israelis to transcend the cultural conflict in which they were engaged in the 1990s and reach a consensus on the issue of the territories? There are three main reasons for this development: (1) a widespread desire for national unity (more specifically, unity between Israeli Jews) since Rabin's assassination and a subsequent increase in Israeli-Jewish unity as a result of the second Intifada; (2) the popular discrediting of the visions of 'Land for Peace' and 'Greater Israel', and (3) the emergence of a 'third way' approach to the territories championed by Prime Minister Sharon.

NATIONAL UNITY

Israeli Jews had long expressed concern over the growing divisions within their midst. Ever since the controversial first Lebanon war, the growing political polarization in the country was a source of public anxiety. This anxiety greatly intensified following the Rabin's assassination on 5 November 1995, more than any other act underscored in the public mind the need for greater national unity. Rabin's assassination by a religious Zionist extremist provided Israelis with the most shocking demonstration of the danger posed by their internal divisions. It laid bare the deep division within Israel between supporters and opponents of the peace process, and raised fears that this division could endanger Israel's democratic order, and even lead to civil war. Thus, in the years after Rabin's assassination, national unity became an urgent national priority for many Israelis Jews.[30] According to a January 2000 survey, 47% of Israelis felt that "preventing a rift in the nation" was more important than signing peace agreements with the Arabs, compared to 34% who believed the opposite.[31]

The Israeli-Jewish public's desire for national unity grew even stronger as a result of the resurgence of Israeli-Palestinian violence following the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000. National unity was now seen as a matter of existential survival. Without national unity, Israelis feared that they would not be able to defend their state against a Palestinian enemy who appeared to be bent upon its destruction. The National Unity government comprising Likud and Labor as the main coalition partners that PM Sharon assembled following the February 2001 prime ministerial election was formed in large part in response to this ardent desire for national unity. Sharon himself explicitly recognized this in his first speech after being elected prime minister when he stressed the need for national unity, declaring, "the time has come to reach agreement among us. The public wants unity."[32]

The second Intifada was instrumental in resurrecting Israeli-Jewish unity.[33] It enabled Israelis Jews to set aside their differences and animosities and focus instead on what they considered to be a fight for their survival.[34] In a climate of fear and insecurity produced by Palestinian terrorist attacks, Israeli Jews rallied together as they had done in the past.[35] President Moshe Katsav noted that, "Recent events [have] helped reduce the divisions which exist in Israeli society."[36] Similarly, an Israeli commentator wrote, "The important thing is that after a generation and a half of bitter rift, of internal dispute whose scope and persistence created an abnormal situation, there is now a truce. Israeli (Jewish) society in Israel has returned to a state of cohesiveness."[37] In this sense, the second Intifada turned the clock back, not only on relations between Israelis and Palestinians, but also on the relations between Israeli Jews. As the old sense of siege returned, so too did the sense of togetherness promoted by it. Once again, Israelis felt themselves to be a nation at war, and they united against their common enemy.

The renewed sense of solidarity among Israeli Jews due to the second Intifada blunted the divisions between them and helped obscure their cultural disagreements. The divisive cultural issues that preoccupied Israelis during the years of the Oslo peace process no longer dominated Israeli public discourse. The previously lively national debate over Israeli identity and Israel's identity as a Jewish state died down. Likewise, the public controversy over post-Zionism faded away.[38] As Tom Segev, the post-Zionist Israeli historian commented: "The matter that was at the heart of the post-Zionist environment was the debate over how to create a Jewish and democratic state. No one is interested in that anymore. We feel as if we must fight for our lives again, because of the Arabs."[39] Thus, although the cultural issues that divided Israelis in the 1990s were not resolved, Israelis were

simply less concerned with them than they once were. Consequently, since these issues were less salient to Israelis, they were less of an impediment to the emergence of a consensus on the issue of the territories.

THE DISCREDITING OF 'LAND FOR PEACE' AND 'GREATER ISRAEL'

It was not just the desire for, and renewal of, national unity that helped Israeli Jews overcome their earlier cultural conflict and reach a consensus on the issue of the territories. Equally important was the fact that the territorial issue stopped being the focal point of this cultural conflict. Not only did the cultural conflict become less important to Israeli Jews and its intensity diminish due to the resurgence of national unity under the shadow of the second Intifada, but also this cultural conflict was no longer played out over the issue of the territories. The cultural conflict between Israelis crystallized around the territorial issue in the 1990s. It was the defining issue in this cultural conflict, summarized in two competing slogans 'Land for Peace' and 'Greater Israel'. These slogans stood for two different visions of the Israeli nation and state, and thus succinctly expressed the cultural conflict raging within the country.

Both of the visions expressed in these slogans have now been discredited. For much of the Israeli-Jewish public, they have both lost their credibility and legitimacy as they appear utopian and dangerously out of touch with reality. The Israeli Left's 'Land for Peace' vision, which held out the promise of a peaceful future in which Israelis and Palestinians lived side-by-side, was severely damaged by the collapse of the Oslo peace process and the outbreak of the second Intifada. Following the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000, many Israelis concluded that if the Palestinians were not willing to accept PM Barak's 'generous' offer at Camp David, then they were not really interested in peace with Israel after all. Even if they were, the price they were demanding was too high and one that Israel could never accept. Consequently, a growing number of Israelis lost hope in the possibility of achieving peace with the Palestinians.[40] The second Intifada was another and even more damaging blow to Israeli hopes for peace. It demonstrated to the vast majority of Israelis that they had "no partner for peace", as then PM Barak put it.[41] Indicative of this belief were the results of a March 2001 poll in which 72% of Israeli Jews thought that the Palestinian Authority was not interested in a peace treaty with Israel, and a similar percentage also believed that the Palestinians did not accept Israel's existence and that they would destroy Israel if they had the capability to do so.[42]

Convinced that there was no Palestinian partner for peace, Israeli Jews roundly rejected the Left's vision of 'Land for Peace'.[43] The peace it promised them in return for withdrawing from the territories was a fantasy, many believed. The Palestinians would never allow them to live in peace, or at least not in the foreseeable future. Hence, the future Israel—normal, secular, liberal, and Western-oriented—optimistically envisioned by advocates of 'Land for Peace' seemed, at best, to be a distant prospect. Peace and 'normality', therefore, were off the public agenda in Israel.

Just as the Left's vision of 'Land for Peace' appeared unrealistic to most Israelis, so too did the Right's vision of a 'Greater Israel' stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, and including Judea and Samaria. The belief that Israel could indefinitely retain the territories and that eventually the Palestinians would acquiesce to this was shattered by the two Palestinian Intifadas. The first Intifada which began in 1987 and ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 struck the first serious blow to the vision of 'Greater Israel' as the mass uprising made Israelis realize the extent of popular Palestinian opposition to the occupation. This brought about a gradual public recognition that the status quo in the territories was not sustainable; consequently, Israeli public opinion moved significantly in a more 'dovish' direction with regard to Israel's long-term options vis-à-vis the territories.[44] The second Intifada—more militarized, violent and bloody than the first—further underscored the willingness and ability of Palestinians to violently resist Israel's occupation of the territories. In particular, the upsurge of Palestinian suicide terrorist attacks within Israel during the second Intifada was a brutal reminder to Israelis that occupying the territories undermined their own personal security.[45] Whatever the appeal of 'Greater Israel', it could not match the desperate need of Israelis for security. For Israelis, security came first, and if 'Greater Israel' threatened this, as Israelis increasingly believed, then it must be abandoned.

While relentless Palestinian terrorism undoubtedly eroded Israeli support for the vision of 'Greater Israel', it was the demographic time bomb, not human bombs, which did the most to persuade Israelis that occupying the territories was untenable. According to well-publicized demographic predictions, by 2010 there would be more Palestinians than Jews in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza combined (due to the much higher Palestinian birth rate).[46] This demographic trend seriously called into question Israel's ability to remain a Jewish and democratic state. With a majority of non-Jews under its control, Israel could be Jewish or democratic, but not both. The need for Israel to remain a Jewish and democratic state was almost

universally accepted by Israeli Jews. A Jewish majority in Israel (thereby securing Israel's status as a Jewish and democratic state) was the most consensual value held by Israelis Jews, more important to them than peace or Israeli possession of the Land of Israel.[47] Greater public awareness of the demographic reality, therefore, led to the recognition that Israel could not ensure a long-term Jewish majority if it possessed the territories.[48] If the price of 'Greater Israel' was Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state, the vast majority of Israelis were not willing to pay this price. Thus, the vision of 'Greater Israel' was discredited once Israelis recognized the demographic threat that it entailed.

The Israeli public's rejection of both 'Land for Peace' and 'Greater Israel'—the two slogans which had come to represent not only competing approaches to the territorial issue, but also competing visions in the cultural conflict over the identity of the Israeli nation and state—effectively removed the cultural conflict from the issue of the territories. The issue of the territories was no longer about whether Israel should pursue 'Land for Peace' or 'Greater Israel', since both had lost their legitimacy. The apparent bankruptcy of both visions meant that the territorial issue was stripped of its cultural, ideological, dimension. Conflicting visions did not define the territorial issue in Israel any longer. As such, the time was ripe for a non-visionary, pragmatic approach to the issue of the territories.

The Third Way: Unilateral Separation

The death of the Left's dream of 'Land for Peace' and the Right's dream of 'Greater Israel' opened the way for a different approach to the issue of the territories—unilateral separation. The majority of the Israeli-Jewish public had gradually come to believe that ruling over millions of Palestinians in the territories was a demographic and security liability, jeopardizing their personal security and Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. For these reasons, they wanted to end the occupation, but few believed that this could be accomplished through a peace agreement with the Palestinians. How could Israel end the occupation without a Palestinian partner for peace? Unilateral separation provided a simple answer to this problem. The basic idea was that Israel, without negotiations with the Palestinians, would withdraw from some or all of the territories and establish a physical barrier, with the Palestinians on one side and Israelis on the other. "Us over here, them over there," was how Barak succinctly put it.[49]

After more than a decade of difficult and frustrating negotiations with the Palestinians and without the prospect of a negotiated settlement to their conflict with the Palestinians in sight, the idea of unilateral separation was

a highly attractive one for many Israeli Jews. It did not require a willing Palestinian partner and it dispensed with the need for interminable negotiations. As one Israeli commentator explained the public appeal of unilateral separation: "It has a soothing ring to it. 'Unilateral'—meaning that Israel can just do what it thinks best, without having to secure the agreement of those impossible, untrustworthy Palestinians. 'Separation'—meaning no more Palestinians."[50]

The collapse of the Oslo peace process, the second Intifada and the numerous suicide bombings, created a strong desire amongst most Israeli Jews for separation from the Palestinians. Instead of hoping for peace with the Palestinians, they now just wanted complete separation from them. Israeli journalist Ari Shavit accurately describes this public mood: "We will withdraw from them [Palestinians], we will get them out of our sight, and we will solve the conflict with a wall. Our desire was to leave the territories and strike at the Arabs, out of a feeling of 'we're sick of it'. We're sick of the Palestinians, we're sick of the Arabs, we're sick of the Middle East, and therefore we want to disengage."[51]

The groundswell of support for the construction of a security barrier or 'fence' between the West Bank and Israel testified to the Israeli public's desire for separation. Those on both the left and right of the political spectrum supported building a security barrier. The idea of building a wall or fence to separate Israel from the Palestinian territories was not new. A heavily guarded electrified fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip already existed, and in the 1990s official thought had been given to creating one between Israel and the West Bank as well.[52] It was the second Intifada that propelled the idea to the top of the political agenda. PM Barak was the first to publicly propose the construction of a security barrier in his campaign for the February 2001 election. By October 2001, a new political movement called "Fence for Life" had come into being with the aim of increasing public support for a security barrier.[53] Despite initially dismissing the idea of a security barrier as "populist",[54] PM Sharon eventually relented in the face of mounting public pressure and in June 2002 his government decided to begin building the barrier.[55]

The construction of a fortified barrier between Israel and the West Bank was thus a physical manifestation of the psychological need of Israelis Jews for separation. The barrier was, in the words of one of Sharon's advisors, both "a physical and mental wall." The mental dimension was crucial—"What we [Israelis] really want," this official disclosed, "is to turn our backs on the Arabs and never deal with them again."[56] Israeli Jews, literally and metaphorically, wanted to wall themselves off from their Palestinian neighbors.

Although the Sharon government repeatedly insisted that the barrier under construction was only a temporary security measure designed to thwart Palestinian terrorist attacks, few doubted that its ultimate purpose was to achieve Israel's permanent separation from the Palestinians. With the security barrier in place, Israel could withdraw from parts of the West Bank even in the absence of a peace treaty with the Palestinians. The barrier would thus eventually become Israel's future border. Compelling evidence for this lies in the route of the security barrier which does not adhere to the 'Green Line,' but juts into the West Bank to include a large number of Israeli settlements in which the vast majority of settlers live. The route of the barrier is not dictated by security considerations alone, but also by demographic considerations—with the objective being to include the largest number of Jews and the smallest number of Palestinians behind Israel's side of the barrier.[57]

While the idea of unilateral separation had been gaining currency in Israel since the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000, it was Sharon who did the most to consolidate public support around it. Sharon took the popular idea of unilateral separation and translated it into a policy of unilateral "disengagement". Sharon was not the first Israeli politician to put forward such a policy (then Labor party leader Amram Mitzna proposed a unilateral withdrawal in the run-up to the 2003 elections, and Barak had earlier considered such a policy at the time of the Camp David summit[58]), but he was arguably the only politician who was able to attract support for a unilateral withdrawal from across the political spectrum.[59] Sharon's personal charisma, his grandfatherly image, his security credentials as an uncompromising right-wing hawk, and his past as a 'warrior' and champion of the settlement project in the territories, gave him an unrivalled ability to gain the public's trust. This trust was essential in order to ease Israeli fears about the possible security risks of a unilateral withdrawal. Sharon's embrace of a policy of unilateral withdrawal, therefore, reassured many Israelis that such a policy would not endanger Israel. If an arch-hawk like Sharon endorsed unilateral withdrawal, Israelis reasoned, then surely this policy was safe to pursue.

Sharon correctly gauged the national mood in Israel. He realized that Israelis had lost faith in the visions of both the Left and the Right, and that although they given up hope of reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians, they did not want Israel to rule over the territories. Sharon expressed this popular sentiment when he told *Likud MKs in 2002:* "I think the idea that it is possible to continue keeping 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation—yes it is occupation, you might not like the word, but what is happening is occupation—is bad for Israel [. . .]. Controlling 3.5 million

Palestinians cannot go on forever."[60] *Although he* initially opposed a policy of unilateral withdrawal (when it was proposed by Mitzna, as well as by Dan Meridor and his own National Security Advisor Uzi Dayan), Sharon eventually relented and embraced the policy in his second term in office.[61] On 18 December 2003, he publicly announced his support for a unilateral "disengagement" if the Palestinian Authority failed to implement the steps set out in the U.S.-sponsored "Road Map".[62] The "disengagement plan" that was later approved in a cabinet vote on 20 February 2005 involved a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (evacuating all twenty-one settlements there) and from four small isolated West Bank settlements.

Sharon's disengagement plan received enthusiastic support from the majority of Israelis, despite the concerted efforts of settlers and their supporters to turn public opinion against the plan. The domestic popularity of Sharon's disengagement plan is especially significant because most Israelis believed that the disengagement from Gaza was only the first stage of a process of Israel's unilateral withdrawal from much of the territories. It was widely assumed that, sooner or later, the withdrawal from Gaza would be followed by a more extensive withdrawal from the West Bank (although Sharon himself denied this). Thus, the broad popular appeal of Sharon's disengagement plan heralded the emergence of a mainstream consensus in favor of an Israeli withdrawal from much, but not all, of the territories.[63]

This consensus was grounded upon a fervent desire for separation from the Palestinians. It was the Israeli-Jewish public's desire for separation that underpinned the new consensus in favor of territorial withdrawal (not a belief in the possibility of peace). The policy of withdrawal from the territories became more acceptable to most Israeli Jews once it was seen simply as a means of separation. It appeared to be a pragmatic approach to the issue of the territories, far removed from what now appeared to them to be the utopian schemes of 'Land for Peace' and 'Greater Israel'. Since it was premised upon the unattainability of both peace and 'Greater Israel' it was attractive to disillusioned left-wing and right-wing Israelis, as well as to those Israelis who had always been in the center of the political spectrum but lacked a clear alternative approach to the issue of the territories than those presented by the Left and the Right. Separation was a centrist alternative that incorporated elements from the approaches of both the Left and the Right to the issue of the territories. It took the policy of territorial withdrawal from the Left, and the Right's skepticism about the possibility of achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace and pessimism about the ability of Israelis and Palestinians to live together. In this sense, separation emerged as a "third way" approach to the territories.[64]

Reconceived as just a way of separating Israelis and Palestinians, the policy of territorial withdrawal no longer carried the cultural 'baggage' it had during the years of the Oslo peace process in the 1990s. Territorial withdrawal was no longer associated with the Left's vision of 'Land for Peace'. It was not attached to a conception of Israel as a secular, liberal, progressive state. Unlike the divisive vision of 'Land for Peace,' separation had no controversial cultural connotations. It did not appear to threaten Israel's Jewishness or the Jewishness of Israelis. On the contrary, separation was widely seen as necessary in order to strengthen and secure Israel's Jewish identity by leaving as many Palestinians as possible outside Israel's borders.[65]

Thus, the crystallization of separation as a distinct approach to the issue of the territories enabled Israelis to finally reach a consensus on this issue although it excludes those on the far-left and far-right of the political spectrum (who together comprise about 20–30% of the Israeli public). The former oppose anything except a complete withdrawal from the territories (i.e., a withdrawal to the 'Green Line') while the latter oppose any withdrawal from the territories. Since these groups are highly unlikely to change their positions on the territories, a complete consensus in Israel on the issue is probably unattainable. Nevertheless, the public support for a partial withdrawal from the territories is a significant change from the public division of the past. This support is an essential condition for Israel's ability to withdraw from the territories. Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005 would not have come about without it. Despite all the anxiety and anguish in Israel that preceded and accompanied the disengagement from Gaza, most Israelis supported it. The fact that the disengagement from Gaza took place more smoothly and quickly than many had believed possible (notwithstanding the harrowing scenes of fervently religious settlers and their supporters being dragged kicking and screaming out of their homes and synagogues) has proven that territorial withdrawal is achievable.[66] Thus, another withdrawal from the West Bank is now only a matter of time.

CONCLUSION: AFTER UNILATERALISM

After decades of bitter argument over the future of the West Bank and Gaza, Israelis have finally reached a consensus over the need to withdraw from most of the territories. Instead of 'Land for Peace' or 'Greater Israel', they simply want separation from the Palestinians. All that really remains for

them to decide is how and when this separation will be accomplished. The domestic debate over the territories has become just a debate over tactics and timing, not outcomes. Most Israelis now want the same outcome—a Jewish state as large as possible with as few Palestinians as possible—and most accept that a withdrawal from much of the West Bank is the only way to achieve this outcome.

Israel's ability to achieve this outcome, however, depends upon the consent of the Palestinians. The belief that Israel does not need the agreement of Palestinians to determine its final borders has been shattered by the events of the summer of 2006. Hezbollah's firing of Katyusha rockets into northern Israel from southern Lebanon, and the Palestinians' firing of Qassam rockets into southern Israel from Gaza following Israel's withdrawal have both starkly illustrated the dangers of unilateral Israeli withdrawals (from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005). The escalation of Israeli-Palestinian violence in Gaza after the disengagement appears to have vindicated the argument made by opponents of Sharon's disengagement plan that a unilateral withdrawal sends a signal of weakness to Israel's enemies and emboldens them to attack. Consequently, Israeli public support for PM Olmert's "realignment plan" has plummeted and forced him to shelve the plan. Unilateral separation as a solution to the issue of the territories has lost its appeal.[67] As an Israeli commentator bluntly put it during the second Lebanon war, "The simplistic belief in a simplistic withdrawal has gone bankrupt."[68]

Unilateralism, therefore, is no longer an option for Israel, but separation still is. Having given up on the unilateral method of separation, Israelis now have little choice but to seek a negotiated and consensual separation with the Palestinians. This will certainly not be easy to accomplish. For one thing, the Palestinians are unlikely to accept the less-than-complete withdrawal from the West Bank that most Israelis want. The status of Jerusalem (whose municipal borders have been greatly expanded since 1967) and the Jordan Valley also remain contentious territorial issues. For another, the Palestinians do not agree among themselves on their goals with regard to their conflict with Israel.[69] More than ever before, the Palestinians are debating whether they should recognize Israel's existence and accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as Fatah proposes, or whether should they aspire to establish an Islamic state over all of historic Palestine, as Hamas seeks. The Palestinians are engaged in their own bitter domestic debate, involving competing definitions of Palestinian national identity (secular versus Islamic) and competing visions of a future Palestinian state. Thus, although Israelis have finally reached agreement on the future of the

West Bank and Gaza, they must now wait for the Palestinians to resolve their own internal debate before this future can arrive.

NOTES

1. Israelis were not either left- or right-wing on the issue of the territories. As many as a third were in the center of the political spectrum, but were often politically marginalized despite their electoral importance. Those on the Left and Right were far more vocal, assertive, and organized than centrist Israelis and, unlike the latter; had distinct approaches to the issue of the territories. Shmuel Sandler, "Centrism in Israeli Politics and the Olmert Government," *BESA Perspectives*, 17 (2006).

2. Tamar Herman and Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, "Divided yet United: Israeli-Jewish Attitudes toward the Oslo Process," *Journal of Peace Research*, 39.5 (2002) 597–613.

3. Political analyst Dan Margalit warned that, "A danger of clashes and loss of control threatens to split Israel from within," *Ha'aretz*, November 6, 1995.

4. I focus on the attitudes and views of Israeli Jews, rather than Palestinian Israelis (approximately 20% of Israel's population) who are excluded from this article's analysis since Arab political parties in the Knesset and Palestinian Israelis in general are still not considered by most Israelis as legitimate participants in foreign policy debates. As with other public issues in Israel, little attention is paid to the opinions of Palestinian Israelis. Although this is slowly changing with regard to domestic issues, on foreign policy issues the voices of Palestinian Israelis remain distinctly marginalized.

5. Dov Waxman, *The Pursuit of Peace and the Crisis of Israeli Identity: Defending/ Defining the Nation* (New York, 2006).

6. The debate over Israel's desired borders, having been largely dormant in the years following Israel's establishment in 1948, resurfaced after the 1967 war. See Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917–1939* (Chapel Hill, 1984).

7. Baruch Kimmerling, "Between the Primordial and the Civil Definitions of the Collective Identity: *Eretz Israel* or the State of Israel?" in Erik Cohen, Moshe Lissak, and Uri Almagor (eds), *Comparative Social Dynamics* (Boulder, CO, 1985); Myron J. Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions: Cultural Change and Political Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989); Michael Barnett, "Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable," in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett (eds), *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Ithaca, NY, 2002); Ilan Peleg, "The Peace Process and Israel's Political Cultures: The Intensification of a *Kulturkampf*," in David Hornik (ed), *The Role of Domestic Politics in Israeli Peacemaking* (Jerusalem, 1997).

8. Yosef Gorny, *Israel in Jewish Public Thought: The Quest for Collective Identity* (New York, 1994).

9. Steven Zipperstein, "Ahad Ha'am and the Politics of Assimilation," in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein (eds), *Assimilation and Community: the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1992).

10. Michael Keren, *The Pen and the Sword: Israeli Intellectuals and the Making of the Nation-State* (Boulder, CO, 1989).

11. Hillel Halkin, "Israel and the Assassination: A Reckoning," *Commentary,* 101.1 (1996) 29.

12. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Israel's Peace-Making with the Palestinians: Change and Legitimacy," in Efraim Karsh (ed), *From Rabin to Netanyahu: Israel's Troubled Agenda* (London, 1997) 180.

13. Oslo I was supported by 53% of Israelis and opposed by 45%, with 2% having no opinion, *Yediot Aharonot*, August 30, 1993. Oslo II was supported by 51% of Israelis, and opposed by 47%, 2% having no opinion, *Yediot Aharonot*, September 28, 1995.

14. Monthly "Peace Index" survey conducted by Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar and Tamar Hermann, http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/Peace_Index/

15. Bar-Siman-Tov, "Israel's Peace-Making with the Palestinians," 180.

16. Only 61 MKs voted to ratify Oslo I, 50 against, 8 abstained, and 1 did not take part in the vote. Oslo II was also ratified by 61 votes, with 59 votes against it.

17. Shmuel Sandler, *The State of Israel, the Land of Israel: The Statist and Ethnonational Dimensions of Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT, 1993) 267.

18. Knesset Speech by PM Yitzhak Rabin, September 21, 1993. http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Speeches/EXCERPTS+OF+PM+RABIN+KNESSET+SPEECH+-DOP-+-+21–Sep.htm

19. *The Jerusalem Post*, International Edition, October 14, 1995. Cited in Virginia Tilley, *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005) 80.

20. Yehiel Leiter, *Crisis in Israel: A Peace Plan to Resist* (New York, 1994) 109.

21. Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel-Aviv; Jihad in Jerusalem* (New York, 2007).

22. Yaakov Kop, "Nation-Building, Pluralism, and Democracy in Israel," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs,* 4.1 (2003) 21–28.

23. Laurence J. Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (London, 1999).

24. Ilan Pappé, "Post Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians, Part 1: The Academic Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* 26.2 (1997) 29–41.

25. Amos Elon, "Israel and the End of Zionism," *New York Times Review of Books* (December 19, 1996) 22–30.

26. Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York, 2000).

27. See, for instance, the monthly Peace Index survey.

28. In September 2005, 57% of Jews supported a far-reaching dismantlement of West Bank settlements (including supporters of a unilateral evacuation and of one in the context of an agreement with the Palestinians). Ya'ar and Hermann, "Peace Index—September 2005."

29. Aluf Benn, "A country that's fun to live in: interview with Ehud Olmert," *Ha'aretz*, March 10, 2006.

30. Dov Waxman, "Israel's Dilemma: Unity or Peace?" *Israel Affairs,* 12.2 (2006) 200–220.

31. *Ha'aretz*, January 21, 2000.

32. "PM-elect Makes Unity His Theme," *Ha'aretz*, February 7, 2001.

33. This was apparent in the overwhelming support of Israeli Jews for PM Sharon's policies towards the Palestinians. In 2001, 89% supported the government's policy of "targeted assassinations" of Palestinian militants involved in terrorism against Israel; the following year the number was 90% and in 2003 it rose to 92%. Asher Arian, *Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2004* (Tel-Aviv, 2003) 29.

34. In a *Ma'ariv* poll from October 2001, only 2% of respondents said the religious-secular divide should be central to the national agenda. Cited in Yossi Klein Halevi, "The New Patriots," *The Jerusalem Report*, November 5, 2001.

35. A March 2002 public opinion survey posed the question: "In your opinion have recent events, including terrorist attacks and operation 'Defensive Shield', strengthened or weakened the sense of national unity in the Israeli-Jewish public?" 86% of Israeli-Jewish respondents answered that the events strengthened national unity. Tamar Hermann, "Tactical Hawks, Strategic Doves: The Positions of the Jewish Public in Israel on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Strategic Assessment,* 5.2 (2002).

36. *Ha'aretz*, October 5, 2000.

37. David Landau, "*Carpe diem*," *Ha'aretz*, April 6, 2001.

38. Neri Livneh, "Post-Zionism Only Rings Once," *Ha'aretz*, February 12, 2005.

39. Dalia Shehori, "Post-Zionism is Dead or in the Deep Freeze," *Ha'aretz*, April 20, 2004.

40. In a survey in August 2000, 50% of Israelis stated that they were more pessimistic since Camp David concerning the chances of peace with the Palestinians, Ya'ar and Hermann, "Peace Index—August 2000."

41. Statement by PM Ehud Barak, Jerusalem, October 7, 2000. http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2000/Statement+by+Prime+Minister+Ehud+Barak+-+07-Oct-20.htm

42. *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 2001.

43. According to the "Peace Index" surveys, support for the Oslo process fell to about 40% by the time Barak left office in early 2001, and to 30.6% by July 2002.

44. In Asher Arian's surveys, the percentage of Israelis willing to return territories increased from 43% in 1986 to 60% in 1993; Asher Arian, *Security Threatened:*

Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War (Cambridge, 1995) 97–98, 274. See also Asher Arian, Michal Shamir, and Raphael Ventura, "Public Opinion and Political Change: Israel and the Intifada," *Comparative Politics*, 24.3 (1992) 317–334.

45. In a 2002 public opinion survey, 63% of Israelis were very worried about their personal safety, as opposed to 30% at the outset of the second Intifada in 2000, and only 13% in 1999. Only 8% of Jews surveyed were not worried about personal safety in 2002, in contrast to 43% in 1999. Asher Arian, *Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2002* (Tel-Aviv, 2002).

46. Lilly Galili, "Jewish Demographic State," *Ha'aretz*, June 30, 2002.

47. Arian, *Security Threatened*, 213. See also Michal Shamir and Asher Arian, "Competing Values and Policy Choices: Israeli Public Opinion on Foreign and Security Affairs," *British Journal of Political Science*, 24.2 (1994) 249–271.

48. Although this demographic reality had long been noted by demographers and by left-wing advocates of a withdrawal from the territories, it only recently gained mainstream acceptance and widespread recognition.

49. Larry Derfner, "The Separation Option," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 10, 2001.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Ari Shavit, "The End of the Third Way," *Ha'aretz*, July 13, 2006.

52. Jonathan Rynhold, "Constructing the Fence and Deconstructing Disengagement: Identity, Norms and Security in Israel," paper presented at the annual conference of the Association of Israel Studies, Jerusalem, June 2004.

53. David Rudge, "New Movement Calls for Unilateral Separation from Palestinians," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 15, 2001.

54. Amit Ben-Aroya, "Sharon: The Separation Fence is a Populist Idea," *Ha'aretz*, April 12, 2002.

55. Mazal Mualem, "Smart Fence, Stupid Politics," *Ha'aretz*, August 30, 2003.

56. James Bennet, "Sharon's Wars," *New York Times Magazine*, August 15, 2004, 67–68.

57. Amir Rapaport, "The Fence," *Ma'ariv*, October 24, 2003.

58. Even before the Camp David summit in July 2000, Barak instructed Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh to prepare a unilateral separation plan in case the Camp David talks failed. "Interview with Ephraim Sneh," February 4, 2002, www.bitterlemons.org

59. Ellie Friedman, "Sharon and the Israeli Consensus," *Jerusalem Post*, November 22, 2005.

60. Gideon Alon, "Irate Likud MKs Put PM on the Defensive," *Ha'aretz*, May 27, 2003.

61. Jonathan Rynhold and Dov Waxman, "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza," *Political Science Quarterly* (forthcoming).

62. "Prime Minister's speech at the Herzliya Conference," *Ha'aretz*, December 20; Herb Keinon, "Analysis: PM details disengagement plan," *Jerusalem Post*, December 19, 2003.

63. Barry Rubin, "Israel's New Strategy," *Foreign Affairs,* (July/August 2006) 111–125; Gideon Levy, "A New Consensus," *Ha'aretz*, March 19, 2006.

64. Ari Shavit, "The End of the Third way."

65. When asked whether Israel's permanent borders should be drawn to include as much of the Land of Israel as possible or whether the aim should be to include as few Palestinians as possible even at the price of relinquishing territory, 59% of Israeli Jews favored including as few Palestinians as possible even if it entailed giving up territory, Yaar and Hermann, "Peace Index—May 2006."

66. "Israel Completes Pullout Ahead of Schedule, Without Serious Violence," *New York Times*, August 24, 2005.

67. Yossi Verter, "Convergence No Longer on Agenda, PM Tells Ministers," *Ha'aretz*, August 20, 2006.

68. Ari Shavit, "The End of the Third Way."

69. Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided," *Foreign Affairs,* 81.1 (2002) 89–105.