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The Washington-Tel Aviv Connection: Global Frontier Management

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

Introduction

During the Reagan administration, a policy of U.S. intervention in the Third World was presented to the American public in idealistic terms, as support for “freedom fighters,” in an attempt to overcome the post-Vietnam syndrome. Internationally, it was presented as the assumption of moral leadership by the United States in the “struggle against international terrorism,” in order to justify reasserting its role as the world policeman. Yet both positions were merely postures; such posturing, as Richard Nixon once noted, was the only way for the U.S. to “recover the geopolitical momentum.” As calculated postures, they could be violated from within, as logical extensions of a criminal crusade.

The Reagan administration came to power after denouncing the Carter administration for its “weakness” with respect to its Iran policy, and after taking a hard line on international terrorism as a centerpiece of its foreign policy. Both positions appear to have been hollow. The United States, using Israel as an intermediary, has been violating its own arms embargo on Iran as well as its loudly trumpeted policy of refusing to deal with “terrorists.” It has undermined the stated policy of seeking an end to the Gulf War between Iran and Iraq by supporting both sides. In conjunction with this hypocrisy, it has violated domestic and international law in pursuit of its *contra* terrorist war against sovereign Nicaragua. As has now become public record, this policy included the diversion of funds from another illicit operation, along with the clandestine solicitation of funds and services from dependant and allied countries.

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The geopolitical and ideological aspirations of the Reagan Doctrine could not be satisfied within the limits set by Congress. Although culpability for alleged illicit acts and unaccountable policies would seem to rest with the White House, congressional endorsement of unlimited support for Israel's role as a back door for U.S. foreign policy, however, should not be ignored since it made this course of events possible. Part of the historical record includes the CIA's solicitation of funds for the *contras* from Israel and Saudi Arabia in April 1984, a time of congressional reluctance because of domestic political obstacles (*International Herald Tribune*, May 21, 1984; see also Jamail and Guterrez, 1986; Bahbah, 1986). Services rendered in one back yard may indeed be returned in another.

The logic of power predominates in U.S.-Israeli cooperation vis à vis Iran. It has been reported that Israel has been supplying Iran with arms since 1979, and with the approval of the U.S. since 1982 (*New York Times*, November 22, 1986; see also *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, December 1986; *Israel and Palestine*, December 1986; *Middle East International*, January, 1987). Knowledge of this strategic agreement throws a new light on a series of incidents — all connected to Israeli arms sales to Iran — that have surfaced over the past two years. These include the arrest and conviction of Paul Cutter of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs in July 1985 for conspiring to sell U.S. arms to Iran; the Pollard spy case of November 1985, which involved his seeking information on weapons systems that Israel could offer to Iran; the arrest of 13 men, including Ret. General Bar-Am in Bermuda in April 1986 on the charge of conspiring to sell \$2.6 billion worth of U.S. arms to Iran, followed in July by the sudden death in London of Cyrus Hashemi, the Iranian arms dealer who had led the men to Bermuda. It would also include disclosures in subsequent months in West Germany, Sweden, and Denmark of Israeli deals to sell military supplies to Iran. In December 1985, then-Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, in the wake of the Pollard affair and another scandal involving Israel, complained to reporters in New York that someone in the U.S. may be "out to get" Israel. Since it is now known that Israel had been acting with the complicity of part of the Reagan administration, it is probably closer to the truth that there was an absence of coordination with other sectors of the administration (Justice, Treasury, and Customs).

Aside from monetary gain, Israel's purpose in arming Iran serves geopolitical interests by following a strategy of promoting conflicts in the outer rim of the Arab world that drain and distract forces which could otherwise be arrayed against Israel. This includes promoting Shiite fundamentalism as a destabilizing force in the Arab world, even at the cost of strengthening Iranian-connected Shiite groups on Israel's border in Lebanon. There is the possibility of drawing the United States closer to the Israeli position on the Middle East, as well as of reviving the old anti-Arab coalition of the Shah's

Iran (a compatible partner in world oil-price agreements), the United States, and Israel. In short, despite the ability of the U.S. (and Saudi Arabia) to maintain discrete liaisons with both sides in the Gulf War, Israel and the U.S. are pursuing parallel aims in seeking to recruit Iran as an anti-Soviet buffer in the Persian Gulf; to maintain a military stalemate in the Gulf War; and to drain the Arab world of financial and military resources as well as political purpose in the process. Such a coincidence of interests has a long history, and its emergence is hardly a spontaneous occurrence, as I shall now show.

History of the U.S. Role in the Middle East

For 30 years the United States has been the dominant influence in Middle East politics. One of the instruments of U.S. influence is an economic and military assistance flow to Israel of an amazing magnitude. Regularly, in exchange for Israel's acceptance of U.S. peace plans, such as the Rogers Plan and the Camp David Accord, the flow of U.S. assistance to Israel is stepped up. However, even when Israel fails to comply with the implementation of these plans and with U.S. policy positions, the flow of U.S. assistance to Israel not only continues, but also increases.

This reality has long been a cause for profound perplexity, particularly in the Arab world. The most common explanation is that Israel is a "strategic asset" to the United States in the Middle East — a very expensive but unsinkable extension of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. The influence of the "Jewish lobby" in the United States is also often mentioned. Here I want to examine an additional hypothesis: that an important reason for the unwillingness or inability of the United States to check Israel's expansionism in the Middle East is the assistance rendered by Israel to the expansionism of the United States in other parts of the world. In order to examine this hypothesis we must first consider when and under what conditions the pattern of U.S. assistance to Israel has taken shape.

Back in 1969, reflecting upon his time as Director General of Israel's Ministry of Defense, Shimon Peres (1970: 62) wrote, "It has often seemed to me that in politics you need to have the right enemies." In this respect Israel appears to have been fortunate indeed. Israel's first major enemy after independence was Egypt. France also considered Nasser's Egypt an enemy in view of his arms supply to the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria and Cairo's hospitality to Ben Bella. France and Israel accordingly had a common interest in opposing what was termed "Pan Arabism," and in the destabilization of Egypt. Israel at the time needed a reliable, political source of armaments. Talks with France resulted in France supplying Israel with *Mystère* fighters in 1956. When Israel undertook its Sinai Campaign in 1956, it was timed to coincide with the British-French attack on Egypt to reclaim the Suez Canal. This marked the beginning of a strategic Franco-Israeli alliance, which

endured until 1967. During most of this time France was engaged in its colonial war in Algeria.

The U.S. "Right to Intervene" in the Middle East

In January 1957, the Eisenhower Doctrine was formulated according to which the United States reserved for itself the right to intervene in the Middle East. In the same year Saudi Arabia made Dhahran available as an American air base. In April, the U.S. came to the assistance of King Hussein in Jordan with the Sixth Fleet and \$20 million in financial aid. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, as well as Iraq (via the Baghdad Pact), were now allied to the United States. In July 1958, the U.S. intervened in Lebanon. Israel in this period received arms from France, from West Germany (through an arrangement with Franz-Josef Strauss, then Defense Minister), and limited financial support from the United States. The United States refused to supply Israel with arms — it was critical of Israel's "reprisal actions" and it did not want to become "the major arms supplier in the Middle East." All of this was to change radically; in the words of Peres, there was "a revolutionary change in the American response to Israel's requests for arms — from a virtual embargo in the early fifties to the supply of tanks and planes in the middle 1960s" (*Ibid.*: 89).

U.S. Arms Flows to Israel

U.S.-Israeli relations are usually considered from 1967,¹ when Israel's relationship with France ended and the U.S. supplied Israel with 50 phantom jets (1968). The actual starting date, however, is 1962. During the entire period between 1949 and 1961, U.S. military assistance to Israel had been less than \$1 million, but in 1962 sales suddenly rose to \$13.2 million.² In 1963, Israel was permitted to buy U.S. Hawk anti-aircraft missiles, and in 1965 Patton tanks and Skyhawk planes. This represented a distinct U.S. policy shift beginning in 1962 in relation to the strategic situation in the Middle East. What motivated this policy shift? The Soviet Union, which had supplied Egypt with arms since 1955, entered into a relationship with Syria in 1958. At the same time, Iraq moved toward Nasser's position, which dissolved the Baghdad Pact. But, if there were any worrisome developments in the Middle East, they did not worry Israel, for as Peres states:

The fact is that the 10 years following the Sinai Campaign seemed comparatively relaxed. The balance of arms was more reasonable. Egypt appeared relatively moderate. With the wars in Yemen and Iraq, the center of military interest seemed to have shifted from Israel to other fronts....the Sinai Campaign gave Israel 11 years of comparative calm (Peres, 1970: 178–179; 217).

Thus, while in the 1950s Israel's urgings of the United States to supply it with arms had been consistently refused, in the early 1960s, Israel received U.S. financial military assistance and arms at a time when, according to perceptions in Israel itself, the arms balance in the Middle East did not require it.

If the policy shift of the U.S. cannot be explained on the basis of developments in the region, it must be accounted for in terms of domestic changes in the United States. Since 1959, the Democrats had been complaining that the Eisenhower administration was "losing the Cold War." Senator John Kennedy campaigned for the presidency with Cold War rhetoric such as the alleged "missile gap" with the Soviet Union. Support for Israel's views on the Palestinian question were also part of his election platform (Childers, 1976: 144). Whereas Eisenhower, in his departure speech in January 1961, warned of the "military-industrial complex" that had developed in the U.S., beginning in 1961 the Kennedy people were poised to put it to use. On January 20, President Kennedy was inaugurated. On February 15, Patrice Lumumba was murdered. On April 17, Cuba's Bay of Pigs was invaded. In August, Kennedy made his Alliance for Progress speech in Punta del Este. In response to concerns raised by the Cuban Revolution, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) was formed. In Tel Aviv, also in 1961 and in cooperation with AIFLD, a Center for Cooperative and Labour Studies was set up with the objective of training Latin American trade union cadres. With the Kennedy era, the Cold War returned and returned in a more confrontational form (Wolfe, 1979: 18–22).

Kennedy-Era Counterinsurgency: Israel's Role

The Kennedy era is well known for its emphasis on counterinsurgency. The counterinsurgency philosophy involved a combination of military efforts, in which Special Forces played a large part, and political-economic efforts, at times referred to as the "other war" or "winning hearts and minds" (Klare, 1981: 87 *fn.*). The ideological concept guiding the new American activism was the national security doctrine, as formulated by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. The Kennedy effort at exercising "world leadership" involved a global projection of U.S. power: the Alliance for Progress was directed at Latin America; in Asia, the U.S. presence in Vietnam was stepped up, while in Africa the U.S. had been active in labor relations and, in the 1960s, in counterinsurgency.

Relations between U.S. and Israeli intelligence services had already developed in the early 1950s under the auspices of James J. Angleton, who ran the CIA's Israel desk as part of counterintelligence. According to Jeff McConnell (1986: 36), "Angleton reportedly saw the pipeline of Soviet Jewish emigrants to Israel as a source of potential KGB infiltration of the Middle East, but also of valuable contacts inside the Soviet Union. Israel agreed to make its emi-

grants and contacts available to the CIA.” Thus, U.S.-Israeli security relations started off on a Cold War footing. These relations were intensified, broadened, and globalized during the Kennedy years.

Israel’s relations with black African countries developed out of contacts with post-independence Ghana (1957). From early on in its international labor relations and foreign aid in Africa, Israel functioned as a “third country” for Western powers — the United States, Britain, France, and West Germany. Also, at an early stage Israel became integrated in the CIA international labor strategy. One account mentions 1956 as the beginning of CIA payments to Israel for intelligence activities in Africa (*Ibid.*), another mentions 1957 (McGehee, 1983: 28), and yet another 1960 (Davis, 1977: 110). In any case, already in 1959 there was mention in the United States of “*imaginative use of the third country technique*” in relation to Israel and Africa (Rivkin, 1969).³ The Afro-Asian Institute of Labour Studies and Cooperatives was established in Tel Aviv in 1960 with funding from the AFL-CIO.

In the early 1960s, Israel’s activities in Africa were expanded to include counterinsurgency operations. Israel joined the U.S., Belgium, and France, which since 1960 had been engaged in counterinsurgency operations in the Congo by backing the secessionist movement in Katanga led by Moïse Tshombe and, after the murder of Patrice Lumumba, by supporting the Kasavubu/Tshombe government. Israel was assigned the task of training the Congolese paratroopers, who were the military mainstay of the new pro-Western government. Israel’s participation in the Congo operations was an act of hostility against the very country that had opened the door in Africa to Israel; the Nkrumah government in Ghana formed a progressive coalition with Mali, Guinea, and Lumumba in the Congo as part of its project of Pan African unity. The intervention in the Congo was designed to disrupt precisely this project and to steer African unity in a pro-Western direction (the Organization of African Unity was formed in 1963 with its seat in Addis Ababa). In Ethiopia, the United States had a long-standing relationship with the Haile Selassie government, which Israel, in view of its security interests in the Red Sea, joined in the 1950s; when in 1965–1966 U.S. counterinsurgency advisers were called in to confront the rebellion staged by the Eritrean Liberation Front, the actual assistance was provided by Israeli military advisers (Halliday, 1979: 58).

Also in the early 1960s, Israel became active in Latin America. Unlike in Africa, Israel had no strategic security interests in Latin America; nor was it seeking export markets at this stage. The usual explanation of Israel’s entry into Latin America therefore is that Israel was both seeking international recognition and legitimation, and establishing contacts with Jewish communities on the continent. Given the timing and nature of Israel’s presence, it also appears to have been part of the U.S. Alliance for Progress initiative. Israel’s

foreign aid programs in Latin America were financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development; its training courses for Latin American trade union cadres were funded by AIFLD. Israel's "civic action" programs and its Nahal-type military-agricultural projects were perfectly in line with the counterinsurgency philosophy of the Kennedy administration. A study of *Israel-Latin American Relations* observes that:

for several Latin American military establishments, (Israel) provided not only a relevant model for civic action and a way of tackling national problems, but was no less instrumental in building a positive and constructive image of the armed forces in their respective nations. Since 1963, Israel has successfully promoted the idea of using the military as a factor in national development. Nahal-type programs, utilized by the armed forces for agricultural and colonization tasks, were adopted by Bolivia, Ecuador (1963–64), Peru, and much later (1971) by Colombia; Israeli personnel assisted in their organization (Kaufman, 1979: 104).

The "third country technique" suited U.S. purposes in making low-profile penetration possible, low profile both in relation to the new African states, and in relation to the sensibilities of Britain and France, the old colonial powers who were positioning themselves to be neocolonial powers. The contribution of Israel also suited the requirements of many new states. At this stage Israel was still viewed as a "third force" country (i.e., neither capitalist nor socialist), and Israel was a noncapitalist country in the sense that it was in the unique situation of financing its development with outside capital transfers.⁴ In the period 1953–1965, the largest capital flow came from reparation payments from West Germany, at 47.2% of the total transfers; contributions from Jewish communities around the world were second at 46.9%; U.S. contributions were 5.9% (Feldman, 1986: 29).⁵ Thus, Israel escaped the problem of primitive accumulation; by the same token, the Israeli development model was not a model at all. This changed, according to Najwa Makhoul, after 1967 when Israel developed the capacity to accumulate capital internally and become a capitalist country. The utopian socialist rhetoric broadcast by Israel at the time was appealing to the leadership in the new states who found in it a way of mediating the predicaments of class struggle. Another attractive feature was Israel's emphasis on mass, especially youth, mobilization. That Israel's civic action programs were quasi-military programs, conducted by or in close affiliation with the Israeli Ministry of Defense, influenced state formation in many newly independent countries; it made Israel a harbinger of the role of the military in development and politics. (See "Table 1: Survey of Israel's Foreign Interventions, 1951–1986," at the end of this article.)

Counterinsurgency in Latin America

Since the 1950s, Israel, side-by-side with France, opposed Pan Arabism; at the same time, a strategic Franco-Israeli alliance formed. Since the early 1960s, Israel cooperated with the United States to counteract the Pan Africanism of Nkrumah as well as the influence of Nasser in Africa, and to counteract Cuban influence in Latin America. Israel's activities in Latin America were initiated, and its activities in Africa stepped up precisely during the Kennedy years. Israel's contribution on both continents closely matched the counterinsurgency philosophy of the Kennedy administration. The emphasis on the role of Special Forces led Israel, beginning with the Congo in 1963, to take up what was to become an Israeli specialty — the training of elite units.⁶ Israel did not play this part in Latin America; prior to the 1970s, no counterinsurgency assistance on the part of Israel is on record in Latin America or the Caribbean.⁷ In Latin America this role was already being performed by the United States via the Army School of the Americas in Panama and similar institutions. This would suggest the existence of a *division of labor* between patron and satellite. What was welcomed in Latin America was the expanded role of the military in “development,” exemplified by Israel. The merger of the military with “development,” typical of the Israeli model, paralleled the counterinsurgency approach of combining counterinsurgency measures with political-economic efforts. The type of labor relations promoted by Israel, of a cooperative, apolitical style, paralleled the AIFLD approach.

These forms of cooperation between, and symmetry of, the U.S. and Israeli approaches to the Third World since the Kennedy years must be taken into account when interpreting the outpouring of U.S. support for Israel beginning in 1962. In the words of a study which appeared in *American Aid to Israel*:

Kennedy and his successors poured \$6 billion into Israel to modernize its armed forces between 1962–1976. Sophisticated American weapons were sold to Israel as a way to establish and maintain its military superiority over its Arab neighbors. In doing so, the U.S. made a long-term commitment to furnish Israel with the most advanced American weaponry...(El-Khawas and Abed-Rabbo, 1984: 33).

The Nixon Administration and “Regional Security” Partners

The globalist policies of the Kennedy administration were continued during the Johnson administration and led to a deepening of U.S. involvement in Indochina. During the Nixon administration, burdened with the Vietnam War, U.S. policy shifted toward greater reliance on “regional influentials” such as Iran, Brazil, Indonesia, and Israel in maintaining regional security. From 1970

onward, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger began to take charge of Middle East policy. The Rogers Plan of 1969 was abandoned and instead Kissinger backed a "Greater Israel" policy. This period had begun with U.S.-Israeli cooperation in containing the "Black September" crisis in Jordan. The 1970s also found Israel as the main arms supplier to Portugal in its struggles against national liberation movements in its African colonies. In 1975, Kissinger asked Israel to provide personnel and military equipment to help South Africa fight the MPLA in Angola (Goldfield, 1985: 29). Israeli arms supplies to Chile and Central America also date from this period. The importance attached by Kissinger to these areas — Angola, Chile, and Central America — in his global management policies is well known.

Israel's Role in World Arms Sales During the Carter Administration

The beginning of the Carter presidency in the United States in 1977 coincided with the shift to the Likud government in Israel. By this time, Israeli industrialization had arrived at a mature stage and Israel was becoming an increasingly important arms exporter. Its successive military victories (1956, 1967, and 1973) enhanced the reputation both of its matériel and personnel. Israeli enterprises such as Solel Boneh and Zim had been active since the early 1960s in many Third World countries, mainly in infrastructural projects; also, after most African countries severed diplomatic ties with Israel in the wake of the 1973 war, economic relations with Israel continued and were expanded. On the one hand, Israel had become dependent upon the increasing flow of U.S. financial assistance; on the other, Israel had become an exporting country, especially of military equipment, in its own right. Hence, Israel's Third World policies by this time also reflected an independent search for markets.

From the point of view of the United States, Israel's overseas activities in this period were significant in that they circumvented the restrictions on U.S. assistance to repressive regimes imposed on account of Carter's human rights policy. The case of Guatemala is well known: between 1977 and 1981, Israel was Guatemala's sole arms supplier. Another instance is the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. Israeli assistance to the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti, starting in 1978, dates from the same period. Israel also ignored international arms embargoes on Rhodesia and South Africa. All of these appeared to be essentially bilateral relationships. Nevertheless, as Penny Lernoux argued with regard to Nicaragua, it would be difficult to discount U.S. involvement:

After international opinion belatedly forced the U.S. government to suspend arms shipments to Somoza, Israel rushed in to fill the gap with anti-aircraft missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, and other armaments. Though the State Department claimed it was none of its business, Israeli manufacturers, most of whom work under U.S. li-

censes, could not have supplied the National Guard without Washington's consent. Only the year before, the U.S. government had vetoed the sale of similarly sophisticated Israeli equipment to Ecuador (Lernoux, 1982: 100–101).

Israel, in effect, compensated for the consequences of the official U.S. human rights posture, diminishing its actual cost to U.S. interests and allies.

It is also in this period, between 1977 and 1981, that Israel began to engage in counterinsurgency assistance in Latin America and the Caribbean — in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Haiti — filling the “counterinsurgency gap” left by the United States. It is to this period that the dictum of Israel volunteering to do the “dirty work” for the United States applies, while carrying the explanatory note that it was “good for business.” Israel's revenues from arms exports rose from \$285 million in 1977 to \$1.3 billion in 1981 (Goldfield, 1985: 15). In August 1981, Yaakov Meridor formulated his proposal suggesting to the United States an intermediary role for Israel and a share of the global arms market, as he told a gathering of Israeli businessmen.⁸

Combating Terrorism: The Reagan Doctrine and Israel

The Reagan era began with a policy shift from “human rights” to “international terrorism.” Again Israel fulfills a specific role in relation to U.S. global strategy, and again it differs from what it was under previous U.S. administrations. Now Israel's interventions circumvent U.S. public opinion and, specifically, congressional restrictions on the implementation of executive policies at a time when there is a Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. Again Israel was to make up for the internal contradictions of U.S. politics. Several instances are a matter of public record: when Israel helped out by funneling \$21 million into El Salvador at a sensitive moment in 1981, when the funds in the U.S. foreign aid budget had run out (*Ibid.*: 1985: 40); and in 1984, when the CIA requested Israel to provide financial assistance to the *contras* after Congress had refused to approve a covert operations budget of the White House (Woodward, 1984).

On the larger canvas, the Nixon Doctrine of reliance on “regional gendarmes” is well past, in particular since the sudden departure of the Shah of Iran. More generally, contradictions, particularly in the economic sphere, have been developing between the United States and leading Third World countries, which find themselves at a state of development which requires greater manoeuvrability. In the United States, however, the “post-Vietnam trauma” still lingers and makes the deployment of U.S. forces for other than brief engagements (Lebanon, Grenada, and Libya) risky. Moreover, the Reagan Doctrine, according to President Reagan's message to Congress of March 1986 entitled “Freedom, Regional Security, and Global Peace,” seeks to “convince the

Soviet Union that the policies on which it embarked in the seventies cannot work" (Tucker, 1986). In other words, it is a rollback doctrine which seeks to demonstrate that "Communist revolutions are reversible." According to the same source, "Perhaps the most striking feature of the doctrine is the disproportion between very ambitious ends and very modest means" (*Ibid.*). With respect to Nicaragua, "the litmus test of the Reagan Doctrine," this disparity between ends and means is so acute that even private sources and agencies are mobilized to assist the U.S. intervention.

Under these circumstances the usefulness of Israel's assistance to the United States is in some respects greater than before. Since 1981, Israel has been active notably in Central America, Angola, and Sri Lanka. Secretary of Defense Weinberger visited Colombo in October 1983, followed by Ambassador-At-Large Gen. Vernon Walters in November; in May 1984, Israel opened an Interest Section in the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, and in June, 150 Mossad agents arrived to provide counterinsurgency training to the Sri Lankan armed forces, along with English SAS men and officers of the armed forces of Pakistan (Seneviratne, 1984).⁹ Meanwhile the resistance in Congress to U.S. intervention in Central America and Angola is conveniently juxtaposed to the fact that, according to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the major Israel lobby in the U.S., "there's never been a more supportive Congress in the history of U.S. and Israeli relations" (Marshall, 1984: 14).

The most consistent pattern of Israeli interventions over the past 25 years is that they occur in areas in the budget proposals of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff which are designated "regions of instability." If we take into account the importance attached to these conflict areas by successive U.S. administrations — the importance of Angola to Kissinger ("the post-Vietnam testing ground of American will and power"),¹⁰ and of Nicaragua as the Cuba of the Reagan administration — as well as the concerns in U.S. military circles of being overextended, stretched too thin because of the urge to operate in several theaters at once, and the obvious advantages, both for domestic and international political relations, of not having to engage U.S. forces, then the vital importance to the United States of Israel's interventions is apparent.

Israel's Political Economy of Intervention

Israel's capacity to intervene is based on a political system that puts no restrictions whatsoever on foreign interventions, an economy which is structurally dependent on military exports, and a public opinion that is largely uncritical of the human rights implications of the nation's foreign policies. A cult of the "strong state," successive warfare, a situation of "no peace, no war," a siege mentality, a highly militarized populace, and the fact that since 1981 25% of Israel's labor force has been employed in military-related industries — all have contributed to this situation.

The strategic alliance between the United States and Israel has taken the form of a pattern of osmosis between the two countries. Economically, Israel and the U.S. are so closely associated that, according to a report on Israel's economy, "American aid has become little more than a transfer of resources between two parts of the same economic system" (Perera, 1984: 17). The accumulation model of the two has become identical on key points — based on high technology, the military as the leading industry, the use of a "separate" proletariat (minorities in the U.S., non-Jews in Israel), and a huge external payments deficit. Israel's military apparatus and industries are a virtual extension of those of the United States; they have been developed on the basis of U.S. financial assistance and technology transfers, direct investments by U.S. corporations, joint ventures, and licensing arrangements, and the reduction of the cost of military research and development by mutual sales (and to NATO partners).

Further, Israel functions as a testing ground for U.S. weaponry and a source of intelligence on Soviet equipment. The two have become alike also in terms of political-military strategy. The military conflicts engaged in by Israel and the U.S. in the 1980s — in Nicaragua (since 1981), Angola (since 1981), Lebanon (since 1982), Tunisia (1985), and Libya (1986) — share the same characteristics in that they are portrayed as reprisal actions against "international terrorism," while following the method, in the words of Secretary of State Alexander Haig in 1981, of "going to the source." Thus, what was one of the grounds for the United States to refuse to supply Israel with arms in the 1950s, Israel's reprisal actions, has become a U.S. strategy in the 1980s. The relevance of Israel's example has been acknowledged by several U.S. policymakers (Shank, 1986).¹¹ Part of the pattern is also that Israel follows United States initiatives closely; thus, at a time that the United States is implementing its Pacific Rim strategy, Israel has been expanding its activities and arms sales in Asia.¹² This includes multi-billion dollar military contracts with China. From the point of view of China, the objective is to disengage Israel from its relationship with Taiwan and therefore to further isolate Taiwan, and to gain access to U.S. technology which it cannot obtain directly; from the U.S. point of view, this serves to integrate China further in the U.S. collective security system while tiptoeing around what remains of the Taiwan Lobby.

Conclusion

The available evidence confirms the original hypothesis. Begun under the Eisenhower administration, and taking on strategic dimensions under the Kennedy administration, the U.S.-Israel relationship has broadened and deepened during successive U.S. administrations, with Israel fulfilling similar functions on the global frontiers of U.S. interests, while each administration

had a different rationale for seeking Israel's collaboration. Under the Eisenhower administration, Israel served as a U.S. Trojan horse among the new nations. During the Kennedy years, this was expanded with counterinsurgency assistance. Under the Nixon administration, Israel served as one of the regional gendarmes. During the Carter administration, Israel reduced the geopolitical cost of the human rights posture. Since 1979, Israel has also made up for decreased U.S. reliance on other regional influentials. Under the Reagan administration, Israel serves to circumvent congressional and other restrictions on U.S. intervention. At the executive level of U.S. policy making, these contributions may be of greater weight than the impact of the "Jewish lobby," which may be of more importance in relation to public opinion. Since the intensification of this collaboration under the Kennedy administration, Israel has been able to build up its military and military-industrial apparatus with sustained and increasing U.S. financial assistance, arms, and technology. The United States has de facto supported a *Greater Israel*, while Israel has occupied trenches in areas of tension around the world in support of a *Greater United States*. This could be termed a long-term Cold War alliance, but its character is more accurately described as an expansionist partnership.

A shortcoming of many analyses of the Middle Eastern situation is that they ignore the *global dimensions* of the situation, not with respect to superpower relations, but with respect to the global dimension of U.S.-Israeli collaboration. Israel is a strategic asset to the United States, but it is not adequate to portray this merely in regional terms. By the same token, the perception that the Middle East situation concerns an "Arab-Israeli conflict" is not adequate. Since the U.S. position on the Middle East is affected by Israel's contributions to U.S. positions in other theaters, the Middle East conflicts must be considered as part of a *global frontier* and in conjunction with other theaters, that is, as a regional part of a global equation.

Through the past decades, the Washington-Tel Aviv connection has been responsible for networks of repression the world over involving holocausts whose victims are uncountable. Presently, Israeli and U.S. issue denunciations of "international terrorism," the latest catchword for the ideological management of the global frontier. The rhetoric of Israel and the United States has become identical. What is being denounced as "international terrorism" is in large measure the regional harvest of the partisan policies the United States has been following in the Middle East. Since the Suez crisis, and more recently, since Henry Kissinger was responsible for Middle East policy, the United States has endeavored to keep Europe out of Middle East politics and from developing a Euro-Arab dialogue (Chomsky, 1983: 20). The United States has dominated Middle East politics under the pretext that the situation is "too complicated." A close reading of a quarter century of U.S.-Israeli collaboration indicates that several of these complications may rather be found in

Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Table 1:
Survey of Israel's Foreign Interventions, 1951–1986¹³

1951	Lebanon , assistance to Phalange
1954	Egypt , sabotage of U.S./British-Egyptian relations (Lavon affair) ¹⁴
1950s	Ethiopia , security assistance with U.S. to Haile Selassie government
1958-	Iraq , with Iran (SAVAK), assistance to Kurds seeking autonomy from Iraq
1960*	Afro-Asian Institute of Labour Studies and Cooperatives, cooperation Histadrut-AFL-CIO
1961*	Center for Cooperative and Labour Studies, cooperation Histadrut-AIFLD
1961–65	Congo , counterinsurgency operations with U.S., Belgium, France ¹⁵
1964	Tanzania , counterinsurgency assistance to Nyerere government; training presidential bodyguard ¹⁶
1965	Sierra Leone, security assistance
1965	India , assistance to India in Indo-Pakistan war ¹⁷
1966	Ghana , with U.S., Britain, assistance in military coup against Nkrumah ¹⁸
1965–66	Ethiopia , counterinsurgency assistance with U.S. against ELF
1967–69	Nigeria , assistance with Rhodesia, South Africa, France, Portugal to Biafra
1967*	South Africa , Israel-South Africa Foundation formed for collaboration in trade, defense, and counterinsurgency
1960s	Chad , counterinsurgency operations with France against FROLINAT
1970	Jordan , collaboration with U.S. in containing Black September crisis
1971–72	Uganda , assistance with Britain in military coup of Idi Amin overthrowing Obote ¹⁹
1971-	Sudan , assistance with Britain to Anyanya against Khartoum government
1970s	Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau , arms supplies to Portugal for colonial wars
1973-	El Salvador , arms supplies followed by counterinsurgency training and assistance
1974–79	Nicaragua , arms supplies to Somoza government
1974*	Ethiopia , counterinsurgency assistance to Derg against ELF; training of elite units
1975–76	Angola , counterinsurgency operations with South Africa against MPLA
1975–76*	Lebanon , assistance to Phalange during Civil War, and ongoing; sponsorship of SLA
1976	Thailand , arms supplies in the wake of military coup ²⁰
1976*	Guatemala , arms supplies and counterinsurgency assistance ²¹
1978	Rhodesia , counterinsurgency assistance to Smith government against liberation movements ²²
1978–86	Haiti , counterinsurgency assistance to Duvalier government
1977–78	Zaire , counterinsurgency assistance in Operations Shaba I and II ²³
1979	South Africa , electronic fence built by IAI on Namibia/Angola border against SWAPO
1979	Central African Republic , assistance with France in overthrow Bokassa ²⁴
1979–80	Indonesia , supply of Skyhawk planes during counterinsurgency operations in East Timor

1980	Namibia/Angola , counterinsurgency operations with South Africa, Chile against SWAPO ²⁵
1981*	Angola , assistance to UNITA via Zaire
1981*	Zaire , counterinsurgency assistance in Shaba; training presidential bodyguard
1981-	Gabon , security assistance to Bongo government
1981-	Honduras , arms and advisers against FMLN (El Salvador) and Nicaragua
1982	Guatemala , assistance to Gen. Ríos Montt in military coup
1982-	Costa Rica , assistance with U.S. to <i>contras</i> ; construction of electronic fence on border with Nicaragua, training of National Guard
1983	Chad , counterinsurgency operations with France, U.S., Zaire against GUNT of Queddei
1980s	Kenya , counterinsurgency assistance
	Sudan , assistance to secessionists in south against Khartoum government
	Malawi , counterinsurgency assistance
	Puerto Rico , with U.S., counterinsurgency assistance
*	Afghanistan , with U.S., China, assistance to insurgents
	Philippines , with U.S. counterinsurgency assistance to Marcos government; training presidential bodyguard; training private landlord armies.
1984*	Sri Lanka , counterinsurgency assistance against Tamil movements
1985	Liberia , assistance to Doe government against November coup attempt ²⁶

* An asterisk indicates that assistance is ongoing up to the present; a hyphen (-) without end date means that no information is available on termination or that it is ongoing.

Table 2:
U.S. Military Assistance to Israel 1949–1985²⁷
(Millions of Dollars)

	Loans	Grants	Total	Total in 1983 Dollars
1949-1952	—	—	—	—
1953-1961	0.9	—	0.9	3.0
1962	13.2	—	13.2	44.2
1963	13.3	—	13.3	44.0
1964	—	—	—	—
1965	12.9	—	12.9	41.4
1966	90.0	—	90.0	280.6
1967	7.0	—	7.0	21.2
1968	25.0	—	25.0	72.7
1969	85.0	—	85.0	234.7
1970	30.0	—	30.0	78.2
1971	545.0	—	545.0	1,360.8
1972	300.0	—	300.0	726.7
1973	307.5	—	307.5	700.7
1974	982.7	1,500	2,482.7	5,100.8
1975	200.0	100	300.0	564.5
1976	850.0	850	1,700.0	3,023.9
1977	500.0	500	1,000.0	1,669.7
1978	500.0	500	1,000.0	1,551.5
1979	2,700.0	1,300	4,000.0	5,587.9
1980	500.0	500	1,000.0	1,230.3
1981	900.0	500	1,400.0	1,557.0
1982	850.0	550	1,400.0	1,467.9
1983	950.0	750	1,700.0	1,700.0
1984	850.0	850	1,700.0	1,700.0
Total	11,212.5	7,900	19,112.5	28,761.4

NOTES

1. For example, Chomsky (1983) is mainly concerned with post-1967 developments.
2. See Table 2, "U.S. Military Assistance to Israel, 1949-1985" at the end of the article.
3. Rivkin is quoted in Africa Research Group (1969). Israel's international labor relations are discussed in greater detail in Pieterse (1986).
4. This is a point made by Makhoul (1987).
5. Feldman (1984) is quoted in *Democratic Palestine*, April 16, 1980, p. 29.
6. Discussed in Pieterse (1986).
7. Weber and Hodel (1984) report on the existence of a 1962 strategic agreement between the U.S. and Israel entitled "Strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel in relation to Latin America and counterinsurgency." There is no confirmation of this in other sources according to my knowledge.
8. Quoted in Black (1983: 43-44).
9. See Seneviratne (1984). Pakistan's involvement was acknowledged by President Jayewardene in a recent interview; Ram (1986).
10. Quoted in Horowitz and Sklar (1982: 11).
11. See, for example, the statements by George Shultz (*New York Times*, October 28, 1984); William Casey (*New York Times*, June 6, 1984); and Col. Charles A. Beckwith (*New York Times*, July 21, 1985) in Appendix "A" to Gregory Shank, "Counterterrorism and Foreign Policy: Elements in the Transformation of Contemporary Imperial Power," an Occasional Paper of Global Options: Research and Advocacy on World Affairs, San Francisco, 1986.
12. See "Giant Steps in Asia," *Israeli Foreign Affairs* 1,11 (November 1985).
13. This survey excludes Israel's arms sales unless they are counterinsurgency related. It includes assistance given to secessionist movements or factions. Obviously, the items listed are of very different status and importance. Among the more important interventions are those which are ongoing, marked *. Generally, the more familiar and often cited items are not referenced. For references, see also Pieterse (1984).
14. Rokach (1980: 50).
15. Young (1965: 456; 459; Chapter 16).
16. Adams (1984: 14-15).
17. Khan (1984: 8). According to the same source, Israel has supplied India with arms since 1962. There is no other source confirming this information.
18. See Nkrumah (1970: Chapter 8).
19. Mamdani (1983: 31-32; 62-64).
20. *Israeli Foreign Affairs* 1,11 (November 1985).
21. The latest report mentioning an Israeli security presence in Guatemala dates from February 7, 1986; see Karni (1986).
22. Adams (1984: 94).
23. Bourgi (1984: 51).
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Palestine Focus* 1,2 (August 1983).
26. *Israeli Foreign Affairs* 2,3 (March 1986).
27. Table 2 is excerpted from El-Khawas and Abed-Rabbo (1984: 35). The sources are: U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau for Program Planning and Coordination. *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Organizations: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945-September 30, 1971; July 1, 1945-September 30, 1977; July 1, 1945-September 30, 1979; and July 1, 1945-September 30, 1981. The New York Times*, August 10, 1982; *The Washington Post*, December 18, 1982; and the *Mideast Observer in Washington*, April 15, 1983.

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