Chapter IV

A CASE STUDY OF ISRAEL
Chapter IV

A CASE STUDY OF ISRAEL

A similar framework of study, as in the previous chapter, has been adopted to the second study of Israel. After a brief outline of the salient features of Israel's foreign policy, the activities of Israel's intelligence services in relation to crypto-diplomacy, decision-making and foreign policy will be outlined. As an attempt will be made to show, Israel's intelligence activities relate more directly to the Arab-Israel conflict and its role can be perceived more clearly in both foreign policy decision-making and implementation. The detailed analysis of the causes and effects of such activity on diplomacy will be undertaken in the next chapter.

The Foreign Policy of Israel

The immediate problems facing the new state of Israel following its establishment in May 1948 were the problems of consolidating and rebuilding the bureaucracy and the economy. In the initial months therefore, foreign policy was relegated to the background. The support offered by the Soviet Union, United States and France in the creation of Israel, enabled Israel to proclaim non-alignment as its foreign policy and Moshe Sharett, the foreign minister, was a sincere advocate of this policy. Israel had in fact acquired a loan from the United States and a consignment of arms from Czechoslovakia. By the end of 1948

---

however, the Cold War had begun in earnest and Israel was forced to make its choice between the Communist and Western blocs.

The Knesset elections of January 1949 brought the Mapai to power and David Ben Gurion was elected Prime Minister. Ben Gurion was the founder and unchallenged leader of Israel till the early sixties and the architect of Israel's foreign and defence policy. The three cornerstones of Israeli foreign policy during this period were the protection of Israel's security and sovereignty, enabling immigration and strengthening the unstable economy. On security issues, the thrust was towards ensuring the sovereignty of the 1949 borders and foiling British or American attempts to resolve the refugee problem through repatriation. There was the need to seek western support either through the NATO, or an informal bilateral agreement with western nations. But more important was the need to repel frequent Arab attacks and ensure that the strategic balance did not tilt in favour of the Arab coalition, especially Egypt, through induction of foreign arms. On the immigration front Israel desired to encourage immigration of Jews from other parts of the world so as to increase its population. This issue was connected to the problem of survival and security since manpower would strengthen the defences of Israel. In applying diplomatic pressure on various governments to allow Jews to emigrate, nations such as the Soviet Union, United States, Argentina or Yemen where large

---

2 Shlomo Aronson, Conflict and Bargaining in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ Press, 1978), pp. 11-12.
sections of Jews lived, came in for special attention. Similarly on the economic front in spite of a desire to be self-sufficient, Israel found itself becoming dependent on foreign aid from Western nations and Jewish contributions. The defence expenditure amounting to nearly 45% of the budget and development programmes to absorb the immigrants threatened financial collapse and Israel was forced to relax its rules and encourage foreign investment. Israel went to the extent of accepting reparation payments from Germany despite strong public opinion against it and economic aid became an important factor in its foreign policy calculations.

The fleeting support given by the Soviet Union to the partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel was based primarily on two factors: firstly the fact that most of the Arab monarchies were reactionary states and tended to have close relations with the West, secondly the pioneering efforts of Zionist Jews in trying to create a new socialist pattern of society through the 'Kibbutz' system and the support of leftist Jews from the Soviet Union, in its development. But this attitude faded very quickly as the Communist International opposed Zionism as a distraction for Jewish communists and considered the two movements incompatible. Secondly many Soviet Jews were attracted to the new state and agitated for the right to emigrate. While Israel

---

tried to apply diplomatic pressure, Jewish loyalty to the Soviet Union became suspect as the support for Zionism spread. The final break in Israeli-Soviet relations came when in the early fifties, Israel began to align with the Western Bloc on all international developments. In spite of the weakness of the local communist parties, the Soviet Union saw revolutionary potential in the developing political situation in Arab states where there was seething discontent with monarchy. In Israel itself, the Communist Party had continuously called for closer relations with the Soviet Union, but the first elections revealed that communism had less than 4% support in Israel.

The dilemma of American policy in the Middle East arose from its moral and material commitment to the security and integrity of Israel. On the other hand, the projection of the Cold War onto the Middle East scenario compelled it to seek friendly relations with Arab states especially the conservative monarchies and liberal democracies such as Lebanon. Egypt, the revolutionary and progressive leader of the Arab masses, was theoretically non-aligned and thereby proved to be the stumbling bloc in United States-Israeli relations. At stake was the vast oil resources of the Middle East and the spread of communism in a strategic area, with the Jewish lobby in America pushing for

---

greater commitment to Israel. America's policy towards Israel has thus varied, depending upon the circumstances. From the initial open partiality for Israel, of President Harry S. Truman, the policy changed to selective support during John F. Kennedy's tenure. The efforts since then have been towards balancing military and economic aid to Arab states, especially Egypt, with the aid given to Israel so as to maintain its strategic superiority in the area. Israeli-American relations have shown a tendency to improve significantly when the Arab states became closer to the Soviet Union, as in the case of Egypt during the sixties. Equally, when American diplomacy has been involved in an effort to mediate or solve the Arab-Israel conflict, relations have deteriorated.

One of the most important goals of Israeli diplomacy since the days of Ben Gurion, has been, to enter into a formal alliance or a mutual defence treaty with the United States and Great Britain, which would commit the West to come to Israel's rescue in the event of an Arab attack. Ben Gurion was farsighted enough to realize that the means to ensure Israel's survival in the long term, was a close military alliance with the United States. Israel consistently aligned itself with the Western stand in the context of Cold War, starting with the Korean crisis in 1950. Israeli leaders, at various points of time have offered

---

alliances, military bases, use of naval ports, intelligence gathered, in the course of its wars, on Soviet weapons and a variety of other benefits including intelligence data with the hope of committing the United States to guarantee Israel's security. This policy however did not succeed as both the United States and Great Britain realized the importance of not antagonizing the Arab states and risking Arab counter-measures. The difference in perspective is significant in that, Israel attacked America's policy of giving military and economic aid to Arab states, who already received significant Soviet aid, as this would only release funds and improve Arab military strength, aimed at the destruction of Israel. For a brief period the negotiations over a partial defence treaty in 1980 and 1981 seemed to succeed. An Agreement on Mutual Strategic Cooperation signed in 1981 between the United States and Israel, however, collapsed in mid-June 1982.

One country with which Israel had close but clandestine relations until 1967, was France. The common factor which united these two countries was their common hostility towards the Egypt led by President Nasser. Egypt had been a major source of military aid to the Algerian national movement, the FLN. Bases, equipment, training and direction had been provided by Nasser, which was a major source of trouble to the French who ruled the Algerian colony. In addition was the concept of socialist solidar-

6 Stevens, ibid., pp. 116-17. See also Rodinson, n. 1, p. 64-65.
ity, between the French Socialist Party and the Israeli Mapai, and aid given to Israel as part of the progressive "left wing" image. The French-Israeli collaboration extended to the area of nuclear technology and French assistance was largely responsible for the Dimona reactor built in the Negev which was discovered in 1960. In addition to carrying out joint atomic experiments, France became the chief supplier of military equipment to Israel, and there was mutual exchange of military intelligence. These relations were closest in 1956 when Israel and France entered into a secret alliance before launching the Suez campaign. Under de Gaulle's "Fifth Republic" France externally maintained a neutralist stand in the Arab-Israel conflict, but after 1967, the French moved away from Israel in an effort to regain their lost influence in the Arab arena, while in Africa, the liberation of Algeria ended the period of co-operation. It was only in 1981, with the return of the Socialist party to power in France, that relations with Israel began to improve considerably.

Israel's relations with West Germany have been characterized by uncertainty and emotional trauma on account of the tremendous opposition it generated, sometimes violent, in the Israeli public and leadership. Ben Gurion was however courageous enough to meet the Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, in March 1960. Israel

---

won substantial advantages including economic aid and clandestine supply of arms and military training to be provided for Israeli army personnel in West Germany. The deal was kept secret to prevent an Arab reaction and in consideration of the sensitivity of Jewish public opinion. German war reparation payments were accepted by Israel and soon constituted one of its major source of revenue from abroad. In 1962, American arms aid to Israel was channelled through West Germany to avoid detection. Once the clandestine flow of arms came to light, the Arab states exerted strong pressure on Germany, and the Germans apparently gave way. But the official recognition of Israel by Germany in May 1965 and exchange of ambassadors, resulted in a break of diplomatic relations between West Germany and Arab states, except for Morocco, Tunisia and Libya. Since then Israeli-German relations have continued on a low but even level, except for occasional emotional tirades by Israeli leaders.

Another area of Israeli diplomacy which requires attention is its Africa policy. The diplomatic defeat of Israel at the Bandung Conference in 1955, when it was not allowed to participate by the Nasser-led Afro-Asian bloc, clearly indicated the weakness of its Third World diplomacy. In the late fifties Israel made vigorous efforts to improve its image and to counteract Nasser's influence in the African nations south of the Sahara.

8 Rodinson, n. 1, pp. 172-3; see also Aronson, n. 2, p. 40. A more personal account of German-Israel relations is available in Golda Meir, My Life (London: First Futura Publications, 1976), pp. 116-17, 143-5.
By 1966 this policy had succeeded and Israel has close relations with many African nations. Israel's defence and nuclear links with South Africa proved to be a disturbing factor in this relationship, and after the 1973 war, more than twenty African nations broke diplomatic relations with Israel under strong pressure from the Arab states. Many however, like Kenya, maintained clandestine links with Israel even while they had no overt diplomatic links. Israel's policy had largely succeeded on account of its technical aid programmes, its missions operating in Africa and the dispatch of numerous African students to study the latest farming and industrial techniques in Israel.

It is, however, Israel's Arab policy which constitutes the core of Israel's foreign policy. This Arab policy has been the product of interaction between external circumstances and internal political developments in Israel. The official Arab policy of Israel was that the Arab rejection of the partition plan, relieved the Jews of their commitment to respect the plan. While accepting the plan earlier, Israel had given up its historic rights sacred to the Zionist tradition, but now Israel retained the right to expand its "historical territory" depending on the international situation, Arab military strength and Arab willingness to come to a peaceful agreement. The same logic was extended to denying a solution to the refugee problem and preventing the return of Palestinians into Israel. Ben Gurion had created

---

an image of an aggressive "hawkish" leader, but in reality he followed a pragmatic policy of manoeuvring between the demands of unattainable peace and war, between territorial compromise and protracted conflict. It was his sense of timing, the capacity to take military risks and ruthless implementation of policy which contributed to the image. Ben Gurion was under constant attack from the Nationalist Right and his own leftist supporters for accepting an armistice and not moving to acquire more territory. Even Major General Moshe Dayan, the Chief of Staff, believed that the Egyptian army should have decisively routed, while Ben Gurion realized the need to acquire more arms, consolidate existing boundaries and resort to diplomacy with the Great Powers, to put pressure on the Arab states.

From 1951 onwards the Palestinian refugees had formed organisations in the Gaza Strip and Jordan which undertook infiltration raids on the Israeli border areas, often committing sabotage and returning to their bases. The Israelis in turn formulated the policy of "massive retaliation" which became the basis of its Arab policy, aimed at carrying the war into enemy territory. By 1955 Egypt was aiding and arming the "Fedayeen", while Ben Gurion made the Arab states responsible for military action undertaken from their territory. The policy of collective reprisal was based on the need to punish the Arab states and indicate the unpleasant

\[\text{Aronson, n. 2, pp. 9-10.}\]

\[\text{For further details see, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's Security and Her International Position Before and After the Sinai Campaign, in Israel Government Yearbook, No. 5720, 1959-60, pp. 9-87.}\]
nature of permanent war in the Middle East while boosting public morale and the image of the Tzahal at home. This policy was interrupted from December 1953 to February 1955 when Ben Gurion resigned to return to his Kibbutz and Moshe Sharett became Prime Minister. Sharett favoured a more flexible policy and was willing to negotiate issues with Egypt such as the refugee problem in return for Arab recognition of Israel. The intermediaries between Nasser and Sharett were British parliamentarians and briefly the potential for a peaceful settlement appeared. But Sharett's policy was not favoured by the Israeli elite or public, especially Ben Gurion's followers, and the opportunity was lost.

The Lavon Affair brought Ben Gurion back to power in February 1955 and he reverted to the hard line policy of reacting virulently to fedayeen raids, non-recognition of Israel and Arab propaganda. While Moshe Sharett continued efforts to solve the problem peacefully, Ben Gurion prepared for war. By 1956, Israel had acquired sufficient French arms to make the army feel confident of a victory. Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres felt that the time was right for a "preventive war" to stop fedayeen raids and defeat Egypt, before it became too powerful with Soviet arms. On 23 October Israel, France and Great Britain signed a secret treaty at Sevres and on 29 October Israel invaded Sinai under French air cover. On 30 October, the Anglo-French ultimatum was issued for both Egypt and Israel to withdraw from the Suez Canal zone, while Anglo-French paratroopers were dropped over the

---

area. The Soviet Union threatened atomic reprisals if the British and French did not withdraw their ultimatum and troops from the Suez. The United States also applied diplomatic pressure on its allies. Within a few days the French, British and reluctantly, the Israelis withdrew and a United Nations peace-keeping force was sent to the area.

In 1961 and 1962 efforts were undertaken by leaders such as Kennedy and Tito to mediate between Egypt and Israel and the focus shifted to diplomacy. These efforts however failed as neither side would change their stand on the issues of refugees and recognition of Israel. In 1963 the pact between Egypt, Syria and Iraq led to an exaggerated reaction in Israel. The revival of the Lavon Affair and its aftermath on Israeli politics, resulted in the resignation of Ben Gurion in June 1963 and he was succeeded by Levi Eshkol. Eshkol's foreign policy was a search for possible alternatives to the earlier belligerency, responding to the pacifist urge to demobilize, without sacrificing the fundamental principles of Zionism. Internally he temporarily succeeded in curbing the military clique and bringing it under civil control and limiting reprisal actions. In the 1965 elections the hard-liners were defeated and Abba Eban the new foreign minister ably supported Eshkol's policy, seeking to balance relations with both the Superpowers and moving towards non-alignment. The relative

---


security and prosperity in Israel led to false hopes of peace, but in 1966 the infiltrations from Syria and Jordan forced Eshkol to return to the hardline position on retaliation. Relations with Syria deteriorated. Syria dragged Egypt into the war hysteria as it was afraid of an Israeli attack. In Israel, Eshkol was attacked for his "weakness" by the Nationalist Right led by Menachem Begin and the activist clique led by Moshe Dayan who advocated a "preventive strike" on both Egypt and Syria. Dayan was made the Defence Minister on 31 May 1961 with tremendous support from the Military and Right-wing politicians. Nasser had asked the United Nations troops to clear out from the Sinai and had moved Egyptian troops by 21 May. Despite Abba Eban's desperate diplomatic moves through the United Nations and third party mediation, the 1967 war broke out when Israel attacked both Egypt and Syria on 5 June 1967.

The early seventies was marked by the abortive diplomacy of Gunnar Jarring, the U.N. mediator and Secretary of State, William Rogers. The trend towards "conservative hawkish" behaviour continued under the new Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defence Minister Dayan, characterized by the unwillingness to make any concessions which could affect the security of Israel. Domestically this was a period of economic problems, controlling Arabs in occupied territories and building Jewish settlements while combating terrorism from PLO bases in Lebanon. Diplomatically

---

Israel became isolated from many of its former allies and strains developed in Israel-United States relations. Israel now began to formulate a "Jordanian" solution for solving the Palestinian problem. A sense of over-confidence had however developed in the political leadership that the Arab states, especially Egypt, were now unwilling and incapable of attacking Israel again. When Egypt attacked Israel on 6 October 1973, the Israeli Government was almost totally unprepared for the war and the army suffered heavy casualties before it could stem the attack. Meir and Dayan were forced to resign for committing the "blunder", in April 1974 and Zitzhak Rabin became the Premier. Politically the Mapai base lost ground to the Right-wing Herut coalition while Rabin, primarily a military man faced difficulties formulating a workable foreign policy.

The major foreign policy development after the 1973 war, was the signing of the Disengagement Agreement on Sinai in March 1975, negotiated through the shuttle diplomacy of Henry Kissinger. Rabin's policies internally and externally were pragmatic and moderate, showing a greater flexibility and willingness to negotiate. One distinct feature of Rabin's foreign policy was the resort to leverage of the Jewish Lobby in America, to offset American pressure on Israel to grant concessions. Domestically the economic problems, corruption charges and in-

16 Aronson, n. 2, pp. 15-16,
17 See Meir, n. 8, pp. 353ff.
18 Aronson, n. 2, pp. 258-60.
ability of the leadership to supply moral and political leadership or inspiration, took its toll in the March 1977 elections. This moral and political vacuum was partly filled by Begin's Likud coalition which won the elections. Begin to some extent retained the image of a Ben Gurion and his foreign policy resembled the policy of massive retaliation and refusal to negotiate on the problem/occupied territories. Sadat's peace initiative in November 1977 took the Israel's once again by surprise and despite Begin's inflexibility, a combination of American pressure and public opinion and the offer of substantial military and economic aid, finally resulted in the Camp David Accord signed in March 1979, after protracted and complex negotiations. While the agreement between Egypt and Israel has come into force, the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy have broken down after three years. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 is also an indication of the close similarity to Ben Gurion's hard-line policy of massive retaliation.

Intelligence and Crypto-Diplomacy

In the context of the above outlined foreign policy, it is necessary to examine the role of intelligence services and its contribution to diplomacy. Israel has direct diplomatic relations with less than half the nations in the world, its weakest areas being Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe and has thus had to resort to intelligence services as a quasi-diplomatic channel of communication. Even where diplomatic relations exist, intelligence liaison has proved a useful secondary channel to bypass
conventional diplomatic channels. The two most interesting examples have been dealt with earlier. It was the contacts between the intelligence services of Egypt and Israel which laid the initial groundwork for the secret meetings between Moshe Dayan and Mohammed Yohami, in Morocco in late 1977. The other case of intelligence liaison came to light after the "Entebbe Rescue" in July 1976 when it was revealed that Kenya's cooperation in the operation was negotiated through intelligence channels. Israel had maintained these clandestine links with many African nations such as Ghana, Kenya, Zaire and Liberia after the 1973 break in diplomatic relations.

Israel and France

There is evidence that as early as 1954, some members of the French Government found increasingly attractive the idea that France might support an Israeli strike against Nasser. Israeli intelligence services were well informed on events in Algeria even before 1953 and had begun to work very closely with the French intelligence SDECR, in 1954. The Mossad supplied France with convincing information about the origins of the Algerian rebellion, its financing often through illicit counterfeiting operations, Egyptian arms supplies and European arms purchases destined

19 Confirmed in personal interview with Schlomo Gazit, Beersheeva, 6.4.82. Gazit was the DMI from 1974-1979 See Appendix II, n. 13, 14.

20 Islamic Revolutionary Guard, Documents of the US Espionage Nest, vol. II (Teheran, n.d.), p. 24. The original CIA Study and Report entitled "Israel: Foreign Intelligence and Security Services" has been reproduced in this volume.
for the National Liberation Front (FLN). There is little doubt that Israel purposely increased French fears of Nasser's involvement in Algeria and stressed his ambitions elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa, in order to increase French willingness to co-operate with Israel. Additional pressures were provided by reports of Soviet intentions to furnish Egypt with a large quantity of arms. Such reports had appeared in the Hebrew Press as early as August 1955. It is possible that the Mossad knew of Nasser's negotiations with Russia in 1955 and had passed on this information to France, soon after the negotiations were initiated. Although more arms were being shipped to Algerian rebels via Spanish Morocco and Libya, the French did not conceive of invading these areas. Cairo actually ranked eighth in terms of arms supplies to FLN, but it provided sufficient reason for the subsequent invasion in 1956.

It was in 1954 that an Israeli spy-ring discovered in Egypt, was found to have members of French origin and suspicions grew of French-Israeli joint networks. Two of the accused spies held French citizenship and several of them had received training in France, according to Zakariah Mohieddin, the Egyptian Interior Minister. Since the French SDECE was not directly involved in operations until 1957, the earlier contacts between the intelligence

21 Crosbie, n. 7, p. 58. The author's data is based on interviews with Paul Gross, the Director of SDECE, 1957-1962 and Zvi Dan, a former Israeli Defence Minister.

22 See Ha-Aretz (Jerusalem), and Ma-ariy (Jerusalem), 28-31 August 1955, and New York Times, 6 March 1956, p. 3.
services consisted mostly of an exchange of information and documents between Israel and France, usually in Paris. General Paul Ely, former French Chief of Staff, confirmed that around this period the Chiefs of Staff of both countries met alternately at Paris and Tel Aviv, twice a year to exchange intelligence data, primarily on the Arab world and occasionally on the Soviet Union. The Mossad contacts were utilized by the SDECE in East Africa, while the French helped Israel with recruiting and supplying false papers to facilitate Jewish emigration from Morocco and Romania. Members of the SDECE were stationed in Israel in 1956 to oversee the security arrangements of the transfer of arms to Israel. Around June 1956, the idea began to crystallise within the French government that France should not only arm, but act in concert with Israel, and during the secret negotiations held for joint attack, members of the intelligence services were present and participated.

From 1958-59 onwards, there was a fundamental difference in the French and Israeli interpretations of developments in the Arab world. The Israelis fearing Arab encirclement, called for the construction of a defence line to contain Nasserism, while de Gaulle preferred a multilateral approach to Middle East problems. In 1961, a rash of press reports condemned Jewish support for the ultra right wing terrorist OAS in Algeria. It alleged Mossad involvement with OAS leaders and claimed that Jacques Soustelle, the

23 Crosbie, n. 7, pp. 140-2. The above data was confirmed in the author's interviews with Paul Ely, Paul Jacquier, Director of SDECE, 1962-63 and Yaakov Tsur, Israeli ambassador to Paris during this period.
Right-wing leader was receiving support and finance from the Mossad and Israel's Right-wing parties. Soustelle was known to be friendly with wealthy American Jews. De Gaulle could hardly have accepted a situation in which foreign policy and the issue of support for Israel threatened to become enmeshed with domestic politics. Whether or not he believed reports of Mossad and Jewish involvement with the OAS, he asked his Cabinet members to sever ties with "Alliance France-Israel".

Despite continued goodwill between the Defence establishment and strategic industries, by 1965, developments within the governmental structures of both countries and the changing role of France in regional politics increasingly weakened the tacit alliance. Under Charles Ailleret, named Chief of Staff in 1961, the annual staff level meetings were discontinued. However, Generals Jacquier and Grossin (SDECE) affirmed that collaboration continued between the intelligence services, which in France, reported directly to the President. Exchanges of intelligence on Africa and the Arab world continued until 1968 and France had a continuing interest in Suez, as well as a desire to keep Lebanon and Syria calm. French officials respected Israeli intelligence particularly when it came to the analysis of Nasser's and the Soviet Union's role in the area. Israel on its part was anxious to obtain from France, precise information on the deployment of Arab troops. But the alliance slowly faded, though there were attempts by Israel's political leadership to embarrass French

---

rapprochement with the Arabs and to shore up the fading relationship, or to prod France into renewed obligations, which however, failed.

One of the key figures in the French-Israel co-operation, especially after the 1956 Suez Affair was Chaim Herzog who was the Israeli military attache posted at Paris and later became Director of Aman, Israel's military intelligence. One of the main purposes of his mission in Paris was to seek aid in easing Israel's computerization load. The Israeli Defence Ministry was of the view that supplementary computer service was required from both France and United States, if Israel was to be in a position to win any war quickly, that may start in the Middle East. While France officially maintained a neutral stance, there was unofficial support from the intelligence service and the Navy. De Gaulle, however, had no wish to see Israel crushed, though he was officially committed to a policy of friendship with the Arabs, especially those that had until recently been colonies of France. So Herzog was able to enter into an unofficial arrangement for co-operation on computerized intelligence with the French Navy. It was to prove of tremendous value during the 1967 War in enabling the small Israeli Navy to play its part.

Israel and the United States

Israel had won a certain amount of unofficial support

25 Croft, n. 7, pp. 180-1

from the CIA even during the Eisenhower era. The CIA had been realistic enough to realize that the appeasement policy towards the Arab world may ultimately run counter to American interests, military and economic. For this reason they maintained a policy of allowing all intelligence operations in Israel to be carried out entirely by the Mossad. In short the CIA had no office or station chief in Tel Aviv, but certain officers in the American Embassy there co-operated with the Mossad. In theory this entailed an exchange of intelligence between the two sides and worked better than expected. The key figures in this arrangement were originally Isser Harel, Ebrahim Evron, the deputy ambassador to Washington, and James Angleton, Head of the CIA counter-intelligence department. Angleton thought that American foreign policy during the Suez operation was a folly and decided to counteract the State Department's bias towards the Arabs, by close co-operation with the Mossad. It was he who first perceived the need for a new policy in the Middle East and safeguards against increasing Soviet Union influence. Angleton and Evron worked well together and as a result, the CIA helped Israel with technical assistance in the nuclear field. Angleton was forced to resign in 1973 by William Colby, Director of CIA who felt that Angleton's close links with Israel, affected America's overtly neutral stance that it wanted to project in the Arab world.

Ephraim Evron was instrumental in paving the way for the reversal of America's policy of seeking good relations with Arab States, which for a while dominated American thinking, not only under Eisenhower but also the Kennedy Administration. What helped Evron was the evidence he was able to produce not only for the CIA, but the State Department also, of increasing Soviet involvement in Egypt. Early in 1965 he had been able to reveal to the CIA that the Soviet Embassy in Egypt was filled with spies, some of whom were unmasked in June 1967, and provided evidence of the Soviet reconnaissance vessel's tactics in the Eastern Mediterranean, against both Israel and the Sixth Fleet. For a brief period Evron was Israel's most powerful figure in Washington, more highly regarded than the ambassador and welcomed as Mossad liaison officer to the CIA. There were many people in the Administration who were sympathetic to Israel and passed on relevant information, in return for which the Mossad offered intelligence relating to American interests.

This information supplied by Israeli intelligence finally convinced not only the CIA but the State Department as well, especially Eugene Rostow and Walt Rostow who became President Johnson's adviser on national security. Walt in fact urged on the President, the shared views of the CIA and Israel. Indeed by the end of 1965 there was pressure inside the CIA for launching a coup in Egypt to get rid of Nasser and realizing this was not possible, due to Nasser's standing in Egypt, the view developed.

---

28 Ibid., pp. 169-70.
that a military defeat for Egypt might bring about the downfall. This was at the same time that Egypt and Ahmed Shukeiry, head of the PLO, recently formed in 1964, forged an alliance. Various high level meetings were held between CIA representatives in the Middle East and Israeli intelligence with the object of co-ordinating both policy and intelligence gathering. These meetings were directed by James Angleton, Ephraim Bitron, Meir Amit (DI) and Aharon Yariv (DMI). President Johnson swung away from the pro-Arab policy as the Soviet pressure on Egypt increased, and Egyptian activities in the Arab world created concern both in the White House and the State Department. Walt Rostow, the foreign policy adviser, convinced Johnson that the American policy towards Israel should serve as an effective check on Soviet movements in the Arab world. This is in effect the strategy that America followed during the sixties, in its efforts to counteract Soviet influence in the Middle East.

Intelligence and Decision-Making

Both the Mossad and Aman have been directly involved in the war efforts of Israel and had a crucial impact on decision-making during these periods. In 1955, soon after the Czechoslovakia-Egypt arms deal, Issar Harel, the Director of Intelligence was sent to the United States on a secret mission. Harel was sent to Washington to put pressure on America. He showed American officials a top secret document of Ben Gurion's meeting with Defence Ministry officials in which the Israeli Prime Minister

---

29 Ibid., pp. 168-70, 178.
declared that, if Israel received weapons to counter Egypt's build-up, or if the flow of arms to Egypt were stopped, there would be no war. The United States did not comply and the mission was a failure, but in response to Harel's mission the United States sent Robert Anderson, a special envoy of Eisenhower to solve the impasse.

The preparations for the war in 1956 were kept a close secret initially and revealed only to the Directors of Intelligence (both Central and Military), a few public officials and envoys. Yeshoshafat Haikabi, the Director of Military Intelligence was sent in October 1956 to New York, at the request of the French Government to serve as liaison officer with the French foreign minister, then participating in the United Nations Security Council debate on the Suez crisis. The first hint that Israel would attack, was given to Israel's ambassador in Washington, Abba Eban, only at this late stage by the Director of Military Intelligence. Abba Eban admits in his autobiography that the intelligence services were a separate channel of communication with the French Government. It is also important to note that members of the intelligence service were present at the secret negotiations that took place between Israel and France on joint plans to attack the canal zone. In Israel itself, it has been established, that the Directors of both central and military intelligence were present and participated in the discussions in

---

October 1956, on various aspects of the attack. One such meeting was held on 29 October at Ben Guiron's house where the Defence Minister, Foreign Minister and Commanders of the armed forces were present to discuss the day of invasion, and the statements to be released to the press by the Defence and Foreign Ministers.

The course of events prior to the 1967 war reveal a similar role for intelligence services. Levi Eshkol, the Prime Minister who did not want to hand over the Defence portfolio to Moshe Dayan thought of creating a Defence Council which included Meir Amit, Director of Intelligence, as a member. The plan however did not work. In May, the Mutual Defence Pact between Egypt and Jordan, came as a surprise development for Israel and one fraught with great danger. The rationale for further delay in a pre-emptive strike had to be urgently re-examined. Eshkol and Abba Eban the foreign minister, decided to send Meir Amit, to Washington to make a clear on-the-spot evaluation of the seriousness of American commitments. Meir Amit's first report arrived on 31 May and served to underline the view that nothing could be gained by waiting. The report read:

At the end of my first round of talks in Washington my conclusions are that we should wait a few days in order to give a chance for the operation of freeing the Straits. However, from hints and scattered facts that I have heard, I get the impression that the maritime force project is running into heavier water every

---

hour. There is a growing chance for American political backing, if we act on our own. (32)

Reviewing these reports, Eban then took what he considered one of his momentous steps during the crisis. Accompanied by the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, he met Yitzak Rabin, Chief of Staff and Aharon Yariv, the DMI and told them that he withdrew his political inhibitions to a military delay: the waiting period had achieved its purpose. Israel would not be isolated as in 1966. It was decided on 3 June 1967 to propose to the cabinet to go to war on 4 June. Meir Amit, in touch with the American Administration did not dissent with the decision and indicated that there was growing public sympathy for Israel in America.

The crisis which was evident as early as 14 May 1967 had actually began with a report from Aharon Yariv, Director of Military Intelligence that there had been a build-up of UAR positions on the borders. In the next few days, intelligence reports indicated further troop movements in the Sinai, and that Egyptian paratroopers had been dropped into Sharm el-Sheikh. The most disturbing intelligence report to the Prime Minister Eshkol was that troops returning from the Yemen, were immediately dispatched to Sinai, by Egypt, Eshkol considered this information as a decisive input that led to the tactical decision for large scale


mobilization of reserves, to be implemented immediately.

Michael Brecher theorizes that as the crisis of 1967 increased, the more was the leadership's solicitation of subordinate advice. The cabinet meetings were expanded to include top army officers and the intensity of consultation grew. Most conspicuous at the latter cabinet meetings was Meir Amit (DI) who had earlier been dispatched to Washington on a special mission. The expanded Defence Ministry included the DMI, Aharon Yariv, and Yitzak Rabin, the Chief of Staff, later admitted that he took Yariv to crucial meetings. Yariv was one of the members of the political elite to support a quick pre-emptive strike. Not only was intelligence often consulted but also briefings that the Directors of Intelligence gave to the various ministers, on the military situation, were crucial in changing the opinion of some members who wanted to delay the strike and await further developments. At some of the expanded cabinet meetings that were held on 2 and 3 June at Eshkol's house, the DI and DMI were present, and participated in the discussions. Moshe Dayan, in his memoirs, gives the distinct impression that senior commanders chalked out plans on the basis of intelligence information and reports and modified or reshaped their future moves in consultation with

intelligence officers.

It is interesting and illustrative to note that the official communique of June 1967 announcing Israel's decision to go to war, indicates intelligence reports as a significant input in the decision, to open hostilities. It states, "After hearing a report on the military and political situation from the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Defence Minister, Chief of Staff and the Head of Military Intelligence, the government ascertained that the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan are deployed for immediate multi-front aggression threatening the very existence of the State."

The impact of the Mossad and Aman on decision-making during the 1973 war, has been dealt with in the second chapter in detail. It may be noted here that the Shimon Agranat Commission which enquired into the intelligence failure of 1973, established that the Director of Military Intelligence, Eli Zeira and three other top intelligence officials were guilty of faulty analysis and misleading the political leadership on the seriousness of the Egyptian-Syrian military threat. The DMI was either present or represented by his deputy at three crucial meetings on


3, 5 and 6 October when the cabinet, Chief of Staff and other top army officers as well as opposition leaders were present. On 3 October Brig-General Shalev, deputing for Zeira at a military political consultation said: "The possibility of an Egyptian-Syrian attack is not likely". On 5 October, the intelligence assessment of Zeira at a meeting at the Prime Minister's House, said: "We are not facing a total war situation" and on 6 October the intelligence estimate claimed and predicted that war would start at 6.00 p.m. that evening, four hours later than it actually did. It was not until the last day that Zeira was certain of an Egypt-Syrian joint attack on Israel. It is not surprising therefore, that the political leadership was taken almost totally unaware in the initial hours of the attack. Moshe Dayan, the Defence Minister gives a clue of the thinking and attitude of the political leadership when he said: "The assumption of the army was that if indeed war was imminent, there would be further indications and intelligence reports, and only if, and when these appeared, would it be necessary to mobilize and take additional measures." The former Prime Minister Golda Meir in her memoirs, gives the impression, that it was Zeira's (DMI) assurance, that the armed forces would be given adequate notice by intelligence if an attack were being planned by Egypt or Syria, was responsible for not taking immediate decisive counter-measures, a few days before the war. She further claims that though she was worried on reading intelligence reports, she did not want to take hasty decisions, such as an earlier costly mobilization following a false alarm, and that Zeira's assurances that a war was not likely, led
to a soothing of her fears and created a complacent attitude. She admits that most of the cabinet meetings during this period, began with the reading of intelligence reports.

Intelligence and Foreign Policy

The activities of Israeli intelligence services relate both to decision-making and implementation of foreign policy. There have been many occasions when these activities have directly affected relations with other nations and indirectly, by affecting Israeli politics which in turn affected foreign policy issues. Thus while the intelligence services have often played a positive role they have at times had an adverse or negative role especially when operating without special sanction from the political leadership. While very few nations broke off diplomatic relations with Israel for intelligence activities, they did at times contribute to tensions and deterioration in relations.

a) The Lavon Affair

The "Lavon Affair" was the earliest instance. It began in 1954, as the result of an abortive intelligence operation in Egypt which resulted in the death of two Jewish Egyptians, sentenced for espionage and sabotage. The incident roused public feeling, in Israel, against Nasser who did not intervene to commute the sentence and hastened a momentous change in Israeli government.

37 Meir, n. 8, pp. 353-9; see also Dayan, n. 35, p. 386. And also Shimon Agranat, Commission of Inquiry: Yom Kippur War: Partial Report presented on 2 April 1974 to the Knesset, pp. 9, 11-12.
and policy. At first it caused political discontent and important personnel changes, with Lavon leaving the Defence Ministry and Ben Gurion returning to the post in February 1955. Revived in 1959, the Affair became a "cause celebre" to opponents of Ben Gurion's authoritative tendencies, created havoc within Israel's political system, notably by causing the split in the Mapai in 1965 which gave birth to Israel's Workers List - the Rafi Party.

But in 1955, the Lavon Affair led to a significant foreign policy change. Ben Gurion wanted to take revenge on Egypt. His first move was to restore the morale of the army and confidence of the public. Exactly one week after his return to the Defence Ministry, Ben Gurion authorized a major attack on the Gaza strip, claiming that it was a reprisal for raids into Israel by Egyptian intelligence agents and supporters. Though there had been incidents of this kind, General Burns the United Nations Truce Supervisor said in his report to the Security Council on 17 March 1955, that "the number of casualties prior to Gaza incident reflects the comparative tranquillity along the armistice demarcation line during the period November 1954-February 1955." For Ben Gurion, the Gaza strip raid was the first step in a stronger security policy of "active defence" destined to develop eventually into 'preventive war' against Egypt.

b) The German Scientists Affair

The kidnapping and trial of Adolf Bichmann in May 1960

---

38 Brecher, n. 13, p. 178.
was an important turning point in the evolution of the Mossad. Though the operation had been a success, the diplomatic repercussions were felt immediately. Argentina expelled the Israeli ambassador and brought up the issue before the United Nations. It temporarily set back Israel's diplomacy in America. Most of Israel's allies sympathised with the motives that lay behind Eichmann's kidnapping, but they were deeply alarmed at the same time, by the methods employed by the Mossad. The point was not lost on Ben Gourion who decreed that Mossad should henceforth employ a little more restraint. For a few years the Mossad did adopt more conventional methods until intelligence reports came in from Cairo that German scientists were helping Egypt to develop ballistic missiles. After seeking Ben Gourion's broad approval, Isser Harel authorised terrorist attacks and threats on the German scientists and their family members in Egypt, West Germany and Switzerland. The campaign of letter bombs and intimidation of family members became public, when in March 1963, the Swiss police arrested two Israeli agents in Basel, threatening Heidi Goerke, the daughter of a German scientist.

The publicity surrounding the case was deeply embarrassing to Israel and Ben Gourion became angry when Isser Harel wanted him to intervene with the West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the Swiss authorities to release the agents. Golda Meir, the Foreign Minister had been previously offended by the major foreign

---

39 The details of the entire operation are available in, Isser Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street* (London: Viking, 1975); Harel, the Director of Mossad, personally directed the operation. See also Appendix II, n. 13; Personal interview with Yaacov Caroz. Tel Aviv. 4.4.82.
policy initiative taken regarding West Germany without her knowledge, by Ben Guiron and Shimon Peres. The operations of the Mossad in Switzerland, put her into the middle of an embarrassing situation. In Israel during March, a barrage of propaganda was let loose, directed by the Mossad, condemning the collision of German scientists, and an exaggerated picture of progress in Egyptian military technology was drawn. What was overlooked was that ex-Nazis worked in defence establishments of West Germany also, which had been aiding Israel. The public tended to believe a holocaust would take place and Ben Guiron's friendly policy towards West Germany was attacked.

The zeal of the Mossad which had tended to go out of hand caused foreign policy problems for Ben Guiron. He found himself opposed by Golda Meir, the foreign minister, who was emotionally irreconcilable to a policy of friendship with Germany. When Isser Harel tried to justify his press-campaign initiative, an angry discussion ensued with Ben Guiron and Harel resigned in protest. In 1965 another issue arose. Wolfgang Lotz, the Israeli spy in Cairo was arrested. In custody, he incriminated the BND Cairo-agent Gerhard Bauch who knew nothing of the activities of Lotz. Only frantic diplomatic action by West German diplomats, saved Bauch from trial. The two episodes were diplomatically disastrous to all concerned. The West German government was already in deep trouble with the Arab world, through the revelations that it had been supplying Israel with arms. The issue was further

---

complicated by the Mossad and Lotz, whose revelations of Israel-West German intelligence co-operation made matters worse. The Germans were also angry that the Mossad had operated on German territory during the intimidation campaign. The Israeli government which was at that time negotiating with West Germany over the transfer of American arms through West Germany found that the affairs had seriously weakened its hand in the negotiations. Ben Guirion issued a stern warning that in future the Mossad could not enter such sensitive operations without the Prime Minister's prior and complete clearance.

c) The Swiss Affair

Another incident took place in 1969 in Switzerland which affected Swiss-Israel relations adversely. A Swiss engineer Alfred Frauenknecht, who was working for Sulzer Brothers, the manufacturers of the Mirage III aircraft, was recruited by the Mossad to steal the engine plans, which could be put to good use in improving the strike power of the Israeli Air Force. In return for £86,000, Frauenknecht diverted the plans to Israel. He was arrested in September 1969 and his trial was described as the worst case of espionage in Switzerland since 1945. Relations between Switzerland and Israel had never been too good and this trial marked the breaking point. The Israeli Military Attache in Berne was asked to leave Swiss territory and there was a freezing of diplomatic relations between the two nations. However the greatest disaster

which proved to be near fatal to Israel was the incident of the 42 U.S.S. Liberty.

d) The Liberty Affair

When the hostilities broke out between Israel and Egypt along with Jordan and Syria, in June 1967, the United States sent a spy vessel, the U.S.S. Liberty into the Mediterranean, off the coast of Israel, to monitor the progress of the war through its sophisticated electronic listening devices. On 7 June the Israeli ambassador was called to the State Department, in Washington and told that the Israeli attack on Egypt and Syria must be halted and a ceasefire would be ordered by the United Nations at the request of United Arab Republic. The ambassador was told in diplomatic language that America was aware that Jordan had been lured into the fighting by false radio messages. This was true, since Israel had broken the Egypt-Jordan ciphers and codes and altered and passed on messages to Jordan creating the impression that all was well on the Egyptian front. Later false messages were fed to Jordan that Egypt needed support from Jordan for an attack in the Sinai, and lured Hussein's army into a trap.

When the information came from the Israeli ambassador in Washington, the Mossad knew that its deception plan had been discovered by a spy-vessel off the coast of Israel and a search was launched. Israel wanted to gain maximum advantage before the United Nations order for ceasefire took effect. It realized that

if the U.S.S. Liberty continued transmission, Israel would be revealed violating the United Nations ceasefire. Further the State Department could leak the information, to the United Nations whose administration was biased against Israel, and thus the information would finally reach Egypt. The CIA dispatched orders for the U.S.S. Liberty to withdraw from the area, but the two messages did not reach the ship, as they were mysteriously misrouted, one returning to dispatch section, the other reaching Africa.

On 8 June, 1967 the United States Defence Department announced that "the naval communication ship, Liberty, was accidentally attacked today, by Israeli torpedo boats and jet aircraft in the Mediterranean near the East coast - 10 Americans were killed, 100 wounded, 20 seriously, when the Liberty was hit by a torpedo. She was flying the United States flag at that time. Pentagon officials said that the Liberty was first attacked by a number of Israeli jets that made six strafing runs, followed twenty minutes later by torpedo boats that fired at least two torpedos. Damage to the vessel was said to be widespread but superficial." The following day figures were amended to 9 dead, 22 missing and 75 wounded. The Liberty though reduced to crawling pace sailed back to Malta. What is more important is that, when the first reports reached Washington, a serious situation developed.

43 Ibid., pp. 180-4.
At first the Chiefs of Staff at Pentagon were driven into proposing a "quick retaliatory air strike on the Israeli naval base which launched the attack." But this plan was rejected and wiser counsels in the White House and State Department pointed out the serious consequences. If this attack on Israel had taken place, it would have drawn the United States into the war, with its own ally, Israel. The Israeli plea that the incident was an accident of mistaken identity was accepted. Officially the Israeli version was that U.S.S. Liberty resembled the Egyptian supply ship El-Ksair, and the US was reluctant to question these assumptions. Later Israel paid over $2 billion in compensation to members of the families of those injured and dead in the attack.