Ideology and Grand Strategy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict:
Syria and Israel, 1963-1973

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I
Ideology and Grand Strategy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Syria and Israel, 1963-1973

Students and practitioners of international relations have long recognized the importance of ideology in war and diplomacy. Holding that war is a competition of the mind, the Chinese military theorist Sun Tzu taught that a successful commander must know his enemy as well as himself, and emphasized the importance of spies, leadership and morale. The Greek historian Thucydides observed that the seafaring, democratic Athenians pursued a daring and innovative foreign policy, while the agrarian, oligarchic Spartans pursued a foreign policy characterized by caution. The importance of ideology is evident to students of modern military history. Nazism's racial chauvinism and celebration of the triumph of the will undoubtedly contributed to Hitler's conviction that Germany could fight virtually all the world's industrialized nations by itself. Abraham Lincoln adopted his scorched earth policy because he believed that the Union would never survive in the long run unless the major socio-political institutions of the Antebellum South, most importantly slavery, were destroyed. The historical examples indicate that foreign policy leaders must learn to appreciate the role ideology plays in the formation of grand strategy.

The importance of ideology in grand strategy underscores the inadequacy of neorealist theories that attempt to predict the foreign policy behavior of states based solely on an assessment of the distribution of material power in the international arena. Neorealism holds that all states are rational actors whose overriding objective is security. Unable to guarantee that other states will have benign intentions in the future, states can

never be satisfied so long as their neighbors possess the capability to defeat them militarily. Hence, whenever one state perceive that another is gaining an advantage in material power, it will work to restore the balance of power by expanding its own military capabilities, forging alliances with other states, or launching war to diminish its rival's material power.[1] According to this logic, the most important aspects of foreign policy behavior are determined by the distribution of material power among states in the international arena.

Yet as other scholars have pointed out, balance of power imperatives only create the parameters for state action—the threats and opportunities to which states respond. There are multiple paths a state might take in a given power distribution.[2] Since there are an endless number of grand strategies a state might adopt in any given power distribution, an analysis focusing on the distribution of material power alone cannot explain why a state chose the particular grand strategy that it did, nor can it predict which grand strategy a particular state will adopt in the future. To do that, one must bring in other factors, and one of the most important is the ideology of the leadership.

The history of Syrian and Israeli foreign policy in the decade between 1963 and 1973 is an excellent case study the extent and ways in which ideology impacts a state's conduct of war and diplomacy. Both countries experienced deep ideological debates during this period. In Syria, the longstanding power struggle between conservative

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[1] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).
[2] Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Introduction," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pg. 28-29.

nationalists representing the interests of the landowning aristocracy, on the one hand, and progressive, Pan-Arab Nationalist parties, on the other, was decided with the assumption to power of the Ba'ath Party in 1963. Yet within the Ba'ath umbrella there remained important ideological distinctions. The party's old guard, led by founders Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, was motivated primarily by the reawakening of Arab national consciousness and the fostering of a sense of unity among all Arab peoples, and were flexible as to the means through which this was achieved. The Alawite officers who made up the Military Committee, who seized power and established the Neo-Ba'ath regime in 1966, placed a far greater emphasis than their predecessors on socialism, and therefore sought to undermine conservative Arab governments and viewed Syria's struggle with Israel as akin to national liberation movements in China, Vietnam, and Algeria against Western imperialism. Hafiz al-Assad, who seized power in 1970, was closer in ideology to Aflaq than to the Neo-Ba'ath, but was nevertheless a realist whose primary concern was enhancing the power and prestige of the Syrian state.

Ideological divides in Israel were no less profound. At the decade's opening, the Jewish state was governed by Mapai, the Labor Zionist party of David Ben-Gurion, which had dominated Zionist politics since the period of the British Mandate. A moderate socialist party, Mapai focused on internal social and economic development, and was ready to compromise its territorial ambitions in return for international support. The 1960s saw the beginning of a long process under which Mapai came under challenge from all sides. On the left was Ahdut Ha'Avodah, an ideologically zealous party with strong ties to the *kibbutz* movement, which valued collectivist living, agricultural labor, and strong attachment to the Land of Israel, and which sought to foster a spirit of heroism

and fierce independence. On the right was Menachem Begin's Herut, a conservative and capitalist party, whose main concern was making good on the Jews' historic claim to all of the Land of Israel on both sides of the Jordan River. The rise of both factions would lead to an Israeli government that was more assertive and less willing to compromise with its neighbors and the world than previous Mapai dominated coalitions had been.

On top of these ideological debates, the period in question saw a great deal of activity in the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. A long-simmering border conflict between Israel and Syria was renewed in 1963, and gradually escalated until it caused the outbreak of regional war in June 1967. In the latter contest, Israel made large territorial conquests that have continued to define regional politics to this day. The next six years saw the Arab states pursue a variety of military and diplomatic initiatives aimed at regaining these territories, initiatives which ultimately culminated in the joint Syrian and Egyptian surprise attack of October 1973.

At each point in the conflict, competing leadership factions in each state developed different grand strategies in response to the same international threats and opportunities, and these variant grand strategies reflected differences in ideology between these leadership factions. The ideology of the leadership factions influenced their formulation of grand strategy in two ways. First of all, differences in ideology caused different leadership factions to pursue different objectives on the international arena. Second of all, ideology influenced the leadership factions evaluation of the means available to pursue those objectives.

Ideology and Grand Strategy in International Relations Theory

Neorealist theories of foreign policy hold that it is possible to predict state behavior without considering the influence of ideology. Recently, two schools of thought have emerged that address the influence of ideology on grand strategy. Neoclassical realism holds that ideology causes leaders to adopt subpar grand strategies when they make political concessions to domestic actors in order to mobilize society, whereas constructivists argue that ideology plays a fundamental role in shaping the national interest.

The original neorealist theory propounded by Kenneth Waltz in his seminal volume, *Theory of International Politics*, provides no account for the role of ideology because its purpose is to explain not foreign policy but rather long-term international outcomes. Waltz's theory is based on three assumptions: (1) the international system is anarchic, meaning that there is no overarching authority that defends weak states against aggressive strong states; (2) all states possess some capability to damage other states; (3) it is impossible to determine with certainty other states' present or future intentions. Under these assumptions, the international system creates incentives for states to improve their share of the distribution of power. Whenever one state or group of states becomes too powerful and offsets the balance of power, the other states will restore this balance by building up their domestic capabilities and forming a counterbalancing alliance.

Over the long-term, the international structure—the distribution of power among states, whether the system is multipolar, meaning that there are many great powers, bipolar, or unipolar—determines the level of stability or instability in international affairs, as well as international outcomes. Waltz acknowledges that international structure

alone does not determine states' foreign policies. Structure merely creates the incentives to which states must respond. Over the long term, states that tend to respond to structural imperatives through balancing behavior will survive, and states that do not will perish. In order to account for any particular state's foreign policy at any given point in time, however, one must consider domestic factors, such as leadership, culture or ideology. Waltz's theory is concerned with different power distributions—multipolar, bipolar, or unipolar—and attempts to explain which ones are conducive to stability in international affairs, and which to instability. Since the theory does not attempt to explain how foreign policy is formed, it provides no account for the influence of domestic factors such as ideology on grand strategy.[3]

The inability of Waltz's theory to account for the formulation of foreign policy inspired other neorealists to build a theory that does explain it, and all these attempts rest on the assumption that security is the dominant consideration in foreign policy decision-making. The first attempt was defensive realism, which highlights the ways international structure and the security dilemma compel states to defend themselves against aggressive states and potential threats. Offense defense theory, for example, posits that wars are less likely when state leaders believe that defensive military strategies have an advantage over offensive ones, because they can be sure of their ability to ward off an attacker and thus do not need to rush to war. If offensive strategies are dominant, however, states will not want to be on the defensive, and will rush to be the first to strike when war seems imminent.[4] According to balance-of-threat theory, another defensive realist theory, states'

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[3] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics.*
[4] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

foreign policies are determined by international structure in conjunction with threat perception. When states perceive that a powerful neighbor has aggressive tendencies, they will seek to counterbalance it.[5]

The second attempt to build a theory of foreign policy was offensive realism, first expressed in John Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Accepting Waltz's three core assumptions—that the international system is anarchic, that all states possess offensive capabilities, and that no state can be sure of another state's future intentions—Mearsheimer adds that all states are rational actors whose primary objective is survival. All states realize that the only way to guarantee their survival in the long term is to gain as much power as possible over other states, and the relentless pursuit of power drives foreign policy.[6] Both offensive and defensive realism share the assumption that states' most urgent concern in international affairs is always security, and that states foreign policy decisions are based almost entirely on the assessment of the balance of power and potential threats. Neither account gives ideology a significant role in the formulation of grand strategy.

Scholars have long observed that different states frequently respond to the same international structures with different grand strategies, and have attempted to resolve the puzzle by bringing domestic factors such as ideology into the equation. There are two types of answers. Neoclassical realism posits that state leaders are driven by balance of power calculations. Leaders need to mobilize their societies in support of their grand strategies, however, and oftentimes they must modify their preferred grand strategies in order to support of the populace or sectors of the elite. Ideology plays a key role when

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[5] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances.*
[6] Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,* 30-31, 33.

leaders have to modify their preferred grand strategies in order to make them amenable to the populace or influential elites. Ideology also has the ability to influence the way that state leaders perceive threats and opportunities in the international arena.[7] Essentially, state leaders are trying to respond to balance of power imperatives, and domestic factors such as ideology cause them to adopt sub-par strategies either by forcing them to compromise on their preferred grand strategies or by causing them to misinterpret the external environment. Ideology is thus responsible only for grand strategic error.

An alternative body of theory, constructivism, holds that beliefs and ideas play a fundamental and necessary role in shaping state's conception of the national interest.[8] State leaders do not merely respond to balance of power imperatives, but draw on their ideologies to determine what they want to gain in the international arena. Consequently, ideology exerts an essential influence on the development of grand strategy.

The debate is whether state leaders are chiefly concerned with the balance of power, and ideology is responsible only for flaws in grand strategy, one the one hand, or whether ideology plays a necessary role in the determination of the core interests states pursue on the international arena, on the other.

The Argument

This study accepts the basic neoclassical realist insight that balance of power imperatives create the parameters for state behavior, and that there are multiple paths a state may pursue within these constraints. A review of Syrian and Israeli foreign policy

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[7] Lobell, Ripsman, and Taliaferro, pg. 23-31.
[8] John Glenn, *Realism versus Strategic Culture,* pg. 533-35. Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) pg. 52-53.

decision-making in the period examined, however, demonstrates that ideology played a fundamental role in identifying the core objectives the state pursued in the international arena. Additionally, ideology helped leaders identify and evaluate the means available to pursue those objectives. In order to demonstrate the importance of ideology on the formulation of grand strategy, this paper adopts ideology as its independent variable and grand strategy as its dependent variable.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "ideology" as: "a set of doctrines or beliefs that are shared by the members of a social group or that form the basis of a political, economic, or other system."[9] This paper will focus on the ideologies to which competing leadership groups in Syria and Israel proscribed.

The term "grand strategy" was coined by Sir B.H. Liddell Hart to describe the plans states develop to employ all the means of statecraft—economic, diplomatic and military—to achieve their objectives in war. Grand strategy is the vision that connects the means to the ends.[10] While retaining the gist of Hart's definition, this study expands the scope of grand strategy to cover state behavior in peacetime as well.

This study argues that ideological disposition influences grand strategic decision-making in two ways. First, ideology helps leaders identify the core interests they pursue in the international arena. The pursuit of some of these objectives does not make sense under pure balance of power logic. Secondly, ideology helps leaders identify and evaluate the means to achieve those objectives. The use of these variables will illustrate the shortfalls of neorealist predictions. If neorealist theory is accurate, then state leaders

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[9] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, accessed 4/10/2013
http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=ideology&submit.x=33&submit.y=23
[10] B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1954).

should choose their grand strategies based on calculations about the balance of power. If different leadership factions prefer different grand strategic approaches, their choices should be based on a different reading of the balance of power situation, or different expectations about the best path to improve the state's share of power in that situation. Since all ideologies value power and security, all leaders seek to improve their states' share of material power through building up military capabilities and forging useful alliances. By employing ideology as the independent variable, however, this paper demonstrates that ideology influences the leaders' evaluation of the different options available in any given situation. More fundamentally, the paper demonstrates that oftentimes different leadership groups prefer different grand strategies because they are pursuing different political objectives, which they have identified for ideological reasons.

The influence of ideological disposition on the formulation of grand strategy is best illustrated by leadership changes. New leaders bring to power new ideological dispositions, which cause leaders to pursue different ends in the international arena and employ different means with which to pursue those ends—in short, new ideological dispositions result in the formulation of new grand strategies. The best evidence for the fact that these changes in grand strategy are substantive and earnest, and not mere rhetoric, is the fact that changes in grand strategy cause changes in state conduct of war and diplomacy.

The first chapter tests out this approach on Syrian foreign policy from 1963 to 1973. On 8 March 1963, Syria came under the rule of the Ba'ath Party, whose leaders adhered to a nationalist ideology that strove to establish a unified Arab state in land stretching from Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea. This ideology rendered the destruction of

Israel a necessity, but the fact that the ideology viewed Pan-Arab unity as a gradual, long term objective enabled leaders to be flexible about which grand strategies they employed to make this vision a reality. First, the Ba'ath leaders attempted to undermine the material base of Israel's existence by diverting waters flowing into Israeli territory. When Israeli air strikes rendered these efforts impossible, the Ba'ath decided that confrontation with Israel was futile given Syria's present military inferiority and decided to reduce the conflict temporarily in order to gain international support and focus on domestic development to improve Syria's power in the long run. On 23 February 1966, control of Syria's government shifted to the Neo-Ba'ath regime. This regime had a socialist ideology, and its grand strategy identified the objective of elimination of Israel as the primary function of its broader struggle against the global bourgeoisie, Western imperialism, and reactionary Arab governments. Seeking to emulate the national liberation struggles of Maoist China, Communist Vietnam, and the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, the Neo-Ba'ath adopted a guerilla warfare strategy. The Neo-Ba'ath regime was overthrown on 16 November 1970 by Hafiz al-Assad. Assad was a realist, and this ideological disposition led him to adopt the grand strategic objective of improving Syria's security and relative power through negotiation with Israel, through alliances with any cooperative regimes, through development of conventional military capabilities, and finally through a limited military operation to recapture the Golan Heights, a territory of immense strategic importance.

The second chapter tests out the approach on Israeli foreign policy in the same period. Based on Labor Zionist principles of Jewish sovereignty, Jewish majority, and international legitimacy, the Mapai government of Levi Eshkol that ruled Israel in 1963

opposed conquest of the West Bank and Gaza, fearing that the occupation of those territories would undermine the Jewish, democratic character of the state and cause international isolation. These priorities caused the Mapai leadership adopt a grand strategy of relying on nuclear deterrence to alleviate Israel's territorial vulnerabilities, and of using conventional deterrence to avoid war until Israel had achieved a nuclear weapons capability. When Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser threatened Israel by sending troops into the Sinai Peninsula and blockading the Straits of Tiran on 14-23 May 1967, the Mapai leadership's main objective was to reinstate the pre-crisis status quo. The Eshkol government preferred to do so by means of diplomacy, but when diplomacy did not work, and it became clear the U.S. would not sanction Israel for launching a strike, the government planned to capture a limited amount of territory in the northern Sinai and use it as a bargaining chip to compel Nasser to lift the blockade.

Israel never executed this plan. On 1 June 1967, due to heavy domestic political pressure stemming from national lack of confidence in his leadership, Eshkol was forced to form a National Unity Government that brought into the cabinet Moshe Dayan as defense minister and Menachem Begin as minister without portfolio. Though Dayan was never loyal to a specific political creed, he felt a deep nationalist attachment to the Land of Israel and was a lifelong hawk in defense matters. Begin's core political objective was to make good on what he perceived as the Jews' historic claim to all of the Land of Israel by invading Jordanian territory. These men found a ready ally in Ahdut Ha'Avodah, an ideologically zealous labor party that emphasized heroism and attachment to the land, and whose leading politician, Yigal Allon, had previously argued that Israel ought to take advantage of its next war to make widespread territorial gains for security and ideological

reasons. Defense Minister Dayan thus changed Israel's war aim from compelling Nasser to lift the blockade to making a show of strength against Nasser by defeating the bulk of his army. Moreover, Dayan took advantage of Jordanian and Syrian provocations to make widespread territorial gains in the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

In the war's aftermath, the divergent ideological dispositions of the various parties caused them to adopt rivaling grand strategies. The Mapai leadership advocated using the captured territories as bargaining chips to compel Israel's Arab neighbors to reach a comprehensive peace settlement. Bent on consolidating Israel's hold on the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and much of the Sinai, Dayan advocated an "Open Bridges" policy in the West Bank whereby the Israelis would remain control and settle unpopulated areas, but there would be autonomous Palestinian self-rule. Dayan took a similar stance toward Egypt, arguing that Israel should withdraw from the Suez Canal in order to let Egyptians resume normal shipping, and thus reduce Egyptian pressure for full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. Largely in agreement with Dayan on Israel's territorial aims regarding the Golan Heights and the Sinai, Ahdut Ha'Avodah leader Yigal Allon argued that Israel should retain control of the Jordan Valley and unpopulated regions of the West Bank and the Golan Heights, and either give autonomy to the populated Arab areas or return them to Jordan. Menachem Begin thought Israel should begin settling the captured territory and retain it indefinitely, but he was indifferent to the diplomatic and political strategy Israel used to achieve this. Unwilling to cause a divisive debate that would tear apart Israel's National Unity Government, the leadership failed to make a decision and effectively implemented all these plans at once. When Golda Meir succeeded Eshkol in 1969, her outlook on the Arab-Israeli conflict led her away from

dovish Mapai ministers like Pinchas Sapir and Abba Eban and into Dayan and Allon's camp. Under Meir, Israel's grand strategy was to retain most of the territory it had captured permanently, and to rely on Israel's military strength and the support of the U.S. to resist Arab pressures for Israeli concessions until the Arabs finally caved in to Israel's demands.

Though leaders in both states recognized and responded to balance of power imperatives, ideological considerations exerted a fundamental influence over their conception of the state's political objectives as well as their considerations about the best strategies to achieve those objectives. In short, the ideological dispositions of Syrian and Israeli leaders played a decisive role in the determination of their grand strategies.

II
The Ba'ath Struggle Against Israel

Throughout the 1960s, Syria faced a consistent balance of power trend—the growth of Israel's military strength, coupled with the consolidation and expansion of its hold on disputed territories and natural resources. From 1959 to 1964, Israel built the National Water Carrier, which channeled water from the Sea of Galilee to the Negev Desert to support agricultural development, thereby strengthening its grip on the disputed water resources along the Israeli-Syrian border. In November 1964, Israel introduced the Israeli Air Force (IAF) into the border disputes, demonstrating Syria's inability to challenge unilateral Israeli actions or defend its core security interests. In June 1967, Israeli seized the Golan Heights, rendering Damascus vulnerable to invasion. In response to this single balance of power trend, successive Syrian regimes developed different grand strategic approaches.

The Ba'ath Party, which assumed power in 1963, responded to the construction of Israel's National Water Carrier by attempting to divert the waters flowing from Syrian territory into the Jordan River on Israeli territory. As soon as the IAF destroyed the Syrian earthmoving equipment, however, the Ba'ath gave up this project and dramatically scaled down its aggressive behavior against Israel. A militant faction of the Ba'ath regime called the Military Committee thought giving up the fight was foolish, however, and upon seizing power and establishing the Neo-Ba'ath regime in 1966 initiated a guerilla war against Israel. When the guerilla war contributed to escalations that resulted in a regional war in which Israel captured the Golan Heights, the Neo-Ba'ath was undeterred and pressed on with the guerilla struggle. Syrian Defense Minister Hafiz

al-Assad thought the 1967 defeat demonstrated the folly of the guerilla strategy, and when he assumed power in 1970 he abandoned it and focused on trying to regain the Golan Heights by any means necessary, including negotiation with the Israelis or building up Syria's conventional military and allying with Egypt to launch a surprise attack with the limited goal of recapturing the Golan Heights or at least goading the Israelis into entering negotiations to return them for a settlement of the conflict. One major source of the differences in grand strategy between these three regimes was their different ideological dispositions.

This phenomenon was not new to Syria. There had been tremendous fluctuation in the ideological orientation of Syria's leaders in the decades since the country emerged from French rule as an independent state in 1946, and this had generally been accompanied by fundamental changes in grand strategy. Syria's first president, Shukri al-Quwatli of the Nationalist Bloc, was a conservative who represented the interests of the Sunni landowning aristocracy. The nation's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Zionists in Israel's 1948 war caused widespread dissatisfaction with the prevailing political establishment, and in March 1949 Colonel Husni al-Zaʿim seized power in a coup. Za'im tried to move the country into the Western camp, offering major concessions to Israel in order to win the favor of the United States. When Za'im was overthrown in August 1949 by an officer from the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi, Syria moved toward the creation of a Pan-Arab state. In order to prevent the SSNP's plan to unite Syria with Iraq, another Syrian nationalist, Adib al-Shishakli, seized power in December 1949. Managing to remain in power until February 1954, Shishakli again offered major concessions toward a settlement with Israel in order

to improve Syria's relationship with the U.S., but Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion rejected his proposals. Shishakli's ouster led to the rise of the Ba'ath Party, a Pan-Arab nationalist group that in 1958 established political unity between Syria and Egypt, resulting in the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.). Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser was the ruler of the new state, and his oppressive dictatorship sparked the revolt of army officers who were loyal to the traditional landowning aristocracy, and who reversed the land reforms and commercial nationalizations pursued under the socialist regimes.[11] The assumption to power of leaders with different ideologies brought about fundamental changes in the Syria's grand strategic objectives in the first decades of the country's independence.

Though the Ba'ath coup of 8 March 1963 resolved the conflict between the conservatives and the progressive, Pan-Arab nationalists, there were significant differences between successive Ba'ath regimes within the Pan-Arab framework. The regime that took power in 1963 adhered to the old guard Ba'ath ideology of Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, whose main focus was rekindling the Arab national spirit. The regime that took power in February 1966 and came to be called the Neo-Ba'ath placed a far greater emphasis on socialism, and viewed itself akin to leftist national liberation movements such as those in China, Vietnam and Algeria. Despite the fact that Hafiz al-Assad, who seized power in November 1970, adhered to a Ba'ath ideology akin to that of Aflaq and Bitar, he was a realist whose primary concern was the power and prestige of

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[11] *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Syria," accessed April 19, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578856/Syria. Jerome Slater, "Lost Opportunities for Peace in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Israel and Syria, 1948-2001," *International Security* Vol. 27, No. 1 (Summer 2002), pg. 86-87.

the Syrian state. The differences in grand strategies these regimes employed were consequences of their distinctive ideological dispositions.

First, this chapter will analyze the connection between the ideology of each regime and the grand strategy it employed. Then, the chapter will review the record of Syrian foreign policy from 1963-1970 in order to demonstrate that changes in grand strategy brought about important changes in Syrian foreign policy behavior.

The Ba'ath Party, 1963-1966

The Ba'ath Party regime that seized power in Damascus on 8 March 1963 was dominated by the ideology of Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, which was driven by the vision of the revival of the Arab spirit. According to the Ba'ath, the Arabs possessed a unique genius and an abundance of humanity, but their culture had declined as a result of oppressive foreign rule exerted by the Ottomans, the European empires, and reactionary Arab oligarchs.[12] In a 1950 speech to party members, Aflaq outlined his vision for a rekindling of Arab greatness: "By revolution we understand that true awakening which it is no longer possible to deny or to doubt, the awakening of the Arab spirit at a decisive stage in human history."[13] Socialism was a means of fostering the awakening, but Aflaq warned that materialistic theories defining individuals by economic class would undermine Arab national consciousness: "Materialistic socialist thinking, as

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[12] Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), pg. 18-20.

[13] Michel Aflaq, "Address to the Homs Branch of the Arab Ba'ath Party, February 1950" in Sylvia G. Haim (ed.), *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1962), pg. 244.

it prevails in the West, threatens this spirit with sterility, desiccation and depletion."[14]

Fostering a sense of unity amongst the Arab peoples, and ultimately bringing them

together under a single political state, executed this Arab awakening:

> "The experience in which our struggle takes place is that of the Arab nation dismembered into different countries and statelets, artificial and counterfeit; we struggle until we can reunite these scattered members, until we may reach a wholesome and natural state in which no severed member can speak in the name of all, until we can get rid of this strange and anomalous state."[15]

The vision of overcoming European colonialism as well as establishing a unified Arab

state rendered Israel a fundamental enemy, as the Ba'ath viewed the Zionist enterprise as

an imposition of a colonialist power, Great Britain, a non-Arab state on the Arab

homeland inhibiting the achievement of an Arab state there.[16] Pan-Arab unity and anti-

Zionism were the core components of the Ba'th's Arab awakening.

The goal of destroying Israel and building a Pan-Arab state was the overarching

aim of the Ba'ath's political program. Article 6 of the Ba'ath Constitution recognized this

would entail conflict, calling on the Arabs to: "struggle against foreign colonialism in

order to achieve absolute freedom for the Arab homeland." Article 7 delineated the

borders of the Arab homeland, which ranged from the Taurus mountains in Turkey in the

north to the mountains of Ethiopia in the south, and from the Zagros mountains in

western Iran to the Mediterranean Sea, thus including all of the territory controlled by

Israel. Moreover, Article 12 indicates that the Ba'ath viewed the fight with Zionism as

essential: "Whoever agitates on behalf of or is connected with a racial group opposed to

the Arabs, or whoever immigrates into the Arab homeland, for purpose of colonization,

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[14] Michel Aflaq, "Characteristics of Arab Socialism," in Sami A. Hanna and George H. Gardner (eds.) *Arab Socialism: A Documentary Survey* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969), pg. 300-302.

[15] Aflaq, Address to the Homs Branch of the Arab Ba'ath Party, February 1950, pg. 248.

[16] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria,* pg. 59-60.

will be expelled from the Arab homeland."[17] Given the fact that the Israelis were non-Arabs living in the Arab homeland, this clause implies that Pan-Arab unity and the destruction of Israel are part of the same objective.

Yet Aflaq never proscribed a specific political program toward realizing this vision, arguing that what was important was for the Arabs to move in the general direction of overcoming the status quo:

> "When we find ourselves ready to oppose the current, then will words, deeds, programs, and everything else become secondary, and the only tangible existing thing on which we can rely will be that we can find some who are ready to assume the responsibility and to go in a direction contrary to the existing situation in the Arab countries…"[18]

Hence, though Pan-Arab unity and the destruction of Israel were the vision the fulfillment which all Ba'ath activities were directed towards, the Ba'ath refused to prescribe a specific political program, rendering the leadership flexible to adjust its grand strategy as the situation required.

The dreadful experience of the 1958-1961 unification between Syria and Egypt convinced the Ba'ath that they should not pursue political unification again until Syria was powerful enough to have leverage in the partnership, and after 1963 the Ba'ath vision of Pan-Arab unity expressed itself in Syria's competition with Nasser for leadership of Arabs. To undermine his credibility, Syrian President Hafiz al-Amin accused Nasser of avoiding the necessary conflict with Israel, claiming that he was "going soft" on the Zionist entity and "selling out the Palestinians for a few bushels of American wheat," and positioned Syria as the leader in the Arab fight against Israel.[19]

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[17] "The Constitution of the Arab Resurrection Socialist Party" in Hanna and Gardner, pg. 307.
[18] Aflaq, Address to the Homs Branch of the Arab Ba'ath Party, pg. 246.
[19] Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Presidio Press, 2003), pg. 19.

Toward this end, the Syrians adopted the grand strategy of destroying Israel's National

Water Carrier, passing resolutions establishing this objective at the Ba'ath Fourth and

Sixth National Congresses in 1960 and 1963, respectively.

Since Israel's National Water Carrier project would enable the country to absorb

millions of immigrants by supporting agriculture in the Negev, the Ba'ath Party viewed it

as a means of securing Israel's existence, and viewed destruction of the project as a

means to eliminate the Zionist state in the long term.[20] An official party statement drew

the connection between disrupting Israel's water project and eliminating Israel:

> "The Arabs' right to destroy the State of Israel is a legitimate right. The Arabs' efforts
> must be diverted to strangling Israel and preparing for its destruction. The correct
> position…is to prevent the diversion of the Jordan by every means available and under all
> circumstances."[21]

In 1963, the Syrians launched a series of direct attacks against the National Water Carrier

on Israeli territory. Then, at the January and September 1964 Arab Summit conferences,

Syrian President Amin al-Hafiz pressured Nasser into adopting a two-pronged strategy:

preparing for war with Israel in the long term and diverting the waters that flowed from

Arab states into in the meantime. In November 1964, Syria commenced work on the

diversion works. Of course, any regime with any ideological disposition would have

made an effort to increase its access to nearby water resources, but there were other ways

of achieving this goal. The Jordanians, for instance, had quietly cooperated with the

Israelis on water sharing under the terms of the U.S. Johnston Plan since 1958, and as a

consequence both the Jordanians and Israelis received U.S. funding for their irrigation

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[20] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pg. 79-80.
[21] Moshe Shemesh, *Arab Politics, Arab Nationalism, and the Six Day War: The Crystallization of Arab Strategy and Nasir's Descent to War, 1957-1967* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academy Press, 2008), pg. 37.

projects.[22] The Ba'ath leaders did not try to improve their own access to disputed waters, but rather to prevent the Israelis from using them. This grand strategy reflected the Ba'ath vision of rallying Arab unity around the fight to destroy Israel.

Yet the flexibility of Ba'ath Party doctrine allowed the Syrians to change the grand strategy with which they pursued the destruction of Israel. When Israeli airstrikes disrupted the water diversion efforts in the spring and summer of 1965, Hafiz again agreed to adhere to the decision of the third Arab Summit in September 1965 to halt the diversion works. In an internal circular of 9 September 1965, the National Leadership of the Ba'ath Party explained its new policy of delaying war and building up its power to eliminate Israel over time:

> Every objectively truthful evaluation of the danger and power of Israel will have to concede that there is not one Arab state that could under present conditions face this danger single-handed, let alone liberate Palestine. It was therefore necessary to plan the strengthening of forces to the point which had been considered the minimum requirement for an Arab victory.[23]

The Ba'ath also decided to change its diplomatic policy in order to improve its international image and foster lucrative ties with Western countries, as it explained in an internal memorandum in early February 1966: "[we] must open a new kind of struggle with Israel, a struggle for the winning of friendship with the weapon of argument, persuasion and achievement."[24] Syria had shifted from a grand strategy of destroying the National Water Carrier to one of delaying war with Israel temporarily in order to focus on

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[22] Avshalom Haviv Rubin, "The Limits of the Land: Israel, Jordan, the United States, and the Fate of the West Bank, 1949-1970," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010), pg. 137-139.

[23] Internal Circular "Concerning the Palestinian Policy of the Party and the Summit Conference" No. 8/4 9 September 1965 in Abraham Ben-Tzur, *The Syrian Ba'ath Party and Israel: Documents from Internal Party Publication* (Givat Haviva, 1968), pg. 5-8.

[24] *Al Khizb* No. 6, February 1966 in Ben-Tzur, pg. 14-18.

internal development and reach out to Western countries for international support in its long-term struggle with Israel.

Though Ba'ath Party ideology identified Pan-Arab unity and the elimination of Israel as the Arabs' mission, its indifference to the specific program that would realize this vision allowed Syrian leaders considerable flexibility in grand strategy. Initially seeking to destroy Israel's National Water Carrier project as a means of positioning Syria as the leader of the Arabs' fight to eliminate Israel, once the IAF attacks demonstrated Israel's overwhelming conventional military superiority the Ba'ath changed its grand strategy to one of temporarily reducing hostilities in order to foster international ties and focus on long-term development.

The Neo-Ba'ath Regime, 1966-1970

The Neo-Ba'ath regime that seized power on 23 February 1966 had a socialist ideological orientation. Their outlook was the product of a process of gradual development guided by their religious, ethnic and socio-economic background as well as the prevailing global ethos of revolution. Whereas Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar were middle-class schoolteachers who had studied in France and were concerned primarily with Arab nationalism, the officers who formed the Neo-Ba'ath regime were members of the minority Alawite sect who hailed from rural areas and who had been originally recruited into a separate branch of the Ba'ath Party founded by the Alawite thinker Zaki Arsuzi and expanded by Dr. Wahib al-Ghanim, the latter being a doctor with pronounced socialist views.[25] Living in Egypt during the U.A.R. years, these men formed

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[25] John F. Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 96 No. 5 (December 1991), pg. 1398

a secret group called the Military Committee and eventually cooperated with the mainstream Ba'ath Party to launch the 8 March 1963 coup. The Military Committee consisted of career military officers who had never studied political philosophy or the art of governance, and their present ideological activities stemmed from the necessity of developing a political program in order to govern effectively. In this process, the basic left-wing disposition they inherited from their sectarian and socio-economic background led them to formulate a radical socialist ideology. In advance of the Ba'ath Party's Sixth National Congress of October 1963, the Military Committee teamed up with Marxist theorist Yasin al-Hafiz to draft a document that was eventually titled "Some Theoretical Propositions." It called for revolutionizing the army, fusing military and civilian sectors in order to bring about socialist revolution, and creating "popular organizations" of workers, peasants, students, women and youth. It also denounced Western-style democracy as a front for feudalism and bourgeois rule.[26]

When the Military Committee seized power and established the Neo-Ba'ath regime, they implemented a political program reflecting the principles in "Some Theoretical Propositions." The population was divided into two categories: friends, which included workers, soldiers, peasants, students and women, and foes, which included feudalists, the bourgeoisie and other reactionary elements. In order to empower the friends and undermine the foes, the regime purged the government of its opponents, nationalized the school system, secured Soviet cooperation on development and infrastructure projects such as the Euphrates River Dam, permitted Khalid Bakdash, the

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[26] Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 86-89.

leader of the Syrian Communist Party, to return from exile, and brought communist

Samih 'Atiyya into the cabinet as Minister of Communications.[27]

The Neo-Ba'ath's radical socialist disposition bred in its leaders a sense of

identification with the leftist national liberation movements in China, Vietnam and

Algeria. The men whom Neo-Ba'ath strongman General Salah Jadid appointed to the top

political posts had all had meaningful contact with those revolutions. Head of State Dr.

Nur al-Din al-Atasi, Prime Minister Dr. Yusuf Zu'ayyin, and Foreign Minister Dr.

Ibrahim Makhus had all served as volunteer medics with the forces of Houari

Boumedienne in Algeria's war against France. Chief of Staff Ahmad al-Suwaydani was a

committed Maoist who had studied Mao's guerilla warfare doctrine as a military attaché

in Beijing. The ideological affinity even permeated the men's personal style. Zu'ayyin

once visited Paris dressed in a Mao-style jacket, changing only after General Charles de

Gaulle refused to receive him in such attire.[28] The Neo-Ba'ath viewed these other

national liberation struggles as models for their own. Just as South Vietnam and the Kuo-

min Tang (KMT) were outposts of Western imperialism in East Asia, Israel was an

outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East. Reactionary Arab regimes, such as

the pro-Western government in Jordan, were Western stooges propped up in order to

divide the Arabs among themselves.[29]

The experiences of China, Vietnam and Algeria taught the Neo-Ba'ath that

guerilla warfare could enable a conventionally inferior population to defeat a

conventionally superior enemy. The Neo-Ba'ath leaders were not the only ones to draw

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[27] Seale, *Asad*, 108-09
[28] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel According to Neo-Ba'ath Doctrine*, 106-107.
[29] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 117.

this lesson. Speaking to a PLO delegation visiting Beijing in 1965, Mao himself

compared the Chinese revolution to the Arab struggle:

> "Imperialism is afraid of China and of the Arabs. Israel and Formosa are bases of
> imperialism in Asia. You are the front gate of the great continent, and we are the rear…
> You are not only two million Palestinians facing Israel, but one hundred million Arabs.
> You must think along this basis. When you discuss Israel keep the map of the entire Arab
> world before your eyes…. Peoples must not be afraid if their numbers are reduced in
> liberation wars… China lost twenty million people in the struggle for liberation."[30]

If united and prepared to sacrifice, the Arabs could win a protracted and bloody struggle

against Israel in the same way that other national liberation movements had defeated

conventionally superior enemies. The Neo-Ba'ath leaders agreed, and they constantly

peppered their propaganda with references to the Algerian and Vietnamese struggles. In

June 1966, President Atasi invoked Algeria to argue that guerilla warfare would enable

the Arabs to overcome conventionally superior forces: "A million French soldiers were

unable to suppress the… resistance of the Algerians, until they finally surrendered to

it."[31] In July 1966, speaking to Syrian troops stationed on the Israeli border, the Chief of

Staff Suwaydani compared Syria's popular liberation struggle to that of the Viet Cong:

> "These latest preparations are only part of a general campaign following the declaration
> of a people's war as the method by which Palestine will be liberated. This solution is the
> lesson we have learned from Algiers and the lesson learned from the US Seventh Fleet
> and tens of thousands of American soldiers who were unable to quash the Vietnamese
> uprising."[32]

Encouraged by these examples, the Neo-Ba'ath adopted the grand strategy of "national

liberation war," the primary feature of which was the sponsorship of Palestinian guerilla

forces.

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[30] *Al-Anwar* (Beirut), 6 April 1965, as received from New China News Agency (NCNA)
in John K. Cooley, "China and the Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 1 No.
2 (Winter, 1972), pg. 21 and 25.
[31] Joseph Mann, "The Conflict with Israel According to Neo-Ba'ath Doctrine," *Israel
Affairs* Vol. 13 No. 1 (January 2007), pg. 119.
[32] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 120.

The Neo-Ba'ath internalized Mao's principle that guerilla strategy aimed to chip away at the enemy's strength over a protracted period of time. A Neo-Ba'ath document from January 1967 instructs guerillas to fight only when they have an assured advantage over the enemy targets, to attack when the enemy forces are scattered, to target isolated concentrations of troops, and to avoid the occupation and defense of fixed positions.[33] The instructions reflect Mao's teaching that guerillas should gradually frustrate and wear out the enemy by means of maneuver and surprise:

> "As to the matter of military responsibilities, those of the guerillas are to exterminate small forces of the enemy; to harass and weaken large forces; to attack enemy lines of communication…to force the enemy to disperse his strength."[34]

Though the Palestinian guerilla activities mostly consisted of laying mines, kidnapping and shooting Israeli civilians, and bombing houses and water infrastructure, rarely involving direct combat with Israeli troops, the employment of Maoist language indicates that the Ba'ath accepted the basic strategy of wearing down a stronger enemy in a protracted struggle.

The Neo-Ba'ath grand strategy for the national liberation war was to chip away at Israel's military, commercial and industrial strength, and to distract the Israeli army from normal training and purchases. As Israel was worn down and distracted, the Arabs would prepare for conventional war. In the long run, the Palestinian guerillas would drag Israel into a conventional war against all the Arab armies in which the Jewish state would be annihilated.[35] The Neo-Ba'ath was unafraid to couple its sponsorship of guerilla forces with bold conventional attacks. On 15 August 1966, Syria deployed its air force against

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[33] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 123-124.

[34] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), pg. 53.

[35] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 119 and 121.

an Israeli boat that had landed illegally on Syria's small strip of Sea of Galilee shoreline,

and Radio Damascus boasted:

> "[Syria] would not confine herself to defensive action but would attack defined targets
> and bases of aggression within the occupied area (alias Israel). Syria has waited for a
> suitable opportunity to carry out this new policy. The opportunity was presented today."[36]

The strategy was based on a sober reading of the international environment. The Neo-

Ba'ath recognized that the U.N. would intervene speedily in the event of war to put an

end to hostilities, and that the Soviets would intervene in the event that Israel threatened

the survival of one of their Arab client states. These realities placed limitations on Israel's

military action.[37] It seems the Neo-Ba'ath expected that the international environment

enabled them to harass Israel continuously without suffering intolerable costs.

Furthermore, protracted guerilla warfare exploited Israel's vulnerabilities. Since

Israel had a small population, it had a low toleration for casualties and was unable to

mobilize troops for an extended period of time without suffering severe economic costs.

Therefore, Israel could never adopt a defensive response to an attritional campaign. It

would be forced to respond by going on the offensive, thereby increasing the chances of

the regional war the Neo-Ba'ath hoped to instigate. Though Israel dealt Syria a

resounding blow in 1967, fears of Soviet intervention and international sanctions

prevented it from going further. The fact that Nasser would rely on similar logic in

formulating his 1969 War of Attrition indicates that many of the principles underlying the

Neo-Ba'ath strategy were sound. Nasser's strategy was based on the assumption that the

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[36] "Bar-Yaakov, *Armistice*, pg. 270 from report No. S/7432/Add. 1 of the UN Secretary
General" in Avner Yaniv, "Syria and Israel: The Politics of Escalation," in Moshe Maoz
and Avner Yaniv, eds., *Syria Under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional Risks*
(London: Croom Helm, 1986), pg. 166-167.
[37] "Memorandum of the Regional Syrian Leadership in Response to the Circular of the
National Leadership," 11 March 1965 in Ben-Tzur, pg. 10.

Israelis would be unable to tolerate high losses without going on the offensive, and that if the Israelis went too far the Soviets would intervene.[38] Though ideologically driven and advocated with inflated rhetoric, the Neo-Ba'ath national liberation warfare strategy exploited many of Israel's core weaknesses.

To summarize, the radical socialist ideological disposition of the Neo-Ba'ath regime inspired the development of its grand strategy of national liberation war by guerilla means.

Hafiz al-Assad, 1970-2000

Hafiz al-Assad, who seized power on 16 November 1970, was a realist. This outlook was a natural outgrowth of his personality. First of all, Assad was driven by ambition, and he harbored the lifelong goal of overcoming the national dishonor that had accompanied Syria's loss to the Zionists in the 1948 war.[39] Though he was a lifelong member of the Ba'ath Party, Assad was ideologically moderate and had never subscribed to the Neo-Ba'ath's radical doctrine. When the Neo-Ba'ath charged him with the task of indoctrinating the troops, Assad neglected radical socialist dogma and organized a lecture tour for the Alawite Ba'ath theorist Zaki al-Arsuzi, whose Arab nationalist teaching was akin to the traditional Ba'ath ideology espoused by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar.[40] Assad opposed the Neo-Ba'ath's program of class warfare, advocating policies to increase the number of political parties and public interest groups that participated in

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[38] See Chapter 3.
[39] Seal, *Asad*, pg. 12-13 and 34-35.
[40] Seale, *Asad*, 89

governance.[41] One of Assad's most outstanding and enduring traits was his will and ability to connect with people from different walks of life and forge difficult compromises. He inherited this quality from his father and grandfather, who both had reputations as skilled intermediaries capable of resolving grave disputes between warring factions,[42] and relied on it at an early age as a student politician, when he served as president of national Union of Syrian Students.[43] Ambition, ideological moderation and ability to compromise and cooperate with people from different walks of life constituted the basis of Assad's realist disposition.

Assad abandoned any hopes of annihilating Israel, and his chief concern was to increase the security, power and prestige of the Syrian state. Toward this end, Assad adopted the grand strategic objective of regaining the Golan Heights, which was vitally important strategic territory for Syria because its occupation rendered Syria vulnerable to invasion. Assad made his new goals official policy during the Eleventh National Congress of the Ba'ath Party in 1971, which substituted the former goal of liberation of Palestine with the circumscribed goals of "liberation of the occupied territories."[44] Assad was willing to achieve these ends by negotiating with the Israelis for a final settlement based on U.N. Resolution 242, which involved Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the conclusion of a final peace agreement. Yet Assad recognized that diplomacy would never succeed so long as the Israelis and the U.S. thought that Syria posed no military threat. In order to improve Syria's leverage, Assad solidified Syria's relationship with the U.S.S.R. and forged new relationships with the oil-rich Arab

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[41] Seale, *Asad* 144-147
[42] Seale, *Asad*, chapter 1.
[43] Seale, *Asad*, 36-7
[44] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria*, pg. 107.

monarchies in order to gain the necessary financial support to rebuild Syria's conventional military capabilities. In order to gain time to develop his country's strength, he reined in the Palestinian guerillas under the Syrian's control in order to temporarily calm the conflict with Israel. Finally, Assad cooperated with Egypt to launch a simultaneous two-front surprise attack in order to regain the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Assad expected that even if he failed to secure his objective in war, the shock his attack would deliver to Israel would compel them to negotiate an acceptable settlement.[45]

In summary, Assad's realism led him to abandon the objective of annihilating Israel and adopt the objective of improving the security and power of the Syrian state. Toward this end, Assad employed a grand strategy of diplomacy, building up conventional military capabilities, forging alliances with cooperative states, and launching a war with limited territorial objectives.

Syrian Foreign Policy, 1963-1970

The new grand strategies adopted by successive Syrian regimes led to changes in the conduct of war and diplomacy. At each escalation in the conflict with Israel, the party in power pursued its preferred policy, a party out of power argued for a change in grand strategy, and the latter then seized power in a coup and implemented its policy. When Israel deployed the IAF to destroy Syria's diversion equipment in November 1964, the Ba'ath Party under the leadership of Amin al-Hafiz deescalated the conflict and pursued a policy of cooperating with Nasser to delay war and build up conventional military forces

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[45] Ibid, pg. 107-109

over the long term in preparation for a future confrontation. At the time, the Military Committee argued that Syria should initiate the war now and employ guerilla warfare, and the Military Committee implemented this policy when it seized power in 1966 and established the Neo-Ba'ath regime. Syria's loss of the Golan Heights in 1967 sparked a foreign policy debate between the Neo-Ba'ath, who advocated continuing the grand strategy of national liberation warfare, and Hafiz al-Assad, who advocated delaying war and building up Syria's alliances and conventional military capabilities in preparation for a limited war to recapture the Heights. Upon assuming power in 1970, Assad implemented this strategy, ultimately culminating in the coordinated Egyptian and Syrian surprise attack against Israel on 6 October 1973. The adoption of new grand strategies by different leaders led to changes in the state's conduct of foreign policy.

Based on its initial grand strategy of disrupting Israel's National Water Carrier, the Ba'ath Party regime launched a series of attacks against the National Water Carrier project in the summer of 1963. The Ba'ath regime launched several artillery attacks on Israeli diversion equipment, and executed other operations such as the 13 July 1963 kidnapping of three Israeli citizens and three Belgian citizens on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee and the 19 July 1963 killing of two Israeli citizens near Kibbutz Almagor.[46] In 1964, Syrian President Hafiz al-Amin got the Arab League to adopt the strategy of cooperating to defeat Israel in the long term and diverting the Jordan River source waters in the meantime. The Ba'ath Regime ultimately gave up the diversion project once Israel deployed the IAF against the diversion works in November 1964 and destroyed them on

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[46] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 80.

13 May 1964.[47] In support of the September 1965 Arab Summit decision to abandon the

diversion project, the Ba'ath leadership declared in an internal memo that the Arabs were

not yet ready to fight Israel and must wait until they were fully prepared.[48] On 6 February

1966, the Ba'ath declared a policy of "breaking the isolation," which consisted of the

abandonment of their previous policy of abstaining from international forums in which

the Israelis participated, arguing in an internal memo that the Ba'ath party should

improve its image in order to foster useful ties with Western countries.[49] The ideological

flexibility of the Ba'ath doctrine enabled the Ba'ath Party to shift toward a moderate

grand strategy involving the reducing the conflict, improving Syria's ties to the West in

order to gain diplomatic and material support, and focusing on internal development.

While the Ba'ath regime responded to the introduction of the IAF into the border

conflict by gradually abandoning its confrontational activities, the Military Committee

thought Syria should respond by initiating a national liberation war. They even took the

initiative to launch it in secret. Without the knowledge of Amin al-Hafiz, Assad and

future Neo-Ba'ath chief of staff Suwaydani in 1964 arranged for the Palestinian group al-

Fatah to use two training camps in Syria,[50] which aided the Fatah in the initiation of its

guerilla campaign against Israel, which was launched on 1 January 1965 in an attack

against the National Water Carrier project.[51] The Military Committee responded to the

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[47] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 87.
[48] Ben Tzur, *The Syrian Ba'ath Party and Israel*, pg. 5-8.
[49] Ben Tzur, *The Syrian Ba'ath Party and Israel*, pg. 14-18.
[50] Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pg. 27-28 and 32.
[51] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking,* pg. 82.

decision of the September 1965 Arab Summit to abandon the water diversion project with an internal circular urging Syria to "kindle the spark" of a war to liberate Palestine.[52]

When the Military Committee seized power on 23 February 1966 and established the Neo-Ba'ath regime, it was able to implement its national liberation war in full. The first step was to build institutional capacity to sustain a protracted guerilla struggle. In 1966-1967, 185 Chinese military officers arrived to train the Syrian army.[53] In September 1966, the regime founded "The Vanguards," the Palestinian branch of the Ba'ath Party, and its military wing al-Saiqa.[54] The also regime formed "the Supreme Command for Popular Defense," and on 19 October 1966 opened twenty recruitment centers across Syria, dubbed Popular Defense Committees, to provide recruits for the guerilla struggle.[55] In accordance with these moves, the regime declared that it would arm any Arab who wanted to join the popular liberation struggle against Israel, and the regime cooperated with Algeria to transport fighters from various countries to guerilla training camps in Syria.[56] Control of state power enabled the Neo-Ba'ath to unleash the Palestinian guerillas on an even greater scale. Jordanian measures to crack down on Palestinian guerillas had constrained Fatah's operational capabilities, with fifteen attacks in September 1965, six in October, three in November, three in December, and none in January and February 1966. With the Neo-Ba'ath rise in late February, however, there was a sharp revival in attacks beginning in April 1966.[57] While there had been thirty eight

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[52] Ben Tzur, *The Syrian Ba'ath Party and Israel*, pg. 10.
[53] Cooley, pg. 26.
[54] Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization*, pg. 157.
[55] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 122-123. The Popular Defense Committees did not get many recruits, except from Alawite areas.
[56] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 122.
[57] Rubin, 214 and 220.

Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel in the three year period from 8 March 1963 to 22 February 1966, there were seventy five in the year between the Neo-Ba'ath's rise on 23 February 1966 to Nasser's occupation of the Straits of Tiran on 15 May 1967.[58]

Hard-line Israeli responses did not discourage the Neo-Ba'ath from its national liberation struggle. When Israel responded to this escalation of violence in July 1966 by deploying the IAF against Syrian targets on the Golan Heights, the Neo-Ba'ath deployed its own air force against the Israelis on 15 August 1966.[59] The Israelis continued to up the ante, initiating a dogfight with Syrian jets on 7 April 1967 that ended with the IAF chasing down Syrian planes and flying triumphantly over Damascus, shooting down six planes in total. In June 1967, the Israelis took advantage of the outbreak of regional war by conquering the Golan Heights.[60] Jadid remained set on the grand strategy of national liberation war, arguing that the 1967 defeat confirmed the fact that conventional war would not bring liberation of Palestine, and that only guerilla warfare could succeed.[61] The Neo-Ba'ath rejected an Israeli offer of 19 June 1967 to return the Golan Heights in return for a peace treaty, and boycotted the Khartoum Summit of 1 September 1967 because the summit accepted the principle of a political solution with Israel.[62] To assist Fatah in its plan to instigate a local rebellion against Israel in the West Bank, Jadid let Fatah use training camps near Damascus and established a command post on the

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[58] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Linkage Politics,* pg. 152.
[59] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 124.
[60] See Chapter 3.
[61] Joseph Mann, *The Conflict with Israel*, pg. 125-126.
[62] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 102-103.

Jordanian border to guide Fatah bands traveling into the West Bank.[63] Having held back

support for guerilla attacks in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war in order to build

defenses to guard against the new Israeli positions on the Golan Heights, in 1969 the

Neo-Ba'ath resumed its attacks against Israel.[64] Israel's retaliations led to dogfights

between the IAF and the Syrian Air Force in February, July and December 1969. In

August 1969, the Neo-Ba'ath launched its first artillery attacks against Israeli positions

on the Golan Heights since the 1967 war, and launched similar attacks in June 1970.[65]

Israeli conventional superiority and victory in the 1967 war did not deter the Neo-Ba'ath

from its grand strategy of national liberation war.

The 1967 defeat convinced Assad that Syria needed to abandon guerilla warfare,

abandon the objective of eliminating Israel, and pursue a realist strategy based on the

limited objective of regaining the Golan Heights. In the war's aftermath, Assad began to

speak out against the Neo-Ba'ath policy and campaign for leadership of Syria,

simultaneously using his authority as minister of defense to limit the guerilla campaign.[66]

As Assad gradually consolidated his control over the armed forces, he placed the

Palestinian guerillas under his watch and issued a special order in May 1969 that limited

their activities. He opposed the Neo-Ba'ath's ideological crusade against conservative

Arab governments, and in September 1970, when Jadid sent in Syrian tanks to assist

Palestinian guerillas who were trying to topple King Hussein, Jadid undermined the move

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[63] Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv, "On a Short Leash: Syria and the PLO" in Moshe
Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (eds.) *Syria Under Assad: Domestic Constraints and Regional
Risks* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pg. 191-205.
[64] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 118
[65] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 117.
[66] Seale, *Asad* 144-147

by denying the tanks air cover, and Jadid was forced to recall the tanks back to Syria.[67]

Assad's strategy became Syrian foreign policy once he took power on 16 November

1970. He was willing to negotiate with the Israelis to regain the Golan Heights, and in

March 1972 announced his acceptance of U.N. Resolution 242—which called for a peace

settlement between Israel and the Arabs following Israeli withdrawal from the territories

captured in 1967—under the condition that Israel withdraw from all the territories and

that Palestinian rights be upheld.[68] Yet he recognized that the Israelis would not feel the

need to negotiate unless they perceived Syria as a military threat, and so he cooperated

with the U.S.S.R., the oil-rich conservative Arab monarchies, and Egypt in order to build

up Syria's conventional military forces. On 26 November 1970, Assad signed a military

agreement with Egypt whereby Assad and Sadat agreed to use political means to delay

conflict and buy time to rebuild their militaries, and then launch a two-front surprise

attack to regain the territories lost in the 1967 war.[69] This strategy culminated in the

surprise attack Syria and Egypt launched against Israel on 6 October 1973.

Syrian foreign policy from 1963 to 1973 reflected the different grand strategies of

its successive regimes, who reacted to the same balance of power trends in different

ways. Facing Israeli military superiority in 1964-1965, the Ba'ath Party chose to reduce

the conflict with Israel and focus on cooperating with other Arab regimes, reaching out to

Western governments, and building up domestic power. Facing the same international

situation, the Neo-Ba'ath chose to implement a national liberation war against Israel.

When the guerilla struggle brought about a regional war in which Israel conquered the

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[67] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking*, pg. 118-119.
[68] Drysdale and Hinnebusch, pg. 109.
[69] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking,* pg. 122.

Golan Heights, the Neo-Ba'ath chose to continue with their policy, but Hafiz al-Assad took power and implemented a realist strategy designed to use cooperation with any Arab governments and the development of conventional military power to make limited territorial gains.

Conclusion

This study argues that leaders draw on ideology to formulate grand strategy, that changes in leadership bringing to power individuals with different ideologies result in the adoption of new grand strategies, and that state behavior in the international arena reflects those new grand strategies.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the history of Syria in the period from the accession to power of the Ba'ath Party in 1967 to the 1973 war confirms this model. Based upon its ideology of Pan-Arabism, the Ba'ath regime that seized power in 1963 sought to rally the Arab world around the conflict with Israel. It sought to do this by diverting the waters flowing from its territory into Israel, but gave up this policy once the Israelis demonstrated their capability to destroy the diversion works. The socialist ideological disposition of the Neo-Ba'ath regime, which seized power in 1966, led them to believe that protracted guerilla warfare could overcome Israel's conventional superiority. They therefore supported Palestinian guerillas in a conflict that would eventually escalate and bring about regional war. Syria's defeat, and the loss of the Golan Heights, did not deter the Neo-Ba'ath from the national liberation war. The rise to power of Hafiz al-Assad in 1970 brought about a realist foreign policy. Assad abandoned the aspiration to destroy Israel and focused instead on regaining the Golan Heights. He reined

in the guerillas in order to avoid conflict while he build up Syria's military capabilities, and partnered with Egypt to launch a limited war aimed at either capturing the Heights or compelling Israel to return them in negotiations. Clearly, the assumption to power of leaders with different ideological orientations brought about changes in Syria's grand strategy.

All these grand strategies responded to balance of power imperatives. In the face of a persistent international structure, the main feature of which was Israel's rising power and its continuous expansionist tendencies, Syria consistently undertook efforts to offset the Israeli threat by building up its own capabilities and seeking allies with other global and regional actors, be they Egypt, the Palestinians or the U.S.S.R. Despite changes in the specific details of Syria's actions at any particular moment, or temporary failures in its cooperation with these other regional actors, the core element of allying with other actors against Israel remained.

Yet there were major differences in these regimes' foreign policies, and these differences explain many of the most important regional developments. For example, the Neo-Ba'ath's national liberation struggle was one of the main causes of the 1967 war. This war provided Israel the opportunity to capture the Sinai Peninsula, a development that ultimately brought about a shift in Egyptian foreign policy toward negotiations with Israel and an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty that brought Egypt firmly into the orbit of the United States. This long-term outcome was a major Cold War gain for the U.S., and it leads scholars to question how the 1967 war came about. An account based on structural factors alone cannot explain the initiation of the 1967 war if the Neo-Ba'ath—reacting to the same underlying international structure that the Ba'ath did—nevertheless

implemented a different grand strategy that made the outbreak of regional war much more likely. Indeed, the most interesting aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict in this period is not the similarities underlying the various governments' foreign policies, but rather the differences. To understand the differences in foreign policy between successive regimes who operate under the same structural constraints, one must account for the influence of their ideologies on their grand strategies.

Ideology was not the only domestic factor influencing Syrian grand strategy during this period. Many scholars have noted the influence of domestic politics on Syrian foreign policy. Both the original Ba'ath regime and the Neo-Ba'ath had limited domestic support, and many scholars have argued opposition to Israel and Pan-Arabism were means of competing with Nasser and securing popular support when the regime's survival was in jeopardy.[70] No doubt domestic constraints influenced the Syrian leaders' conduct of the conflict with Israel during this period, yet even if certain crises were initiated to gain popularity, the strategies through which the regimes conducted the conflict with Israel were still very different. Moreover, both the Ba'ath and the Neo-Ba'ath advocated their respective grand strategies before they assumed power, and pursued them consistently throughout their reigns. The consistency in their policy positions and their behavior suggests that they intended to implement these grand strategies regardless of domestic pressure. Domestic political constraints may have

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[70] Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and his Rivals, 1958-1970* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East: Syria Between Domestic and External Conflict, 1961-1970* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983). Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

played a role in shaping the conduct of foreign policy, but ideology sill played a decisive influence in the development of Syrian grand strategy.

The one major exception is Assad. Though Assad was a lifelong member of the Ba'ath Party and adhered to central elements of its doctrine, he was in many ways non-ideological. His realist grand strategy seems to have drawn its direction far more from his own personal temperament than from ideology.

III
Zionism and Territory

At least since the end of the 1956 Suez War, Israeli foreign policy leaders shared several core assumptions about the international balance of power and Israel's geostrategic position. Almost all Israeli leaders believed their Arab neighbors were hostile enemies, and that they would gain power in the long run as their populations expanded at a faster rate than that of Israel. All Israelis recognized that the borders Israel established in the 1949 armistice agreements—which concluded the Israel's 1948 war for independence—lacked strategic depth and therefore rendered Israel vulnerable to Arab invasion. Since most of Israel's people, industrial infrastructure, and military facilities were located in a small strip of territory close to the borders, Israel's Arab neighbors would be able to deliver a devastating blow in a short period of time should they be the first to attack in a future war. Based on the assumption that the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Nations would intervene quickly in the event of war and impose a ceasefire, the Israelis expected that whoever initiated the next war might have a major advantage. By the time the defending party would be prepared to repel the initial blow, the U.N. might have already imposed a ceasefire. Moreover, since Israel had a small population, its military relied on a massive amount of reserves to fight wars against large Arab armies. The country could not endure long periods of military mobilization, which would remove a great deal of the working population from normal economic activities and thus result in economic crisis. It was thus imperative to resolve any future crisis as quickly as possible, and to make sure that Israel would be the first to strike if war was inevitable. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operated under a deterrence doctrine under

which Israel would punish Arab provocations by going on the offensive and attacking the Arabs in their territory—these retaliations would compel Israel's neighbors to cease their belligerent activity. In the event that Israel were faced with a hostile coalition of Arab states threatening war on several fronts, IDF plans called for Israel to launch a preemptive airstrike to wipe out the Arab air forces, to be followed up by combined infantry-armor assaults to take out the Arab ground forces.[71]

Given these shared assumptions, there was widespread agreement among Israeli foreign policy leaders on most of the main elements of the country's military and diplomatic behavior in the first half of the 1960s. Israel must offset its inferiority in territory and population by maintaining conventional military superiority, and it should forge alliances with the world's great powers in order to acquire the most advanced modern weaponry. Israel thus bought arms from France, and it also sought to cultivate its ties to the U.S., signing the U.S.-Israeli Memorandum of Understanding in 1965. Though an important faction of the ruling coalition disagreed, there was general support for Israel's nuclear weapons program. Israel should retaliate against continual Syrian and Palestinian provocations by going on the offensive. Any large Arab forces stationed in the West Bank or in the Sinai Peninsula would pose a threat, and demilitarization of both areas was a priority. Agreement on these fundamental issues led to a basic consensus on Israeli foreign policy for most of the decade.

The Egyptian military occupation of the Sinai Peninsula and subsequent blockade of the Straits of Tiran shattered this consensus. The IDF General Staff and several leading

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[71] Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1981), pg. 224-239. Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), pg. 172.

politicians advocated immediate war, regardless of whether Israel had international support, the objective of which would be to shatter the Egyptian army. Other core elements of the country's leadership sought to avoid war and to resolve the crisis by diplomacy. Once it became clear that diplomacy would not work, they supported limited military operations aimed at compelling Nasser to lift the blockade. Israel's subsequent conquest of the entire Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan Heights further eroded the foreign policy consensus. For security and ideological reasons, one side advocated the retention of most, if not all, of the captured territories. The other side advocated broad territorial concessions in the interest of reaching a comprehensive peace settlement with the Arab states. This debate dominated Israeli foreign policy decision making up to the 1973 war, and continues to influence it today.

These foreign policy debates coincided with a gradual change in the ideological disposition of the country's political leadership. In 1963, Israel was governed by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol of Mapai, the moderate labor party that had dominated the country's politics under David Ben-Gurion since the British Mandate. In 1965, Mapai merged with the nationalist and militant party Ahdut Ha'Avodah to form the Alignment, but the Ahdut Ha'Avodah ministers remained a small minority in the Alignment and in the Israeli Cabinet, which contained ministers from several other parties. On 1 June 1967, four days before Israel launched its surprise attack against Egypt, Israel formed a National Unity Government. Eshkol remained prime minister, but Rafi minister Moshe Dayan became minister of defense and right-wing nationalist Menachem Begin of Herut joined the Cabinet as minister without portfolio. The rise to power of such hawkish ministers strengthened the hand of Ahdut Ha'Avodah, and in 1968 Mapai, Ahdut

Ha'Avodah and Rafi merged to form the Israeli Labor Party. Eshkol's death in 1969 precipitated a political struggle between Ahdut Ha'Avodah leader Yigal Allon and Minister of Defense Dayan, and party leaders chose old guard Mapai stalwart Golda Meir as prime minister in the expectation that she would exert a moderating influence.[72] Tending to agree with Allon and Dayan's hawkish outlook on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Meir further empowered them in foreign policy decision making, and sidelined dovish Mapai ministers Pinchas Sapir and Abba Eban in the process. In the midst of deep and urgent foreign policy debates on matters of fundamental importance, these leadership changes exerted a decisive influence on Israel's grand strategy.

Mapai

Mapai received its basic ideological direction from the political thought of Theodor Herzl. The motivation behind the ideology was not the messianic dream of returning to the Land of Israel, but rather the need to alleviate the plight of Jews in Europe. This set of priorities is expressed in Herzl's 1896 pamphlet, *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Problem*, the founding document of Labor Zionism, which inspired the First Zionist Congress at Basel in 1897.[73] Herzl reveals his motivation in the preface, which opens by stating that the Jews' precarious situation is the reason a Jewish state is necessary: "The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and these outcries have awakened the slumbering idea."[74] More importantly, Herzl

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[72] Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Third Edition*, (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2007), pg. 543-552.
[73] Israel Cohen, "Forward," Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question, Fourth Edition,* trans. Sylvie D'Avigdor (London: Rita Searl, 1946), pg. 4.
[74] Ibid, pg. 7.

anticipates this motivation is what will attract others to the cause: "Everything depends on our propelling force. And what is our propelling force? The misery of the Jews."[75] To Herzl, the reason to establish the Jewish state is security, and every other goal is secondary.

In the same pamphlet, Herzl also lists three requirements that would become the Zionist movement's core objectives. The first is that the Jews be the majority in their new homeland. Given the fact that Jews have been persecuted in every country they have lived, they are obviously vulnerable wherever they are not in the majority: "The majority may decide which are the strangers; for this...is a question of might… In the world as it now is…might precedes right."[76] The second requirement is that the Jews must have sovereignty in their new homeland.[77] Herzl's third requirement is support of the leading world powers and international recognition of the Jews' right to whatever land they inhabit.[78] *The Jewish State* provides no extensive treatment of the Jews' claim to Palestine. Herzl dedicates just one page to the subject of the Jewish state's location, which considers the relative benefits of Palestine and Argentina. Though Herzl lists more advantages for Palestine—and it is hard to imagine that he did not always expect the Jewish state to be located in Palestine—he does not express a preference either way.[79] The fact that he does not argue strongly in favor of Palestine and even expresses a willingness to consider other options indicates that he considered the Jewish state's

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[75] Ibid, pg. 8.
[76] Ibid, pg. 15.
[77] Ibid, pg. 28.
[78] Ibid, pg. 29.
[79] Ibid, pg. 30.

territorial allotment to be relatively unimportant. Herzl's priorities were Jewish majority, sovereignty, and international support.

Following Herzl's vision, the Mapai leaders proved willing to compromise on territory in the interest of preserving Jewish majority, Jewish sovereignty, and international standing. Initially, the Zionists assumed this project would take the form of a Jewish state established on both sides of the Jordan River. In 1919, World Zionist Organization president Chaim Weizmann presented the Zionist claim to the Paris Peace Conference: all territory west of the Hijaz railway line in Jordan, and all territory south of Lake Karaoun in Lebanon to the southern border of the Palestine Mandate (running from the southern edge of the Gaza Strip to present-day Eilat).[80] The Zionists' territorial desires were based on the assumption that massive Jewish immigration from Europe would establish a Jewish majority in the land. An 1882 letter from Zionist leader Eliezer Ben Yehuda expresses this belief: "The goal is to revive our nation on its land…*if only we succeed in increasing our numbers here until we have the majority*."[81] During the next four decades, as it became increasingly clear that core international players would not support a Jewish state on all this land, and that there would not be a Jewish majority there, the Labor Zionists gradually limited their territorial aspirations.

First, the Mapai leadership cut down their territorial claims in order to gain international support for the creation of an independent Jewish state. When the 1922 Churchill White Paper split the Palestine Mandate in two, with the territory on the east

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[80] "Statement of the Zionist Organization Regarding Palestine," 3 February 1919 in Benny Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pg. 39.
[81] Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and Yehiel Michal Pines to Rashi Pin, October 1882 in Morris, *One State, Two States,* pg. 36.

side of the Jordan River constituting a separate entity known as Transjordan, the Labor

Zionists gave up claims to land east of the Jordan River.[82] In 1937, David Ben-Gurion

and Weizmann were ready to sacrifice eighty percent of Palestine, including all the

Jewish holy areas in Judea and Samaria, in accepting the recommendation of the Peel

Commission to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.[83] Weizmann later

explained that his priority was Jewish independence with a Jewish majority:

> "A Jewish State with definite boundaries internationally guaranteed would be something
> final… Instead of being a minority in Palestine, we would be a majority in our own state,
> and be able to deal on terms of equality with our Arab neighbors in Palestine, Egypt and
> Iraq."[84]

With Jewish persecution on the rise in Europe, Ben-Gurion and Weizmann reasoned that

the most important objective in the short term was to gain political independence so they

would no longer have to face British quotas on Jewish immigration. Similar motives led

Mapai to accept the 29 November 1947 U.N. Partition Plan, and prevented them from

invading the West Bank at the end of the 1948 war. Ben-Gurion's diary entries from the

time indicate that he did not think the invasion of Jordan was worth the risk of sparking

British intervention.[85] These priorities remained a core part of Mapai's international

outlook. In the aftermath of Israel's conquests in the 1967 war, Foreign Minister Abba

Eban argued that Israel should return the territories in order to avoid international

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[82] Morris, *One State, Two States*, pg. 42-43.
[83] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict: A History With Documents, Fourth Edition* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), pg. 139.
[84] Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time, Third Edition*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), pg. 203.
[85] Avshalom Haviv Rubin, "The Limits of the Land: Israel, Jordan, the United States, and the Fate of the West Bank, 1949-1970," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010), pg. 18.

isolation and the condemnation of the U.S.[86] With a Jewish majority and international recognition, Mapai was satisfied to make territorial compromises.

Though Mapai initially expected that it would one day rectify partition and regain the territories it had sacrificed, the party leadership abandoned this aspiration once they realized that there would never be a Jewish majority within the borders Weizmann had delineated in 1919. Mapai considered conquest of the West Bank to be desirable only if it were accompanied by transfer of the bulk of the area's Arab residents. Population transfer had seemed viable ever since the 1937 Peel Report had proposed the transfer of 250,000 Arabs out of the territory allotted for the Jewish state.[87] At the time, Ben-Gurion explained the necessity of population transfer to the World Zionist Congress: "Transfer…is what will make possible a comprehensive settlement program. Thankfully, the Arab people have vast, empty areas [to move to]."[88] Given the fact that the 1948 war had seen a mass exodus of Palestinians from Israel—whether compulsory or voluntary— Mapai expected similar flights to accompany any future territorial conquests.

Mapai's leaders determined that such population flights were no longer feasible after Israel's occupation of Gaza in the 1956 Suez War. On the eve of war, Ben-Gurion had planned to take advantage of any opportunities the conflict might present to conquer the West Bank. Planning the conflict with France and Great Britain at Sevres, Ben-Gurion suggested that Israel and France should split up Transjordan, with Israel taking the West Bank and the East Side joining Iraq. Britain seems to have acquiesced in Israel's

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[86] Sachar, pg. 711.

[87] Reginald Coupland, "Note for Discussion of Partition," undated, PRO CO 733 346/9 in Morris, *One State, Two States*, pg. 63-64.

[88] Protocol of meeting of 7 August 1937, CZA S25-1543 in Morris, *One State, Two States,* pg. 67.

territorial hunger, as the Treaty of Sevres contained the agreement that though Israel

would not start a war with Jordan, Britain would not come to the latter's defense should it

provoke hostilities with Israel.[89] At an IDF General Staff meeting on 12 April 1956,

General Yitzhak Rabin expressed the leadership's expectation that many Arabs would

flee in the event of Israeli invasion.[90] The Israeli occupation of Gaza in 1956-1957

demonstrated that population transfer was no longer feasible. No Gaza residents fled

when the Israelis invaded, and Israeli proposals to the U.S. and the U.N. to resettle the

Gaza Strip's Arab population did not elicit promising responses. From this experience,

Ben-Gurion concluded that conquering Arab-populous territories would only cause

trouble for Israel, as a 10 March 1957 diary entry reveals:

> "How can we provide for 200,000 refugees and 60,000 settled inhabitants… And the
> political danger is even greater. There is no doubt that the refugees will commit acts of
> terror… Without a solution to the refugee problem – meaning, their resettlement in an
> Arab country – the Gaza Strip is a curse and a danger under any condition."[91]

The lesson of 1956 was that Israeli invasion would likely force the Israelis to govern a

large Arab population.

Ben-Gurion applied the lessons from Gaza to the West Bank, and determined that

Israel's best policy was to support the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan and perpetuate the

status quo, thus avoiding any further territorial aggrandizement. In July 1958, Ben-

Gurion readily granted British send planes over Israeli air space in the campaign to

support King Hussein in the aftermath of the 14 July 1958 coup in Baghdad. When some

Israeli Cabinet members suggested that Israel take advantage of King Hussein's

vulnerability and conquer the West Bank, Ben-Gurion argued that the territorial gains

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[89] Ibid, 45.
[90] Ibid, 51.
[91] Ibid, 51.

were not worth the risk of alienating the British and the Americans. Ben-Gurion added that governing the West Bank's Arab population was too burdensome to be worth the effort: "[We would] have to confront [the West Bank Palestinians] with bayonets." Ben-Gurion noted in his diary on 16 July 1958: "This time, [the Palestinians] won't run away!"[92] The aversion to exerting control over a large Arab population remained a core element of Mapai's outlook after the 1967 war. In 1968, Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir advocated returning the West Bank and Gaza to Arab control in order to prevent Israel from turning into an Arab state, and in 1969 Foreign Minister Abba Eban argued that retaining control over the Arabs would undermine Zionist values.[93] From this point forward, the Mapai leadership coalesced around the consensus that the prospect of international sanction, combined with the costs involved with capturing a territory with a large Arab population, rendered expansion into the West Bank undesirable.

Mapai's insistence on international legitimacy and Jewish majority crystallized around a new grand strategy in the late 1950s. Israel would avoid the acquisition of the West Bank with its large Arab population, and focus its national development projects in the Negev Desert. Once agricultural projects succeeded in the Negev, the government would be able to settle Israel's new immigrants there. A key part of this strategy, therefore, was the National Water Carrier, constructed from 1959 to 1964, which channeled waters from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Negev in the south. Instead of acquiring more territory to achieve secure borders, Israel would develop nuclear weapons and thus render its lack of strategic depth irrelevant. As Israel developed its

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[92] Ibid, 56-57.
[93] Sachar, pg. 710-711.

nuclear capacity, it would try to prevent border conflicts from escalating to all out war.[94]

Ben-Gurion protégé Shimon Peres expressed the essence of the strategy in a 1963 IDF

meeting: "technology…has taken the place of geography."[95] By the early 1960s, the

Mapai leadership had adopted a grand strategy of accepting the status quo territorial

allotment and focusing its national development projects on the Negev Desert, and of

using nuclear deterrence to overcome Israel's territorial vulnerability.

Upon assuming office in 1963, Eshkol announced that he would continue the

previous government's policies, and his grand strategy mirrored Ben-Gurion's. There

were no plans for territorial conquest. The first Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) five-year

plan developed under Eshkol's chief of staff, Yitzhak Rabin, stated that further territorial

conquests were unnecessary: "the State of Israel can realize fully its national goals within

the borders of the armistice agreement."[96] On 17 May 1965, unveiling a proposal for a

peace settlement between Israel and its neighbors, Eshkol declared that the Zionist

national project would be completed in the 1949 lines:

> "The peace settlement will be made on the basis of Israel as it is… Through its toil and
> sacrifice, and with the support of humanity's finest sons, after the most appalling of
> history's tragedies, the State of Israel arose in a partitioned Land of Israel. In this
> heritage, and within these boundaries, we shall do all we can, and more, to gather in the
> scattered sons of our people and to unveil anew the light of our genius." [97]

In order to secure tepid U.S. acquiescence in its nuclear weapons program, Israel adopted

the policy of nuclear ambiguity: Israel would not "introduce" nuclear weapons into the

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[94] Shlomo Aronson, *Levi Eshkol: From Pioneering Operator to Tragic Hero – A Doer* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), pg. 90 and 96-98. Rubin, pg. 77-78.
[95] Morris, *One State, Two States*, pg. 110.
[96] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), pg. 221.
[97] Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Eshkol, 17 May 1965, accessed 3/29/2012 http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1 947-1974/15+The+Israeli+Peace+Plan+-+Statement+to+the+Kness.htm

region.[98] Israel would continue to build its nuclear weapons, but it would not adopt a strategy of overt nuclear deterrence, and it would neither acknowledge or deny its nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, Israel would use retaliation to deter its Arab neighbors from provoking a conflict before Israel got nuclear weapons, and Israel would especially defend the National Water Carrier, on which the development of the Negev depended: "Israel will oppose unilateral and illegal measures by the Arab States and will act to protect its vital rights."[99] Mapai's grand strategy was to preserve the territorial status quo by means of maintaining Israel's relations with the U.S. and Israel's international legitimacy, enhancing the IDF's might, building nuclear weapons, focusing on internal development, and avoiding war with Israel's neighbors.

In May 1967, when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser occupied the Sinai Peninsula, expelled the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) from its posts along the Egyptian-Israeli border, and blockaded the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, Eshkol's objective was to restore the pre-crisis status quo. His strategy is best understood in contrast to that of the IDF. In their view, the main problem with Nasser's provocation was not the blockade per se but rather the challenge it posed to Israeli deterrence. IDF intelligence chief Aharon Yariv insisted that Israel attack in order to prove to the Arabs that Israel could and would resist any further aggression:

> "If Israel takes no action in response to the blockade of the Straits, she will lose her credibility and the IDF its deterrent capacity. The Arab states will interpret Israel's weakness as an excellent opportunity to threaten her security and her existence."[100]

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[98] Rubin, pg. 136.

[99] Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Eshkol, 21 January 1964, accessed 20 April 2013, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/12+Israel+Will+Protect+its+Vital+Interests-+Statem.htm

[100] Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Presidio Press, 2003), pg. 87.

Since the IDF wanted to showcase Israeli might, their preferred option was to fight alone.

Eshkol never bought into this theory. The 1956 experience had taught him that the Arab

states would recover from an Israeli victory and return to fight again. Consistent with his

overall grand strategy, Eshkol preferred to avoid war and resolve the crisis by diplomacy:

> "We must remember that destroying the Egyptian army now will not bring it to an end. It will recover. Israel won't without foreign aid. If we can avoid war, we must spare no effort to do so. There is a good hope that Britain and the United States, for their own considerations as well, will do it instead of us."[101]

Eshkol gradually came to favor war only when it became clear that diplomacy would not

resolve the crisis and that the U.S. would not punish Israel for acting preemptively.

Eshkol's war aims were limited to the restoration of the pre-crisis status quo. On 24 May

1967, Eshkol approved an IDF war plan called Kardom, under which Israel would

conquer a limited amount of territory in the Sinai Peninsula, from Israel's southern border

to Jebel Libni, and hold the territory as a bargaining chip until Egypt lifted the blockade.

The IDF would mobilize troops on the Syrian and Jordanian borders for defense only.[102]

Eshkol did not intend to take advantage of the war to make territorial gains. His objective

was to restore the pre-crisis status quo, and his priority was to do so while maintaining

international support for Israel. Thus he preferred to resolve the crisis by diplomacy, and

planned to launch a limited war only as a last resort.

Once Israel conquered the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan

Heights in the 1967 war, Eshkol's grand strategic objective was to obtain a

comprehensive peace settlement, and his grand strategic means was to use the territories

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[101] This quote is a truncated version of Eshkol's response to the IDF's description of the red lines theory in a discussion on 28 May, following the Israeli Cabinet decision to wait as long as three weeks before attacking. Aronson, *Levi Eshkol*, pg. 184.
[102] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 242-243.

as bargaining chips to achieve that settlement. Just two days after the end of the war,

Eshkol told the Knesset he viewed Israel's victory as an opportunity to resolve the

longstanding conflict: "A new situation has been created, which can serve as a starting

point in direct negotiations for a peace settlement with the Arab countries."[103] In a

statement to foreign correspondents on 27 June 1967, Eshkol laid out Israel's willingness

to trade the captured territories for a peace treaty:

> So long as our neighbors will persist in their policy of belligerence and will make plans
> for our destruction, we will not relinquish the areas that are now under our control and
> that we deem necessary for our security and self-defense. If, on the other hand, the Arab
> States will agree to discuss peace with us and will forego their war against us, there is no
> problem that, I hope, we will not be able to solve in direct negotiations, for the benefit of
> all parties concerned.[104]

After Eshkol's death on 26 February 1969, his protégé Pinchas Sapir as well as Abba

Eban continued to champion the land for peace policy in Israeli foreign policy debates.

Eshkol's successor, Golda Meir, was a Mapai stalwart, but she had long disagreed

with the party leadership on foreign policy issues. Viewing the Arabs as implacable, Meir

saw no value in making concessions. She expressed this basic outlook in her opposition

to the 1937 Peel Commission's proposal for partition:

> "I was shocked when I heard how good Zionists speak about their great joy of being
> given a Jewish state for the first time in the history of our people. The truth is that they
> are not giving us anything, they are just stealing our land."[105]

In 1965, she opposed Eshkol's peace initiative. In her first address as prime minister to

the Knesset on 5 May 1969, Meir stressed continuity with the previous administration's

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[103] Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Eshkol, 12 June 1967, accessed
4/10/2013,
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1
947-1974/23+Statement+to+the+Knesset+by+Prime+Minister+Eshk.htm
[104] Statement by Prime Minister Eshkol, 27 June 1967, accessed 4/10/2013,
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1
947-1974/1+Statement+by+Prime+Minister+Eshkol-+27+June+1967.htm
[105] Goldstein, "Israel's Prime Ministers and the Arabs," pg. 183.

policy, but there was a slight difference in emphasis. Whereas Eshkol had taken a conciliatory tone, insisting that Israel would return to secure borders while diplomatically declining to specify what those changes might be, Meir spelled out the fact that territorial adjustments would be part of any peace treaty: "the June 4th lines will never be returned to."[106] Even in her rhetoric, she refused to take a conciliatory tone in order to placate the Arabs or other actors.

These attitudinal differences caused Meir to move out of the Mapai camp on foreign policy and sideline the role of Eshkol's top dovish advisors in foreign policy decisions. Mapai Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir, one of the champions of land for peace, told his aid that he never contributed to internal foreign policy debates because he knew that opposing Meir would wreck his longstanding friendship with her: "I want you to know, take note, and remember. I will never oppose Golda."[107] Mapai Foreign Minister Abba Eban, another land for peace advocate, found himself completely sidelined on foreign policy issues. Yitzhak Rabin, then serving as Israel's Ambassador to the United States, reflected in his memoirs that Meir communicated directly with him, and left Eban no role in policy formation toward Israel's most important ally: "Eban's political role was of a most limited nature – at least in Mrs. Meir's government, where policy was shaped by the prime minister."[108] For foreign policy advice, Meir relied instead on ministers from the coalition government's hawkish parties who wanted to retain most of the captured territories for ideological and security reasons. Most foreign policy decisions

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[106] Yossi Goldstein, "Israel's Prime Minister's and the Arabs: Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin," *Israel Affairs* Vol. 17 No. 2 (April 2011), pg. 184.
[107] Yechiam Weitz, "Golda Meir, Israel's Fourth Prime Minister (1969-1974)," Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 47 No. 1 (2011), Pg. 49.
[108] Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Boston and Toronto: Little Brown, 1979), pg. 241-2 in Ibid, pg. 50.

were made in Meir's informal Kitchen Cabinet, which met on Saturdays to formulate the

prime minister's preferred policy in advance of the weekly Sunday Cabinet meetings.

The composition of this Kitchen Cabinet demonstrates the dominance of hawks over

Meir's foreign policy: Yisrael Galilee and Yigal Allon of Ahdut Ha'Avodah, Moshe

Dayan, of Rafi, Abba Eban and Pinchas Sapir.[109] Given the fact that Sapir did not voice

dissenting opinions on foreign policy and that Eban was ignored, it is clear that the

former three were Meir's principle advisors on foreign policy issues throughout her

tenure. Though Meir was a Mapai prime minister, her tenure effectively brought about

the dominance of Moshe Dayan and the Ahdut Ha'Avodah ministers in Israel's foreign

policy decisions.

Consequently, Meir's grand strategy reflected her own personal disposition as

well as the ideological dispositions of these other parties. Though she advocated the

policy of land for peace, she told the Knesset on 4 August 1970 that Israel's final borders

would likely include a significant amount of territory in the West Bank, including the

Jordan Valley and the ridge tops, all of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, a

strip of land connecting southern Israel to Sharm el-Sheikh, and other parts of the

Sinai.[110] Since the Nixon administration by now supplied Israel with all the arms it

needed, Meir saw no reason to make any compromises whatsoever. Her grand strategy

was to respond to Arab military provocations with strength, to assume a hard-line in

negotiations, and to wait for the Arabs to cave in to Israel's every demand. Abba Eban

described the strategy: "All this time, the Israeli defense strategy was frankly attritional.

The logic was that if the Arabs were unable to get their territory back by war or by Great

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[109] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 287.
[110] Ibid.

Power pressure, they would have to seek negotiation and to satisfy some of Israel's security interests."[111] Meir feared that the slightest concession would place pressure on Israel to withdraw to the 5 June 1967 lines, and so she made no concession.

In summary, the Mapai party was ideologically oriented toward three objectives: Jewish sovereignty, Jewish majority, and international legitimacy. The pursuit of these objectives led Mapai to abandon gradually the claim to land outside Israel's 1949 borders. By the early 1960s Mapai pursued a grand strategy of maintaining international support, of building a nuclear weapons program, and of avoiding war at least until Israel had nuclear weapons. Given this grand strategy, Eshkol's preferred response to the May 1967 crisis was diplomatic resolution, and when that did not work, he planned to launch a war whose objective was the restoration of the pre-crisis status quo. On the eve of war, several hawks entered the Cabinet and led Israel toward dramatic conquests. In the aftermath, the Mapai leadership formulated a new grand strategy of trading the captured territories for a comprehensive peace treaty. In 1969, Golda Meir became prime minister. Though she shared Mapai's general ideology, she was hawkish on foreign policy and relied on hawkish parties in the governing coalition for foreign policy advice. Reflecting her own belligerent attitude and the ideological dispositions of these other hawkish parties, Meir formulated a new grand strategy—relying on U.S. support and Israel's military might to sit and wait while the Arabs tried to get Israel to make concessions, until the Arabs finally gave up and submitted to Israel's position.

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[111] Ibid, pg. 309.

Ahdut Ha'Avodah

Closely connected to the movement of collectivist agricultural settlements called *kibbutzim*, Ahdut Ha'Avodah promoted a spirit of ideological zealotry. Its core values were collectivist living, agricultural labor, and settlement of the Land of Israel. Ahdut Ha'Avodah sought to create a new breed of Jew in the Land of Israel. Party ideologue Yitzhak Tabenkin urged the Jews to shed the cowardly ways of Diaspora living. He disparaged European Jews who did not resist the Nazi Holocaust as "sheep going to the slaughter," and encouraged the Jews in Israel to confront danger in a courageous manner: "We now have to live with a sense of fear, not fear of the coming enemy, but fear that all which has been developed in this country for forty years—will end one day in eternal dishonor."[112] During the British Mandate, the leaders who would later form Ahdut Ha'Avodah were closely associated with Yitzhak Sadeh, the Jewish commander who first advocated the strategy of responding to the 1936-1939 Arab revolt attacks by launching retaliatory raids near the attackers' villages and on the roads they used, employing tactics of maneuver and surprise and striking under the cover of night—termed "going beyond the fence," this doctrine was developed in contradiction to the defensive tactics then prevalent in the Jewish settlement communities. When Sadah formed the Palmach, the elite strike force that produced the first generation of IDF leaders, Ahdut Ha'Avodah played a key role in facilitating the cooperation between this unit and the *kibbutzim*, and party leaders such as Yigal Allon held key command posts.[113] The party thus embraced a

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[112] Yehiam Weitz, "The Positions of David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Tabenkin Vis-A-Vis the Holocaust of European Jewry," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 2, (1990) pg. 197.
[113] Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son: A Biography*, trans. Evelyn Abel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pg. 82-86, 132-133.

spirit of valor and heroism, as well as the ethos of taking the initiative and going on the offensive against Israel's enemies.

Ahdut Ha'Avodah considered territorial expansion an ideological necessity. In a 1968 book, Ahdut Ha'Avodah leader Yigal Allon argued that the Jews owned all the Land of Israel by historical right.[114] In 1955, a party election brochure called for territorial expansion and expulsion of the Arabs from the Jews' homeland: "No territorial concessions must be made. Arab refugees must be rehabilitated on the unused land of the Arab countries, with international help."[115] Moreover, a socialist that had identified with the U.S.S.R., Ahdut Ha'Avodah initially opposed Israel's move into the Western sphere, advocating a "the policy of independence and non-identification."[116] As alignment with the Soviets gradually proved imprudent, this ideological disposition gradually moved toward an aversion to any international alliances that could restrict Israel's freedom to act. Taken together, these values infused Ahdut Ha'Avodah with an activist disposition.

The overriding grand strategic objective of Ahdut Ha'Avodah was territorial aggrandizement, and its primary target was the West Bank. In the spring of 1949, Major General and party leader Yigal Allon urged Ben-Gurion to invade Jordan.[117] In an article published shortly before June 1967, Allon argued that Israel must take advantage of the next war to make dramatic territorial gains: "In…a new war, we must avoid the historic mistake of the War of Independence…and must not cease fighting until we achieve total

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[114] Avi Raz, *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). pg. 271.
[115] Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pg. 171.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son: A Biography*, trans. Evelyn Abel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pg. 283.

victory, the territorial fulfillment of the Land of Israel."[118] During the 1960s Allon and

Galili opposed Israel's nuclear weapons program, fearing that the Arabs would build their

own nuclear weapons in response, which would reduce the opportunities for Israel to

make territorial gains in a conventional war.[119] Allon never placed much emphasis in

international support, and urged Israel to avoid placing itself in a situation where it relied

on any power for its security:

> "Diplomatic guaranties…are devoid of any real deterrent value; they are lacking in
> teeth… Military guaranties, however, can be of some value, but to rely exclusively upon
> them would be a critical error… the guaranty itself might hand over almost totally to the
> guarantor the recipient's power of independent action."[120]

Instead, Allon and Galili thought Israel must provide its own security. In his 1959 book

Curtain of Sand, Allon argued Israel must delineate a number of "red lines" that would

trigger a preemptive counterstrike.[121] Allon's grand strategy was one of conventional

deterrence, in which Israel would scare the Arabs off by offensive operations that

showcased Israel's military might.

Once Nasser occupied the Sinai and blockaded the Straits of Tiran, Allon and

Galili called for war immediately. Preemptive war was in line with both elements of

Ahdut Ha'Avodah's grand strategy—offensive deterrent posture and territorial

conquest—and Allon and Galili urged the Cabinet to take advantage of the opportunity to

conquer the West Bank. In the aftermath of the Israel's success, Ahdut Ha'Avodah's

main objective was to retain the conquered territories. Allon submitted in July 1967 a

document to the Cabinet that would come to be known as the Allon Plan, intended to

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[118] Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), pg. 321.
[119] Aronson, *Levi Eshkol,* pg. 133.
[120] Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders," *Foreign Affairs*, October
1976, pg. 43-44.
[121] Aronson, *Levi Eshkol,* pg. 177.

perpetuate Israel's hold over conquered territories permanently. Under the Allon Plan, the areas in the West Bank heavily populated by Arabs would either form an autonomous Palestinian entity or be returned to Jordan, while Israel would keep Jerusalem, the territory adjacent to the Jordan River, and large swaths of uninhabited territory, including the bulk of the Judean desert in the south. Gaza would be a part of the Arab entity.[122] Allon also sought to retain the Golan Heights, a number of strategic territories on the northern Sinai, and a strip of territory connecting Sharm el-Sheikh with southern Israel.[123] Allon thought the great powers might favor his solution as a feasible compromise, that the invasion had shocked the Palestinians and thus presented the Israelis with an opportunity to force a solution on them, and that it was best to resolve the dispute before violent Arab resistance became widespread.[124] Allon thought any U.S. imposed plans to the conflict would inevitably undermine Israel's interest:

> "The various proposals or plans raised by third parties to the conflict only serve the opposite purpose… the [American] 'Rogers plan' of 1969…erred on two main counts: first, by the very fact of its presentation to the parties instead of leaving it to them to negotiate their differences without prior conditions; second, by its total lack of any consideration for Israel's security needs."[125]

Though prepared to negotiate, Allon feared caving in to international pressure and great power demands.

Ahdut Ha'Avodah's ideological disposition toward connection with the Land of Israel, independence, and heroism. Throughout the 1960s, it advocated a grand strategy of conventional deterrence. In 1967, its grand strategy was to take advantage of the crisis to make a show of strength against Nasser and to capture territory. After 1967, its

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[122] Shlomo Gazit, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories* (Frank Cass: Portland, OR, 2003),149-150. Sachar, pg. 710.
[123] Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders," pg. 48-49.
[124] Shapira, *Yigal Allon, Native Son*, pg. 315.
[125] Ibid, pg. 52.

adopted the Allon Plan to settle the uninhabited areas of the West Bank and Gaza and give the inhabited areas back to the Arabs. It considered this strategy to have the best prospects of ensuring continued Israeli control of the conquered territory.

Moshe Dayan

The ideological disposition of Moshe Dayan was rooted in his sense of connection to the ancient Israelite kingdoms described in the Bible. An early schoolteacher, Meshulam Halevi, had cultivated this sentiment through lessons that emphasized engagement with the local natural habitat coupled with thorough immersion in biblical literature. As Dayan reflects in his 1974 book *Living with the Bible,* he viewed his world as an extension of the world of ancient Israel:

> "Our actual surroundings served to further bridge the distance of time, returning us to the days of antiquity, our patriarchs and nation's heroes. The language we spoke—the only language we knew—was Hebrew, the language of the Bible."[126]

Dayan continued to cultivate the connection between the ancient Israelites and the physical land of Israel through his lifelong infatuation with biblical archeology.[127] The connection between the Bible and the physical Land of Israel instilled in Dayan a hunger to establish Jewish control over all of the latter. In 1934, Dayan hiked the length of the Jordan River to the northern tip of the Dead Sea, much farther than was safe for Jews to travel at the time, and then went west through Hebron to Gaza, where he fought with an Arab policeman who had stopped him by insisting that the man find an official to speak

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[126] Mordechai Bar-On, *Moshe Dayan: Israel's Controversial Hero* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pg. 7.
[127] Bar-On, pg. 44-45.

with him in Hebrew, even though Dayan spoke Arabic, and subsequently convinced the Jewish daily *Davar* to report this assertion of Jewish national rights.[128]

Dayan considered that Jewish and Arab national aspirations were irreconcilable, that Arab anger at Jewish seizure of their lands was justified, and that the Jews must respond to this anger with military might. In 1956, eulogizing an IDF commander who had been murdered while trying to drive Arab shepherds away from Nahal Oz, a kibbutz that had been founded on the site of a previous Arab village, Dayan reminded the Israelis that their national project entailed perpetual conflict:

> "For eight years they have been sitting in Gaza refugee camps while before their eyes we have been making the land and villages where they and their forefathers had lived our own… How we shut our eyes to a sober observation of our fate, to the sight of our generation's mission in all its cruelty… Beyond the furrow border, a sea of hatred and vengeance swells, waiting for the day that calm will dull our vigilance, the day that we listen to the ambassadors of scheming hypocrisy who call on us to lay down our arms… This is the decree of our generation. This is the choice of our lives—to be prepared and armed, strong and resolute or to let the sword fall from our fist and our lives be cut down."[129]

Though Dayan recognized the Arabs' legitimate grievances, he made no apology for Israeli actions. If Jewish settlement of the land would inevitably cause conflict with the Arabs, the proper action was to prepare for a fight.

At the same time, Dayan liked and respected the Arabs and felt the Jews could live alongside them. This sentiment stemmed from the fact that as a boy he befriended members of the local Bedouin tribes, learning to speak their language and becoming familiar with their customs.[130] In his memoir *Story of My Life*, reflecting on Arab attacks against Jews launched by a group called the Kassamiya, Dayan indicates draws a

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[128] Bar-On, pg. 12.
[129] Bar-On, pg. 76.
[130] Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pg. 31 and 34.

distinction between the national feelings Arabs and Jews hold toward one another, on the one hand, and personal feelings, on the other:

> "I had no doubt that it was possible to live at peace with them, they in their own villages and according to their traditional patterns, and we according to ours… The Kassamiya…clarified one aspect of the relations between us…the deep national and religious chasm that separated the Arabs from the Jews who were fulfilling the ideals of Zion."[131]

The implication is that nationalism and religion are the source of the wedge between these two communities, who otherwise would have no problem living side by side.

These three facets of Dayan's ideological disposition would bear important implications on his grand strategy—his attachment to the Biblical land of Israel, his conviction that the Jews must employ military might against irreconcilable enemies, and his conviction the Jews and Arabs could nevertheless live alongside each other in harmony.

Upon becoming defense minister on 1 June 1967, Dayan adopted a grand strategy of forcing a showdown with Nasser and conquering territory. Dayan had never been satisfied with the 1949 armistice lines. In the prologue to *Story of My Life*, Dayan indicates that nationalist and religious motives had long fueled his intention to recapture Jerusalem:

> "I had waited nineteen years for this moment. In 1948, when I was commander of Jerusalem, and later, when I was chief of staff, I had cherished the hope of a liberated Jerusalem and a freed Mount Scopus. Throughout all the generations, during the two thousand years of their exile, the Jewish people had yearned for Jerusalem. In the previous two decades, this craving of the centuries had found expression in operational plans. Jerusalem and its environs had a place in the General Staff files, on air reconnaissance photographs, and in exercises at the sand table."[132]

The minutes from a 1950 conference of Israeli diplomats indicate he had long awaited the opportunity for further territorial conquests:

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[131] Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pg. 34.

[132] Moshe Dayan, *Moshe Dayan: Story of My Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976), pg. 14-15.

> "Dayan believes that the first campaign in the process of Israel's establishment as an independent state is not yet over since we have not yet specified whether its spatial identity today is the final one… He believes that the period we are living in is still open to change."[133]

Dayan took advantage of the May 1967 crisis to realize those ambitions. He also saw the crisis as a challenge to Israel's will to stand up for itself. Therefore, upon becoming chief of staff on 1 June 1967, Dayan pushed for war and expanded Israel's war aims. Eshkol's grand strategy had been to make limited territorial acquisitions in the northern part of the Sinai and to use them as bargaining chips to compel Nasser to open the Straits of Tiran. Dayan thought the main threat of Nasser's blockade and occupation of the Sinai was that it undermined Israeli deterrence, so first goal was to make a show of strength:

> "The aim of this war was armed confrontation with Nasser. The real gravity of his closing the Straits of Tiran lay not simply in the blockade itself, but in his attempt to demonstrate that Israel was incapable of standing up to the Arabs. If we failed to disprove this thesis, our situation would steadily deteriorate. We therefore had to embark on a test of strength… Therefore, I said, we had no choice but to go out to the very center of his armed might."[134]

Dayan therefore changed the war's primary objective to the destruction of the Egyptian forces, and expanded the territory the IDF would capture so that it now included Sharm el-Sheikh.[135] Furthermore, as demonstrated below, Dayan took advantage of the opportunity to conquer the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Dayan's inauguration as defense minister shifted from making limited territorial conquests to bargain for the opening of the Straits of Tiran toward winning a major showdown with Nasser in order to prove Israel's strength and making major territorial acquisitions.

In the aftermath of Israel's victory, Dayan's primary objective was to retain the captured territories permanently. In the 18-19 June 1967 Cabinet meetings where the

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[133] Bar-On, pg. 40.
[134] Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pg. 323-324.
[135] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 243.

Israeli government debated the future of the territories, Dayan argued that Judea, Samaria

and Gaza were: "part of our land, to be settled, not to be abandoned."[136] Dayan's

territorial appetite included more than just the Palestinian lands. On the eve of the 1969

elections, Dayan pushed his territorial vision through to become the platform of the Israel

Labor Party, the unity of Mapai, Ahdut Ha'Avodah and Rafi. The chairman of the

platform committee announced the position on the radio on 3 August 1969:

> Israel regards the Jordan River as its eastern defense border, non-crossable westward by
> foreign army forces. We will continue to control the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip
> and our independent forces, controlling the straits in an area…territorially contiguous
> with Israel, will ensure freedom of shipping from Eilat southward.[137]

In the Autumn of 1973, Dayan drew up a plan for the territories, which Yisrael Galili

wrote up and which subsequently became known as the Galili Document and approved

by the party secretariat on 3 September 1973. The plan included a new Jewish town to be

built on the Golan, a rural center to be established in the Jordan Valley, the construction

of a deep-water port called Yamit in the Sinai between Rafah and El-Arish.[138] The

objective of retaining the territories and settling them reflected Dayan's ideological

disposition toward the view that the Jews were rebuilding their ancient civilization in

their biblical homeland.

The grand strategy Dayan advocated reflected his seemingly contradictory

convictions that military strength must be displayed before an implacable enemy, and that

the Jews and Arabs could live together side by side. Part of Dayan's means to achieve

these objectives were the use of military power to dissuade the Arabs from making war to

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[136] Dayan, *Milestones*, in Bar-On, pg. 143.
[137] Bar-On, pg. 159.
[138] Bar-On, pg. 160.

get back the territories. When the Egyptians launched provocations along the Suez Canal

in 1968, Dayan advocated going on the offensive to compel them to give up:

> "The decisive question is: Can we implement a policy to show the Arabs that it is better
> for them to reach a peace settlement or at least a ceasefire because wars with us will cost
> them dearly and they will not achieve their goal? We must now strike back hard, not rely
> on fences and mines."[139]

Dayan had no qualms about going on the offensive after the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO), and the IDF launched raids against PLO bases on the east side of the

Jordan River, most notably the raid against Karameh on 12 March 1968, and against the

Beirut airport on 29 December 1968.[140] Yet a core component of Dayan's grand strategy

was being flexible and allowing Arab life to return to normal as soon as possible. Dayan

believed that if Israel created a situation that was tolerable for the Arabs, they would

eventually come to accept Israel's continued occupation of the territories. Dayan

explained this concept in a conversation with the Palestinian poet Fadwa Touqan:

> "The situation between us today is like the complex relationship between a Bedouin man
> and a girl he has abducted against her will. But once they have children, the children will
> recognize the man as their father and the woman as their mother. The original act of
> abduction will mean nothing to them. You the Palestinians, as a nation, do not want us
> today, but we will change your attitude by forcing our presence upon you."[141]

In the West Bank, this thinking informed Dayan's Open Bridges policy. Dayan thought

that if the Israelis permitted the Palestinians to resume their lives as normal, and also

fostered close economic ties between the West Bank and Israel proper, the Arabs living

in Palestine would gradually come to accept Israeli rule. Shlomo Gazit, whom Dayan

appointed to oversee the administration of the territories, describes the tree points of

Dayan's Open Bridges policy: "an 'invisible' occupation administration; normalization,

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[139] Bar-On, pg. 152.
[140] Bar-On, pg. 149 and 157.
[141] Gazit, pg. 242.

along with a free link with the Arab world; and a sophisticated punitive policy."[142] Dayan

explained that an invisible government would mean that the Palestinians administered

their own territory, and ordinary Palestinian would never have to run into Israeli officials:

> "If we wish to see any good come out of the fact of our forced presence in the Territories,
> we must ensure that the areas of friction between the two peoples are minimal. To bring
> that about, we have to make it a goal of our military administration that a local Arab can
> live a normal life as long as he has not violated the law, without needing to see or interact
> with any Israeli representative of our military occupation administration."[143]

That way, the Palestinian public would not feel emotionally that their lives were being

controlled by Israel. Normalization included the free movement of all peoples into and

out of the West Bank, freedom of access to Palestinians and Jews to all holy sites,

allowing the West Bank to continue using the Jordanian Dinar as official currency,

freedom for the West Bank to trade with other states as it had before, and the fostering of

economic cooperation between the West Bank and Israel in order to make the former

economically dependent on the latter. Dayan's thinking was that by the time the Arabs

came around to negotiate a final peace agreement with Israel, the West Bank would be

thriving economically under the Israeli occupation, and separation would be undesirable

to the residents.[144] Similar thinking underlay Dayan's desire to withdraw from the Suez

Canal, which would allow the Egyptians to resume normal economic activities such as

shipping through the canal, and thus would make Israel's permanent occupation of the

Sinai less frustrating to them. Though Dayan had advocated conquering large portions of

the Sinai during the 1967 war, he had always opposed conquering the Suez Canal, and on

22 March 1971 he proposed to Meir's close circle of foreign policy advisors, the Kitchen

Cabinet, that Israel withdraw from the Suez Canal as part of an interim agreement:

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[142] Gazit, *Trapped Fools*, pg. 47.
[143] Ibid, pg. 47-48.
[144] Ibid, pg. 56-58.

> "To breach a solid wall, we should aim for an interim agreement. Contrary to our position that so long as there is no peace treaty we will hold the current ceasefire lines, we should retreat from the Suez Canal as part of an imperfect agreement."[145]

Dayan thought that by withdrawing and allowing Egypt to renew shipping on the Suez Canal, he would reduce the possibility of war, and he thought Israel should redeploy 18 miles to the east, dismantle the Bar-Lev line, and consider the arrangement to be permanent. He expected that Egypt would not consider this to be the final line, but that Sadat would eventually arrange a solution through negotiation rather than war.[146] The thought behind this, just as in Open Bridges, was that enabling the Arabs to resume life as close as possible to that they had lived before 5 June 1967 would help them reconcile themselves to the prospect of permanent Israeli occupation of the captured territories. This grand strategy reflected Dayan's convictions that war would go on forever, that Israel should make territorial conquests and fight hard, but also that the Arabs and Jews could live together amiably.

Dayan aimed to attain as much territory as possible, and his grand strategy included on the one hand, the employment of cruelty and offensive operations to compel the Arabs to cease resistance, and, on the other hand, measures of reconciliation in order to make the situation workable for the Arabs, so that they might eventually come to grudgingly accept Israel's consolidation of their lands.

Menachem Begin

Menachem Begin, who entered the Israeli government as a minister without portfolio on 1 June 1967, viewed territorial expansion into the West Bank as an

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[145] Bar-On, pg. 155-156.
[146] Bar-On, pg. 156-157.

ideological imperative. Begin emerged as a leader in the Revisionist Zionist Ze'ev

Jabotinsky's Betar youth movement, an organization of young Eastern European Jews

attracted to Jabotinsky's assertive and militant posture. Begin viewed the world as

fundamentally hostile to Jews, a view that was increased by the Holocaust, to which he

constantly referred, and a view which he brought to the Arab-Israeli conflict, referring to

the pre-5 June 1967 borders as "Auschwitz borders," calling Arafat Hitler, and calling the

Palestinian national charter the Arab *Mein Kampf*.[147] Yet whereas Jabotinsky had been an

assimilated Russian, a pragmatist who was unfamiliar with the Jewish religious tradition

and whose militancy was a matter more of style than of substance, the Betar youth hailed

came from unassimilated, traditional Jewish backgrounds and also drew inspiration from

religious sources, such as Uri Zvi Greenberg's messianic poetry.[148] Consequently,

asserting Jewish control over all the ancient Israelite land was a core ideological

imperative, and there was no aversion to using military means to do so. In response to

Ben-Gurion's declaration of the Jewish state on the basis of the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan,

Begin asserted the ideological necessity of future Israeli expansion:

> The State of Israel was established. But we shall remember that the homeland has not yet
> been liberated… We shall carry the vision of full liberation and redemption. Five-sixths
> of our national territory are at stake. Our plows will yet plow the fields of the Gilead.[149]

Gilead is a territory east of the Jordan River that, according to the Bible, was occupied by

the ancient Israelite tribes of Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe Manasseh, and its inclusion

at the end of the paragraph is an example of the Biblical language that generally

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[147] Peleg, pg. 31-33.

[148] Colin Shindler, "Likud and the Search for Eretz Israel: From the Bible to the Twenty-First Century," *Israel Affairs* Vol. 8 Issue 1-2 (2001), pg. 100.

[149] Ilan Peleg, "The Legacy of Begin and Beginism for the Israeli Political System," in Gregory S. Mahler (ed.), *Israel After Begin* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pg. 34.

accompanied Begin's assertions of Jewish territorial aspirations.[150] A 1959 pamphlet of Begin's political party Herut laid out the claim explicitly: "the right of the Jewish people to *Eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel) in its historic entirety is an eternal and inalienable right."[151] In a 1960 interview, Herut leader Ya'acov Meridor explained that Israel's right extended to all the territory included in the present state of Jordan. The purely ideological root of Begin's territorial aspirations is demonstrated by the fact that, whereas Dayan and Ahdut Ha'Avodah had always wanted territories outside the ancient Land of Israel such as parts of the Sinai for security purposes, Begin had no desire to conquer anything outside of the ancient land of Israel. Meridor explained that Israel had no desire to conquer any territory other than the Jordanian territory: "The 'claim' comprises Jordan (including, of course, the West Bank) and Gaza, but no other Arab territory; thus peace treaties with all other Arab states are in order."[152] A combination of the belief in acting boldly, shunning international cooperation, and the emphasis on the Jews' historic links to the ancient Israelite lands combined to make Begin's party favor militant means to make large territorial gains.

Based on his ideological disposition to seek to establish the State of Israel in the ancient Israelite territory, the mistrust of all outsiders and the need to use military activism, Begin's consistent objective was territorial acquisition at Jordan's expense. Though there was the need to keep the Jewish character of the state, there seems to be no fear that incorporating a large Arab population would undermine this, as a 1959 Herut party platform calls for: "the reunification of *Eretz Yisrael*, where all its inhabitants,

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[150] Deuteronomy, 3:12-13
[151] Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, pg. 174.
[152] Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, pg. 173.

regardless of origin, creed or community, will live as free and equal citizens of the Hebrew state."[153] With this objective in mind, Begin appears to have been willing to employ any means to attain them. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Begin supported Israel's harsh reprisal policy because he expected this to lead to escalation toward a war that would enable Israel to conquer its territory.[154] He therefore thought the May 1967 crisis should be exploited in order to make these territorial acquisitions, and on the evening 5 June 1967, the first day of the war, urged the Cabinet to conquer the Old City of Jerusalem immediately: "this is an historic moment of opportunity."[155] In the aftermath of the war, Begin argued that Israel should never return the West Bank to the Arabs, but to avoid international isolation it should not annex it outright for the time being but simply start establishing settlements.[156] Reflecting Herut's line that the Palestinian residents of the West Bank would be incorporated as citizens in Israel, Begin proposed the establishment of Jewish quarters in Arab cities in the West Bank to build "an atmosphere of mutual trust" between the two peoples.[157] Reflecting Herut's relative indifference to the other territories, Begin approved the initial Cabinet decision on 19 June 1967 to trade the Golan Heights and the Sinai for peace and to defer a decision on the West Bank. His stance seems to have hardened over time, as he opposed Israel's acceptance of U.N. Resolution 242, which happened on 1 May 1968, and opposed plans for Rhodes-style negotiations.[158] Begin's ideological disposition toward realizing a Jewish state on all the Land of Israel informed his objective of territorial expansion, and

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[153] Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel*, pg. 174.
[154] Peleg, "The Legacy of Begin," pg. 35.
[155] Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 232
[156] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 256.
[157] Peleg, 26.
[158] Peleg, pg. 25-26.

his grand strategic means were war and then settlement of the captured territories without making any outright decision to annex them and thus avoid international sanction.

Israeli Foreign Policy, 1963-1973

The differences in ideological disposition of the various leaders who participated in foreign policy decision making brought about changes in Israel's grand strategy. In the first part of the period, the various grand strategies of the different leaders shared the same policy prescription—retaliatory raids against the Syrian and Palestinian provocations. During the 1967 crisis this consensus disintegrated, and a leadership change on the eve of war pushed the government toward a policy of preemptive invasion with expansionist aims. Israel promptly launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, followed by the invasion of the West Bank and the Golan Heights. In the aftermath of the war, the Israeli government decided to avoid making a decision between those who wanted to make concessions for a peace treaty and those who wanted to annex the conquered territories, and this effectively caused the government to pursue all three policies at once—in charge of the administration of Gaza and the West Bank, Dayan implemented his "Open Bridges" policy; the Israeli government effectively tolerated the construction of settlements in the occupied territories under the guidelines set in the Allon Plan; and the Eshkol government pursued negotiation through various channels, despite the fact that Israel's gradual acceptance of Dayan's and Allon's strategies effectively undermined those efforts. From 1970 to 1973, based on her grand strategy of not yielding one inch, Golda Meir rejected the initiatives of several Arab leaders to

resolve the conflict on the basis of U.N. 242. The Egyptian and Syrian surprise attack on 6 October 1973 caught Meir's government completely off guard.

During the border conflict between Israel and Syria that raged from 1963 to 1967, the grand strategies of all foreign policy elites prescribed retaliatory raids on enemy territory. There was some disagreement over the policy's objectives. Expansionists such as Menachem Begin supported the raids in the expectation that regional escalation would eventually provide an opportunity for Israeli invasion of Jordan, whereas the Mapai leadership under Eshkol intended to compel the Arabs from instigating war long enough for Israel to achieve nuclear deterrence. Eshkol's viewpoint carried the day, and the Israeli responses to Syrian and Palestinian provocations were planned in such a manner as to avoid regional escalation. Though the persistence of Syria's aggression prompted the Israeli responses to become increasingly aggressive, Israel had no intention of taking things too far. The Eshkol's bold moves were based on IDF assessments that Egypt would not be ready for the next round of Arab-Israeli wars until at least 1970, especially since his forces were then bogged down in Yemen.[159] At any rate, Eshkol planned his retaliations in a manner designed to preserve the regional status quo as much as possible.

In the 1963-1964 debate about Israel's response to Syria's water diversion project, Eshkol chose the least aggressive path. Moshe Dayan argued that nothing short of war would prevent the Arabs' diversion efforts, and published an article saying that war was inevitable if the Arabs went forward with their plans. Ahdut Ha'Avodah minster Yisrael Galili argued that Israel should exploit an incident in the demilitarized zones to conquer Syrian territory along the Banias River. When Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin suggested

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[159] Luttwak and Horowitz, pg. 167.

that Israel focus only on destroying the Syrian diversion equipment, Eshkol adopted this relatively restrained policy.[160] The plan was to provoke Syria into attacking Israeli targets in the demilitarized zones, and then exploit these incidents to destroy Syria's diversion equipment. The Israelis only escalated the conflict when their prevailing tactics proved insufficient to thwart the diversion project. The Israeli's first attempt to execute the strategy, on 3 November 1964, had been limited to tank shelling against Syrian targets.[161] Eshkol authorized Rabin to introduce the IAF into the fray on 13 November 1964 because the Israeli provocations had spurred the Syrians to fire on Israeli settlements with artillery pieces that fell outside the tanks' range.[162] Eshkol adopted an even riskier strategy in the spring and summer of 1965—using increasingly harsh retaliations to force the Syrians to choose between abandoning the diversion project or facing all out war— because the Syrians were moving their tractors farther and farther away from the border.[163] In September 1965, the Syrians submitted to the decision of the third Arab summit conference at Casablanca to cease the diversion works. Eshkol had succeeded.[164]

The desire to preserve the regional status quo animated Eshkol's response to the first Syrian-sponsored Fatah raids in January 1965. Since Fatah launched the majority of its attacks from Jordan, the IDF launched its first retaliatory raid in May 1965 in order to pressure King Hussein to crack down on the terrorists. Rabin explained Israel's motive: "to get the Jordanian authorities to feel a more serious responsibility for acting against al-Fatah than has been expressed over the past months." When the Jordanians began

[160] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 231.
[161] Ma'oz, "Prelude to the Six-Day War," pg. 25.
[162] Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Presidio Press, 2003), pg. 23.
[163] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 232.
[164] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 232.

arresting Fatah agents and confiscating caches of explosives, the number of Fatah attacks

decreased from 15 in September to six in October to three in November, three in

December, none in January 1966 and none in February 1966. At that point, Eshkol

stopped authorizing retaliatory raids, and told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense

Committee on 1 February 1966 that Israel should focus on other means of combating

Palestinian guerillas besides military strikes.[165] Seeking to preserve the regional status

quo, Eshkol took advantage of the opportunity to desist from activities that threatened to

undermine the Hashemite regime.

       The desire to avoid war and preserve the regional status quo continued to animate

Eshkol's policy after the Neo-Ba'ath seized power in February 1966 and implemented

their national liberation war. The Neo-Ba'ath coup enabled the regime's leaders to

increase the support they had been providing to Fatah, which restarted its attacks with a

bombing on the night of 24-25 April. When an Israeli retaliatory raid on the night of 29-

30 resulted in the deaths of 11 Palestinian civilians, an enraged King Hussein dispatched

two armored brigades into the West Bank. Wishing to avoid to the prospect of

undermining Hussein's regime or provoking regional war, Eshkol told Rabin that Israel

should stop launching attacks in Jordanian territory: "We don't want to hit Jordan any

more. It makes sense to leave the situation as it is, if possible, for two to three months.

Otherwise it will seem to the world that the Jews are just lashing out."[166] The desire to

avoid regional conflict prevented Eshkol from continuing to target the Palestinian

guerillas in Jordanian territory.

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[165] Rubin, 199-215.
[166] Rubin, pg. 221-222.

Instead, Israel opted to stop the guerillas by retaliating against Syria. Since IDF intelligence indicated that the Syrian army ran Fatah training camps inside Syria, and that Syrian intelligence officers even conducted some of Fatah's operations, the Israelis at this point considered Fatah to be effectively an arm of Damascus.[167] Additionally, the Neo-Ba'ath had restarted the water diversion works. Consequently, compelling Syria to rein in Fatah seemed like an ideal means of quelling the guerilla hostilities. On 7 July 1966, Israel dispatched the IAF against Syrian diversion works and artillery positions on the Golan Heights, shooting down one Syrian MiG in the subsequent battle.[168] On 14 July 1966, Israel again dispatched the IAF to attack Syrian diversion sites.[169] When the Syrians reacted to these attacks on 15 August 1966 by deploying their air force against an Israeli boat that had run ashore on the Syrian section of the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, the IAF did not hesitate to shoot down two Syrian MiGs.[170] According to Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee minutes from 1 November 1966, the Israelis at this time were preparing to deliver a devastating blow that would compel Syria to cease supporting the Fatah guerillas once and for all. The Israelis assumed that that Egypt and Jordan would not respond so long as the attack was "vigorous and quick," and Israeli diplomats began fostering international support for such an attack by lodging a complaint about Syria with the U.N. Security Council.[171] Intending to preserve the regional status quo and avoid war, Eshkol responded to the recognition that Jordan could tolerate no further raids by shifting the fight to the Syrian front.

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[167] Rubin, pg. 222.
[168] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 29.
[169] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pg. 90.
[170] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 29.
[171] Rubin, pg. 235.

Further developments caused the Israelis temporarily to revert to the Jordanian front. On 4 November 1966, Egypt and Syria signed a defense pact, and now an Israeli strike would risk war with Egypt. Despite the fact that the guerilla attacks continued, the Israelis did not follow through with their plan to deliver Syria a devastating blow. Yet when a mine outside Hebron killed three Israeli policemen on 10 November 1966, a strong demonstration of Israeli strength seemed imperative. Since the prospect of fighting Nasser rendered Syria a non-option, Eshkol opted to make a dramatic show of strength in the town of Samu in the West Bank. Still, the Israeli strategy was calibrated to avoid sparking a regional war. The strategy was to deter West Bank Palestinians from providing shelter to Fatah. By launching the raid in broad daylight and sending in tanks, the Israelis hoped to avoid civilian casualties and deter the Jordanians from fighting them.[172]

The Samu raid's disastrous consequences caused the Israelis again to cease activities inside Jordan in order to avoid undermining Hussein or sparking regional war. Jordanian troops did intervene. Fifteen Jordanian soldiers, five Palestinian civilians and one Israeli soldier were killed. Thirty four Jordanians soldiers, six Palestinian civilians, and ten Israeli soldiers were wounded. Ninety three buildings were destroyed. Riots broke out throughout the West Bank that threatened King Hussein's regime. In a conversation with Rabin, Eshkol said the raid had hit the wrong target: "We meant to punch the mother-in-law but we beat the shit out of the bride."[173] To relieve the pressure on King Hussein, the Israelis adopted a static defense approach, cancelling planned cuts to the length of mandatory IDF service in order to dispatch more guards along the borders

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[172] Rubin, 242 and Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 31-32.
[173] Rubin, 232-263.

and allocating more funds to build fences along the borders.[174] Again, the policy of

avoiding war caused the Israelis to stop retaliating against King Hussein when tensions

seemed to approach an intolerable level.

Again, the Israelis shifted their focus toward Syria. Fatah continued to launch

attacks from November 1966 to March 1967 from Syrian and Jordanian territories, but

the Israelis wanted to give King Hussein an opportunity to recover from Samu.[175] Israel

could not let the guerilla attacks go unanswered, however, and Eshkol revealed his

decision to Rabin: "I believe we have to punish the Syrians." Eshkol decided that Israel

would respond to the next Syrian provocation with a dramatic show of force. On 31

March 1967, Palestinian guerillas bombed an irrigation pump and Israeli railroad tracks.

In response, on 7 April 1967 the Israelis provoked a clash that ended with the IAF

chasing Syrian planes across the border, shooting down two MiGs over the Golan

Heights and shooting down four more planes directly above Damascus. It was a bold

display of Israel's air superiority.[176] Undeterred, Fatah launched two more attacks on 9

and 13 May, one of which originated in Syria.[177] At this point, the Israelis sent signs

indicating that they were planning further major attacks against the Syrian regime. In a

public interview, IDF Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin said:

> "The type of reaction adopted against Jordan and Lebanon is applicable only against
> states that do not favor the acts of sabotage mounted from their territory… In Syria the
> problem is different, because the government activates the saboteurs. Therefore the
> objective of the action in Syria is different."[178]

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[174] Rubin, pg. 279-280.
[175] Rubin, pg. 279-280.
[176] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 46-47.
[177] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 53.
[178] Morris, *Righteous Victims,* pg. 304.

On 11 May, Eshkol issued another warning: "In view of the 14 [border] incidents in the past month alone it is possible that we will have to adopt measures no less drastic than those of April 7." On 12 May, at a briefing for the foreign press, IDF intelligence chief Aharon Yariv said that if the Syrians continued to support terrorist attacks inside Israel, then Israel would take limited military measures to topple the regime in Damascus.[179] Unable to strike Jordan without risking war, but unable to sit idle while the Palestinian guerillas continued to harass its country, the Israeli government moved toward a major showdown with Damascus.

Eshkol's grand strategy at this time was to avoid war at least until Israel had acquired nuclear weapons. Yet he had to respond to attacks on essential water infrastructure and a prolonged campaign of harassment. When a clash with Syria seemed to risk war, he shifted Israel's retaliations to the Jordanian front. When a clash with Jordan seemed to risk war, he shifted the focus back to Syria. This oscillation indicates that Eshkol was searching for a way to compel Fatah and the Syrians to give up, without in the process bringing about a regional war.

The Mapai leadership's grand strategy of avoiding war at least until Israel had acquired nuclear weapons, as well as the importance it placed on international legitimacy and U.S. support, caused it to attempt to resolve the May 1967 crisis by means of diplomacy. On 23 May, when Nasser blockaded the Straits of Tiran, the Ministerial Committee on Defense declared the move an "act of aggression," yet voted unanimously to dispatch Foreign Minister Abba Eban to Washington, D.C. to confer with U.S.

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[179] Morris, *Righteous Victims,* pg. 304.

President Lyndon Johnson and delay any decision by at least 48 hours.[180] Eban returned

to Israel on the night of 27 May and told the Cabinet that the U.S. opposed Israeli

preemption but supported the Israeli right of free passage. Eban argued that Israel should

wait a "few weeks" for the U.S. to organize an international convoy to open the Straits of

Tiran.[181] The next afternoon, 28 May, the Cabinet was tied on whether or not it should

launch a preemptive strike.[182] At the end of the meeting, the Cabinet decided to wait as

long as three weeks to give the U.S. time to organize an international effort to open the

Straits of Tiran.[183] On 30 May, upon learning that Jordan's King Hussein signed a

defense pact with Egypt, agreeing submit its forces to Egyptian control and allow forces

from other Arab governments onto its territory, Eshkol dispatched Mossad chief Meir

Amit for further consultations with the Americans.[184] The Mapai leadership preferred to

resolve the crisis by diplomacy, and it would not act without some degree of U.S.

acquiescence.

Yet Mapai's dominance of Israeli politics promptly collapsed. Nationwide

conviction that Eshkol was not fit to lead the country in a time of crisis forced him to

form a National Unity Government that would permanently empower parties with more

hawkish views. On 1 June 1967 Eshkol agreed to bring Moshe Dayan into the Cabinet as

defense minister and Menachem Begin as minister without portfolio.[185] Dayan's

appointment as minister of defense granted him a great deal of authority to shape Israel's

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[180] Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pg. 380.
[181] Oren, *Six Days of War,* pg. 122.
[182] Brecher, *Decisions,* pg. 396.
[183] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 124.
[184] Oren, *Six Days of War,* 129-131. Brecher, *Decisions*, pg. 425.
[185] Oren, *Six Days of War,* pg. 132-139.

foreign policy behavior. Since David Ben-Gurion and Levi Eshkol had both been prime minister as well as defense minister, there had been no clear delineation of authority between the two offices. On 2 June 1967, Eshkol and Dayan set the parameters of the defense minister's authority. There were two major points. First, the defense minister would not attack any country that had not yet attacked Israel without the prime minister's approval. Second, the defense minister would not authorize the IDF to bomb the cities of any country that had not yet bombed Israeli cities without the prime minister's approval.[186] Given these limited restrictions, it appears that once war was underway, Dayan had a great deal of flexibility to shape Israel's objectives and dictate the conduct of war. Dayan's appointment thus enabled him to make broad changes in the war's basic objectives. Moreover, the entrance of Dayan and Begin into government necessarily strengthened the position of Ahdut Ha'Avodah, with whom they shared fundamental foreign policy priorities.

Consistent with his view that Israel needed to humiliate Nasser by shattering his army, Dayan pushed the government toward launching a preemptive strike at the earliest possible moment. On Friday, 2 June, one day after taking office, Dayan told Eshkol that the Cabinet should authorize immediate military action against Egypt at its next full meeting, scheduled for Sunday, 4 June.[187] Dayan spent the next two days preparing for that outcome. That night, Eshkol, Dayan and a few other leaders met with Meir Amit and Abe Harman, who had just returned from Washington D.C. Amit and Harman reported that the convoy plan would probably not pan out and that the U.S. would probably stand by Israel so long as it won the war. Nevertheless, both advocated waiting one week and

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[186] Dayan, *Story of My Life,* pg. 341.
[187] Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pg. 339.

sending a ship through the Straits of Tiran to test the blockade. Dayan yelled at them, however, arguing that testing the blockade would allow Nasser to attack first and cause severe damage to Israel, and everyone present eventually came round to his view.[188] At the Sunday meeting, the Cabinet received a letter from President Johnson restating his opposition to unilateral Israeli action: "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go it alone." Yet Dayan pressed hard for immediate action: "Nasser must fulfill the process he started. We must do what he wants us to do… It's our only chance to win, to wage this war our way." Dayan carried the day—the ministers voted fifteen to two to go to war.[189] The gradual realization that the crisis could not be resolved by diplomacy and that the U.S. would not censure Israel for preemptive action gradually brought the Mapai leadership to favor war as a last resort. War had been Dayan's first choice, however, and upon assuming power he wasted no time in bringing it about as soon as possible.

Israel's conduct of the 5-10 June 1967 war reflects the new strategy brought about by Dayan, Begin and Allon. Whereas Eshkol's war aim had been to capture limited territory in the northern Sinai in order to use it as a bargaining chip to compel Nasser to lift the blockade, Dayan's principle war aim was to shatter the Egyptian army and capture Sharm el-Sheikh. Moreover, whereas Eshkol had planned to confine the war to Egypt, Dayan, Begin and Allon pushed to take advantage of the conflict to capture the West Bank. Shortly after Israel launched the surprise attack against Egypt, Eshkol directed the Israeli Foreign Ministry to deliver a message warning King Hussein not to strike: "Israel will not, repeat not, attack Jordan if Jordan maintains the quiet. But if Jordan opens

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[188] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 156-157.
[189] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 156-157.

hostilities, Israel will respond with all of its might."[190] The night before, Dayan had "strongly opposed" sending such a message.[191] Once the Jordanians attacked, Dayan constantly advocated Israel invade Jordanian territory. By 1:30 P.M. on June 4 , the Jordanians had shelled Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, launched air force sorties over several Israeli cities, and conquered the strategic position of Government House in Jerusalem. The IAF responded by destroying the Jordanian air force in two successive attacks, and the IDF considered further moves unnecessary. Rabin said: "We're pounding their air force, why do we have to conquer their territory at this stage?" IDF Intelligence Chief Aharon Yariv explained that Hussein was compelled to appear to be attacking Israel, and that further Israeli moves would force him to act more aggressively: "Hussein has to act against us, but what we're doing now is providing him with the basis for acting." Overriding these objections, Dayan ordered ground forces to conquer Government House and begin the invasion of Jenin.[192] At a Cabinet meeting that night, Begin urged the Cabinet to conquer the Old City: "this is an historic moment of opportunity."[193] Allon added: "We all want to see the Old City as an indivisible part of Israel—or that Israelis at least have access to the Holy Places." Yet the Cabinet was split, and declined to make a decision on the matter.[194] At 1:35 A.M. on 6 June, however, Dayan, Eshkol and Rabin decided to make conquering the West Bank their third objective in the conflict, after destroying Egypt's military forces and conquering Sharm el-Sheikh. Following this, in the afternoon of 6 June, the Cabinet voted to invade the central mountain ridge of the

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[190] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 184.
[191] Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 321-322.
[192] Oren, *Six Days of War,* pg. 186-191.
[193] Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 232
[194] Oren, *Six Days of War*, pg. 208.

West Bank.[195] Later that day, they voted to conquer the Old City of Jerusalem. Once the Jordanians troops withdrew, Dayan ordered the IDF to blow up the three bridges connecting the West Bank to the East Bank—a bold symbol indicating that Israel had severed the West Bank from the Hashemite Kingdom.[196] The rise in influence of Dayan, Begin, and Allon, all of whose grand strategies called for taking advantage of future opportunities to fix the mistake of 1948, resulted in an Israeli invasion of the West Bank.

The invasion of the Golan Heights was less controversial. On 7 June 1967, by which time it was clear Nasser had lost in the Sinai, Eshkol, Rabin and Commander of the Northern Command David Elazar agreed in principle that Israel should invade the Golan Heights. The next day, Eshkol even brought a lobby of settlers from the Kinneret into a meeting of the Ministerial Defense Committee to advocate conquering the Heights. Though Dayan initially opposed the invasion on the grounds that it would spark Soviet intervention, he ordered the invasion the minute he learned that Syria had requested a ceasefire, obviously wishing to avoid missing this opportunity.[197] Syria had long used its position on the Golan Heights to divert waters flowing into Israeli territory, and it had long used its position on the Heights to shell Israeli civilians. Given the fact that Eshkol had wanted to deliver Syria a devastating blow even before the May 1967 crisis, it is not surprising that he favored such an action in the midst of the war.

In the aftermath of the war, divided between three grand strategies—Land for Peace, Open Bridges, and the Allon Plan—the Israeli government effectively tried to implement all of them simultaneously. There was no question about what should happen

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[195] Rubin, 314.
[196] Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 325.
[197] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 246-248.

to East Jerusalem, which Israel promptly annexed.[198] Obviously, no Zionist, regardless of

ideological disposition, would surrender the Holy City. The future of all other territories

was a matter of debate. Initially, the Mapai leadership won the Cabinet's support for its

Land for Peace strategy in regard to the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. On 19

June 1967, the Israeli Cabinet adopted its policy toward the captured territories: it would

trade the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for a peace treaty, it would trade the

Golan Heights to Syria in exchange for a peace treaty. The 19 June resolution made no

mention of the West Bank, however, merely stating that Israel would strive toward a

humane solution of the Palestinian refugee issue.[199] The Cabinet had not been able to

reach a consensus on the issue, and the leadership decided to delay making any decision

in the interest of preserving the National Unity Government.

The deferral of decision on the status of the West Bank enabled Dayan and Allon

to implement their plans simultaneously, and undermined Eshkol's efforts to reach a

political solution with King Hussein. Needing to formulate a policy for administering the

West Bank in the absence of a final resolution, the Cabinet approved the implementation

of Dayan's Open Bridges policy on 15 November 1967, and governance of the territory

subsequently fell under Dayan's authority.[200] Though the Cabinet never formally

approved the Allon Plan, Yigal Allon and fellow Ahdut Ha'Avodah member Yisrael

Galili chaired the Ministerial Settlement Committee and used this position to promote

[198] Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pg. 331.
[199] Cabinet resolution 563 of June 19, 1967 in Avi Raz, "The Generous Peace Offer that was Never Offered: The Israeli Cabinet Resolution of June 19, 1967," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 37 No. 1 (2013), pg. 86-87.
[200] Gazit, pg. 47.

settlement of the West Bank in accordance with the Allon Plan map.[201] When Mapai

merged with Rafi and Ahdut Ha'Avodah to form the Israeli Labor Party in 1968, the

Allon Plan emerged as the party's preferred solution. This stance eliminated the

possibility of any compromise with the Arabs. Though Eshkol's efforts to reach a deal

with West Bank Palestinians failed, King Hussein proved willing to negotiate toward a

final settlement. In April 1968, the Israeli Labor Party instructed Foreign Minister Abba

Eban to present Hussein with the Allon Plan as Israel's proposal. Though King Hussein

was amenable to the idea as Eban described it, he rejected it outright once he saw Allon's

map. This ended the prospects for a Jordanian-Israeli deal in the foreseeable future.[202]

Though the Mapai leadership strove to reach a settlement on the West Bank based on

territorial concessions, Dayan and Allon implemented two policies intended to perpetuate

the Israeli presence indefinitely, and these policies derailed the Israeli-Jordanian

negotiations.

Eshkol never got a change to implement his Land for Peace strategy on the

Egyptian and Syrian fronts, as those countries retained a belligerent stance in the first

years after the 1967 war. In the Khartoum Resolution of 1 September 1967, Nasser joined

other Arab heads of state in declaring that there would be "no peace with Israel, no

recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it."[203] On 21 January 1968, the Egyptian daily

Al Ahram published Nasser's declaration that Egypt must compel Israeli withdrawal form

the Sinai by military means. In September and October of 1968, Egypt initiated this

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[201] Gazit, pg. 150.
[202] Gazit, pg. 202. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 263.
[203] League of Arab States, Khartoum Resolution, 1 September 1967, accessed 4/11/2013, http://www.cfr.org/international-peace-and-security/khartoum-resolution/p14841?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fpublication_list%3Ftype%3Dessential_document%26page%3D69

strategy with artillery attacks against Israeli forces stationed along the Suez Canal.[204] In March 1969, Nasser announced the commencement of a War of Attrition, and began launching artillery bombardments of the Israeli troops on the East Side of the Suez Canal. The war escalated, and ended only in the summer of 1970, after the IAF's deep penetration bombing campaign against Egyptian cities sparked direct Soviet intervention in the fighting.[205] The Syrians were just as belligerent, boycotting the Khartoum Conference of August 1967 because they did not consider it to be belligerent enough, continuing to let Fatah use training camps near Damascus, and even guiding Fatah guerillas through Syria to resist Israel in the occupied West Bank.[206] Egyptian and Syrian belligerence rendered peaceful resolution of the conflict infeasible at this time.

By the time the Egyptians began pursuing a negotiated settlement to the conflict, the assumption to power of Golda Meir in Israel had brought about a grand strategy of waiting for the Arab states to cave in to Israel's demands. This new grand strategy caused the Israelis to reject persistent Egyptian offers. When, on 8 February 1971, Gunnar Jarring sent Egypt and Israel identical memoranda proposing that Israel withdraw to the international border and Egypt agree to sign a peace treaty with Israel, Egypt provided a positive response: "Egypt will be ready to enter into a peace agreement with Israel containing all the aforementioned obligations provided for in Security Council Resolution 242."[207] This was the first time an Egyptian leader had ever expressed willingness to make peace with Israel, and marked a major turn in the Egyptian position. Based on the

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[204] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition: A Case Study of Limited Local War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pg. 44-45.
[205] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition: A Case Study of Limited Local War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
[206] See Chapter 2, pg. 19-20.
[207] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 299-301.

Land for Peace grand strategy, Abba Eban encouraged the Cabinet to give a positive

response. As Yitzhak Rabin explained in his memoirs, however, Israel thought that the

American interpretation of 242 meant implementation of the proposal the Israeli Cabinet

had passed on 19 June 1967:

> "I have no doubt that the United States based its interpretation of the resolution on the
> cabinet's decision of June 19, 1967… the administration understood the resolution to
> mean that Israel must withdraw to the international borders in the Sinai and the Golan.
> The only place where border changes would be open for consideration was the West
> Bank."[208]

Since the Meir government had adopted a grand strategy of waiting the Arabs out, it was

unwilling to commit to anything that might be interpreted as a territorial concession.

Though Israel responded that it was willing to negotiate for a settlement based on secure

boundaries, hawkish ministers Yisrael Galili and Moshe Dayan convinced the Cabinet to

tack a statement at the end effectively specifying that Israel would never return to the

1949 armistice lines: "Israel will not withdraw to the pre-5 June 1967 lines." By forcing

Egypt to make unacceptable concessions before the talks even began, this message

derailed the current round of negotiation. Jarring was satisfied with Egypt's message but

dissatisfied with Israel's, and his mission ended soon afterwards.[209] Following its grand

strategy of waiting the Arabs out, the Meir government rebuffed the Egyptians' offer to

negotiate for a peace treaty.

Meir rejected another initiative from Egyptian President Anwar Sadat himself. On

4 February 1971, in a speech to the Egyptian National Assembly, Sadat proposed that

Israel withdraw from the Canal line and Egypt reopen the Suez Canal as an intermediary

step toward the implementation of U.N. 242. He also indicated that he was willing to

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[208] Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, trans. Dov Goldstein (Berkley and Los Angeles,
CA: University of California Press, 1979), pg. 136.
[209] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 299-301.

accept U.S. mediation, which was better for the Israelis than U.N. mediation. The details of the proposal were that Israel would withdraw 40 kilometers from the Canal, the area Israel evacuated would be demilitarized, Egypt would reduce the size of its forces on the west bank of the canal, Egypt would open the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping, Egypt would station technicians and policeman within 10 kilometers of the canal on the east side to help with the operation of the canal, and that this move would be an intermediary step toward a peace settlement on the basis of U.N. 242. Based on his grand strategy of restoring normalcy in order to make the Arabs come to accept Israeli territorial gains, Dayan enthusiastically supported this proposal. Consistent with the grand strategy of Land for Peace, Abba Eban supported this initiative as well. Even IDF Intelligence Chief Aharon Yariv thought Israel should make a generous response. Yet Meir refused to accept Israeli withdrawal from any territory without a full peace deal, she refused to accept the placement of any Egyptian personnel on territory from which the Israelis had withdrawn, and she refused to enter into any agreement committing Israel to the implementation of U.N. 242 because she feared this would later place pressure on Israel to make far reaching territorial concessions. Though the Israeli Cabinet voted to go forward with Sadat's plan, Meir dragged her feat in the negotiations and made so few concessions as to disrupt the whole process. On 10 December 1971, almost a year after Sadat's original proposal, Meir finally voiced her willingness to sign an interim agreement toward a comprehensive solution so long as it was not tied to U.N. 242, emphasizing that Israel would never return to the pre-5 June 1967 lines. Meir said Israel would make a limited withdrawal so long as no Egyptians were stationed on the east side of the Canal. By this point, however, Meir's offers were too little too late, and the process

had effectively been killed.[210] Essentially, Meir's commitment to the wait the Arabs out grand strategy led her to drag her feet in negotiations toward an interim agreement with Sadat, effectively spoiling the process.

Meir rejected yet one more Egyptian peace initiative. In July 1972, Sadat made a dramatic move by expelling Soviet military advisors from Egypt, demonstrating that he had given up on the Soviets and was ready to cooperate with the Americans in the interest of regaining the Sinai. In February of 1973, he dispatched Egyptian national security advisor Hafez Ismail to Washington, D.C. for talks with Kissinger, the aims of which was to reach a political settlement with Israel. Yet Meir was uninterested. When she visited Nixon on 1 March 1973, she told him that the Israelis could afford to sit out the stalemate because the Arabs had no military option. At this time, King Hussein of Jordan also met with Kissinger in Washington, telling him that he was willing to make a deal with Israel but unable to accept Israel's stringent terms. Eban explained Israel's policy to the *Jerusalem Post* on 27 October 1972: "Israel's best policy at present is to let Egypt's President Sadat 'sweat it out,' with his range of alternatives narrowing all the time, eventually driving him into negotiations with Israel itself."[211] Meir's wait the Arabs out grand strategy led her to reject three peace initiatives from the Egyptians. Her refusal to make any concession convinced Sadat that he could make progress only after launching some sort of military action, and these considerations informed his decision to launch a surprise attack in conjunction with the Syrians on 6 October 1973.

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[210] For a comprehensive treatment of the negotiations, see Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pg. 302-08.

[211] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall,* pg. 313-315. As Israel's foreign minister, Eban did not necessarily express his own views when speaking to the press. At this point, Eban continued to advocate trading the captured territories for a peace treaty.

Conclusion

The grand strategies of leaders from all ideological dispositions took structural imperatives into account. Mapai's grand strategy made up for Israel's small population and lack of strategic depth through the acquisition of a nuclear deterrence and the maintenance of alliances with power states that could provide Israel with sophisticated weapons. The other grand strategies all aimed to consolidate Israel's hold over territories that alleviated the country's territorial vulnerabilities. These hawkish grand strategies were feasible in the aftermath of the years after the 1967 war given the fact that the U.S. continued to supply Israel with advanced weapons despite the country's refusal to make territorial concessions. All the grand strategies sought to improve Israel's security, and all were based in part on a reading of global and regional power trends.

Nevertheless, leaders on both sides of the territorial debate had significant non-structural goals. Mapai's refusal to conquer the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and its later desire to return them in exchange for a peace treaty, stemmed in large part from its aversion to exerting Israeli control over a large Arab population. Mapai feared that doing so would inevitably undermine the Jewish, democratic character of the state. Maintaining the national, ethnic or religious character of a state is a non-material goal, and the Mapai leadership was willing to give up two core elements of material power—population and territory—in order to achieve this non-material goal. Dayan, Begin and Allon's territorial ambitions were driven as much by ideology as by structural imperatives. Their preference for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip makes this clear. When urging territorial conquests in the years after 1948, all three had focused on the need to move into the West Bank. In the 1967 war, Israel attacked Egypt first by necessity, but it attacked the West Bank

before it attacked the Golan Heights. This preference for the West Bank cannot be explained by structural imperatives alone. Throughout Israel's history, its main threats came from Egypt and Syria. Israel's relationship with Jordan was relatively calm. Therefore, structural imperatives should have caused Israeli leaders to prioritize the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights over the West Bank. These leaders' prioritization of the West Bank is a function of the ideological attachment to territory that has historic and religious significance to Jews. Ideological disposition played an essential role in shaping leaders' objectives on both sides of the territorial debate.

In the early 1960s, leaders from all ideological dispositions shared widespread agreement on the basic element's of Israel's security policy. The country would build up its conventional military capabilities, forge alliances with the great powers, retaliate against enemy provocations, and develop nuclear weapons. Yet the factions had different expectations for this policy. Averse to the prospect of bringing a large Arab population under the Israel's control, Mapai expected the retaliations to deter Israel's enemies from making war until Israel's nuclear weapons program rendered further territorial acquisitions unnecessary. Herut and Ahdut Ha'Avodah, conversely, expected the retaliation policy to instigate the outbreak of a conflict that would provide Israeli the opportunity to acquire territory deemed strategically and ideologically vital. It was only natural that the opportunity to launch such a war shattered the consensus on security policy. It may seem natural that a state which achieved a tremendous military victory over its rivals, and which enjoyed the support of the world's mightiest power, would be unwilling to make concessions on the territory it had conquered. No doubt these factors played a role in Golda Meir's thinking. Yet once it is recalled that Meir had also opposed

concessions in 1937, when Israel was at its weakest, when the country was not yet even a state, it becomes obvious that other factors must have played a role. Leaders with other ideological dispositions advocated different policies. At the height of Israel's seeming invulnerability, drawing on their aversion to incorporating large Arab populations into Israel, and also on their desire to maintain international legitimacy, Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban continued to advocate a policy of trading the captured territories for peace. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan thought that by withdrawing from the Suez Canal line and allowing the Egyptians to resume normal shipping, the Israelis might alleviate Egyptian pressure for full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. The 1978 Camp David Accords, ultimately a consequence of the 1973 war, were an event of world significance, especially given the fact that the subsequent U.S.-Egyptian alliance was a major Cold War victory for the West. One wonders what the consequences would have been had Israel managed to placate Egypt on its own.

The main outlier in this period was Golda Meir. Though Meir adopted a different grand strategy than her Mapai predecessors, she did not have major ideological disagreements with them. Rather, her different approach seems to have stemmed from a difference in personal temperament, which led her to rely on advisors with ideologies that rendered them far more hawkish.

IV
Conclusion

Neorealist theories can explain important aspects of the causes of the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. A balance-of-threat theory explanation might hold that the rise of Israeli power and aggressive intent caused its Arab neighbors to enter into a series of counterbalancing coalitions, and both sides took advantage of the Cold War to gain useful great power alliances. An offensive realist explanation might be similar, adding that Israel's drive to maximize its share of material power drove it to take advantage of border conflicts to acquire strategic territory. A neoclassical realist account might hold that regime instability forced Arab governments to gain popular support by adopting an aggressive stance against Israel, a stance that was imprudent from a structural standpoint given Israel's conventional military superiority. After the 1967 war, ideologically-driven stances on both sides of the territorial question undermined Israel's ability to formulate a prudent response to structural imperatives. These theories all capture part of the story, yet all leave something out.

Without contradicting the essence of these theories, the employment of ideological disposition as independent variable and grand strategy as dependent variable provides a much more comprehensive picture of the intentions behind these states' actions. By the early 1960s, the Mapai government in Israel had concluded that further territorial expansion was undesirable because it would force Israel to incorporate a large Arab population into the Jewish state. The government therefore focused its national development plan on cultivating agriculture in the Negev Desert, which required water to be channeled to the south from the Sea of Galilee. The government's plan was to deter

the Arabs from initiating any further wars before Israel acquired a nuclear deterrent, which would alleviate the country's territorial vulnerability.

In 1963, however, a radical regime took power in Syria that was guided by Pan-Arab aspirations. Eager for a fight with Israel, the regime targeted Israel's National Water Carrier by diverting the waters flowing into Israel from Syrian territory. A more radical sect of the Ba'ath party took power in 1966, and adopted an even more aggressive grand strategy of relying on Palestinian guerillas to target Israel's water channels, economic infrastructure and security apparatus. Seeking to avoid war, the Israeli government launched retaliatory operations intended to compel the Syrians to cease from this behavior, but the Syrians did not stop, and Israel's retaliations became ever more aggressive. By spring of 1967, the Israelis went so far as to instigate a massive air battle over Damascus to display Syria's vulnerability, and several Israeli leaders made public statements indicating that Israel was considering delivering a destabilizing blow to the regime in Syria.

The regional escalation placed enormous pressure on President Gamal Abel Nasser of Egypt to intervene on the Syrian's behalf, and in May 1967 he sent his troops into the Sinai Peninsula, expelled the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), and imposed a blockade on Israeli shipping through the Straits of Tiran. The Mapai leadership under Prime Minister Levy Eshkol tried to resolve the crisis through diplomacy, and when that did not work it decided to launch a limited war designed only to compel Egypt to lift the blockade. On the eve of war, however, there widespread lack of confidence in Eshkol's leadership capabilities. A new governing coalition emerged including Moshe Dayan and Menachem Begin, who sought to take advantage of the crisis to make

widespread territorial gains. In the aftermath of the war, the Mapai leadership wanted to trade the captured territories in exchange for a comprehensive peace settlement with Israel's Arab neighbors. The new coalition, however, gradually pushed Israel in the direction of consolidating its territorial gains. This process was completed when Eshkol was succeeded by Golda Meir, whose grand strategy was to expand Israel's presence in the occupied territories and not to withdraw an inch until the Arab states gave in to all of Israel's demands.

Initially, Egypt and Syria resorted to violence to compel Israel to leave the territories. Syria continued to support the Palestinian guerillas, and Nasser launched the war of attrition. Both governments saw the assumption to power of new leaders who changed their tactics. Both Hafiz al-Assad and Anwar Sadat gave up any hopes of destroying Israel, and both were prepared to resolve the conflict along the lines of U.N. Resolution 242, which involved Israeli territorial concessions and a peace treaty. By this time, however, the Israeli government was uninterested in negotiation, so Syria and Egypt sought to compel Israel to come to the table by resorting to force. The result was the surprise attack of 6 October 1973.

The main outliers were Hafiz al-Assad and Golda Meir. In both cases, it seems that differences in personal temperament were more responsible for their different grand strategies than differences in ideology were. In the Syrian case, Assad was in a basic sense non-ideological. In Israel, Meir was not ideologically different from her Mapai predecessors. Still, ideology did play some part. Understanding the fact that Assad was non-ideological, and that his predecessors pursued an ideologically driven foreign policy, helps explain the differences in grand strategy the successive regimes adopted. Moreover,

Meir's grand strategy was not just the result of her personal temperament, but also of the fact that her temperament led her into the camp of advisors whose ideologies rendered them far more hawkish than Meir's Mapai predecessors were. In both cases, though the grand strategic changes were heavily influenced by the personal temperament of leaders, examining ideological differences is illuminating.[212]

Adopting ideology as an independent variable and grand strategy as a dependent variable helps illuminate what leaders on both sides were thinking—what they wanted, and how they planned to get it.

In the period 1963-1973, leaders in Syria and Israel were animated by the same basic goal, a goal that had been pursued by leaders in both societies for decades—to reestablish the spirit and livelihood of a nation that had long been oppressed by outside forces. The different parties viewed different means of achieving this basic goal. The old school Ba'ath ideology taught that the utmost priority was to foster a sense of national unity among the Arab peoples across the region. The Neo-Ba'ath placed a greater emphasis on socialist revolution. To Assad, the most important element of this project was building up the power of the Syrian state. The Labor Zionists assumed the Jewish national character would flower when its people lived as a majority in their own sovereign state. Ahdut Ha'Avodah taught its followers to embrace collectivist living, agricultural labor, and a spirit of heroism in order to cultivate a new, pure, and honorable Jew. Herut expounded the Jews' undying attachment to the Land.

The basic difference between the Syrian and Israeli formulations of the nationalist goal is that the Syrians' answer was outward looking, while the Israeli answer was

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[212] For the reflection that temperament provides a better explanation than ideology, I am indebted to Professor Mufti.

inward looking. The Ba'athists' concerns were never limited to the people who lived within Syria's artificial borders. Their aspirations always incorporated the aims of the Arab peoples dispersed across many lands. The Zionists were concerned with the Jews, with building a new civilization on their ancient homeland. Their ideologies did not pay much attention to the other actors in the Middle East. There was thus a fundamental difference in the nature of the impact that ideology had on grand strategy in the two countries.

The ideological visions of all the Syrian states provided strong suggestions for the proper grand strategy. Though the original Ba'ath vision was ideologically flexible, Pan-Arab unity suggested that the proper grand strategy should in some form include Arab cooperation in some sort of struggle against Israel. The Neo-Ba'ath revolutionary vision readily suggested the strategy of protracted guerilla warfare. The basis of Assad's realist vision was achieving a balance of power between Syria and Israel, and this drove him to use any means to improve Syria's military capabilities and retain strategic territory.

The regional orientation of the Ba'ath ideology helped Syria's leaders develop grand strategies that reasonably accommodated the needs and aspirations of other actors in the Middle East. Syria's foreign policy behavior before Assad may seem dangerously reckless, but it succeeded in getting other Arab actors to go along with its plan. The Syrians were able to convince the Arab League to adopt water diversion as its nominal objective, and the Syrians were able to successfully coordinate a guerilla warfare campaign with Fatah, an outside Palestinian organization that had been founded when Syria was still part of the U.A.R. Moreover, the Syrian strategy of using these aggressive measures to ultimately drag the other Arab states into an all out war with Israel

succeeded. Assad was successful in winning Sadat's cooperation for the strategy that ultimately cumulated in the 1973 war.

The Israeli ideologies, on the other hand, did not take much account of their Arab neighbors. Reflecting this, the Israelis did not enjoy much success in compelling their neighbors to act according to their wishes. The retaliatory raids Israel launched between 1963 and 1967 failed to deter the Syrians from their guerilla struggle, and only brought the region into all-out war. In the aftermath of war, Israel's inability to resolve the West Bank situation undermined any chance of a peace accord, and its grand strategy of compelling the Arabs to give in to Israeli demands ultimately led to the disastrous Egyptian and Syrian surprise attack of 1973. The Israelis' great strength was their operational, tactical and technological prowess, as well as their national unity.

The conduct of war and diplomacy is an art whereby one society imposes its will on another. The balance of power sets limits on what the will can achieve. Ideology is the spiritual energy that animates it.

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