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## To Build and to Be Built By: Israel and the Hidden Logic of the Iron Wall

### PARADIGM SHIFTS IN ISRAELI STUDIES

IN ISRAEL, AND IN ISRAELI studies, “the paradigms, they are a-changin’.” On 10 July 1994, more than 500 people packed themselves into a lecture hall at Tel-Aviv University to hear several historians and sociologists revile each other’s work. The event was the climax of several months of controversy in the national media. Several “established” Israeli historians, sociologists, and writers charged that a new crop of post-modernist, post-Zionist, unpatriotic, disrespectful, dangerous, and unprofessional academics (including some of their own students!) was denying Israel’s heroic past and endangering national morale by questioning long-established but unspoken rules about the boundaries for acceptable interrogation of the history of Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

The “new” historians and sociologists, some self-described as post-modernist, some not, some self-described as Zionists, and some not, responded by recounting egregious discrepancies between the archival record, as revealed by recently released Israeli government documents, and the official myths of Israeli civil religion (in school curricula, national holidays, and popular beliefs)—myths elaborated and still fostered by the academic establishment. Among the most vulnerable and sensitive of these myths have been beliefs about Arab responsibility for the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948, the decisiveness of liberal and socialist Zionist ideals in the construction of Israeli institutions (including the Histadrut [United Labor Union], the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, and the Israel Defense Forces), the unavoidability of Arab-Israeli wars, the devotion of Zionist and Israeli leaders to finding peace agreements with “implacable” Arab foes, the historical “artificiality” of the Palestinian na-

tional movement, and the ready acceptance by Ashkenazi Jews of their brothers and sisters from Asian and African countries.

This is a momentous debate. The fundamental and decisive question it reveals is the legitimacy of applying universalist criteria to the performance of the Zionist movement as the sole legitimate expression of Jewish nationalism. Indeed the very existence of the debate therefore challenges the notion of Israel as a “Jewish” or “Zionist” state whose parochial imperatives justify suppressing or avoiding public disclosure of inconvenient truths. The debate’s persistence contributes to a profound reshaping of the boundaries of political culture, political discourse, and political competition in Israeli politics.

The single most important strand within this multi-faceted, and often highly personalized, public argument is the image of the confrontation with the Arabs. The received view portrays the “Arab problem” as a tragic, painful, and/or irritating adjunct to the Zionist saga, rather than as a formative or constitutive element. Expressed with different political emphases by scholars and writers such as Shmuel Eisenstadt, Moshe Lissak, Dan Horowitz, Daniel Elazar, Amos Elon, Anita Shapira, Yehoshua Porath, and Aharon Meged, the established position has been that the confrontation with the Arabs was an important, unforeseen, and difficult problem for a Zionist project whose contours nonetheless were shaped independently of it. In this master narrative of Zionism and the rise of Israel, Jewish national decisions and the carefully worked-out formulas of Zionist ideology (such as “redemption” and collective ownership of land, economic self-reliance, Jewish labor, pro-active self-defense, and an exclusivist Jewish ethos) were the framework within which devoted idealists (mainly socialist and Ashkenazi) implemented their dreams and the dreams, ancient and modern, of all Jews. The view of “new” Israeli researchers, such as Yoav Peled, Benny Morris, Tom Segev, Yoram Peri, Gershon Shafir, Ilan Pappé, Lev Grinberg, Yagil Levy, Uri Ram, Uri Ben-Eliezer, Baruch Kimmerling, and Michael Shalev, as well as non-Israeli specialists such as Joel Migdal, Myron Aronoff, Yael Zerubavel, Avi Shlaim, Mark Tessler, and myself, is that the struggle with the Arabs was of fundamental, constitutive importance for the kind of state that Jews built in the Land of Israel, the norms and institutions that were enshrined as ineluctably “Jewish,” “Zionist,” and then “Israeli,” and the web of Israeli culture which surrounds and grounds these political constructions in the popular imagination and everyday life of millions of people.

In this essay, I will analyze Zionist and Israeli interaction with the Arab world as a dialectical relationship. My argument is based on a conventional

reading of the history of armed conflict between Arabs and Jews in and over Palestine/the Land of Israel, though I challenge many established notions about Zionist ignorance of Arab realities and about cause and effect in the relationship between war and the Jewish state—both the state-on-the-way and the state in being. I will also affirm some of the basic insights of Zionist leaders in the pre-state period. I hope this essay will also help explain the long delay in reaching an accommodation between Israel and the Arabs, not by attributing it to the inherent expansionism and aggressiveness of Zionism or Jewish nationalism, but to the unanticipated, and unappreciated, consequences of the only rational strategy available to Zionists from the early 1880s to the mid-1930s. In this way, I hope to move the debate over new paradigms for studying Israel and Zionism beyond disputes over whether the historical record is embarrassing or honorable, or whether Zionism or Palestinian nationalism are facts or artifacts, toward an understanding of how two movements, so separate and dissimilar in the circumstances of their origins, have interacted to produce Palestinian and Israeli realities which each reflect nothing so much as they do their relationship with one another.

### JABOTINSKY: “ON THE IRON WALL”

Standard histories of the early years of the Zionist movement go to great lengths to avoid more than passing mention of the Arab question as an issue of debate within the movement during its formative years.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is often said that the Zionist movement in its first decades was blissfully unaware of the Arab population of Palestine as a substantial obstacle to its ambitions in that country. Expressions of surprise and horror at the sudden “discovery” of a large hostile Arab population in Israel are commonly cited to document this supposed ignorance, along with the virtual absence, in the lengthy, detailed debates of various Zionist Congresses, of any serious consideration of the “Arab problem.”<sup>2</sup> But recent scholarship has shown that the published debates of the Zionist Congresses were carefully edited to eliminate reports of discussion about the Arab issue, and that the diaries of Zionist activists contain detailed and well-informed assessments of the brutal contradiction between Zionist imperatives and Arab requirements and aspirations.<sup>3</sup>

The most enlightening example of how clear-eyed the early Zionist leadership was in its assessment of Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism, and of the implications of that opposition for Zionist policy, is an article

entitled “On the Iron Wall” [*O Zheleznoi Stene*] written by the Revisionist (maximalist) Zionist leader Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky in 1923 for the Revisionist Russian-language journal *Razsviet*, which was published in Berlin.<sup>4</sup> The article is seldom cited. When it is, it is used for contradictory polemical purposes (by Zionist opponents and Revisionist partisans). The former characterize it as evidence of Zionist brutality; the latter as a profound and inspiring rejection of the principle of compromise.<sup>5</sup> Each of these usages suppress the insights to be gleaned from treatment of the article as a forceful, honest effort to grapple with the most serious problem facing the Zionist movement and as a formal articulation of what did become, in fact, the dominant rationale for Zionist and Israeli policies and attitudes toward the Arabs of Palestine from the 1920s to the late 1980s. Indeed, it is precisely in its mixture of insight and blindness, of shrewdness and naiveté about how politics works, that this article mirrors the reality of Zionist Arab policy, of the substantial effectiveness of that policy, and yet of its tragic incompleteness.

Before proceeding with my analysis, Jabotinsky’s argument must be laid out in some detail. He begins by acknowledging that “Palestine will always be inhabited by two peoples” and by declaring that he bore no ill will toward the other people in the country, the Arabs. He regarded them, he wrote, with the same “courteous indifference” as he felt toward other Gentile peoples. Further, he condemned all talk of removing the Arabs from Palestine as “totally impossible.”

However sincere these sentiments were, it is in the next portion of the article where Jabotinsky’s intent to speak frankly becomes unmistakable. Basing himself on the fundamental Zionist principle, common to virtually all wings of the movement, that a Jewish majority in Palestine was the *sine qua non* of Zionist success, Jabotinsky admits that no basis existed for gaining Palestinian Arab agreement for this fundamental Zionist requirement.

Apart from those who have been virtually “blind” since childhood, all the other good people have long since understood that there is not even the slightest hope of ever obtaining agreement to transform this Palestine from an Arab country to a country with a Jewish majority.

To drive home his point, Jabotinsky dismisses out of hand official Zionist propaganda, as served up before various international investigating committees, that Jewish demands on the Arabs were reasonable, that the Arabs would benefit by Zionist success, and/or that the Arabs of the country

lacked a sufficient sense of themselves as a people to see the Jewish national home as an infringement on their collective rights.

In our peace proclamations we try to convince ourselves that the Arabs are either fools easily deceived by a milder interpretation of our aims or a tribe of mercenary materialists ready to give up their rights to the land of Israel in exchange for cultural or economical advantages.

We can tell them as much as we want about our good intentions; but they understand no less than we what is no good for them. They cling to Palestine, at least with the same instinctive love and natural jealousy displayed by the Aztecs to their Mexico or the Sioux to their prairies. . . . Individual Arabs may perhaps be bought off but this hardly means that all Palestinian Arabs are willing to sell a patriotic fervour for which not even Papuans will trade.

Indeed, nowhere in history, wrote Jabotinsky, have people born in a land, "no matter whether they are civilized or savages," accepted settlement of outsiders in their country without a "stubborn fight." To explode the official Zionist propaganda that Arab opposition was the result of Arab "misunderstanding" of Zionist motives, Jabotinsky quoted an editorial from the Palestinian Arab newspaper *Al-Carmel*, to the effect that the one thing the Jews wanted above all, freedom of immigration, was just exactly what the Arabs would necessarily refuse. "The logic in the mode of thinking employed by this Arab editor," wrote Jabotinsky,

is so simple and clear that it should be learnt by heart and be an essential part of our basic thinking on the Arab problem . . . Colonization is self explanatory and what it implies is fully understood by every sensible Jew and Arab. There can only be one purpose in colonization. For the country's Arabs that purpose is essentially unacceptable. This is a natural reaction and nothing will change it.

So far Jabotinsky's argument is as follows. An indigenous people does not agree to the settlement of outsiders in the land of its birth. Palestine contains an indigenous Arab people. Zionist efforts to settle Palestine with Jews are thus immutably opposed by the Arabs of Palestine. Propaganda to the contrary, nothing can hide this fact or change it.

The argument then turns to policy implications. What should the Zionist movement do in the face of implacable hostility from the Arab people of Palestine? One option cited by Jabotinsky is to approach "non-Palestinian Arabs" with money or a political alliance to gain their agreement to Jewish control of Palestine. This course is rejected for two reasons: 1) it

would not, in fact, remove the opposition of the Arabs of Palestine to Jewish settlement; and, 2) it would undermine the Middle East position of Zionism's European allies. The *only* path to Zionist accomplishment, wrote Jabotinsky, is to create circumstances under which, eventually, the Arabs of Palestine would agree to Zionism's minimum requirements. Since, as he puts it, "every indigenous people will resist colonizers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of colonization," it is necessary to avoid seeking an agreement with the Arabs ("precisely because they are no rabble but a living people") until the last "gleam of hope that they will succeed in getting rid of us" is eliminated. Only then will this "living people . . . be ready to yield."

To eradicate Palestinian Arab hopes that Zionist settlement might be halted, Jabotinsky therefore advocates building an "Iron Wall" against Arab opposition—a policy, he says, which, except for one technical disagreement, was supported by all Zionists.

In this respect, there is little difference between our 'militarists' and our 'vegetarians'. The only slight difference there might be between them is that the former want an Iron Wall constructed with Jewish bayonets and the latter want it to be constructed with Irish bayonets. Others, supporting a Baghdad agreement, are willing to make do with Baghdadi bayonets . . . but we all want an Iron Wall.

In a few sentences, Jabotinsky then sets out a strategy for changing Arab behavior and achieving a negotiated compromise. The Arabs, he argues, will repeatedly seek to breach the Iron Wall. If the Wall is constructed properly and stoutly defended, this long series of attacks will fail. Even such constant and costly failure will not convince Arab "extremist groups" to change their behavior, but it will create political conditions within the Arab community of Palestine such that "extremist groups with their slogan 'No, never' lose their influence which will then be transferred to more moderate groups." At this point the time for Zionist political action will have arrived.

Only then will the moderates offer suggestions for mutual concessions. Then only will they begin bargaining with us on practical matters, such as guarantees against pushing them out, and equality of civil and national rights.

Such negotiations, he predicts, will lead to "the granting of satisfactory assurances to them, so that both peoples, like good neighbors, can live in peace."<sup>6</sup>

## THE "IRON WALL": THEORY, STRATEGY, AND/OR POLICY

Even in the crude, abbreviated, but evocative, form in which Jabotinsky originally presented his argument, there was contained a "theory" of how change could come about that would make a peace agreement between Jews and Arabs in Palestine possible. It is a theory based on the impact of war, in particular of repeated defeat in war, on constellations of power and purpose within the polity suffering these defeats. I shall argue that, based on this theory and on the policy Jabotinsky derived from it (a theory and policy effectively adopted by Ben-Gurion, the Zionist movement as a whole, and successive governments of Israel from 1948 until 1992<sup>7</sup>), a very great deal can be explained about the rhythm of war and peace-making between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, about the dramatic shift to the right that occurred in Israel following the Six Day War, and about the much delayed overtures by the Labor government installed in 1992 to reach toward a real political compromise with the Palestinians. Specifically I will emphasize the theoretically predictable, but historically unanticipated, obverse effects of repeated wars and of repeated victories in wars on the constellation of power and purpose within the polity *behind* the Iron Wall.

Although it was written as both a polemic and a policy prescription, it is right, proper, and useful to treat Jabotinsky's argument for the construction and defense of the Iron Wall, his predictions about its consequences, and his advice for future Zionist governments who will have to respond to those consequences, as both a strategy for a Zionist solution to the "Arab problem" and as a theory explaining how and why normal nations engaged in nearly zero-sum conflicts can eventually arrive at a political accommodation. I will further argue that, as a strategy, it was substantially, but partially, effective, and that the reasons for its partial failure lie in the failure of Jabotinsky (and the Zionist movement as a whole) to extend the full logic of the theory to Jews as they applied it to Arabs.

The character of the Iron Wall, as theory, can be understood only by analyzing the rhetoric of the Iron Wall as strategy, for the persuasiveness of Jabotinsky's argument is in part grounded in a theory of political learning of which he writes as if both he and his audience understands and accepts it. This is a theory that, as it happens, is generally consistent with contemporary understanding of how "rational actors" respond to the "active deterrent" or "compellence" strategies of their opponents.<sup>8</sup> This kind of theory, which Jabotinsky does not explicitly articulate as such, is a necessary concomitant to the inference that Jabotinsky believed his own argument. It is based on images of shifting incentive structures prompting changes in the



outcomes of internal political competition within separate, antagonistic political communities, leading to a lowering of minimally acceptable expectations. Such a game is distinguished by the fact that it is only barely, and only in the long-run, *not* a zero sum game.<sup>9</sup>

The Iron Wall as strategy can be divided into five stages of changing policies, each stage a requirement for advancement to the next stage. Together, the five stages comprise a recipe for moving from categorical Arab rejection of Zionism to a negotiated compromise based on satisfaction of Zionism's minimum requirements. The story of the Arab-Israeli conflict can largely be told as the successful Zionist/Israeli implementation of the first three stages, followed by failure to advance in a timely manner to stage 4. Not until the Arab side in general, but especially the Palestinian side (both in Lebanon and during the Intifada), implemented their own version of the Iron Wall strategy against Israel, did the Israelis move to stages 4 and 5. My argument is that the failure to advance to stage 4 of the theory was not an easily avoidable error, but an unanticipated, albeit logical, consequence of the successful implementation of stages 1, 2, and 3 and an unnoticed, but logical, corollary of the Iron Wall as theory.

In the abstract, the five stages of the Iron Wall strategy for transforming existential conflict between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs into accommodative peace can be listed as follows:

Stage 1: Construction of the Iron Wall.

Stage 2: Defense of the Iron Wall against attempts to breach it.

Stage 3: Costly defeats lead to power shifts within antagonist from intransigent extremists toward moderates willing to compromise.

Stage 4: Defenders of Iron Wall perceive power shifts from extremism to moderation within antagonist's political arena and shift their own policy toward negotiation and compromise.

Stage 5: Negotiations lead to a settlement of the conflict based on equality of collective rights.

Constructing an Iron Wall against Arab opposition was the first task. It is about this stage that Jabotinsky acknowledges there existed some disagreement within the Zionist movement. Revisionists, in the tradition of Herzl's "grand political Zionism," put great faith in international legality, international charters, and official acts of state creation. In this context, the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate, as the authority for the British rule of Palestine, were valued as guarantees for the establishment and security of a Jewish state. To create a state as quickly and as comprehensively as the Revisionists imagined, and to fill it overnight with millions of Jewish immigrants, would require the full support of the Great

Powers, especially Britain. In Jabotinsky's view, the Iron Wall should and would be comprised, as he put it, of "Irish [British] bayonets."

As it happened, of course, the Jewish state arose much more incrementally, and in a relationship with the British that was at least as conflictual as it was cooperative. An Iron Wall was constructed, mainly by Jews in military formations of varying legality and effectiveness: HaShomer, Haganah, the Palmach, Irgun, Lehi. On the other hand, "British bayonets" also played a crucial role. Many future leaders of Zionist military formations and of the Israel Defense Forces received their first military training in the British-sponsored Jewish Legion, or in other units of the British Army. In Palestine, the British provided arms, training, and a legal framework of activity for an armed Jewish constabulary. In the 1930s, British officers, such as Orde Wingate, helped train Jewish fighters in anti-guerrilla tactics. These "night squads" were given direct experience in retaliation and terror raids against Arab villages and Arab irregulars and served as a nucleus for the Palmach, the striking force of the Haganah. Most important of all was the ruthless use of British military force in the late 1930s to crush the Arab Revolt, a savage military blow from which the Arabs of Palestine never fully recovered.

Ultimately, however, it was the military arm of the Zionist movement in Palestine, and especially the Haganah and the Palmach, that formed the Iron Wall. Under the auspices of the Histadrut, the main Labor Zionist political parties, and the settlement movements, weapons were smuggled into the country, a primitive but effective underground arms industry was created, and "watchtower and stockade" settlements were erected in outlying areas; thousands of part-time soldiers were trained; and an elaborate command and control structure was developed. This was the military and infrastructural basis for the emergence of the Israel Defense Forces in 1948.

In the pre-state period, Zionism's pre-eminent leader, David Ben-Gurion, put particular emphasis on his role as commander-in-chief of the Haganah, playing an active and assertive role in the appointment of commanders, development of strategy, deployment, and tactical operations. Soon after the state was established, the Palmach was disbanded along with the Irgun and Lehi (part of Ben-Gurion's political consolidation). For most of the first decade and a half of the State's existence, Ben-Gurion served as both Prime Minister and Defense Minister, ensuring the continuation of intimate ties between the IDF and the top political echelon. Under Ben-Gurion's patronage, enormous resources were channeled to the military and related security services. Emphasis was placed on aggressiveness, pre-emption, qualitative superiority, universal service, and rapid mobilization capacity. By the late 1960s, a new dimension was added to Israel's Iron Wall

as a result of top-level decisions made a decade earlier to develop an Israeli nuclear weapons capacity.

The second stage of the Iron Wall theory-as-strategy in the Zionist confrontation with the Arabs was to defend the "Wall" against repeated attacks and to inflict grievous defeats on the attackers. As anticipated, the Arabs of Palestine (with help from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, TransJordan, and elsewhere) did attack the Yishuv [pre-state Israel] repeatedly. Major disturbances occurred in 1921, 1929, and 1936, although low-intensity, scattered attacks against individual settlements and Jewish inhabitants of Palestine began before World War I and continued through the entire period of the British Mandate. Following the UN's approval of the Partition Plan in November 1947, full-scale civil war erupted. Various irregular Palestinian Arab groups waged a fierce struggle to conquer isolated Jewish settlements, take control of key roads, force the capitulation of Jewish Jerusalem, and make the UN plan unenforceable.

Fully exploiting its advantages in organization, military training, and national unity, the Yishuv held its ground. By April 1948, it was in a position to go beyond defense toward punishment of the Arabs of Palestine and expansion of the territory allotted to the Jews by the United Nations. Fighting intensified again in May 1948, when Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and TransJordanian troops invaded Palestine. But with arms from Czechoslovakia, and with Jewish ranks refreshed by thousands of new immigrants, the Iron Wall held firm. Apart from the Arab Legion of TransJordan, each Arab Army suffered embarrassing defeats. Israeli forces prevented the loss of any Jewish settlements from within the territory allotted to the Jewish state, added substantial territories to the Jewish state in the Galilee, the northern Negev, and the Little Triangle, secured Jewish Jerusalem, uprooted hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs, and seized the villages and lands of three-quarters of a million refugees. As envisioned within the theory of the Iron Wall, the attempt to breach it had not only failed, but had resulted in the kind of disproportionate losses, to both Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states, that, it was thought, could encourage Arabs to accommodate themselves to the immutability of the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

Once the 1949 Armistice Agreements were signed, a rapid demobilization took place within the newly constituted Israel Defense Forces. But several units performed badly when sent into action to combat infiltration by Arab refugees and to attack Arab villages and military units in the West Bank, Syria, and Gaza. The military and political leadership responded by creating a special retaliation unit ("Unit 101"), expanding the spirit and standards of that unit to the paratroopers, and then through the entire army.

In general, an effort was made to infuse the army and the populace with a sense of living under siege and the need, at all times, to exhibit aggressiveness and ruthlessness in the defense of Israel's borders. The retaliation policy, vigorously implemented from 1950 to 1956, was based on the infliction of grossly disproportionate losses on Arabs in response to casualties and damage suffered by Jews. Again, the intent was not only to demonstrate the futility of attempts to breach the Iron Wall, but to encourage Arab elements to abandon hopes of ever benefiting from violence against Israel.<sup>10</sup>

In this context, *Miftzah Kadesh* [the Sinai Campaign], Israel's attack on Egypt and its capture of the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula in the autumn of 1956, can be understood as a retaliation raid on a massive scale. One of its purposes was to demonstrate to both Arabs and Israelis that the new generation of Israeli soldiers were as capable of defending the Iron Wall as the generation of '48. But the 1956 war, insofar as it represented an effort to unseat Nasser and discredit the militant brand of pan-Arab nationalism he represented, can also be seen as an unprecedentedly explicit and active attempt to implement that part of the theory of the Iron Wall that anticipated that successive and costly defeats would lead to internal political shifts within the Arab world, involving the demise of "extremist groups with their slogan 'No, never'" and their replacement by more moderate elements ready for peace negotiations with the Zionist polity.

Although the war did reassure Israelis about the fighting skills of their army, its political outcome—including the failure of the British-French attempt, in collusion with Israel, to occupy the Suez Canal Zone and Israel's own evacuation from Sinai and Gaza under pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union—raised, rather than lowered, Nasser's prestige. The myth of the "second round" still prevailed among Palestinians and in the wider Arab world—the idea that the defeat of the Arabs in 1948 had been a fluke brought about by the corruption of the Arab governments, the incompetence of their leaders, failures of coordination, and the mistake of committing only a fraction of available forces to the battle. The high profile role played by the British and French in 1956, along with the fact that Israel initiated the fighting in a surprise attack, kept alive the idea that in a "fair and square" war between Israel and the Arabs, it would be possible to eliminate the Zionist entity once and for all.

This popularly imagined possibility was the context within which Syria, Jordan, and Egypt joined forces in May 1967 to threaten Israel with a war of destruction. Regardless of the actual intent of Nasser and the other Arab leaders in early 1967, the definite impression created for the Arab publics was that the hour of decision was approaching, that this time Israel

would not catch the Arabs off-guard, that this time the Jews would not be saved by imperialist intervention, that finally the force of Arab arms would carry the day. Israel's smashing victory over Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in June 1967 was a dramatic and decisive demonstration of precisely what the Iron Wall had, from the time of HaShomer and the Haganah, been designed to show—that Israel could not be destroyed by military force and that every attempt to do so would result in even greater and more humiliating defeats.

In the third stage, once it had been convincingly established that the Iron Wall could not be breached and that the costs of trying to do so were extremely high, the expectation of the Iron Wall strategy was that moderate political forces within the Arab world would emerge and gain ground against the die-hard extremists. Whatever trends in this direction had been present in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war, it was the Six Day War of 1967 whose impact in this regard was unmistakable.

The June War was fought amidst high-hopes bordering on exaltation in the Arab world and real trepidation among ordinary Israelis. These emotions, the lopsided outcome of the war, and the absence of any direct outside involvement on Israel's side, combined to make the Six Day War a turning point in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab world was in shock. Nasser's closest friend, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army, committed suicide. The large casualties inflicted on the Jordanian, Egyptian, and Syrian armies, and the painful loss of territory—the Golan Heights, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai peninsula—were incontrovertible evidence of Israeli military superiority (even leaving aside its nuclear weapons capability).

Although not immediately apparent, the June War was the beginning of the end for the kind of ambitious Pan-Arab unity schemes advanced by Nasserists, Baathists, and Arab socialists. Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian acceptance of United Nations Security Resolution 242 was the first clear diplomatic signal that the "confrontation states" were ready to accept Israel's presence in the Middle East within the 1949 armistice lines. In 1970, the vanguardist Baathist regime of Salah Jedid in Syria was replaced by the pragmatic, Syrian-oriented rule of Hafez el-Assad. In that same year, Nasser died, but not before beginning a retreat from the radical Pan-Arabism that had led him to wars in both Yemen and Sinai. His successor, Anwar Sadat, quickly launched an initiative to gain a non-belligerency or interim peace agreement with Israel.

Although the PLO's official policy called for the dismantling of Israel, by 1969 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were already deciding that such a goal was impossible to achieve.<sup>11</sup> In the late 1960s, Palestinian no-

tables and intellectuals raised the idea of a separate Palestinian state in the territories alongside of Israel and asked the government of Israel to negotiate with them on this basis.<sup>12</sup> In Jordan, King Hussein crushed radical PLO efforts to overthrow his regime and then made a formal offer of peace to Israel based on a Hashemite Kingdom that would include both Jordanian and Palestinian segments.

Ironically, the war fought in October 1973 was the most vivid expression of Arab perceptions that Israel was, for all intents and purposes, a permanent feature of the Middle East. As reflected in pre-war pronouncements, subsequent explanations, and, most meaningful of all, in the military deployments and operational decisions made in the course of the fighting, the destruction of Israel was neither the formal nor informal objective of the Syrian and Egyptian attacks. Instead, their aim was to reawaken Israeli desires to pay something substantial for peace with the Arabs and trigger serious American involvement in the process of negotiating a peace agreement.<sup>13</sup> Financed by Saudi Arabia, and with the post-attack participation of Iraq, Jordan, and Morocco, the October War showed clearly that the Arab world had learned the lesson of the Iron Wall—the Zionist project would not succumb to Arab violence. A *modus vivendi* would be necessary, achievable only through negotiations.

In the Iron Wall strategy, the next stage, the fourth, was recognition of the successful accomplishment of the third stage—publicly avowed realization by the political echelon within the Iron Wall, i.e., within Israel, that: 1) moderates did exist on the Arab side who were prepared to make peace with the Zionist entity based on guaranteeing the vital requirements of both peoples and the principle of “equality of civil and national rights”; 2) Arab moderates were indeed gaining power in a struggle with extremists; and 3) the program of the moderates and the struggle for power they were waging were real, i.e., not disingenuous stratagems for preparing a lethal attack.

To be sure, there were circles in Israel who did perceive these developments in the years immediately following the Six Day War. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Eshkol government forswore territorial ambitions and expressed readiness to negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of the *status quo ante*. This (fleeting) posture was consistent with the Iron Wall strategy. But with the attempted absorption of expanded East Jerusalem, the erection of settlements in Gush Etzion, Golan, and the Jordan Valley, and crystallization of the Allon Plan as an informal but effective framework for Israeli policy, the government departed substantially from the Iron Wall strategy. In 1972, Golda Meir’s government declared that, in addition to expanded East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, Gush Etzion, and

the Jordan Valley, the Gaza Strip was also to be considered an “inseparable” part of Israel. In 1973, the government launched a large-scale settlement drive in the northeast corner of the Sinai.

The fact is that, instead of welcoming trends toward moderation among Palestinian and other Arabs, Israel rebuffed several Arab peace feelers. In 1967 and 1968, requests by Palestinian notables for permission to organize in support of negotiations with Israel toward autonomy or a non-belligerent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were denied.<sup>14</sup> From 1969 through 1971, the Israeli government refused several Egyptian offers, brokered by the Great Powers and the United Nations, of a partial peace agreement based on partial Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. King Hussein’s Hashemite Kingdom Plan was publicly and categorically rejected by Golda Meir, who dismissed it as unconvincing and an unacceptable basis for negotiations. Israeli *hasbara* [propaganda; information] portrayed Arab peace initiatives as ambiguous at best. Arab demands for complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 were described as part of a plan to use return of these territories as a “first stage” toward continuing their struggle to destroy the Jewish state. Despite the emergence of a small but important peace movement in Israel after the 1973 war, the PLO’s adoption in 1974 of the principle of a separate state solution, a series of Egyptian-Israeli disengagement and phased withdrawal agreements in Sinai, and the development of a full-scale struggle, both within the PLO and among the Arab states, between the “acceptance front” (those willing to accept Israel’s existence in the Middle East with a Palestinian state alongside it) and the “rejection front” (those who still rejected a “political” solution to the conflict), the Rabin-led Labor government of 1974–76 refused to engage in negotiations with Jordan or with Palestinians about the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE IRON WALL:

##### UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES, UNEXAMINED IMPLICATIONS

This extended refusal to grant effective political recognition of moderation in the Palestinian and Arab camp, and Israel’s escalation of its territorial and political demands, were substantial departures from the strategy of the Iron Wall. A crucial element of the Iron Wall strategy—a plan for gaining Arab acceptance of minimum Zionist requirements—was that these requirements were firmly established at the outset and would not expand. That which was to be defended by the Iron Wall was not supposed to expand, or was not envisioned as expanding once Arab moderates expressed willingness to pay the price of the original, minimal demands. In other words, the

Iron Wall strategy was to be implemented with the expectation that superiority of force on one side, expressed by the unassailability of the Iron Wall, could and would lead to a settlement that would not reflect the prevailing balance of power at the time of negotiation (Zionist superiority, Arab inferiority), but rather an equality of national and civil status, which Jabotinsky (formally) acknowledged in the 1920s when Jews seemed weaker than the Arabs.

However, contrary to the dictates of the strategy, Israel's minimum conditions for peace did not remain stable. Instead, they expanded as those behind the Iron Wall felt their margin of superiority increase.<sup>16</sup> The trajectory of Israeli policies after 1967, and especially after the Likud's rise to power in 1977, indicates that the political logic that drove Israeli politics after 1967, particularly with regard to the Land of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, was not "having convinced them by our superiority that we cannot be destroyed, let us now offer them a political settlement based on equality, which their military might cannot gain for them," but "having convinced them by our superiority that we cannot be destroyed, why must we offer them a political settlement based on equality, which deprives us of things we want?" This logic is in direct contradiction to the prescriptions of the Iron Wall strategy, since, taken to its logical conclusion, it would result in demands on the Arabs that would escalate with every decision on the Arab side to acquiesce to a previous demand, thereby vitiating the purpose of the Iron Wall strategy to begin with; i.e., achievement of a political settlement based on Arab acceptance of minimum Zionist demands.

Much of the work of "new historians" such as Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé is an argument that this departure from the Iron Wall theory-strategy began as early as 1949–1954.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, even Itamar Rabinovich, in his critique of this work, accepts the basic contention that peace agreements available after the 1948 war corresponded to minimally acceptable requirements as perceived by the Zionist leadership before the war. After the war, however, these opportunities were rejected as too costly in terms of territory and demography for a Zionist leadership whose image of what was minimally acceptable had expanded with their confidence in Israeli military superiority.<sup>18</sup> I have already noted the refusal of Labor-led governments under Meir from 1968–1974 and Rabin from 1974–1977 to move toward negotiations with the Palestinians, to respond in a timely way to Egyptian overtures, or to agree to public and formal peace negotiations with Jordan based on territorial withdrawals from territories occupied in 1967. But it was only after 1977 that maximalist Zionist ambitions displaced, both officially and practically, the ambiguous, tentative, disjointed policies of de facto expansionism characteristic of earlier Labor governments.



As a large and well-grounded scholarly literature attests, the Likud victory in the 1977 elections marked a substantial shift to the right in political power and sentiment in Israel.<sup>19</sup> Governments led by Menachem Begin in 1977 and 1981, and by Yitzhak Shamir in 1983 and 1990, were based on formal and informal alliances with the National Religious Party, fundamentalist settlers in the West Bank, Gaza and Golan, and small extreme parties who shared their commitment to territorial aggrandizement within the Land of Israel at virtually any cost. Associated with the ascendancy of neo-Revisionism was a dramatic departure from Israel's traditional military posture (emphasizing, publicly at any rate, the principles of "purity of arms" and "*ein breira*" [no alternative]).<sup>20</sup> Thus the Lebanon War ("Operation Peace for the Galilee"), launched in June 1982, was the first of Israel's wars against the Arabs to be explicitly justified as an assertion of Israeli military power that was *not* a "last resort," but a strategic option. The war's declared purpose, in addition to destroying PLO positions in Southern Lebanon, was to eliminate the Palestinian national movement as a relevant political actor, thereby paving the way for the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

There were related transfers of power, economic resources, and prestige in political, cultural, and social spheres. The main religious party, the National Religious Party, abandoned its pragmatism and diffidence in "affairs of state" and asserted its own vision of redemptionist Zionism as a guide for designing Israeli institutions and conducting the conflict with the Arabs. In public culture the kibbutz and the secular sabra were replaced as icons of patriotism and service to the country by the knitted-yarmulka-wearing activists of the "national religious" movement and the Gush Emunim settlements they established and inhabited. "Leftist" rather than "rightist" became the modal term of opprobrium. Heroes and slogans of classical Zionism, associated with the Zionist purpose of "normalizing" the Jewish people and transforming Jews into "a nation like all the other nations," were rejected or ignored in favor of heroes and slogans associated with Revisionist Zionism and orthodox Judaism, including "the whole Land of Israel for the whole People of Israel" and "a nation that dwells alone."<sup>21</sup>

The Likud's flagrant departure from the Iron Wall strategy was nowhere more clearly manifested than in Yitzhak Shamir's favorite refrain. Before the Intifada, one of Shamir's most common responses to critics who suggested the need for compromise with the Palestinians if peace was to be achieved was "*ma zeh bo'er*" [what is burning?]. In other words, what is the necessity of bothering to pay a price for something that we don't need? Why rush to talk to Arabs, even if they are willing, if the Arabs are not able, by

force of arms or in any other way, to cause us enough difficulties to constitute a problem for us in the here and now? Why, given Israeli military and political superiority, indeed dominance, should Arab moderation be treated as an opportunity for peace instead of as an occasion for unwarranted sacrifice?

Then, of course, came the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister in 1992, the Oslo Agreement with the PLO and Washington Declaration of Principles in 1993, the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, serious, ongoing negotiations with Syria, and the troubled but substantial implementation of the first stages of a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement. Those who had read the 1967 war and its aftermath as markers of a permanent change in the direction of the Israeli polity and of the impossibility of a negotiated compromise with Palestinian Arabs, were proven wrong.<sup>22</sup> Suddenly, it seemed to many observers, the “extremist groups with their slogan ‘No, never’” were replaced in the government of Israel by more moderate elements ready for peace negotiations and real, if obfuscated, compromise with the Palestinian national movement.

What happened? Does the failure to move promptly to the fourth stage of the Iron Wall strategy disconfirm Jabotinsky’s theory of Arab-Israeli relations and, more generally, the theory of political learning and accommodation upon which it can be seen to be based? What happened, of course—behind the energetic efforts of the Bush-Baker team to focus Israeli attention on the settlement extravaganza and the economic distress of new Russian immigrants, behind the inability of Gush Emunim and the Likud government to persuade or bribe massive numbers of Israelis to live in the West Bank and Gaza, and behind the increasing openness of Israelis to view the PLO as a possible negotiating partner—was the Intifada. The Palestinian uprising, comprised of non-violent and semi-violent demonstrations, verbal and violent harassment of soldiers and settlers, commercial and labor strikes, refusals to pay taxes, and creation of alternative institutions, began in December of 1987 and lasted at least to the middle of 1993. It was an unprecedentedly massive and sustained demonstration of fundamental opposition within the occupied territories to continued Israeli rule. Virtually all Palestinians in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, in one way or another, participated in it. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of collaborators publicly disavowed their past activities. Many others were killed by Intifada activists.

Israeli repression was fierce, leading to at least one thousand deaths, more than 100,000 injuries, week-long and even month-long curfews in many villages, towns, cities, and refugee camps, a severe reduction in Pales-

tinian standards of living, and perhaps the highest incarceration rate recorded anywhere in recent history. For Israelis the territories were transformed into zones of fear, to be avoided as one would avoid a war torn area. For the first time, Palestinian political action presented the Israeli army and the security services with a challenge that was officially and repeatedly characterized as beyond their ability to neutralize. Even right-wing politicians found it impossible to deny the character of the Intifada as a full-scale civil rebellion. The costs of increased army duty in the territories, the disruption of military training, and the absence of Arab laborers, although by no means prohibitive, were nonetheless significant enough to be experienced as a painful consequence of the continued occupation. The psychological and social effects of having tens of thousands of their citizens involved in the incarceration and mistreatment of Palestinian adults and children also weighed heavily and disturbingly on most Israelis.

Systematic polling showed two clear reactions among Israelis to the Intifada: 1) a rejection of the previously popular notion that the "status quo" was preferable to all other options; and, 2) a strong desire to be separated from the Palestinians in the territories, whether by withdrawing from the territories or by expelling the Palestinians from them.<sup>33</sup> Polls also began to show that whether Israeli respondents favored it or not, most were coming to believe that a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was inevitable.<sup>34</sup> In this political context the territorial compromise program of Israeli moderates, if it could not capture the imagination of uncommitted or rightward leaning Israelis, could yet be treated by most as a viable option—a strategic response to Israel's foremost political problem (its relations with the Palestinians) that could not be used by the Likud to deprive Labor of an election victory.

The government formed by Labor and the liberal-dovish bloc Meretz in July 1992 emerged after an election in which Jewish votes for hawkish lists actually totaled more than Jewish votes for dovish lists. But many annexationist votes were cast for splinter groups that did not pass the electoral threshold. The great majority of Arab votes were cast for dovish parties. By allying itself informally with two predominantly Arab parties, the Labor party was able to prevent Likud from forming a coalition government while attracting support from the largest ultra-orthodox party, SHAS. The new government's policies toward the occupied territories, the Jewish settlements in those areas, their Arab inhabitants, and the Arab world as a whole were explicitly based on recognizing Arab readiness for peace with Israel based on mutual compromises. An Israeli government had finally moved to stage 4 of the Iron Wall strategy.

In the first year of the new government's tenure, serious negotiations with Palestinian representatives began. Despite a lack of concrete progress, it was clear that the State of Israel was, for the first time, ready to negotiate with Palestinians on the basis of an understanding that Palestinian Arabs had political rights over, and not just in, portions of the "Land of Israel." Within a little over one year, the world knew that this Israeli government was also ready to negotiate directly with the PLO. Secret talks leading to the Oslo Agreement reached their public consummation in the Washington Declaration of Principles, signed in September 1993. Implementation of the Gaza-Jericho autonomy and military withdrawal agreement, early empowerment accords, breakthroughs with Jordan, diplomatic ties between Israel and Tunisia, Morocco, and other Muslim and Arab states—all these reflect a process of intricate, difficult, but serious bargaining, which was, as Jabotinsky laid it out in 1923, always intended to be stage 5 of the Iron Wall strategy.

## CONCLUSION

If the current peace process moves eventually to a form of Palestinian self-determination acceptable to both Arabs and Israelis, the overall objectives of the Iron Wall strategy will have been accomplished. Albeit at great cost, and perhaps over a longer period of time than its framers considered likely, the repeated demonstration of Israel's indestructibility did produce change in the Arab world—a moderation of Arab and even Palestinian demands that entailed satisfaction of Zionism's minimum requirements. In another sense, however, the Iron Wall strategy was wrong. While the theory underlying the strategy portrayed "normal nations" as responsive rationally to changing perceptions of the possible, the Iron Wall as strategy, at least as imagined by Jabotinsky and implemented by Ben-Gurion *et al.*, failed to recognize that the same basic logic that led to expectations of a contraction of Palestinian Arab objectives in response to a forced reduction in Palestinian perceptions of what was possible would lead to an expansion of Zionist/Israeli objectives in response to the wider opportunities associated with repeated victories and images of Arabs as weak and undeserving. Nor did the Iron Wall strategists take into account the psychological and cultural effects on those inside the Wall, whose siege mentality and cultivated hostility toward their enemy would make it politically difficult to treat ambiguous signs of Arab moderation with the detachment and finesse Jabotinsky's formally articulated vision required. These effects help to account for the

rightward trajectory of the Israeli political system between 1967 and 1988, the changes in Israeli society and culture associated with that shift, and a substantial delay in movement toward peace, a delay of two to four decades, depending on how promising one considers the negotiating opportunities that arose immediately after the 1948 war.

On the other hand, the Iron Wall as theory—an implicit theory of normal nations learning through conflict about the limits of their capacities and expecting that learning to be manifested in changing distributions of power within each nation as a political community—the Iron Wall as theory can explain both the rightward trajectory of Israeli politics after 1967 and the long delay in the beginning of serious negotiations. In other words, had the theory implicit in Jabotinsky's argument been elaborated and applied systematically and consistently, it would have been possible to anticipate the problems of demand escalation and institutionalized expansionism that arose as a result of repeated Zionist-Israeli victories on the battlefield.<sup>25</sup>

Recall that Jabotinsky described the Arabs of Palestine as a normal “living” people—as a people, indeed, whose aspirations and responses to intrusion upon their territory were to be understood as absolutely typical of all “living” peoples. Of course Jabotinsky also viewed the Jews as a living people. Removed from its partisan and polemical context, the logic of his argument leads to the following syllogistic analysis.

1. Repeated violent encounters with enemies produce changes in the internal political dynamics of a living people.
2. Living peoples can experience a series of defeats or victories.
- 3a. A living people that experiences a series of defeats will, over time, display a moderating tendency among substantial portions of its population. These elements will vie for power against the intransigent faction. This moderating tendency will gain strength as the number and scale of defeats increases.
- 3b. A living people that experiences a series of victories will, over time, display an extremist tendency among substantial portions of its population. These elements will vie for power against the more moderate faction. This extremist tendency will gain strength as the number and scale of victories increases.

In other words, movement from stage 3 to stage 4 of the Iron Wall strategy (from successful defense of the Iron Wall to operational recognition of moderation in the enemy) should have been understood, based on the logic of the theory of the Iron Wall, to require a difficult act of political will. That is, movement from stage 3 to stage 4 should have been expected to entail policies that would go against the political and cultural grain of a

society whose experience of siege, constant warfare, and regular victory would have produced an environment quite uncongenial for the necessary characterization of an old enemy as constituting, at long last, a suitable interlocutor for negotiating painful but necessary compromises.

In 1984, Ezer Weizmann, former chief of the Israel Air Force, now President of the State and then Minister without Portfolio in a "National Unity Government," described the difficulties of this transition. He traced the problem, as I have, to the unanticipated consequences of successfully building and defending the Iron Wall. Asked to account for the delay in moving toward comprehensive peace after the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty went into effect, Weizmann responded:

Both in the Sinai Campaign of 1956 and in the Six Day War of 1967 the Jews had tremendous doubts about their ability to do battle. What didn't we talk about then? Soviet doctrine, tanks, MIGs. Alack, alas—the end of the world was at hand! But today, today the Jewish generals of the IDF are considered the finest in the world. And rightly so. The same holds for the peace process: evidently we have to undergo some sort of psychological transformation before we can believe in the peace and move ahead. We of the military raised an entire generation to be fighters. The generations to come will have to educate the people of Israel, in an intelligent and rational manner, to believe in the necessity of peace agreements between us and the Arabs. That's a lot harder than doing battle . . . The national leadership has to be a lot stronger . . .<sup>26</sup>

Of course to expect that Jabotinsky would have anticipated this problem is asking much too much of a publicly disseminated political strategy. It would have been politically and polemically awkward to admit that eventually compromises—compromises that would be experienced as extremely painful—would have to be made. Jabotinsky would have also had to have had at his disposal a rough but robust theory of institutional lag—a theory consistent with, but not contained within, the theory of national political learning which was the logical basis for the Iron Wall strategy.<sup>27</sup>

Politics is neither rational, if rationality is understood as exercise in the precise calculation of costs and benefits, nor surgery, if surgery is understood as a precise use of appropriate tools for achieving specific and limited effects. In politics, for consequential effects to be achieved, policies must be institutionalized. As part of the process of institutionalization, those who wield policies as tools designed for a specific purpose are transformed by the activity of using those tools, of implementing those policies. The skills, interests, expectations, and aspirations acquired in the course of success-

fully pursuing official goals ensure that the policies themselves will long survive the tasks for which they were designed, and that by surviving, they will participate in the creation of new political realities and new tasks. Institutions thereby carry politics beyond the parameters governing the original policies and tasks for which they were established.

In the case at hand, the institutions, norms, slogans, and elite recruitment modalities necessary to sustain a “besieged” polity over generations had, as a predictable consequence, massive effects on Jewish attitudes toward Arabs and toward the role and value of military force. In Israeli parlance, part of what was necessary to sustain and defend the Iron Wall was an impression of there being “*ein breira*” [no alternative]. It was believed that only if no other alternative were seen to be available would morale be stiff enough to convince parents to sacrifice their children in repeated wars and acts of violent retaliation. Associated with the principle of “*ein breira*” were children’s literature, academic approaches, journalistic practices, linguistic conventions, investment patterns, infrastructural choices, military deployments, political appeals, and cultural stereotypes, whose common purpose was to strengthen the Iron Wall against expected attacks and whose effect was to narrow the range of expectations most Israelis as individuals, and the Israeli political system as a whole, could have of Arabs.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, the logic of the Iron Wall strategy as emphasized by Jabotinsky—that only a series of costly defeats can convince a living people to relinquish valid territorial claims—can be seen as providing a correct analysis, not only of the Arab pattern of refusal, defeat, internal moderation, and negotiated compromise, but also of the Jewish/Zionist/Israeli pattern of refusal, defeat, internal moderation, and negotiated compromise. From this perspective, the complete failure of Begin’s government to eradicate the Palestinian problem—by circumventing it (Camp David), demoralizing it and destroying its leadership (the Lebanon War), or by overwhelming it demographically (the West Bank settlement project), the inability of Shamir-led Israeli governments to crush the Intifada, and the painful losses suffered by Israelis in connection with both the Lebanon War and the Intifada, were the consequences of a well-defended Palestinian “Iron Wall.” Its effect, in particular that of the Intifada, was, à la Jabotinsky, to encourage Israeli moderates and to brighten their prospects for displacing Israeli “extremist groups with their slogan ‘No, never.’”

Nowhere was this dynamic so publicly or dramatically acknowledged as in remarks made by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at the opening session of the Knesset in October 1994. Looking back at the Yom Kippur War of 1973, he acknowledged how important, even necessary, the painful losses

suffered by Israelis in that conflict were to the eventual willingness of an Israeli government to negotiate on the basis of territorial compromise.

History does not recognize the concept of: if. We are still shackled by the bitter memory of that Yom Kippur. We are not free of the events. We cannot ask: What would have happened if things had gone differently? Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat said at the time, and I quote: I am prepared to sacrifice the lives of 1.5 million Egyptian soldiers in order to free the lands, and the late Moshe Dayan, who was defense minister at the time, said: We are waiting for a telephone call from the Arabs. He also said: I prefer Sharm al-Shaykh without peace to peace without Sharm al-Shaykh. We responded to the Egyptian president's remarks with ridicule and arrogance. Moshe Dayan's remarks made a deep impression on many people in Israel. *A bloody war with Egypt and Syria and thousands of fatalities among IDF soldiers dear to us and among soldiers in the Egyptian and Syrian Armies were needed for Cairo to reach the correct conclusion that peace is preferable to war and for Jerusalem to reach the correct conclusion that peace is preferable to Sharm al-Shaykh.*<sup>29</sup>

To explain the shifting trajectory of Israeli politics as in large measure a function of Israel's conflict with the Palestinian Arabs is not just to make a point that established Israeli scholars would be unlikely to make; it is to frame an argument whose assumptions contradict fundamental tenets of Zionist ideology and fundamental presuppositions of the scholarly paradigms built upon those presuppositions. Since such explanations are implicitly or explicitly present in the work of many of Israel's new historians, social scientists, and culture studies specialists, it is little wonder that the wars in the Israeli academy these days are as fierce as they are, or that they attract so much interest in the media and in the political arena.

Consider, for instance, that a stock-in-trade of right-wing Zionist/Israeli polemicists has been that Palestinian nationalism is "inauthentic," a phony, artificial, wholly "reactive" movement with no "positive content" whose only reality is hostility toward the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.<sup>30</sup> Such arguments, of course, reflect a rather old-fashioned view of the primordial nature of nations and nationalism. But to the extent that they still carry weight in Israel, and do so beyond the right-wing circles where they appear most regularly, one can appreciate the anger of Israelis at scholarship that understands Israeli society, and even the character of the Zionist movement itself, as profoundly shaped by the conflict with the Arabs. This is the emotion that lies behind the intensity of the debate in contemporary Israel over the work of Israel's "new" historians, sociologists, and political scientists.



As it is with state projects and the stubborn realities they face, so it is with paradigms. At bottom, the new paradigm of Israeli studies, within which the Arabs, and the conflict with them, emerge as constitutive rather than peripheral factors, does reject the formerly hegemonic image of Israel as a “Jewish” or “Zionist” state. Instead of marveling at the success of Zionism and asking what dedication, skills, ideas, miracles, or unusual conjuncture of historical circumstances made it possible, or instead of asking about specific aspects of Israeli reality to explain their divergence from that which would seem to be the natural intent or trajectory of Zionist activity, the new scholars operate under a paradigm of questions and assumptions that does not place the Jewish historical experience, Zionist ideology, or Zionist practice at the center of the story. Instead of understanding Israel and its future as a faulty, but nonetheless coherent, product of Zionism and the Jewish historical predicament which produced it, these scholars see Israel, and its future, as fundamentally indeterminate, shaped by the political, economic, and social realities of Israeli society, by the presence within the society of huge numbers of Haredi and Sephardi Jews, Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, and Palestinian Arabs, and by the cumulative consequences of the hundred-years war with the Arabs. The fascinating questions and satisfying answers produced by their approach account for both the fury these scholars have provoked and the likelihood of their eventual ascendancy.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, David Vital's volumes concerning the first decades of the organized Zionist movement: *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford, 1975); *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford, 1982); and *Zionism: The Crucial Phase* (Oxford, 1987).

2. For reports of surprise, see Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (Harmondsworth, 1983), 148–158.

3. Regarding repressed portions of Zionist Congress debates about policy toward the Arabs of Palestine, see Benny Morris, “Thus Were the Zionist Documents Overhauled,” *Ha’Aretz*, 4 February 1994. In her book, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York, 1992), 126, Anita Shapira refers to “a clandestine debate” regarding the Arab problem “far removed from the limelight of the press.” For revealing insights into some of these debates, see Susan Lee Hattis, *The Bi-National Idea in Palestine during Mandatory Times* (Haifa, 1970).

4. Each of the passages quoted in this essay has been translated from the original Russian. See note 30, below. The most readily available translations include

an English version distributed by the World Zionist Organization in the early 1970s and a Hebrew version distributed at that time by Gahal—a version translated from Yiddish which was translated from the original Russian.

5. For the former use, see, e.g., Lenni Brenner, *Zionist Revisionism from Jabotinsky to Shamir* (London, 1984), 73–78. For the latter use, see, e.g., “We and the Arabs: On the Iron Wall,” supplement to the Herut journal *Eretz Yisrael*, 35 (May 1974).

6. I would not infer from these comments that Jabotinsky entertained, privately or otherwise, a political agreement with the Palestinians that would have included a Palestinian Arab state in part of the country, either West or East of the Jordan. On the other hand, I do not think it is an accident that, in his Iron Wall article, Jabotinsky avoided mentioning anything about the terms of the final negotiated settlement. In this way his position could be adopted by non-Revisionist Zionists. It can also be understood as consistent with the contemporary positions of both the Likud and the Labor Parties, whose leaders formally accept the political division of the “Land of Israel” between Arabs and Jews. While the left has defined the country as West of the Jordan and now accepts partition of that territory, the right has defined the Land of Israel as including the East Bank (although now, as per official declarations of Benjamin Netanyahu, it accepts the terms of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, acknowledging the legitimate and permanent existence of an Arab state in all of TransJordan).

7. Though Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionist movement in general disagreed vigorously with Jabotinsky and the Revisionists on a host of issues, they effectively agreed with his analysis of the Arab problem and his prescription for coping with it. In 1918, Ben-Gurion told a Zionist meeting that “There is no solution to the question of relations between Arabs and Jews . . . And we must recognize this situation . . . We as a nation want this country to be ours; the Arabs, as a nation, want this country to be theirs”; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York, 1988), 80. For the extent to which even Labor Zionist “doves,” such as Chaim Arlosoroff, shared the fundamentals of Jabotinsky’s “Iron Wall” approach to the “Arab Problem,” see Arlosoroff’s famous secret letter to Chaim Weizmann, dated 30 June 1932, published in *The Jewish Frontier* (October 1948). For descriptions of positions on “the Arab problem” of Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion which show Ben-Gurion, in the 1930s, developing the same “clear-sighted analysis of realities” as Jabotinsky possessed in the 1920s, see Shapira, *Land and Power*, 156–58, 210–11.

8. See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, 1966).

9. It is also distinguished by its character as a “two level game,” with one level played out between the two communities and another, inside each community, between “moderates” and “extremists.” See Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42 (Summer, 1988): 427–60; George Tsebelis, *Nested Games: Rational Choice in Comparative Politics* (Berkeley, 1990).

10. For the best available treatment of the retaliation raids, their purposes and their effects, see Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars: 1949–1956* (Oxford, 1993).

11. See Ian Lustick, "What West Bank Arabs Think," *The Jewish Frontier* (June 1970): 13–19.

12. See Moshe Maoz, *Palestinian Leadership on the West Bank: The Changing Role of the Arab Mayors under Jordan and Israel* (London, 1984), 87–88.

13. See Chaim Herzog, *The Arab-Israeli Wars* (New York, 1982), 315–16.

14. See Mark Allan Heller, "Politics and Social Change in the West Bank Since 1967," in Joel S. Migdal (ed.), *Palestinian Society and Politics* (Princeton, 1980), 200–201, and Heller's Ph.D. Dissertation, "Foreign Occupation and Political Elites: A Study of the Palestinians" (Cambridge, 1976), 228–30; Hillel Frisch, "From Armed Struggle over State Borders to Political Mobilization and Intifada within It: The Transformation of PLO Strategy in the Territories," *Plural Societies* 19(2&3) (1990): 99–100; and Simcha Flapan, "The Long Search for Peace: A Progressive Israeli View," in Samuel F. Wells Jr. and Mark A. Bruzonsky (eds.), *Security in the Middle East: Regional Change and Great Power Strategies* (Boulder, 1987), 168.

15. See Matti Golan, *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger: Step-by-Step Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York, 1976), 216–227; Nadav Safran, *Israel: Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 536–38; Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Boston, 1979), 240–41; and Yael Yishai, *Land or Peace—Whither Israel?* (Stanford, CA, 1987), 94.

16. A convenient and telling marker for this escalation is contained in the book of the Likud's current leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, *Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World* (New York, 1993). Although Jabotinsky's article is not mentioned, Chapter 7, regarding security issues, is entitled "The Wall." The brunt of the argument is that no territory should be relinquished and that the overall purpose of Israeli military might is to "effect a lasting change in Arab attitudes"—a change that will, in Netanyahu's view, be revealed when there emerges "an Arab leader courageous enough to be willing to forgo some or all of the Arab claims to the remaining land." (i.e., the lands occupied by Israel in 1967, not those held by Israel before 1967). See pp. 292–293.

17. Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York, 1988); Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947–51* (London, 1992).

18. Itamar Rabinovich, *The Road Not Taken* (New York, 1991).

19. See, for example, Amnon Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back* (New York, 1984); Ilan Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977–1983: Israel's Move to the Right* (New York, 1987); Myron J. Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989); and Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley, 1983).

20. Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977–1983*.

21. See Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions*; Myron J. Aronoff, "Establishing Authority: The Memorialization of Jabotinsky and the Burial of the Bar-Kochba

Bones in Israel under the Likud," in Myron J. Aronoff (ed.), *The Frailty of Authority, Political Anthropology, Vol. V* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986), 105-130; Ian S. Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York, 1988), 17-71; Amnon Sella, "Custodians and Redeemers: Israeli Leaders' Perceptions of Peace, 1967-1979," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22-2 (April 1986): 236-251; and Ofira Seliktar, "The New Zionism," *Foreign Policy* no. 51 (Summer 1983): 118-138.

22. See especially Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism* (London, 1986), 648-49; Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Project: A Survey of Israel's Policies* (Washington, DC, 1984), 21; Meron Benvenisti, *1986 Report: Demographic, Economic, Legal, Social and Political Developments in the West Bank* (Jerusalem, 1986); and Donald Harman Akenson, *God's Peoples: Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), 344-345. For a full analysis of the putative "irreversibility" of Israeli rule of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and of the political dynamics of the struggles inside of Israel, modeled here as "learning," by the Israeli political system as a whole, see Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), Chapters 1, 2, 9, and 10.

23. For analyses of the effects of the Intifada on Israeli political opinion, see Mark Tessler, "The Intifada and Political Discourse in Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, XLIX(2) (Winter 1990): 43-61; Giora Goldberg, Gad Barzilai and Efraim Inbar, *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion* (Jerusalem, February 1991) *Policy Studies*, 43, 11-15, 21-24, and 47-50; and Don Peretz, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising* (Boulder, CO, 1990), 119-127, 134-143, and 156-160.

24. See Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*, 378-379.

25. To make this claim is not to assert that Jabotinsky's personal hopes and plans for the Palestinian Arabs were, over the long-term, cooperative in both spirit and content. It is not at all apparent how "equal civil and national rights" of which Jabotinsky wrote in 1923 could be squared with Revisionist commitments, which Jabotinsky appears to have shared, to Jewish sovereignty over the whole of the Land of Israel, including TransJordan. My focus here is on the theoretical implication of one of Jabotinsky's publicly articulated arguments, not on his personal preferences.

26. Eitan Haber interview with Ezer Weizmann, *Yediot Achronot*, 2 November 1984. Translated in *Israel Press Briefs*, no. 30 (December 1984): 1.

27. On the other hand, even mainstream academic theories of deterrence have been susceptible to the criticism of asymmetry; that is, to the implicit but real expectation (contrary to the formal terms of the theory) that one player in the game (the one with whom the analyst identifies, usually the "deterrent") is much less likely to de-escalate demands in response to higher perceived costs and risks and much less likely to escalate demands in response to perceived weakness in the environment. See Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968). For a theory of "institutional lag," see Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*.

28. This intent was made most explicit by Moshe Dayan, Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces from 1953 to 1957, and Minister of Defense from 1967 to 1974. In the 1950s, Dayan and those associated with him advocated policies designed to inflame tensions with the Arabs lest the Israeli public be fooled into trusting Arab offers of peace or lose its resolve to sacrifice in what was increasingly defined as an endless, or virtually endless, war with the Arab world. See Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and Other Documents* (Belmont, MA, 1980), 44, for her quote to this effect from Sharett's diary entry for 26 May 1955. In a 1968 address to graduates of the Israel Army Staff and Command College, Dayan gave a widely disseminated speech rallying the people of Israel for a virtually permanent war against an implacable Arab enemy. This and many other similar speeches by Dayan epitomized the narrowing effect of the Iron Wall on Israeli visions of the Arab enemy. See Moshe Dayan, "A Soldier Reflects on Peace Hopes," reprinted from *The Jerusalem Post* in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israel-Arab Reader* (New York, 1985), 434-445.

29. Speech delivered before the Knesset, 3 October 1994, Voice of Israel Radio, transcribed by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service in *Daily Report: Near East and South Asia*, 4 October 1994, 41. [Emphasis added.]

30. The insistence of right-wing Zionists on the artificiality of "Palestinian" nationalism, the merely artifactual character of these sentiments as functions of hostility to Zionism, and the primacy of the term "Land of Israel" over "Palestine" is awkwardly, but revealingly, displayed by the systematic mistranslation of Jabotinsky's Iron Wall article into Hebrew and English in the versions they distribute. Although in the original Russian Jabotinsky refers to Palestine, Arabs of Palestine, and Palestinian Arabs, these translations substitute "Land of Israel" and "Arabs of the Land of Israel." My thanks go to the Jabotinsky Institute and Museum in Tel-Aviv for providing me with versions of "On the Iron Wall" in the original Russian, and to Professor M. Steven Fish and Mr. Sergei Krikunov for their translation assistance.

For examples of right-wing Zionist characterizations of the inauthenticity of Palestinian nationalism see Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land of Destiny* (New York, 1985), 194; Israel Eldad, *The Jewish Revolution: Jewish Statehood* (New York, 1971), 111-118; Samuel Katz, *Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine* (New York, 1985), 259-260; Moredechai Nisan, "The Nature of Palestinian Identity without the PLO," *Artzi* 4 (Spring 1986): 52-63; and Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution: A New Perspective* (New York, 1978), 157 and 159.