From ‘Brave Little Israel’ to ‘an Elite and Domineering People’: The Image of Israel in France, 1944-1974

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family, whose unflagging love, patience, and support made this dissertation possible in a myriad ways.

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Abstract of Dissertation

From ‘Brave Little Israel’ to ‘an Elite and Domineering People’: The Image of Israel in France, 1944-1974

This dissertation examines the rise and decline of French-Israeli relations at both the popular and official level between 1944 and 1974 in light of Israel’s imagined Jewishness. From 1954-1968, France was Israel’s most important international partner, providing it with extensive diplomatic support and billions of francs worth of military and nuclear hardware. Using recently declassified French defense and diplomatic records, and understudied sources in the French media and Jewish organizational world, this study demonstrates that the rise of this region-defining friendship was contingent on powerful perceptions of Israeli Jewishness rooted in the French experience of the Second World War.

Previous scholarship has attributed the French-Israeli alliance to pragmatic factors arising out of the 1954-62 French-Algerian War. Yet this narrow framework insufficiently accounts for the political breadth, personal depth, or longevity of the French-Israeli alliance, which both pre- and post-dated the Algerian conflict. By examining the impact of sentiment, ideology, and institutional structure alongside the pragmatic, I challenge the presumed primacy of political realism in the French-Israeli relationship.

Thinking about Israel also stimulated and reflected heated internal debates about the nature and ethos of French society after the Vichy period, and proved central to the politicization of France’s Jewish and Arab communities in the late 1960s. Historians of French Jewry have recently explored the role of Jewishness as an ideational foil for defining the self and the state. This dissertation demonstrates that Israel functioned in a

similarly elucidatory fashion by examining Israel's variable figuration as a vulnerable enclave of Holocaust survivors, a second front in the struggle for French Algeria, and a test case for the principles of the Left. In a revision to that scholarship which presumes a postwar French silence surrounding the Holocaust, I also demonstrate that popular and political discourse about Israel and the Holocaust was extensive, and mutually informing. Finally, by providing the first study of French popular discourse on Israel throughout the entirety of this period, I challenge the notion that the 1967 Arab-Israeli War had an immediate and transformative effect on Israel's international image, and question long-held assumptions about Israel's declining popularity in Europe.

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List of Abbreviations

AFP .....Association France-Presse

AIU .....Alliance Israélite Universelle

AJY .....*American Jewish Year Book*

ASFA .....Association de Solidarité Franco-Arabe

AUJF .....Appel Unifié Juif de France

CCOJF.....Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France

CDIM .....Centre de Documentation Israël et Moyen-Orient

CDJC.....Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine

CGT.....Confédération Générale du Travail

CIEEMG .....Commission Interministérielle pour l'Étude des Exportations de Matériels de Guerre

CNEIA .....Comité National d'Expansion de l'Industrie Aéronautique

CRIF.....Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France

FEJ .....Front des Étudiants Juifs

FGDS .....Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste

FLN .....Front de Libération Nationale

FRUS.....*Foreign Relations of the United States*

FSJU.....Fonds Social Juif Unifié

GP .....Gauche Prolétarienne

GUPS .....General Union of Palestinian Students

IDF .....Israeli Defense Forces

IFOP .....Institut Française d'Opinion Publique

JA .....Jewish Agency

JORF .....*Journal Officiel de la République Française*

JPS.....Jewish Publication Society

LICA (LICRA).....Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme

MRAP .....Mouvement Contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples

NSA.....The National Security Archive

OAS.....Organisation de l'Armée Secrète

OPEC .....Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PCF .....Parti Communiste Français

PFLP .....Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

PLO .....Palestinian Liberation Organization

SGDN.....Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale

SDECE.....Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espoinnage

SFIO.....Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière

SHD.....Service Historique de la Défense

SOFRES.....Sociète Française d'Enquêtes par Sondages

SPCH .....SciencesPo Centre d'Histoire

UDR .....Union pour la Défense de la République

UDT .....Union Démocratique du Travail

UEJF .....Union des Étudiants Juifs de France

UD- V^{e} .....Union des Démocrates pour la V^{e} République

UNR .....Union pour la nouvelle République

UNRWA .....United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East

USNA.....U.S. National Archives at College Park

WZO .....World Zionist Organization

Introduction

Une Affaire "Personnelle"

An Alliance without Parallel

"There are many types of friendship between countries," former Israeli President and Prime Minister Shimon Peres recalled in 2015, "but today, looking back, I can say that none of them at the time could be compared to the one between Israel and France during the demanding years of 1955 to 1967. We called it the Golden Age. It was not based on interests," he insisted, "but rather on common values."[1] Peres, who had been the chief Israeli architect of the French-Israeli relationship as Israel's Director-General of Defense from 1953 to 1959, was uniquely poised to know, and had personally laid the groundwork for what was to become the most important diplomatic relationship of Israel's first two decades. In France, French-Israeli friendship appealed on a wide range of bases, from the ideological and sentimental to the prejudiced and pragmatic. For leading Socialists like Guy Mollet, Israel was a partner in the international work of socialism and a symbol of the proactive fight against fascism. For Gaullist politicians like General Pierre Kœnig, Israelis were former comrades in arms in the shared struggle against Nazism. To senior statesmen like Léon Blum and Christian Pineau, the Israelis were Jews to whom France had a moral and historical obligation. Meanwhile, to the partisans of French Algeria, Israel was an ally in a joint battle against pan-Arab nationalism, an analog to their own struggle, and the indirect beneficiary of growing currents of anti-Arab racism. For others still, Israel was an expedience, a valuable customer for the French arms industry and a useful political lever on the Arab world. But,

[1] Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.

at both the personal and national level, sympathy for Israel was rarely one-dimensional. Most often, it was a combination of such factors that inclined French sympathies toward Israel.

The result was an informal friendship of remarkable breadth and depth rooted as much in the personal as the pragmatic. Its origins lay not in the 1954-1962 French-Algerian conflict, but in the images of Jewishness, institutional patterns, and memories produced by the Second World War, and its bases remained salient into the 1970s. The French-Israeli friendship was, from the early 1950s to the late 1960s, virtually above partisanship and a rare point of French political unity. The French-Israeli partnership found supporters across the political spectrum and at all levels of the French government and military. By 1957, the France-Israel committees in the French Senate and National Assembly included representatives from every political party.[2] As the French Socialist politician Édouard Depreux remarked in that year, "If a national unity party were to be created in France, its initials would be I.S.R.A.E.L."[3] In the press and in popular discourse, meanwhile, the same images that had first characterized the young State of Israel as "encircled" but "dynamic," "tiny" but "brave," and "capable" but "beleaguered" continued to dominate French perceptions of Israel well beyond the 1967 Six-Day War. These images would continue to operate to Israel's benefit into the 1970s, producing political pressure and, occasionally, material aid, despite the official collapse of French-Israeli cooperation in 1967-1968.

[2] U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Airgram 1464, February 15, 1957, file 651.84a/2-1557, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park (USNA), College Park, MD.
[3] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret* (Paris: Fayard, 1964), 243-44.

Yet the French-Israeli relationship was more than an anomaly of French political unity; the informal friendship had significant material and political ramifications as well. Between 1954 and 1968, France functioned as Israel's most important international patron, providing military and diplomatic assistance essential to Israel's development and battlefield successes. Throughout the 1950s, and in contravention of the French, British, and American Near East Arms Coordinating Committee, shipments of French materiel helped Israel maintain arms parity with its Arab neighbors. During the 1956 Suez Crisis, Israeli soldiers drove French-built AMX-13 tanks to victory in the Sinai, fighting in cooperation with French and British troops. As they did, Guy Mollet's Socialist government provided diplomatic cover to Israel at the UN, and aerial and naval cover to Israel's cities. In 1958, as the French Fourth Republic became the Fifth, France continued to supply Israel with military materiel, albeit at a more regulated rate under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle. Between 1960 and 1968 alone, however, Israel received over 2.16 billion francs in French materiel and munitions, remaining the most important overall customer of the French arms industry.[4] It was thus with French arms, and most notably Mirage-III aircraft, that Israel won the 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israeli air superiority proved decisive. The cooperation between the two countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s had also launched an exchange of technical knowledge and materiel crucial to both France and Israel's fledgling nuclear programs. Israel, meanwhile, provided France with a positive balance of trade, intelligence on the pan-Arab movement in North Africa, and a foothold in a region where France had lost much of its influence as

[4] CNEIA (Comité National d'Expansion de l'Industrie Aéronautique) Report no.901/69, February 7, 1969, GR 1 R 152, sub-series R, Fonds de l'Armée de Terre, la Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France. Note this sum is given in post-1960 new francs, as is the approximation of total military aid provided below.

a result of the 1954-1962 Algerian War. While assistance to Israel was far from an uninterrupted flow of French largesse, the end result was nonetheless profound: French arms and diplomacy shaped the balance of power in the Middle East, provided Israel with a total of approximately 4.4 billion francs in military aid, and pushed consistently for international frameworks in which to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The gradual breakdown of the French-Israeli friendship was as important as its endurance. In 1967-68, after a gradual process of disengagement, Charles de Gaulle halted military and diplomatic support for Israel in a bid to rebuild France's economic and political position in the Arab world and position himself as a neutral mediator between the Cold War blocs. This shift in the position of the conservative French government was matched by a concomitant transformation in parts of the New Left, where the anti-fascist politics of the 1940s and 1950s, which had produced considerable sympathy for socialist Israel, were beginning to give way to an enduring anti-Zionism entangled with the discourses of anti-imperialism and Third-Worldism. These discourses, though still marginal in the late 1960s, point to the beginnings of a critical transformation in the French perception of Israel, as young leftists who experienced the Holocaust and Israel's early struggles as history, not memory, came to political maturity amidst the discourses of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and anti-Americanism. The simultaneous turn away from Israel by parts of the French Left and Center-Right contributed significantly to Israel's diplomatic isolation, spurred the growth of the American-Israeli alliance, and raised new and difficult questions concerning the politics and identities of French Jews and their relationship to the Jewish State. The French-Israeli split likewise produced considerable controversy, generating heated debates across the French political spectrum

as to whether interest or principle should govern French policy. In this way, the Israel debate both spurred and reflected a larger debate over the nature of the French Republic, serving to help define and delimit French political identity in the tumultuous years of the late 1960s.

Understanding French policy toward Israel, as Shimon Peres implies, requires more than analysis of interest, and he was not alone in thinking so. As US diplomatic officer Robert McBride reported from Paris in 1957, "it should not be taken for granted that French-Israeli relations . . . are governed by logic or international realities."[5] Though pragmatic political interest is unquestionably central to this history, it does not sufficiently account for the tremendous political breadth, personal depth, or longevity of the French-Israeli friendship, and its primacy must not be assumed. We must rather assess its weight in tandem with an examination of the ideas, institutions, sentiments, and cultural factors that underpinned French power politics and perceived national interest.

In doing so we must backdate the origins of the French-Israeli relationship, which both pre- and post-dated the catalytic 1954-62 Algerian War. I date the origins of the French-Israeli relationship to the 1940s, and particularly the French and Jewish experiences of the Second World War. I argue that the development of French-Israeli ties was contingent on the resulting confluence of individual agency, local political and institutional patterns, great power competition, and powerful perceptions of Israeli Jewishness rooted in memories of the Holocaust, the French Resistance, and the Munich Agreement of 1938. In so doing, I seek to make a case for the enduring power of social imaginaries in the formation of foreign policy, and argue for the primacy of the local as a lens for understanding international politics. The ideas that would shape French policy

[5] Paris to State, Airgram 1464, February 15, 1957, 651.84a/2-1557 1955-1959 CDF, RG 59, USNA.

toward Israel, including principled interventionism, a commitment to French Mediterranean power, and images of Israel as a western, socialist, vulnerable, and Jewish country, were largely in place by 1949, and fixed by 1953. These ideas, though far from uniform, would shape French public discourse and action in a generational way. It would take a political and bureaucratic changing of the guard, reaching its apogee only in the late 1960s, rather than any one event, to gradually unmake them. In France, the Israel debate likewise served to complicate and clarify political identity, and became a discursive site to contest what it meant to be French, Jewish, Arab, Right, and Left. The Israel debate subsequently became a key catalyst impelling a larger debate about France itself, while stimulating the politicization of France's religious minorities around the politics and events of the Middle East.

The rise and decline of the French-Israeli relationship was also highly contingent on the institutional framework of French foreign policy. The decentralized and multi-polar French Fourth Republic, in which the key ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and the Interior virtually functioned as personal fiefdoms, was an essential framework outside of which the informal French-Israeli alliance could not have developed as it did. The Algerian War had given the ministries of Defense and the Interior an inflated role in the formation of foreign policy that allowed for the development of parallel policies often at odds with, and occasionally unknown to the French diplomatic service of the Quai d'Orsay. Accordingly, at moments no less critical than the planning of the 1956 Suez Canal invasion, key Quai personnel were left in the dark.[6] The reforms of the 1958 French Fifth Republic and the 1959-1969 presidency of Charles de Gaulle were,

[6] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 2667, November 29, 1956, file 651.74/11-2956 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

consequently, an equally important framework. Ministerial independence was gradually curbed, and foreign policy-making power centralized in the hands of the foreign minister and the new executive presidency. Yet it should not be presumed that this structural transformation produced a clinical, detached foreign policy in and of itself. Policy formation remained firmly tied to personality and worldview, particularly in light of the strong personal hand de Gaulle took in guiding foreign relations in general, and the Israel issue in particular.

My work also suggests that we must significantly reevaluate the notion that the 1967 Six-Day War had an immediate and transformative effect on Israel's international image. I demonstrate that the French public was slow to abandon longstanding images of Israeli vulnerability after 1967, which instead retained a broad popular salience well into the 1970s. I consequently argue that the impact of the 1967 War must be understood as a process playing out gradually over time, rather than a moment of rapid transformation. My dissertation charts this process as it played out in France, and offers a significant revision in our understanding of Israel's declining popularity in Europe.

French-Israeli relations were ultimately contingent on the people involved at the levels of both policy formation and execution. The worldviews, sentiments, memories, and fears of a single individual were, at key moments, decisive, either to setting policy or undermining it. In some ways, France did not have a consistent policy toward Israel so much as a contested multiple-personality that changed unevenly with the personnel and voices of the French Republic. It is these civil servants and public voices that I wish to highlight, and French policy toward Israel cannot be fully understood without taking

seriously the images, ideologies, and sentiments that shaped their perceptions of Israel and French interests.

Interventions

Scholarly discussion on the French-Israeli relationship of the 1950s and 1960s has been largely defined by debate over the centrality of the Algerian War and the role of sentiment. While conventional historiographic wisdom holds that the Algerian War was the decisive factor shaping French-Israeli relations, I argue that this is an oversimplification that obscures the actors, institutions, and ideas upon which policy relied. Sylvia Crosbie's foundational 1974 work on the French-Israeli relationship is emblematic of this conventional historiography. Building on extensive interviews but limited archival access, Crosbie argues that the French-Israeli partnership was rooted primarily in pragmatic considerations arising from the 1954-62 Algerian War and the interests of a growing French arms industry. In Crosbie's assessment, French upset over Egypt's support of Algerian revolutionaries, and efforts by the western powers to maintain arms parity in the Middle East, dictated the rise and decline of the French-Israeli "tacit alliance" in tandem with the duration of the Algerian War. After 1962, she argues, France sought to rebuild its reputation and economic access in the Arab world, and support for Israel correspondingly declined.[7]

Zach Levey also views Algeria as the decisive factor. His work highlights Israeli doubts about the durability of a French-Israeli partnership, and illustrates that the Israeli leadership itself saw French support for Israel as conditional on the ongoing conflict in

[7] Sylvia Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance: France and Israel from Suez to the Six Day War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 4, 8, 20-26, 46, 86-87.

Algeria, an assessment with which Levey agrees.[8] As he notes, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion himself felt that France "would never be either willing or able to 'stand by Israel against the entire world,'" thereby limiting French-Israeli friendship to "'a few short years.'"[9]

Algeria-centric conclusions remained predominant in much of the scholarship of the 1990s. The Israeli scholars Mordechai Bar-On and Avner Cohen argued that the Algerian War, the French arms industry, and intelligence sharing were the key elements driving French aid to Israel.[10] André Martin similarly concluded that the French decision to arm Israel was "clear cut," grounded in French hostility to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser over his support for the Algerian National Liberation Front (Front de libération nationale, FLN) in its struggle for independence.[11] While these factors were central, their importance has been somewhat overstated, and less pragmatic elements, including sentiment and ideology, have consequently been marginalized. Michael Abitbol, for example, argues that such ephemeral factors were never critical, and suggests that their importance was inflated after the fact out of "nostalgia" for a romanticized past.[12]

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[8] Levey takes issue with Crosbie for suggesting that the Israelis were deeply committed to a French "orientation," arguing that the Israeli leadership only ever viewed France as a stop-gap surrogate in their search for an American strategic guarantee. Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 1-8, 56, 70-71, 116-29.

[9] Levey, 120.

[10] Bar-On had served as the private secretary of Moshe Dayan, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces during the Suez crisis, and his views reflect Levey's broader assessment of the Israeli position. Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955-1957*. Trans. Ruth Rossing. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); (Originally published in Hebrew in 1992), 25-33; Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 17, 33, 49-60, 361.

[11] André Martin, "Military and Political Contradictions of the Suez Affair: A French Perspective," in Illan Selwyn Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 54.

[12] Michel Abitbol, "Introduction," in Michel Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 2004), xii. See also, for example, Crosbie, who writes

This interpretation has the benefit of being the official explanation offered by de Gaulle and his allies as the French-Israeli alliance collapsed. In late 1967, shocked by public protest over his rupture with Israel, de Gaulle expressed his incredulity to his aide, Jean d'Escrienne: surely, he exclaimed, "The whole world understands that political reality excludes [considerations of] sentimentalism!"[13] The echo of his words could be heard as recently as the early 2000s, when the French ambassador to Israel, Jacques Huntziger, remarked that "There is no such thing as friendship between states, but only common interests between them."[14] We must be cautious accepting such remarks as representative, however, as the architects of the French-Israeli alliance would have fundamentally disagreed, and strong popular and political opposition to de Gaulle's break with Israel worked to undermine official policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the same token, we should avoid prejudging the origins of French-Israeli ties by the nature of their disintegration. Scholarship on this subject has also insufficiently analyzed changing perceptions of Israel in the French public sphere, or how Israel became a marker of political identity in France, particularly on the Left and among proponents of French Algeria. I contend that more must be done to integrate the broad range of elements and actors shaping policy toward Israel.

Consequently, my account seeks to frame French-Israeli relations in light of their ideational and institutional contexts, in addition to their pragmatic bases. Several recent scholars share in my efforts to do so. Laurence Coulon, Guy Ziv, Gadi Heimann, Tsilla Herschco, Michael Bar-Zohar, Howard Sachar, and David Lazar are among those who

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that the "unorthodox diplomacy" of the French-Israeli alliance "was not based in sentiment but a commercial affair." Crosbie, 170.

[13] Jean d'Escrienne, *Le Général ma dit, 1966-1970* (Paris: Plon, 1970), 158-59.

[14] Abitbol, "Introduction," xiv.

see sentiment, ideology, and the French experiences of occupation and resistance as central to the development of French-Israeli ties. They argue, as I do, that these factors did not displace political pragmatism in the development of French-Israeli relations, but were rather inextricably bound up with it.[15] Gadi Heimann accordingly concludes that "we cannot fathom the depth of French aid and the unusual conditions in which it was given without recognizing the ideological-emotional dimension."[16] Michael Karpin and Binyamin Pinkus, historians of Israel's nuclear program, also credit ideology and sentiment with an important role.[17] It was such factors, Pinkus concludes, that led French Prime Minister Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury to remark that "I gave you [Israelis] the atom in order to prevent another Holocaust from befalling the Jewish people."[18] Marginalizing such statements obscures the important personal dimension of French-Israeli relations.

The recent interventions of Gadi Heimann and Guy Ziv have been particularly important in addressing the role of the personal in French-Israeli politics. Ziv, writing on the cognitive psychology of Shimon Peres, and Heimann, whose work addresses the intersection of Charles de Gaulle's political worldview and personality, have usefully

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[15] For French popular images of Israel, see especially Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 13-14 and 447; and David Lazar, *L'opinion française et la naissance de l'état d'Israël, 1945-1949* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1972), 246-49. On the role of ideological socialism and the experience of the Second World War, see Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, trans. Peretz Kidron (New York: Delacorte Press, 1979), 226-28; Michael Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret*, 9; and Howard Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), 77-83, 100-102, and 108-113. On the primacy of individual personality and agency, see Guy Ziv, "Shimon Peres and the French-Israeli Alliance, 1954-9," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:2 (April 2010), 414-15; and Gadi Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage: French-Israel Relations, 1958-1967," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21:2 (2010), 242, 254-55. On anti-Jewish prejudice within the Quai d'Orsay, see especially Tsilla Herschco, *Entre Paris et Jérusalem: La France, le sionisme et la création de l'état d'Israël, 1945-1949*, trans. from the Hebrew by Claire Darmon. (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003), 11-14, 447.

[16] Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage," 242.

[17] Michael Karpin, *The Bomb in the Basement: How Israel Went Nuclear and What That Means for the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 11-13, 57-62, 77, 92; Binyamin Pinkus, "Atomic Power to Israel's Rescue: French-Israeli Nuclear Cooperation, 1949-1957," in *Israel Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 117-18, 123, 131.

[18] Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 117-18.

demonstrated the contingency of the political upon the personal.[19] Shimon Peres, in his own history of Israel's quest to arm itself, likewise credits a confluence of the pragmatic and the personal. Peres asserts that "it would be utterly false to the very nature of [the French-Israeli] bond to conceive of it in terms of interest alone. . . . The new Franco-Israeli relationship showed that traditional policies of 'what's in it for me,' based on self-interest, could give way to policies informed by generosity, understanding, and comradeship."[20] By highlighting the importance of personal, cultural, and institutional context alongside national interest, my work joins in the efforts of these scholars to stress the multivalent contingency of the French-Israeli alliance.

An important critique of this scholarship has been put forward in the recent work of Frédérique Schillo, whose 2012 *La Politique Française a l'Égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* cautions against placing oneself "in the emotional register" shared by Peres, Bourgès-Maunoury, Mollet, and other architects of the French-Israeli alliance.[21] Bookending her history with de Gaulle's 1959 remarks on Algerian self-determination, Schillo emphasizes instead France's political and international context. In doing so she aligns her work with those privileging the Algerian affair, arguing that as Algerian self-determination became official policy the French-Israeli alliance entered a terminal decline.[22] Meanwhile, Schillo seeks to demonstrate "how Zionist diplomacy made practical use" of the themes of Revolution and Resistance to appeal to their French

[19] Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 407-8; Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage," 254-55.
[20] Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), 64.
[21] Frédérique Schillo, *La politique française a l'égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012), 9. Those who Schillo critiques along these lines include Elie Barnavi, Luc Rosenzweig, Tsilla Herschco and Michael Bar-Zohar.
[22] Schillo, 11-13, 988, 994.

counterparts.[23] Yet even if such themes were tactically employed, as they at times undoubtedly were, they nonetheless appear to have resonated. More must be done to assess how and why they did. It is precisely this resonance — and the "emotional register" in which it was articulated — that I seek to recapture, as, outside the Quai d'Orsay, public advocacy for French-Israeli cooperation was only rarely articulated in terms of interest alone.[24] Rather, we must explore how the question of French-Israeli ties became a way of articulating an idealized France, one variably defined by its values, its past, and its geopolitical interests. Doing so allows us to build a better understanding of the foundations and longevity of the French-Israeli friendship, and by extension, account for its collapse.

The French-Israeli alliance also had important ramifications for French internal politics, but only a handful of scholars have examined the role of the Israel debate through the lens of party ideology. This is a regrettable gap, as I aim to demonstrate that French-Israeli relations were both contingent on French internal politics, and helped shape them in return. Samy Cohen's 1974 study of Gaullist attitudes was pioneering in this avenue of inquiry, and his conclusion that the question of Israel both cut across existing divisions between Gaullist factions, and later enshrined them, can now be buttressed through an analysis of popular and political discourse.[25] More recently, June Edmunds, who shares my conclusion that a generational and ideological shift was key to

[23] Schillo, 67-68.

[24] Whether this unwillingness to rely on interest alone was principled or itself tactical will be treated with at greater length in the text. I generally conclude, however, that sentiment and ideology, when expressed, were felt genuinely. Meanwhile, scholarship broadly agrees that the Quai was consistently pragmatic in its treatment of Israel, or if anything, somewhat pro-Arab or anti-Jewish in its bias. A presumption of its primacy in French-Israeli relations may contribute to the thesis that French-Israeli relations were fundamentally based on interest as, for the Quai, they were. Yet the Quai, too, had influential outliers in the "emotional register," most notably P.E. Gilbert, French ambassador to Israel between 1953 and 1959, about whom we shall say much in subsequent chapters.

[25] Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 294-99.

the gradual transformation of French discourse on Israel, has adopted a similar framework to assess the French Left.[26] Edmunds, however, examines the French case only briefly as a comparison to her work on Great Britain, and thus her analysis calls for considerable expansion, which I aim to provide.[27]

It was thus a constellation of factors that built and ultimately broke the French-Israeli alliance. Algeria was a part of this constellation, critical, but neither always nor universally the most important component. Ideology, sentiment, institutional structure, and images of Israeli society and Jewishness, rooted in the French experience of the early 1940s, were each at times decisive. Without any one of these elements the picture would fall apart.

In addition to this central argument, I seek to make several key interventions in the way the French-Israeli relationship is viewed and studied. First, in order to most accurately represent the plurality of actors shaping French-Israeli relations, my work prioritizes the inclusion of a broad range of popular and political voices. In doing so I wish to highlight the roles played by the executors, and not merely architects of policy by examining the actions and recommendations shaping relations at the level of the middling bureaucracy. This is a methodological goal I share with Guy Ziv, who argues that the French-Israeli alliance "would probably not have been formed had it not been for [Shimon] Peres' initiative, determination, an ability to recognize and exploit

[26] June Edmunds, *The Left and Israel: Party-Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4, 139-145. Elie Barnavi and Luc Rosenzweig have adopted a similar framework, examining the intersection of image, political ideology, and *realpolitik*. Elie Barnavi and Luc Rosenzweig, *La France et Israël: Une affaire passionnelle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 32, 70-71, 81-82, 92, 168-69.

[27] This need is compounded by the limited access Edmunds was afforded to French archival records, particularly for the late 1960s and after. These records have only recently become accessible, and I make use of them here.

opportunities, and the unorthodox methods he used to do so."[28] Yet, other middle-tier officials were also important. Such was the case of the outspokenly pro-Israel Pierre-Eugene Gilbert, the French ambassador to Israel from 1953-1959 who, in the words of Frédérique Schillo, "fashioned his function in the image of his temperament: the diplomat, the simple executor, would be the decider."[29] I seek to extend Ziv's approach to a broader pool of actors, to officials like Peres and Gilbert who were the men on the ground, the points of contact, and the expert opinions upon which French-Israeli relations depended. French and Israeli officials like Abel Thomas, Louis Mangin, Jean Bourdeillette, Yosef Nahmias, Henri Roux, and René Neuville would all play important roles influencing or executing policy toward Israel. To see these men as simply cogs in the machinery of government is to undercut their personal contributions to this history, and to leave many of its key moments obscured.

I use the term "men" deliberately, for the practice and formation of French-Israeli ties was an almost exclusively male enterprise. With rare exceptions, it was only in the late 1960s, as French-Israeli cooperation collapsed and French society was shaken by the May Events of 1968, that women became visible in the official, communal, and press sources that reflect French debate about policy toward Israel. Due to limitations of scope, the gendered character of the French-Israeli friendship will receive only limited attention here, however, this angle of analysis deserves a thorough treatment of its own.

In addition to integrating the middle-tier bureaucracy, I also wish to assess the broad range of popular voices that reflected and helped shape French images of Jews and Israel. Doing so allows us to contextualize the decision-makers as participants in a wider

[28] Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 407-12, 427.
[29] Although Schillo does not make it an explicit goal, in practice her treatment of middle-tier officials most closely mirrors that of Ziv and myself. Schillo, 521.

debate about Israel playing out in the press and in political discourse. This reveals that Mollet's likening of Nasser to Adolf Hitler, or Defense aide Abel Thomas's characterization of his actions as a kind of "atonement" for the Holocaust, were not anomalous. They were rather consistent with and constituent of a larger set of gradually changing ideas about the State of Israel and its Jewish character. In his 1991 study of nationalism, Benedict Anderson argued that nations arose as a social construct out the gradual expansion of "imagined communities."[30] I build on this conclusion to suggest that nations live — often differently — in the imaginations of their external observers as well, as one social imaginary reflects on another. Analyzing French popular discourse about Israel sheds light on this transnational imagining, and reveals that Israel's reality was often less important than French perceptions thereof.

Demonstrating the prevalence of certain images also helps account for the lobbying and activism that the Israel debate generated in France, and indicates how politicians may have perceived the priorities of their electorate on this issue. Finally, a focus on popular discourse helps challenge the thesis of Algerian centrality, illustrating that popular support for a French-Israeli partnership endured powerfully for more than a decade after Algerian independence. Laurence Coulon, David Lazar, Uri Dan, Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, and Jean-William Lapierre have all provided important studies of French popular opinion on Israel. Most of these, however, are limited in either chronology or scope, and very little attention is given to popular opinion following the dramatic years of 1967-1968.[31] Only Coulon has produced a broader study of French opinion, and I build

[30] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).
[31] Coulon (2009); Lazar (1972); Uri Dan, *L'embargo* (Paris: Éditions et Publications Premières Paris, 1970); Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le monde diplomatique et Israël 1954-2005* (Paris: Éditions Le Manuscrit, 2006);

on his efforts to frame the gradual transformations taking place in the French perception of Israel within their particular cultural and political context.

An investigation of popular discourse on Israel also sheds new light on the questions of public Holocaust remembering and Jewish politicization in postwar France. In his 1991 work on postwar memory Henry Rousso argued that a "Vichy syndrome" pervaded postwar France, stifling public discussion of the occupation, the Holocaust, and Jews under an idealized Gaullist myth of Resistance.[32] While Rousso noted the political mobilization of the wartime past by participants on both sides of the Algerian conflict, his work provided minimal discussion of the same processes as they may have applied to discourse on Israel. This seems a gap, as the French press often characterized Israel as the refuge of Europe's Holocaust survivors.[33] Prior to 1967-1968, Rousso implies, the two matters lacked consistent public association, with French Jews only experiencing a "reawakening" of memory in the early 1970s, partly as the result of a sudden consciousness of the Middle East.[34] Historians like Ronald Schechter have echoed Rousso's conclusions, arguing that "the French had very little to say about the Jews" in the postwar period, as "any attention to the Jews risked raising the painful question of French complicity." Only with the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1968 May Events, he argues, did these issues cross "from silence to speech, invisibility to visibility."[35] As my

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Jean-William Lapierre, *L'information sur l'état d'Israël dans les grands quotidiens français en 1958* (Paris, Éditions du CNRS, 1968).

[32] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France Since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), vii, 9, 26.

[33] Rousso, 81, 134.

[34] Rousso, 132-39.

[35] Schechter's remarks come as part of the epilogue to his work on a considerably earlier period, and he should not be faulted overmuch. However, his remarks are a useful representation of the enduring power of Rousso's conclusions. Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 257-58. Samuel Moyn has challenged Rousso's dating, but not broad interpretation, arguing that the breakdown of the Vichy syndrome occurred with

work will show, however, the tropes of occupation, Resistance, anti-fascism, and the Holocaust were deployed extensively in French debate over Israel to advocate both for and against French-Israeli partnership. Similarly, though use of these themes spiked in and following 1967-68, they were by that time already well established in mainstream discourse. In this regard, key French decision-makers perceived Israelis explicitly as Jews, as fellow victims equal if not greater to themselves in victimhood, to whom France owed a moral debt. Voices within the French Jewish community felt similarly, and used the sites, occasions, and language of Holocaust memorialization to frame their public positions on Israel. I accordingly seek to nuance notions of a postwar silence, and argue that, for some, support for Israel was itself a form of public Holocaust remembering.

Recent scholars have come to similar conclusions, arguing that discourse about the Holocaust was used consistently by Jews to frame their attitudes toward Israel. Joan Wolf has produced the most important scholarship on this subject, and while her work focuses on the catalyst of 1967, she demonstrates that a Holocaust idiom was already being used by Jews to speak about Israel by the mid-1950s.[36] According to Wolf, Israel provided a framework wherein, "motivated by the perception that Israel was in immediate danger, Jews began to search actively for new ways to make sense of both the Holocaust and their place in the Western World."[37] Seán Hand and Susan Suleiman have

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the 1966 publication of Francois Steiner's *Treblinka: The Revolt of an Extermination Camp.* Like Rousso, however, he asserts that Jewish victimhood had been absorbed within a collective French one. Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 5, 47, 141.

[36] Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1, 26; Joan B. Wolf, "Anne Frank is dead, long live Anne Frank:" The Six-Day War and the Holocaust in French Public Discourse," *History and Memory* 11:1 (June, 1999), 107.

[37] Wolf notes that a Holocaust consciousness had existed among Jews well before 1967, but that it was only infrequently evoked beyond the confines of the Jewish community. Wolf concludes that it took the anxiety of the Six-Day War to compel Jews into a more public use of the Holocaust as a framework of understanding. Wolf, "Anne Frank is dead," 105, 108.

also argued against notions of postwar silence. In their view, increasing Jewish outspokenness stemmed in large part from demographic, communal, and social transformation, and particularly that brought on by the influx of some 235,000 North African Jews, who immigrated to France in the 1950s and 1960s.[38] These scholars conclude that using the Holocaust to talk about Israel helped French Jews make sense of their relationship to each, and I share in their efforts to expose this semantic link.[39]

Thinking about Israel also helped Jews frame and articulate their own place within French society. Israel served as a contested symbol bound up with the discourses of Republic, Revolution, and Resistance, a benchmark against which some Jews posited their civic, communal, and political identities. In analyzing this practice, I join in the recent efforts of Laurence Coulon, Ethan Katz, Maud Mandel, and Ariel Danan to make clear what Israel meant to the diverse range of French Jews, and how it impelled their politicization.[40]

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[38] Seán Hand, "Introduction," in Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 20; Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Orphans of the Shoah and Jewish Identity in Post-Holocaust France: From the Individual to the Collective," in Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, 131-32. Suleiman's ultimate conclusions mirror Moyn's in asserting the 1966 Treblinka Affair as the critical moment.

[39] Hasia Diner is among those scholars recently seeking to challenge the myth of postwar silence. Her work on the American Jewish context argues that Israel served as a sort of "living memorial" well prior to 1967 and the 1962 trial of Adolf Eichmann. I suggest that Israel occupied a similar role in France. See Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 4-6, 311, 320.

[40] Coulon focuses primarily on anti-Zionist Jews on the French Left, and members of progressive political groups, and is thus more interested in Jewish critique of Israel than support for it. For Jewish support for Israel see especially Ariel Danan *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014). For the triangular relationship between Jews, Muslims, and the French state, see Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). I am also in dialogue with Marc Hecker and Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac on the rise of Jewish institutional mobilization in France as it relates to Israel, though I argue more must be done to analyze pre-1967 debate over the proper relationship between Israel and French Jewry. See Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), and Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF: De la Résistance juive a la tentation du lobby* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011).

However, Jews were not alone in using the memory of the Holocaust to make sense of their attitudes toward Israel. As Wolf argues, non-Jews also made discursive use of the Holocaust, though the universalizing tendencies of this usage created tension between Jews who had experienced the "trauma" of the Holocaust, either personally or psychologically, and gentiles who had not.[41] As I shall demonstrate, however, French gentiles were making use of the Holocaust to frame their actions toward Israel as early as the late 1940s, and consistently did so at the highest political levels throughout the 1950s. In doing so I illustrate that both Jews and gentiles were using the Holocaust as a framework for understanding Israel far earlier and more consistently than is typically recognized.[42]

Bound up with notions of post-Holocaust silence is the assumption that everything changed in and as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War. According to this view, Israel's international and popular image collapsed as a direct consequence of the war and its subsequent occupations, as Israel, formerly seen as weak and threatened, proved itself stronger than the combined might of its immediate neighbors.[43] The war produced an opposite effect on most Jews, this view holds, galvanizing Jewish communities and "reawakening" their political consciousness, supposedly dormant since the trauma of the

[41] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 1, 19. Wolf's framework could do more to account for French gentiles who experienced other forms of hardship at the hands of the Nazis, however, including deportation and internment.

[42] The impact of the experience of the Second World War and the presence of an "anti-Munich reflex" among the French leadership, particularly in the 1955-1956 period, are well known to scholars. However, as we noted above, these factors are often attributed, more or less critically, to "sentiment." I seek to assess this period through Wolf's more analytical approach to Holocaust memory and discourse.

[43] Those who argue for the centrality of 1967 include Hecker, 10-13; Edmunds, 85; Schechter, 257-58, and Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs: De 1979 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 307, 319. Those who focus on the Gaullist rupture often center 1967 in light of the official end to French-Israeli cooperation that occurred in 1967-1968. Included in this group are Barnavi and Rosenzweig, 31, 168-69; Abitbol, "Introduction," xiv; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, "France and the June 1967 War," in Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, eds., *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247.

Holocaust.[44] This claim, explicit or implicit, has become something of a truism for those seeking to retrospectively explain declining sympathy for Israel in the 1970s and 1980s. It is, however, problematically one-dimensional in its teleological implications and disregard of the changes taking place within the French political and cultural landscape. While a splintering of attitudes toward Israel *did* take place, particularly among some elements of the Left, popular and political images of Israel demonstrated far more continuity than change into the early 1970s. The war's impact on contemporary views was thus less dramatic than has been generally supposed, and the discursive influence of June 1967 must be understood as a process playing out over time, and not as a paradigm-shattering moment. It must rather be contextualized more deeply in its local context, in order to frame gradual changes in the French image of Israel in light of the rise of the New Left and enduring Gaullist political power between 1968 and 1974.

Maud Mandel, Ethan Katz, and Laurence Coulon have also suggested that the centrality of 1967 may be overstated, arguing that the key transition instead took place between 1968 and 1970, largely as a result of French domestic factors.[45] Writing from the context of Jewish-Muslim relations, Mandel and Katz argue that the anxieties produced

[44] This assumption is more common and more understandable among those assessing the impact of 1967 through its Jewish angle, where the Six-Day War had its most immediate and transformative effect. Maud Mandel characterizes this assumption as "a truism of modern Jewish history"; Mandel, 80-82. Works where this assumption is present include Doris Bensimon, *Les juifs de France et leurs relations avec Israël 1945-1988* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 163-65; Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF,* 48-49, 56; Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphael, *Jewish Citizenship in France: the Temptation of Being among One's Own,* trans. Catherine Temerson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 2-3; Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: an Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 112; Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust*, 1 and 105, and Erik Cohen, *The Jews of France Today: Identity and Values* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 13. Even among Jews, however, responses were more fractured and contextual than is typically acknowledged, particularly among those whose support for Israel came into tension with their political self-identification.

[45] Mandel, 124; Coulon, 13-14. Coulon sees a range of international factors as contributing, while Mandel and Katz are focused primarily on the French context.

by the Six-Day War served to expand and normalize Jewish mobilization over Israel, rather than create it.[46] Coulon, meanwhile, has argued that the foundational "Israelophile" images underpinning popular sympathy for Israel endured beyond 1967. Even as they began to erode, he argues, many of Israel's critics "avowed [themselves] still torn between *two* friendships," rather than an opposition between Israelis and Arabs or Palestinians.[47] Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a Jewish leader of the student Left in May 1968, thus recalled how, during the Six-Day War, "I was in a state of anguish . . . . I was torn in two . . . . Even during the wildest time, when things were completely crazy, I was never pro-Palestinian, nor was I pro-Zionist . . . . In my view they're both right."[48] Though I agree with Coulon's conclusions, I argue that challenges to Israel's predominant pre-war images had yet to attain mainstream salience even by 1970. As I will demonstrate, these pre-war images continued to shape discourse and action into the 1970s, and were in several ways reinforced, rather than undermined by the Six-Day War.

Finally, analyzing the Israel debate sheds important light on the development of anti-Jewish and anti-Arab prejudice in France, and the recent targeting of French Jews as Israeli proxies. The issue has multiple dimensions. On the one hand, the French-Israeli alliance stifled some currents of Right-wing antisemitism, as Israel's conflicts with its neighbors made Jews appear as potential allies in a more important struggle against Arabs and pan-Arabism. On the other hand, Israel's faults were at times attributed to its "Jewish" character, and French Jews' critique of government policy enflamed accusations of collective double-loyalty. The Israel question elicited antisemitic reactions from the Left as well, where new and borrowed antisemitic formulations strove to make

[46] Mandel, 82, 124; Katz 243, 255-56.
[47] Coulon, 13-14, 103, 445-46.
[48] Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France,* 93-94.

sense of Israel. The combined effect was the blurring of the lines between the Jewish and the Israeli. De Gaulle himself most infamously obscured this distinction in his remarks of November 27, 1967, when he critiqued Israel's comportment by characterizing Jews generally as "an elite people, sure of themselves and domineering . . . [charged] with a burning and conquering ambition." In the eyes of French philosopher and political scientist Raymond Aron, in doing so de Gaulle opened a new era of permissibility for public French antisemitism, sanctioning the use of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist discourse to target Jews broadly.[49] The collapse of the images underpinning French-Israeli ties, and the growth of anti-Zionist currents on the Left were also mutually entangled, and the two must be analyzed together if either is to be understood.[50]

Anti-Arab racism was also an important contributing factor to, and consequence of the French-Israeli alliance. Historians of the social consequences of the Algerian War have done much to indicate how prejudices within France's ministries, among the *pieds-noirs* (Algeria's European population), and among partisans of French Algeria contributed significantly to the development of French-Israeli friendship. While these prejudices will have a place in this analysis, limitations in scope dictate I leave a more detailed discussion to Katz, Mandel, Yves Gastaut, and Richard Viven, who have recently produced important works on the subject.[51]

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[49] Raymond Aron, *De Gaulle, Israel and the Jews*, translated by John Sturrock (New York: Praeger, 1969), 24. Historian Henry Weinberg shares this interpretation, and argues that de Gaulle's depiction of Jews problematically built on antisemitic tropes. Henry Weinberg, *The Myth of the Jew in France, 1967-1982* (Oakville, Mosaic Press, 1987),28-35.

[50] This is not to suggest that anti-Zionism and antisemitism are synonymous; rather, that the former is at times motivated by or engaged with the latter. Similarly, anti-Zionism is not the purview of the Left, or even gentiles alone. It is the anti-Zionism of the Left, however, which I feel has the greatest analytical bearing on the gradual unmaking of French-Israeli friendship, and which can thus be most fruitfully studied here.

[51] On the relationship between the Israel question and French anti-Arab racism see especially Katz (2015); Mandel (2014); Yvan Gastaut, "La Guerre des Six Jours et la question du racisme en France," *Cahiers de la*

Methodology and Framing

My approach to the history of French-Israeli relations is grounded methodologically in Alexander Wendt's constructivist approach to international politics and recent scholarship analyzing perceptions of Jewishness within the history of ideas. In his social theory of international relations, Wendt argues that interests are not given, but ideationally constituted, their effects "a function of culturally constituted ideas." Ideas, he writes, are not more important than power or interest, but rather, "power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Power and interest explanations *presuppose* ideas."[52] It is thus with ideas, and perceived value, that Wendt recommends analysis begin. In light of the frequency with which French policy toward Israel was articulated through reference to sentiment, ideology, and French "tradition," ideas and images seem the logical starting point here as well. Interest can thereby be contextualized in light of the assumptions upon which it relied.

I accordingly aim to provide a cultural history of the French idea of Israel, assessing its flexible content and meaning in light of its social, political, and ideological contexts, representation, and deployment. In their studies on the place of Jewishness in the history of ideas, Ronald Schechter and Jonathan Judaken have meanwhile demonstrated the utility of inscribed Jewishness as a lens for understanding French politics. Their works provide useful models for how the image of Israel might be studied in turn. Schechter suggests that the demarcation of Jewishness was central to the

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Mediterranee 71 (2005): 15-29; and Richard C. Viven, "The End of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," *The Historical Journal* 37:2 (June 1994): 365-88. Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 1, 1917-1958,* and *Tome 2, 1959-1991,* (Paris: Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1992-1993) also include relevant sections.

[52] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 24-25, 41, 123-24, 135.

development of French republicanism and policy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Jews, he concludes, were "good to think," an abstract case study facilitating "the conceptualization and articulation of a number of ideas that were of special importance to their contemporaries."[53] Judaken has demonstrated that Jewishness played a similar role in twentieth century French intellectual thought through his analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre. Imagined Jews, Judaken contends, "became a mirror" helping the French reflect on their culture, history, values, and politics, and functioned as a "cultural code" (to use Shulamit Volkov's term) facilitating a larger debate about the French nation and its identity.[54] I argue that Israel functioned similarly, serving as a prism that helped clarify and articulate debate about politics, community, ethics, and the Republic.

In their symbolic capacities, Jewishness and Israel were also mutually informing. It is thus crucial that we understand what it meant for Israel to be socially constructed as a "Jewish" state, and how this shaped perceptions of Jewishness and Israel in France. It is not coincidental, but central that phrases including "it's David against Goliath," "Nasser is a new Hitler," and "Israel . . . exaggerates, just like the Jews have done since the days of Moses" were deployed by French policy-makers to defend their choices. Neither

[53] Schechter is building on Claude Levi-Strauss's work on "totems," here assessing French Jews as such in the context of Revolutionary debates on citizenship and the nature of the Republic. Schechter, 7. On the place of Jews in the articulation of the contested French Republic, see Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); on the tropology of Jewishness in postwar French philosophy, see Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[54] Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 8-9, 18-19. For Volkov's updated discussion of cultural codes as they pertain to Israel and antisemitism, see Shulamit Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," in *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 25:1, 2006: 51-62. On the role of Jewishness in the wider western history of ideas, see especially David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton and Company, 2013). See also Diner (2009) on Israel's symbolic function in the American Jewish community.

French policy nor Jewish identity politics can be understood without an analysis of the semantic associations implicit in such language.

Maud Mandel and Ethan Katz have recently demonstrated the fruitfulness of Israel as a framework for understanding minority and national identity in France. Arguing that debate by French Jews and Muslims about the Middle East was rarely ever *only* about the Middle East, Mandel asserts that such debate "became one way that Muslim and Jewish nationalists negotiated their relationship with the wider polity . . . ."[55] Katz has concluded the same, arguing that "competing understandings and institutional manifestations of 'Frenchness' inflected how Jews and Muslims saw one another," France, and the Middle East.[56] But, as I shall illustrate, the wider population engaged with the Middle East in a similar fashion, and used its conflicts and peoples as discursive vehicles to posit competing visions of France. I accordingly analyze the Israel debate not only for its role in making Jewish and Muslim identity, but also that of France itself.

In framing this project I have chosen to focus on the motivations of the French, for whom, in light of Israel's desperate need for modern arms, the benefits of a French-Israeli partnership were less immediately clear.[57] While the foundations of Israeli policy toward France will not be ignored, considerable recent scholarship has been produced on the subject, and I do not wish to retread that ground here.[58] Additionally, as the

[55] Mandel, 17-18.
[56] Katz, 5. See also Shmuel Trigano, *La démission de la République: Juifs et musulmans en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003).
[57] In doing so I wish to particularly challenge Avner Cohen, in whose work the French appear largely passive, manipulated by their Israeli partners. Avner Cohen, 12.
[58] On Israeli policy see in particular Zach Levey (1997); Avner Cohen (1998); Guy Ziv, *Why Hawks Become Doves: Shimon Peres and Foreign Policy Change in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014); Binyamin Pinkus, *Me-Ambivalentiyut Li-Verit Bilti-Ketuvah: Yisra'el, Tsarfat, Vi-Yehude Tsarfat 1947-1957* (Kiryat 'Sedeh Boker, Hosta'at hasefarim shel Universitat Ben Guryon ba-Negev, 2005) (Hebrew); and Michael Bar-Zohar, *Gesher 'Al Hayyam Hattikhon* [Bridge Over the Mediterranean: French-Israeli Relations, 1947-1963] (Tel-Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1964) (Hebrew).

foundational images underpinning French sympathy for Israel both pre- and post-dated the pinnacle years of 1955-1968, a broad framework centering the French cultural, institutional, and political context is necessary. I have therefore bracketed my analysis between the conclusion of the generationally-formative occupation of France in 1944, and the end of Georges Pompidou's Gaullist presidency in 1974.[59] As I argue that ideologies, interests, and images born of the Second World War fundamentally shaped the French-Israeli future, our analysis must begin with their earliest articulation in the immediate postwar years. Similarly, rather than 1959 or 1967, I will contend that the 1969-1974 period constituted the closing years of the French-Israeli friendship. It was then, as Georges Pompidou continued his predecessor's policies of military and diplomatic embargo against Israel despite considerable public opposition, that the partisans of French-Israeli friendship made their last significant foray.

Chapter One accordingly begins with an examination of the institutional, ideational, and political factors that came together to form the bedrock of the French-Israeli relationship between 1944 and 1953. There, we shall see how ministerial competition, individual agency, and the fusion of pragmatic and sentimental concerns would coalesce to lay the defining patterns of the French-Israeli relationship in the immediate postwar years. Examinations of the *Exodus* affair of 1947, the *Altalena* affair of 1948, and the question of Israeli statehood provide case studies to help us illuminate these patterns, and reveal the inner workings of a disjointed French Middle East policy that was the product of competing foreign policy visions.

[59] Miriam Rosman has recently adopted a similar chronological framework, situating her study between 1947 and 1970. See Miriam Rosman, *La France et Israël, 1947 - 1970: De la création de l'état d'Israël au départ des vedettes de Cherbourg* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2009).

Chapter Two subsequently analyzes how this inconsistency solidified into a coherent policy of alliance between 1954-58, charting the expansion of French-Israeli relations at the levels of policy-making and execution. There, we will see how French policy toward Israel was often framed through the lenses of Munich, Algeria, the Republic, and the Holocaust, and examine how questions of Israel and Jewishness came to semantically inform one another, as well as the recent French past. This allows us to nuance Henry Rousso's work on Holocaust remembering, while an analysis of the institutional structures of the French Fourth Republic helps us to explain how determined ministers and bureaucrats could create an alliance of remarkable breadth and depth, despite significant internal opposition.

Chapter Three, in turn, charts the gradual decline of the French-Israeli political relationship between 1959-67 in the context of institutional, ideational, and political change. There, we shall examine how the 1958 creation of the French Fifth Republic and the end of the Algerian War in 1962 undermined the institutional context in which French-Israeli relations had thrived. We shall also give particular attention to France's new president, Charles de Gaulle, and reveal how his vision of French *grandeur* prompted a reformulation of the bases of the French-Israeli relationship in terms that Israel's leaders found difficult to accept. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the French-Israeli break of June 2, 1967, and its aftermath, and situates this moment as the culmination, rather than the cause, of declining French-Israeli relations.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six shift our attention from policy to the public sphere, and work to uncover Israel's place within the French popular and political imaginary. Chapter Four's analysis of French media and political discourse on the 1967 Six-Day

War reveals that French perceptions of Israel changed less profoundly and less rapidly than has been typically recognized, in the wake of that conflict. An analysis of French political activism, particularly within the French Jewish community, links discourse to political action, and demonstrates that the French government's break with Israel in 1967 was not replicated at the popular level. Chapter Five, meanwhile, turns our attention to the tumultuous years of 1968-70 in order to chart the slow fragmentation of French popular perceptions of Israel. There we shall see how the social and political changes catalyzed by the May Events of 1968 created alternate ways of imagining Israel, particularly within the student and intellectual Left, while stimulating the politicization of France's Jewish and Arab minorities. In doing so, this chapter argues that the gradual breakdown of French popular sympathy for Israel was grounded in French local politics as much as the realities of the Middle East.

Chapter Six, however, works to demonstrate the limits of these transformations by situating them within the larger context of mainstream French discourse on the Middle East in the early 1970s, and in so doing, reveals the broad endurance of French public sympathy for Israel even after the Six-Day War. It does so by examining French media and political discourse surrounding the 1969-70 Cherbourg affair, during which French middling officials and businessmen assisted Israel in spectacularly subverting their government's embargo on military equipment destined for the Jewish State. The embarrassment of the episode, and the quiet subsequent purge, signaled the end of the unorthodox ties that had bound France and Israel together for the previous two decades, and ended hopes for an amelioration of relations in the near future. Gaullist and left-wing criticism of Israel also harmonized during this period, and by the late-1973 Yom Kippur

War, French support for Israel was becoming an increasingly partisan issue. Chapter Seven illuminates this development by resuming our analysis of French-Israeli political relations between 1970-74, during the presidency of Georges Pompidou. There, an analysis of French and American diplomatic records reveals how French and Israeli diplomatic objectives became increasingly incompatible, culminating in a series of French responses to the Yom Kippur War that precluded the possibility of a French-Israeli reconciliation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the ongoing fragmentation of French popular perceptions of Israel in the wake of the 1973 War, and analyzes how debating Israel helped break longstanding French Jewish taboos about acting politically in the name of explicitly Jewish interests. The dissertation ends with a brief look toward the policies Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, whose ascent to the French presidency in 1974 marked a definitive shift in French policy toward the Middle East. His extensive sale of military equipment to the Arab world, and vociferous support for Palestinian rights, made it clear that French-Israeli relations were entering a new, often confrontational period.[60]

By framing my study explicitly in light of its French context, I wish to nuance the presumed primacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict in shaping attitudes toward Israel. In doing so, I seek to explain why US embassy officer Robert McBride felt it necessary, in 1957, to inform his superiors that "Israel, for France, is an internal matter rather than an external one."[61] In this my efforts harmonize with those of Maud Mandel and Ethan Katz,

[60] On Giscard d'Estaing's Middle East policy, see the relevant sections of Weinberg (1987); Sachar (1998); David Pryce-Jones, *Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006); J.R. Frears, *France in the Giscard Presidency* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981); and Timo Behr, "France, Germany and Europe's Middle East Dilemma: The Impact of National Foreign Policy Traditions on Europe's Middle East Policy" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2009).

[61] Paris to State, Airgram 1464, February 15, 1957, 651.84a/2-1557 1955-1959 CDF, RG 59, USNA.

who similarly argue that French attitudes toward the Middle East must be seen first through the lens of France itself.[62] Despite this, my discussions of public and political discourse focus largely, but not exclusively, on crisis moments in the Middle East. This is because Israel was most discussed and most visible in France at moments when it was perceived to be in danger, or endangering others.[63] Thus, while I wish to challenge the suggestion that French-Israeli relations depended primarily on the events of the Middle East, those same events generated considerable public discussion facilitating analysis of discursive change over time.

Before proceeding further, however, a few terminological remarks are in order. I have chosen to use the term "Jew" (the French *Juif*) broadly to refer to those who self-defined as such, were defined as such by others, or spoke from within an explicitly Jewish institutional or editorial framework. My decision to include perceived Jewishness in this label comes as part of my effort to highlight the symbolic dimension of Jewishness in France, and its use by members outside that community to frame their own identities. The term "Arab" will be used likewise, while, when speaking of the varied inhabitants of French colonial Algeria, I shall provide specific descriptors. When the French term "*Israélite*" is used, connoting a primarily confessional rather than ethnic or national Jewish identity, the original term will be used in the text.[64]

Given the ongoing contest over the legitimacy of the Zionist project, the terms "Zionist," "anti-Zionist," "pro-Israel," and "anti-Israel" will be used as they appear in the sources, though certain distinctions must be made. Zionists may be broadly defined as

[62] Mandel, 155; Katz, 4-5 and 243-44.
[63] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 202.
[64] *Israélite* is a term of French republican origin connoting Jewish confession in a French civic context, and has no relation to the term *Israélien*, or "Israeli" — something certain self-defined *Israélites* were keen to point out.

those who believe in the validity of Jewish nationhood; many Zionists also support claims to Jewish sovereignty in part or all of the biblical land of Israel. Zionism includes a broad range of views, from, to use Laurence Coulon's terminology, reflexively sympathetic "compromise Zionists" to "unconditional Zionists" dogmatically defending Israeli policies. Anti-Zionists are similarly diverse, ranging from "diasporic Jews" and "anti-Zionist reformers" who disavow the particularism of Jewish nationalism but accepted the reality or necessity of Israeli statehood, to "radical anti-Zionists" systematically opposed to Zionist ideology or the project of Israeli statehood.[65] Meanwhile, while those advocating for increased moral and material support to Israel can be characterized as "pro-Israel," the term "anti-Israel" will be reserved for those calling for the separation from and disappearance of Israel as a state on ideological, sentimental, or racist grounds. For the names of the polities, populations, conflicts, and territories of the Near East, I have chosen to use the terms most commonly employed by my subjects, in order to depict their perspectives as accurately as possible. Accordingly, I shall speak primarily of an "Arab-Israeli" conflict, as opposed to an "Israeli-Palestinian" conflict until we reach the late 1960s and early 1970s, as it was only then that the Israeli-Palestinian dimension began to appear distinct from its larger regional context.[66]

A final word must also be said about the sources for studying French-Israeli relations, as the development of an Algeria-centric historiography depended in part on the limited availability of French archival sources for the post-1962 period. Much scholarship

[65] Coulon, 18-20.

[66] While we might speak in highly specific terms of a "Zionist-Palestinian conflict," as Ethan Katz does, most French voices did not frame events in this way, and this framework was largely confined to intellectuals and activists on the far Left who framed their opposition to Zionism as jeopardizing an otherwise presumed *convivencia* between Jews and their neighbors. The conflict was rather "Arab-Israeli," and the "Palestinian refugees" it produced were not generally seen as independent participants in this conflict until the rise of Palestinian guerrilla activity in the later 1960s.

on this subject is accordingly based in interviews, memoirs, and Israeli archival sources. Only recently have archival records from the key French ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs become available for the Gaullist period, and particularly for the years of 1966 and after. French Defense records have been particularly under-utilized, even for the 1950s. This is unfortunate, as the sources and personalities of the Ministry of Defense are key to understanding how and why a French-Israeli alliance grew and prospered in an atmosphere of discrete informality.

As newly opened records indicate, a diverse range of voices had made French-Israeli relations a highly contested matter both before and after the Algerian crisis. Additionally, officers in the French middling bureaucracy continued to circulate sympathetic descriptions of Israel, its people, and even its occupations into the 1970s, illustrating that notions of a clean break in 1967 are considerably exaggerated. Only Frédérique Schillo has made extensive use of the French Foreign Affairs and Defense archives, though as her work terminates in 1959, mine will be the first to make detailed use of these records to assess the 1960s and 1970s. Some important records do remain inaccessible, however, and several of my requests to access restricted materials on French-Israeli relations were refused.

My research in these archives was supplemented by additional work with the published series of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Documents Diplomatiques Français*; with the US State Department files; and with its published series, *The Foreign Relations of the United States*. Though the United States was only a tangential player in the history of French-Israeli relations, its records, never before used to analyze this subject, provide key insights into the opinions and actions of French and Israeli officials

at both the national and bureaucratic levels. The voices of the French Jewish community were accessed by examining the papers of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France, CRIF) and the French Chief Rabbinate housed at the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation (Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, CDJC). I also reviewed the publications of Jewish media outlets and student groups, and make use of sociological studies of French Jewry. Supplemental research for the project was carried out in the United States Library of Congress, with the transcripts of French Senate and National Assembly sessions, and in several smaller collections in France and the United States. Where official records provide an incomplete picture, I have drawn on the memoirs and interview records of French, Israeli, British, and American observers and participants. I have sought to compensate for the inherently retrospective and self-interested nature of these sources by using them to corroborate one another, and by using them in conjunction with archival sources. In addition, I make extensive use of heretofore understudied currents of popular discourse, particularly for the post-1967 period, to analyze French press, legislative, and intellectual debate on Israel. In examining these sources, I share William Lapierre and Joan Wolf's view that comment and opinion exist in a reciprocal relationship, mutually shaping one another, and so assess public discourse as part of an ongoing dialogue shaping French thinking about Jews and Israel.[67]

Through all this I wish to contend that the French-Israeli friendship was not simply the product of a temporary confluence of dispassionate interest, but a relationship highly contingent on the people and societies involved. Tactical considerations alone, though important, fail to explain the contemporaneous shift of the French Left and

[67] Lapierre, 13-14; Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust*, 3.

Center-Right away from Israel in the late 1960s, why proponents of a French-Israeli alliance couched their support in terms of the Holocaust and the Republic, or why popular sympathy for Israel eroded much later than official support. These gaps expose the limits of the purely pragmatic as an explanatory lens, and can only be addressed through the analysis of ideas and images.

These images could be quite colorful, and for some of its key architects, the French-Israeli relationship had an air of the romantic. In its heyday, discretion, affection, and mutual satisfaction set the tone. As French Ambassador Pierre-Eugene Gilbert put it to the Israeli daily *Zmanim* in 1954, "There is no need for any treaty [between France and Israel], just as in loving a woman there is no need for a marriage contract."[68] Though the French-Israeli relationship would never be consummated as an alliance, its bases were deep and personal; it would take time to fully dissipate. Accordingly, when Gilbert left his post five years later, he reassured his Israeli friends that the personal bonds that held France and Israel together remained strong: "Every time you see an item in the papers about difficulties with French-Israeli relation[s]," he comforted, "remember me and stop worrying . . . ."[69] They did: today, Pierre Gilbert Street can still be found in the Israeli city of Netanya, one block down from Rehov Tzarfat ("France Street").

To fully understand the relationship Gilbert did so much to build we must examine each of its facets: the personal and the political, the local and the international, the popular and the institutional. Only then can we reconstruct the history of a forgotten friendship that shaped France and the Middle East to lasting effect, a friendship that was

[68] U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 186, September 27, 1954, file 651.84a/9-2754, 1950-1954 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[69] U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 363, November 25, 1959, file 651.84a/11-2559, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

above all private, unofficial, contingent on the personalities and personnel involved: in every sense, *une affaire* "*personnelle*."

Chapter One

Between Two Camps: France, Jewishness, and the Question of Israel, 1944-1953

Introduction

In late January 1946 an overcrowded army staff car trundled down a dusty Lebanese road toward the town of Metula and the border with British Mandatory Palestine. The car belonged to a French general stationed in Beirut; he was not aboard, but his chauffer, a French sergeant, was at the wheel. The driver must have been dismayed to encounter a British security patrol as he reached the border. He was waved to a halt for a brief inspection. Aboard his car the patrol discovered contraband of the most troubling sort: Jews. Four women, two men, and two children. They were illegal immigrants trying to enter Mandatory Palestine in contravention of strict restrictions on Jewish immigration.[70] The single hand grenade found among the immigrants' possessions attested to their determination, and perhaps a readiness to participate in efforts to throw off British rule by violent means. The Jews were unloaded, arrested, and conducted to an internment camp.[71] The sergeant and his car were retained for questioning. The unfolding scene on that Levantine road could only have been one of frustration, embarrassment, and

[70] These restrictions were established by the British White Paper of 1939, which attempted to curb Arab unrest in Mandatory Palestine by severely limiting Jewish immigration. Entry permits for Jews were limited to 75,000 between 1939 and 1944, after which no further Jewish immigration would be permitted without the approval of Arab communal authorities. Jewish immigration was periodically halted during these years, even as the Holocaust unfolded in Europe. The White Paper policy remained in effect until 1948, though American pressure compelled Britain to allow the entry of 1,500 Jewish internees and immigrants each month from October 1946.

[71] Probably in British-controlled Cyprus. Over 53,000 Jews would be interned there prior to 1949. M. du Chaylard à Général d'Armée Beynet, Telegram 36, "Contrebande entre le Liban et la Palestine," January 24, 1946, 4 H 316, sub-series H, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, la Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France.

bitterness. Who were these unlucky immigrants, what was their ultimate fate, and what were they doing in the personal staff car of a French army general?

While existing documentation does not permit us to answer the first two of these questions, it does shed indirect light on the third. French press and government records reveal that this was not an isolated incident. Well before French-Israeli relations reached their apogee in the mid-1950s, well before a State of Israel even existed, French ministers, officers, and private individuals were taking extraordinary steps to help build a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine. Their greatest impact was in facilitating the movement of immigrants and arms to the *Yishuv* (the Palestinian Jewish community). By 1948, in the words of future French Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, French collaboration (or more frequently, acquiescence) in Zionist activities, had made France "the center of Zionist activity for all Europe."[72] The relationships, power structures, interests, and images upon which this collaboration was based laid the groundwork for and established the defining patterns of a diplomatic relationship whose foundations would still resonate three decades later. My aim here is to chart these foundations from their origins in the Second World War through the first six years of Israeli statehood, and examine how they set the stage for the deepening of French-Israeli amity in the mid-1950s.

I contend that the defining patterns and premises of the French-Israeli alliance date to the 1940s, and thus well predate the 1954-1962 Algerian conflict upon which much recent scholarship has fixated.[73] Though Zionism was not unknown to France prior

[72] Jacob Kaplan, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJY*) vol. 49 (1947-1948), Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1948, 322.

[73] See for example Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955-1957*, trans. Ruth Rossing (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); André Martin, "Military and Political Contradictions of the Suez Affair: A

to the Second World War, it held little salience in political circles or among French Jews. The war changed this decisively, stimulating both French support for and opposition to the Zionist project in the late 1940s. Outside the French Foreign Ministry's headquarters at the Quai d'Orsay, Zionism now enjoyed growing popular sympathy. The French experiences of occupation and resistance, horrific revelations of Jewish suffering, and a sense of shared struggle rooted in the working relationship between Free French and Zionist forces were together the fulcrum of this shift. What emerged was a new set of images, ideologies, and real or imagined relationships that redefined French attitudes toward Zionism.

Yet the majority of those who supported Zionist goals were not Zionists in the ideological sense, and questions of Jewish nationalism generated little interest.[74] To the extent that Zionism enjoyed French support, it was most often a question of principle or sentiment, expressed as sympathy for Europe's suffering Jews. This was the result of a critical semantic shift, one at times articulated by Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) and Zionists themselves, which increasingly linked the experience of the Holocaust with the future of Jewish statehood.[75] In this way, Zionists, Jewish DPs, and illegal immigrants came to be seen first and foremost through the dual prism of Jewishness and survival, with their destinies, aspirations, and pasts linked. The best Europe could do, this amalgamating formula posited, was give "the Jews" a state, and so redress and prevent a

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French Perspective," in Illan Selwyn Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); and the foundational Sylvia Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance: France and Israel from Suez to the Six Day War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). A more nuanced argument, which situates Algeria as the most important of a number of interests, has been put forward in Frédérique Schillo, *La politique française à l'égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012).

[74] I share this conclusion with Frédérique Schillo. Schillo, 91.

[75] The Jewish Agency, the Zionist government-in-waiting and operational branch of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), spent considerable energy articulating this claim, positing that only Jewish statehood could bring an end to Jewish minority suffering.

repetition of the evils of the Holocaust. Zionists *qua* Jewish survivors discursively became fellow victims who "had suffered enough," brothers in arms in the struggle against fascism, and an occupied people whose struggle for freedom evoked French memories of occupation and resistance. These images were not without a foundation in reality: many future Israelis were in fact survivors of the Holocaust, or those who had narrowly escaped it. By 1950, some 136,000 Jewish DPs, over half the total number (approximately 250,000), were living in Israel.[76] The resulting semantic link would prove enduring: over the next three decades, Israelis would often be seen first through the lenses of Jewishness and survival.

The Palestine question also served as a lens for thinking about France itself.[77] For some, helping Jews reach and build a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine became a way of articulating a postwar, anti-Vichyist French identity grounded in the tradition of French liberalism. In this light, ensuring the future of Europe's displaced Jews became a test case for French postwar ethics: having themselves experienced suffering at the hands of the Nazis, could France stand idle as Jews fought for national independence, and subsequently, survival? Many on the Left said "No." These included members of the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français, PCF), like deputy Florimond Bonte, and French Section of the Worker's International (Section française de l'internationale ouvrière, SFIO) leader Léon Blum, who demanded France take a moral stand for Zionism. Questions of Jewish suffering and the Jewish postwar future thus

[76] "Displaced Persons," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed May 16, 2016, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005462.

[77] I build here on Ronald Schechter's claim that the Jews of France were "good to think [about]," facilitating the formation and articulation of republican identity by serving as referential test-cases. Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 7.

became avenues by which a postwar *Résistancialist* identity could be performed, instead of being marginalized as a competing narrative of victimhood.[78] Pro-Jewishness, inscribed as pro-Zionism, accordingly became a cultural code signifying participation in local and international struggles against fascism, oppression, and occupation, one prism among many through which the postwar French population could posit a reinvigorated national identity.[79]

It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that France was gripped by a popular wave of sympathy for Jews or Zionism. Most were indifferent most of the time. Interest was rather episodic, characterized by brief but intense periods of discourse and visibility. However, this had the effect of solidifying rather than undermining images that amalgamated Jewish vulnerability with the Zionist quest for national security and independence. Amidst a scarcity of demystifying images about daily life in the *Yishuv*, dramatic incidents such as the 1947 *Exodus* affair and the 1948-49 Israeli War of Independence took on disproportionate weight in the French social imagination. The result would be a lasting image of an Israeli Jewishness that was at once strong and vulnerable, one that would be continuously evoked throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

But not all images were sympathetic: the years of the Second World War also created powerful new sources of opposition to the Zionist project, most notably within Catholic and diplomatic circles. At a moment when France was recovering from foreign occupation and facing unrest in French Indochina, the Mediterranean became a stage on

[78] On *Résistancialisme,* the French myth of widespread wartime resistance, see Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[79] On cultural codes as they pertain to Israel and Zionism, see Shulamit Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," in *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 25:1, 2006: 51-62.

which France could reassert its self-image as a great power. The French diplomatic establishment accordingly set about rebuilding French hegemony in the Mediterranean — and rebuilding was needed. France's League of Nations mandates in Syria and Lebanon had been agitating for independence since the mid-1930s, and Arab nationalists had capitalized on France's postwar weakness to press their claims. Britain, which sought to dominate the region itself, encouraged these nationalists, and in so doing earned the lasting emnity of many French observers. By 1946, under intense Anglo-American pressure, France had been ousted from Syria and Lebanon. But the French Foreign Ministry was determined to rebuild its position in the region, and it consequently adopted a Syria-centric regional policy. Facing restive populations in French North Africa, the Foreign Ministry was also loath to take any action that might antagonize the Arab world. Arabist diplomats like Louis Massignon, René Neuville, and Vincent Monteil accordingly lobbied against Zionist goals, which they viewed as prejudicial to French interests. Their concerns would raise considerable obstacles to the development of French-Israeli ties, and form the backbone of an enduring French diplomatic vision of Israel and the wider Near East.

Coupled to this diplomatic coolness was a wariness about Jewish sovereignty, often expressed in a religious idiom by the Catholic press and the same set of Arabist diplomats. In their view, Jews could not be trusted to protect Christian holy sites or populations, and might even actively assault them. At times, these claims dipped into antisemitic rhetoric to make their case, once more directly linking Zionist efforts to an indelible Jewishness. This has not gone unnoticed in recent scholarship, and Tsilla Hershco has argued that the Quai's attitude toward Jewish statehood was often inflected

with "anti-Jewish prejudices."[80] In this she is correct. But chalking French diplomacy up to institutionalized antisemitism, as is sometimes assumed, would be an oversimplification. Antisemitism, as Hershco readily acknowledges, was rather only one element shaping French diplomacy toward Zionism, more important for some than others. By contrast, religious anxieties would have a more lasting impact on French perceptions of Israel, and stimulate the Quai's commitment to the internationalization of Jerusalem.

Postwar French attitudes toward Zionism were accordingly split between competing bases of understanding that failed to reconcile. Though not a strict binary, the fault line of this division broadly separated the professional cadres of the French Foreign Ministry from those of the Interior and Defense ministries. Whereas the former's views on Zionism were shaped largely by a traditionalist and religious assessment of French interest, the latter's outlook was characterized by a greater susceptibility to sentiment and a willingness to revise traditional assumptions. The tension between them was reflected and institutionalized at the policy level thanks to the multi-polar power structures of the new French Fourth Republic. A powerful National Assembly, weak coalition governments, and a division of foreign policy powers between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministry made for a dilution of executive power and the creation of personal fiefdoms within key ministries.[81] Consequently, individual ministries, and occasionally officials, were able to shape, implement, or undermine policy as they felt best. In this context, the personal interventions of Zionist lobbyists like Léon Blum and Maurice

[80] Tsilla Hershco, *Entre Paris et Jérusalem: La France, le sionisme et la création de l'état d'Israël, 1945-1949,* trans. Claire Darmon (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003),269-70.
[81] This was particularly prevalent in the ministries of Foreign Affairs, dominated by the Popular Republican Movement, and the Interior, monopolized by the SFIO. Schillo, 93, 101-6.

Fischer were to prove decisive, evoking sentiment and ideology to tip the balance at several key junctures.[82] The result was a non-policy of vacillating inconsistency and ministerial independence that created fertile ground for what Sylvia Crosbie has called the "unorthodox diplomacy" of the next decade.[83] Only in the early 1950s, with Israeli statehood and survival seemingly established, would French-Israeli relations assume a more coherent, formalized pattern under Foreign Ministry control. Even then, the patterns, images, and interests which had first shaped attitudes toward Zionism would continue to dictate developing relations. The French-Israeli alliance of the mid-1950s and its attendant images cannot be fully understood without framing them in light of their wartime antecedents, and it is to these that I now turn.

Prehistory of an Image: Imagining Israel Before Partition

While the Second World War would produce a critical shift in French attitudes toward Zionism, prior to the 1940s French interest in the Palestine question had been minimal.[84] Palestine had been declared a British mandate by the League of Nations in 1922, and the only major interests France had in the territory were the protection of the religious, cultural, and educational institutions and minorities it sponsored.[85] Although French Foreign Minister Jules Cambon had expressed sympathy for Zionist aspirations as early as 1917, his words were never implemented as policy, and France was content to

[82] Hershco, 265.
[83] Crosbie, 4. Hershco has similarly characterized French policy toward the Palestine Question as "tainted by indecision and incoherence." Schillo, by contrast, argues that "indifference" set the tone. While this may have been true of the French Foreign Ministry, upon whose sources Schillo heavily relies, Schillo's characterization cannot be uniformly applied outside it where, as we shall see, practical and sentimental considerations provoked significant interest in the question of Israel. Hershco, 45; Schillo, 91.
[84] On French interwar attitudes toward Zionism see Michael Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present and Future* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 2004) and Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).
[85] Dominique Trimbur, "Les acteurs de la politique palestinienne de la France (1901-1948)," in Abitbol, 84-85.

leave the matter in British hands.[86] So was much of the Zionist leadership; Chaim Weizmann, the President of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), was doggedly pursuing a pro-British policy in the hope of an eventual settlement. Within the Quai d'Orsay, meanwhile, Zionism aroused little sympathy or understanding. At best, it appeared to run contrary to the assimilationist ethos of the French Third Republic through its international call to Jewish nationalism.[87] At worst, it seemed to catalyze a restive Arab nationalism, one already causing trouble for France in Syria and North Africa: revolts had broken out in Mandatory Syria in 1925, and by the mid-1930s Syrian nationalists were pushing for independence. Additionally, few diplomats liked the prospect of handing Palestine's holy sites over to Jewish "fanatics," surrendering France's longstanding self-image as the guarantor of Levantine Christianity.[88] An entrenched institutional orientalism and some anti-Jewish prejudice completed the picture, leaving the Quai roundly unsympathetic to the Zionist cause.[89]

There were, however, some prominent Zionists within the French political world. These included state ministers Anatole de Monzie, Jules Cambon, and Marius Moutet; prime ministers Louis Barthou, Paul Painlevé, and Édouard Herriot; and Jerusalem Consul General Gaston Maugras.[90] In 1926 most of these joined Joseph Paul-Boncour, President Gaston Doumergue, and two other former prime ministers to found the Association France-Palestine, a French political alliance supporting Jewish statehood.[91]

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[86] Michael Abitbol, "Introduction," in Abitbol, xii.
[87] Michael Abitbol, "France et le sionisme: Aspects historiques, culturels et idéologiques," in Abitbol, 156-57.
[88] Trimbur, 83-84.
[89] Abitbol, "La France et le sionisme," 161-63.
[90] Ibid., 156-57; Trimbur, 89-91.
[91] These were Astride Briand and Raymond Poincaré, together with former minister Justin Godart, physicist Paul Langevin, and composer Maurice Ravel. The Association would become the Association

The most famous French interwar Zionists, however, were the Jewish banking magnate Baron Edmond de Rothschild and the three-time prime minister Léon Blum. Rothschild had been a key financial supporter of Zionist agricultural settlements since the 1920s, and worked on the international scene to promote the Zionist cause. But it was Blum who was most archetypical of these early Zionists.

Like most French Jews of his day, Blum found that Zionist exhortations to Jewish nationalism did not resonate. An *israélite*, socialist, and member of the political elite, Blum was deeply committed to France and its non-confessional civic identity. Nonetheless, by the 1920s he had become a Zionist. His public speeches reveal how Zionism could become a vehicle for the expression of an explicitly French political and ideological identity. "I am a Zionist," he told the Sixteenth Zionist Congress in 1929, "because I am French, Jewish, and Socialist, because modern Jewish Palestine represents a unique and unprecedented encounter between humanity's oldest traditions and its boldest and most recent search for social liberty."[92] For Blum, embracing that search meant embracing Zionist Socialism and its promise of Jewish national emancipation. His words echoed ones he had delivered in 1922, when he promised the Zionist movement that French Socialism "will do everything in [its] power to help you, because Zionism, a product of class suffering, is compatible with international socialism . . . . It is socialist because it is just, humane, and of the people."[93] To support Zionism was, for Blum, a nearly obligatory act in keeping with the best traditions of French Socialism. To Blum,

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France-Israël in 1948, and play a prominent role in fostering French-Israeli relations in the 1950s and 1960s.

[92] Pierre Birnbaum, *Léon Blum: Prime Minister, Socialist, Zionist,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 147-49.

[93] *Ibid.*

the two appeared not only compatible, but joint fronts in a larger struggle for social justice.

The efforts of Blum and his fellow Zionists, however, were largely isolated, and had little appreciable effect on interwar policy. Lacking mainstream popular support or organization, interwar French Zionism was the purview of left-wing elites and ideological fringe movements. It would take national catastrophe and Vichy's authoritarian challenge to the republican ethos to produce a wider reassessment of the Jewish national enterprise.

The Second World War gave France cause to take a second look at the Zionist movement, and from this reevaluation came a working relationship with lasting practical and sentimental effects. It began with General Charles de Gaulle who, as the leader of Free France, had come to the Levant in fall 1940 to rally the region. Jewish Palestinians offered Free France a considerable amount of sympathy, and expressed a readiness to put their infrastructure, propaganda, and even soldiery at de Gaulle's disposal as he prepared to invade Syria in summer 1941.[94] That good relations with Zionism might endear him to powerful Jewish American lobbies was not lost on de Gaulle, who was in no position to scorn Jewish help. But de Gaulle was shrewd. Listening to the advice General Georges Catroux, his Arab specialist and High Commissioner for the Levant, de Gaulle kept Free France's formal relationship with Zionism limited and practical. Aiding the militarization of the Jews, Catroux warned, would provoke Arab resentment and jeopardize the Free French position throughout the Near East. Thus, when the Haganah, the pre-state Jewish

[94] Henri Lerner, "Avec de Gaulle en Palestine," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 39, No. 4 (1992), 608-9.

armed forces, offered to put a division at Free France's disposal, Catroux killed the notion.[95]

Nonetheless, de Gaulle readily accepted Zionist aid in other areas. The Haganah provided intelligence on Vichy Syria, helped establish an independent Free French radio post in Haifa, and paved the way for the invasion of Syria with military incursions and acts of sabotage.[96] Indeed, it was during one such raid that Moshe Dayan, the future Israeli Minister of Defense, famously lost an eye. When Free French troops finally massed to invade Syria in June 1941, it would be in trucks provided by the Haganah. Once Syria was in hand, however, de Gaulle's interest in Zionism rapidly dissipated; his relationship with Zionism had been an alliance of convenience, and a precedent for his later presidency.

Though de Gaulle was careful to keep his distance, his officers and men were less so, and lasting impressions emerged from the wartime cooperation of Free French and Jewish forces. Many French troops perceived Palestinian Jewry as partners in a shared struggle against Nazism. The activities of Jewish resistance groups, such as the Zionist Jewish Army (Armée juive), which fought with the French Resistance and sent young Jews to fight for Free France and the Haganah, further fed this perception.[97] This brotherhood in arms, limited though it was, earned Israel one of its staunchest supporters: General Marie-Pierre Kœnig. In early summer 1942, Kœnig was charged with a desperate stalling action against advancing German forces near the Libyan oasis of Bir-Hakeim.

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[95] Lerner, 607-9. Georges Catroux is not to be confused with his nephew Diomède Catroux, who in the 1950s and '60s became an ardent proponent of French-Israeli friendship.

[96] Lerner, 611-17.

[97] With Liberation the group would be reorganized as the Organization juive de combat, and become part of the French Forces of the Interior. Jacob Kaplan, "French Jewry Under the Occupation," *AJY* vol. 47 (1945-1946), Philadelphia: JPS, 1946, 100-101; on the activities of the Jewish Army, see also Renée Poznanski, *Jews in France during World War II* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2001), 452-57.

Unknown to Kœnig at the time, a Jewish brigade of 400 men held the French flank at Bir-el-Harmat, and sustained 75 percent casualties in doing so. Kœnig's recollection of his subsequent encounter with these troops, which he often repeated throughout the 1950s and '60s, testified to the lasting impression they made:

> The whole 8th Army Corps was in retreat, bruised, beaten, [and] tired. And suddenly we perceived a column [coming up] on us; it was fresh, endowed with a magnificent *esprit de corps*, excellent morale — you couldn't believe it had been in combat like all the others. It was a column of Palestinian Jews . . . . I stopped my soldiers and said: "Now look at those men."[98]

The Jewish troops were in the process of lowering their standard, the Jewish national flag, in keeping with British army regulations. Kœnig stopped them at once, and had his men give the Zionist flag a full military salute. "This is what gave me such a deep impression of the Israelis' qualities," Kœnig would later recall, indicating as he did how wartime encounters lastingly shaped images of the future Jewish state.[99] Groups of French veterans and former Resistance fighters demonstrated similar tendencies. In the decades to come, the Action Committee of the French Resistance (Comité d'action de la Resistance française) and the International Union of the Resistance and the Deportation (Union internationale de la Resistance et de la Deportation) would join Kœnig in championing French-Israeli friendship by evoking "our comrades of the Israeli Resistance."[100] That such evocations continued to appear even as French-Israeli relations broke down in the 1970s attests to the enduring power of these wartime encounters.

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[98] Quoted in Pierre Péan, *Les Deux Bombes* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), 34-35.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] "Si tous les Resistants du monde voulaient se donner la main. . . ," March, 1968, MDI 101, archives du CRIF, Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France), Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris.

Zionists were also seen as potential allies should France attempt to rebuild its Levantine influence after the war.[101] France was compelled to accept Lebanese independence in mid-1943 under local and British pressure, and many French officers were bitter over Britain's role in maneuvering France out of its Levantine mandate. That the *Yishuv* was on bad terms with the British thus only endeared it further. A chance encounter encapsulated this feeling and the mutual admiration it produced. In 1945, a French officer stopped on his way to admire a Zionist kibbutz but, mistaken in his battledress for a British soldier, he was received very coldly. Clarifying that he was not British, but French, "the attitude changed instantly." He was fêted by the village's Jewish leader, who spoke of "his lively admiration for the France of General de Gaulle," and the two parted on excellent terms.[102] The episode contrasted sharply with the reception French troops were receiving among Palestinian Arabs, whose purported "craze" for Hitler had not gone unnoticed, and who had chanted "down with France" at public events.[103] Many of these Arabs were upset over French policy in Syria, where troops had been used to quell nationalist protests in 1945. Episodes like these left lasting impressions, and laid the groundwork for close future relations between the French and Israeli defense establishments.

Additional groundwork was being laid in France itself. With Liberation, Paris quickly became the center of Zionist activity in continental Europe, which expanded

[101] So it seemed to François Coulet, de Gaulle's aide from 1941-1942. Lerner, 609.
[102] De Sauzier à Cdt. Supérieur des Troupes du Levant, telegram 8930/LFJ, "Situation politique en Palestine," May 13, 1945, GR 4 H 385, sub-series H, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[103] De Sauzier à Cdt. Supérieur des Troupes du Levant, Telegram 8498/LFJ, "Situation politique en Palestine," March 3, 1945, GR 4 H 385, sub-series H, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Robert Louisgrand à Jerusalem, Telegram 25/LJ, January 15, 1946, GR 4 H 385, sub-series H, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD. On the attitudes of Palestinian Arabs toward Nazism see Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

rapidly from 1946 to 1948.[104] David Ben-Gurion, Israel's future prime minister, drove this process. Ben-Gurion recognized early that France presented an environment in which his Jewish Agency (JA), the executive branch of the WZO, could operate with relative openness outside British scrutiny. Capitalizing on French bitterness toward Britain, as well as wartime clandestine networks and burgeoning popular sympathy, Ben-Gurion set about "winning France to Zionism."[105] Former resistance fighters with ties to the Underground, like Jewish Army leader Abraham Polonski, now became Haganah commanders, putting their networks at the disposal of the JA. Turning to France also let Ben-Gurion undercut the efforts of the anglophilic Chaim Weizmann, with whom he was vying for leadership of the Zionist movement.

By May 1945, Ben-Gurion had established Paris as his European headquarters. Zionist groups including Poale-Zion, the Histadruth, Hashomer Hatzair, Hehalutz, the General Zionists, Youth Aliyah, and the Mizrachi party soon followed suit.[106] Ben-Gurion, JA political secretary Léo Cohen, and French Zionists Marc Jarblum and André Blumel now set about establishing diplomatic contacts with French political leaders. To Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, a Christian Democrat of the Popular Republican Movement (Mouvement républicain populaire, MRP), these emissaries stressed pragmatism, emphasizing the role Zionism could play in helping France maintain its interests in Christian Lebanon.[107] With others, like Socialist Interior Minister Édouard

[104] On Zionist activity and organization within occupied France during the Second World War, see Poznanski, 154-59.
[105] Hershco, 56-66.
[106] Kaplan, "Western Europe: France," (1948), 323-24.
[107] Bidault briefly served as Prime Minister from October 14, 1946 to November 28, 1946, and again from October 28, 1949 to July 2, 1950.

Depreux, sentimental arguments carried the day.[108] Meanwhile, a network of Zionist agents went to work organizing propaganda, clandestine immigration, and the procurement of arms.

Their greatest success was in *Aliyah Bet*, the JA's program of clandestine Jewish immigration to Palestine. Led by Shaul Avigur and headquartered in Paris from spring 1946, the operatives of *Aliyah Bet* recruited from transit camps, forged papers, acquired arms, and dispatched blockade-runners from Marseille and other French ports toward the Palestinian coast. Often, they did so with the tacit cooperation of French intelligence and internal police services.[109] In all, from March 1946 to June 1948, some fifteen vessels set sail from France in the service of *Aliyah Bet*, with over 25,000 Jewish refugees aboard.[110] In pursuing these activities, the agents of the JA and their French partners were creating an infrastructure and a pattern of clandestine aid to the Jewish state that privileged individual agency, personal initiative, and channels outside the avenues of formal diplomacy.

As this was taking place, the officers of the Quai d'Orsay were striving to formulate a Near East policy that took stock of new diplomatic concerns that had arisen from the Second World War. These included preventing communist penetration into the Near East, addressing their dependence on US financial aid, and a commitment to retaining a privileged relationship with newly-independent Syria and Lebanon. Most of all, France was regionally concerned to check the rising pitch of anti-French agitation emerging in the Arab world.[111] The British-backed Arab League, created in 1945, was

[108] Schillo, 44-54; Hershco, 64-65.
[109] *Ibid.*, 68-70.
[110] *Ibid.*; Schillo, 42.
[111] Hershco, 11.

edging toward pan-Arabism, and was beginning to champion the cause of North African independence from France. Quai diplomats worried that any gesture of support toward Zionism would further inflame anti-French Arab nationalisms. Experts like Arabist professors Louis Massignon and Robert Montagne accordingly argued against a pro-Zionist policy at the Quai and in the French press.[112] This view was encouraged by Arab diplomats, including representatives of the Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, who promised neutrality over North Africa in exchange for French support on the question of Palestine.[113] Limiting anti-French agitation would remain a dominant concern within the Quai d'Orsay throughout the remainder of the 1940s, and color much of its thinking in the subsequent two decades.

This concern was reflected in the work of the Committee for the Study of Jewish Questions (Comité d'études des questions juives), which was created in April 1945 to study the Palestine question in connection with other Jewish issues. The Paris-based committee, headed by former ambassador to Syria and Lebanon Henri Ponsot, was ultimately beholden to traditionalist views of French Near Eastern diplomacy.[114] Evoking France's vocation as a self-defined "Muslim empire," the committee determined that a Jewish national home would neither solve the Jewish problem nor serve French interests. Indeed, the committee warned, an independent Jewish state might even have aims on Lebanon, and it echoed the argument of *israélite* consistorial leader Léon Meiss, who insisted that Jewish support for a national home was limited. Emotive arguments linking Zionist aims to Jewish suffering, meanwhile, fell on deaf ears; most of the Quai's officers

[112] *Ibid.*, 38; Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion Française, Israël et the conflit israélo-arabe: 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 49-50.
[113] Hershco, 52.
[114] *Ibid.*, 23-27, 32.

were unsympathetic, and renounced any responsibility for the Holocaust or the actions of the Vichy government.[115]

But debate over the Jewish question continued within French diplomatic circles. Dissonant voices appeared most frequently among French diplomats serving in the Levant. These officers expressed greater readiness to reexamine the truisms of French diplomacy to better promote French interests in a rapidly changing Near East.[116] The Quai also had little ability to check the cooperation being afforded to Zionist activities by Édouard Depreux's Socialist-dominated Interior Ministry. The result was a vacillating policy of limited enforceability that sought to stifle pan-Arabism in North Africa by acceding to pan-Arab positions on Palestine. The lack of a unified policy on Palestine allowed clandestine networks to continue their efforts to build a Jewish state, even as sentimental images of Jewishness became powerfully embedded within popular perceptions of Zionism.

These perceptions were grounded in the French experience of occupation and resistance, which became lenses for understanding Zionism and its goals at the popular level. The result was a set of ideas symbolically linking Jewish suffering with aspirations to Jewish statehood. In some instances, the Vichy state's wartime practices appear to have reinforced the semantic link between Jewish suffering and Zionist theses of Jewish nationhood. In early 1942, for example, Vichy organized foreign worker units comprised solely of Jews who had immigrated to France since 1936 — and termed these workers "Palestinians."[117] Additionally, though after the war few French people readily attested to

[115] *Ibid.*, 23-26, 34-38.
[116] *Ibid.*, 44-45.
[117] Poznanski, 176-77. On the broad experience of French Jewry during the second world war, see Poznanski (2001).

the extent of French collaboration with the Nazis, key politicians felt that France had contracted an outstanding moral debt to Europe's surviving Jews.[118] Interior Minister Édouard Depreux framed his support for Zionism in this light, contending that the war had produced "an immense debt *vis-a-vis* the victims of Nazi barbarism [i.e. the Jews]."[119] For Depreux and those who shared this feeling, including his successor Jules Moch, providing arms, immigrants, and diplomatic recognition to the nascent Jewish state was a step toward rectifying the balance sheet. Documents within the ministries of Defense and the Interior reflected this sentiment, and at times tellingly discussed French relations with Palestinian Jewry by reference to the victims of the Holocaust.[120]

Zionist groups, meanwhile, were not above exploiting this sentiment. Radio broadcasts by the Revisionist Zionist Irgun evoked the bitter memory of collaboration by warning that the "ghetto" the British were creating in Palestine would have "a puppet government [led] by a Pétain or a Laval."[121] Philippe Pétain and Pierre Laval had been the leaders of the Vichy collaborationist government, and for many in France they had become symbols of shame and culpability.[122] Frédérique Schillo argues that such propaganda did much to mobilize French sentiments. This may be so. But, propagandized or not, the reality was that many French citizens found the memory of the Vichy period meaningful, and responded in concrete ways. The Vichy period had been one of transgression from the traditions of French liberalism; for some, supporting Zionism

[118] On the silence surrounding Vichy and the memory of French collaboration, see Rousso (1991).
[119] Schillo, 51.
[120] "Méditerranée et Proche-Orient: Problems actuels," EMA/12, September, 1948, GR 10 T 227, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Hershco, 59.
[121] Schillo, 68.
[122] Both men were condemned to death by the reconstituted French government in 1945. Laval was executed in October of that year, while Pétain's sentence was deferred due to his advanced age. He died in a prison hospital in 1951.

accordingly became a way of breaking with the Vichy past, and an implicit act of atonement.

Additionally, growing French sympathy for Zionism cannot be attributed to guilt alone. Key architects of the future French-Israeli alliance were instead motivated by personal encounters with wartime suffering. Future Foreign Minister Christian Pineau had been interned in Buchenwald where, he recalled, after witnessing the "terrible suffering inflicted upon the Jews, I swore to do everything I could do help them."[123] Future Air Secretary Diomède Catroux, who would do much to build the Israeli air force, had a similar experience: his attitudes toward the Jewish state were profoundly marked by the memory of sheltering a dozen Jewish children during the Nazi occupation.[124] It was not guilt that brought these men to Zionism, but principle. Their wartime experiences had created lasting images of Jewish vulnerability.[125] When presented with opportunities to strengthen the Jewish state ten years later, Pineau, Catroux, and those like them would act to ensure that the Jews, *qua* Israelis, would never be so vulnerable again.

For others, the experience of armed struggle against Nazism had greater bearing on the formation of attitudes toward Zionism. Gaullists and former Free French soldiers were broadly sympathetic toward Zionist goals, and internal documents favorably recalled the extent of Jewish support for Allied war efforts both in and outside of

[123] David Lazar, *L'opinion française et la naissance de l'état d'Israël, 1945-1949* (Paris: Calmann-levy, 1972), 125.
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] It is worth noting, however, that the Vichy period was not one of unmitigated French sympathy for Jews. Polls taken by both the Vichy government and the Free French intelligence services in 1943 reported widespread antisemitism in occupied France, particularly in rural areas. Antisemitism could also be found within the organizations of the French Resistance, where Jews often opted to serve within homogenously Jewish units. Even among those who were "repulsed" by the persecution of the Jews, some continued to express a desire that immigrant Jews would subsequently emigrate — perhaps stimulating a curious kind of antisemitic sympathy for Zionist emigrationism. Wartime philosemitism, meanwhile, was most often self-reported as being "in reaction" against Germany or the Vichy regime. Poznanski, 380-82.

Palestine.[126] One of the most enduring currents of pro-Zionist sympathy within France, however, came from the ranks of former Resistance fighters.

Jews had been active participants in the French Resistance, either operating within homogenously Jewish cells, or as part of heterogeneous French units. Though only a small proportion of French Jews fought as Resistance fighters, their activities left a lasting impression.[127] Jewish communists were particularly active, demonstrating that Jews shared in France's struggle for liberation under the slogan "Every Jew, a résistant," even as they mobilized the legitimating mantle of the Resistance to pursue political goals.[128] For these Jewish communists, participation in the Resistance was a way of laying claim to their rights as Jews and Frenchmen in the postwar world to come; a communist tract in March 1944 accordingly evoked a powerful brotherhood in arms when it wrote that "The blood of Jewish fighters has been abundantly shed on French soil, and every day is mixed with generous blood of the finest sons of the French people."[129] Notwithstanding their larger goals, such words and deeds helped create a lasting sympathy for Jewish political aspirations within some currents of the French Resistance.

It would not take long before this sympathy was extended to the Zionist project. In February 1944, mounting violence in Mandatory Palestine had escalated between British forces and the Jewish paramilitaries of the Irgun and the extremist Lehi. Watching it unfold, many ex-Resistance fighters saw an echo of their own recent struggle in Zionist efforts to throw off British rule. Resistance-affiliated press outlets, like the leftist

[126] Lerner, 620-21; "Méditerranée et Proche-Orient: Problems actuels," EMA/12, September, 1948, GR 10 T 227, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[127] On Jewish participation in the French Resistance, see especially Poznanski, 347-55, and 449-57.
[128] *Ibid.,* 347, 354.
[129] The tract was published by the Union of Jews for Resistance and Mutual Aid. Poznanski, 449.

Combat, gave voice to these perceptions, and discursively legitimated the Irgun by characterizing it with vocabulary connotative of the already-mythologized French Resistance. By 1946, Irgunists were accordingly being presented as "partisans" struggling against "brutal" British repression. This is particularly striking given the enmity that existed between the right-wing Irgun and the polical Left within the *Yishuv*, and indicates that French understanding of internal *Yishuv* politics was limited at best. Yet even the Catholic daily *La croix* hailed the "Jewish maquis of the Irgun," suggesting that the Irgun's seeming similarities with the French Resistance had the power, at least momentarily, to overcome Catholic anxieties about the Zionist project.[130] French Jewish journals put things in similar terms, as did *Le monde juif,* which praised the French press for the sympathy it had shown "to the Palestinian [Jewish] resistance, in whom it recognizes the spiritual brothers of the French Resistance of yesterday."[131] Former Resistance fighters like future Interior and Defense Minister Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury and his aides would preside over the growth of the French-Israeli alliance, and evoke this spiritual brotherhood as they did.

This brotherhood was not only spiritual, however: several prominent members of the French Resistance had subsequently joined the Zionist struggle, becoming living links between the two movements. One such individual was Betty Knout (aka Gilberte Lazarus). Knout's mother, Ariadna Sarah Scriabina, had been a founder of the paramilitary Jewish Army, while Knout herself had received a Croix de Guerre for her bravery in the Resistance. In 1947, Knout was arrested in Belgium as a member of the militant Revisionist Zionist fringe group Lehi, accused of planting a bomb aboard a

[130] Schillo, 89; Coulon, 35-36.
[131] Schillo, 89.

British ship. The arrest, and the question of her extradition to face British prosecution, provoked a brief but telling media storm that saw the legitimacy of the Resistance extended to cover Knout and other Jewish insurrectionists. The SFIO's mouthpiece, *La populaire*, called upon the legacy of the Resistance to defend Knout's actions: "It would be inadmissible," it wrote, "and France won't allow Betty Knout, heroine of the Resistance, to be administratively handed over to the executioners of [Irgun member] Dov Gruner."[132] The British, by contrast, were being characterized as a "regime of terror [running] rampant in Palestine" by the recently-formed Council of French Jewish Institutions (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de france, CRIF), the umbrella organization of French Jewry.[133] A moral binary was beginning to take shape, one that identified the Zionist revolt against Britain with the struggle of the French Resistance against Nazism.

Similar patterns emerged in public debate over the fate of Robert Misrahi in February 1948.Though later known as a philosopher, Misrahi was at the time a young man, a former student of Jean-Paul Sartre, and a Lehi bomber. Misrahi's arrest and incarceration for terrorism led Sartre, his former mentor, to speak out in terms that endowed the Zionist insurrection with the political and moral authority of the French Resistance. At Misrahi's trial Sartre hailed him as a "veritable defender of liberty" whose motivations stemmed "from the same pure convictions that we ourselves, Free French, prevailed upon in combating the Nazi occupier." Helping "the Jews and the Palestinian [Zionist] cause" was, he subsequently declared, a moral duty of the publicly engaged

[132] Dov Gruner was an Irgun operative executed in April 1947 by British authorities. His execution sparked significant public protests by the French Jewish community with the support of the SFIO. Lazar, 54-57.
[133] The CRIF was formed in 1944. "Le meeting de protestation de la Salle Wagram," 1947, MDI 53, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

intellectual.[134] In doing so Sartre joined a mounting chorus of voices on the non-communist Left that extended the wartime moral binary of occupied/occupier to the Palestinian Mandate. Knout and Misrahi became symbols of this binary, and the public outcries aroused by their arrests reverberated far beyond their individual actions as fighters for Jewish independence.

Attitudes toward Zionism were changing within the French Jewish community as well, though at a slower pace. Here too the war had played a crucial role, stimulating a reevaluation, and in the analysis of French Chief Rabbi Isaïe Schwartz, dispelling the lingering reservations of many French Jews.[135] One Alsatian Jewish schoolteacher put this shift in simple terms: "My father was a Communist and an anti-Zionist, but during the [Second World War] I told myself that this was insane. People should have a country . . . where they can find refuge when they need to escape from anti-Semitism."[136] French Jews were not becoming Jewish nationalists, but they were increasingly seeing the

[134] Jonathan Judaken argues that Sartre's wartime experiences led him to conceive Jews symbolically as exemplary figures of suffering and negativity. This conceptualization, Judaken contends, was key to Sartre's formulation of his framework of *engagement,* the public duty of the intellectual to expose and resist oppression in an existentialist mode. If, as Judaken contends, Sartre's position as a Resistance writer was the ultimate symbol of that *engagement*, then his partial extension of that legitimacy to Misrahi and the Irgun works to situate the Zionist cause within a powerful position of moral authority. Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 149-50, 183, 188, 197-98. By contrast, Richard Viven and Michel Winock have argued that the monopoly held by former Resistance members over postwar public discourse stifled public discussion of a specifically Jewish wartime experience, subsuming it under a hegemonic narrative of French suffering and resistance. Though their arguments are in many respects correct, the discursive processes which linked Jewish resistance in Palestine to French resistance against Nazism cannot be ignored, particularly given the longstanding support ex-Resistance organizations would demonstrate toward Israel over the subsequent two and a half decades. This conclusion adds another layer of nuance to Viven and Winock's interpretations, indicating that, at times, Jewish specificity was co-opted into French postwar narratives, and not simply blurred out. Richard C. Viven, "The End of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," in *The Historical Journal* 37:2 (June, 1944), 368-71; Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs: De 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 272-75.

[135] Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 150.

[136] Robert I. Weiner and Richard E. Sharpless, *An Uncertain Future: Voices of a French Jewish Community, 1940-2012* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2012), 110.

rationale in a Jewish state. But even as Jewish popular sentiment was warming to Zionism, the Jewish institutional scene remained fragmented. This was due in no small part to a traumatic wartime experience that had devastated the French-Jewish leadership and posed difficult questions about public Jewish identity in France.[137]

The CRIF encapsulated this fragmentation. Under the presidency of Léon Meiss, the CRIF began in 1944 as a fragile federation. Zionism threatened to prove a divisive issue, particularly for the Universal Israélite Alliance (Alliance israélite universelle, AIU), one of its largest constituent members, and thus had to be handled carefully. René Cassin, the AIU's president, was concerned that the CRIF's founding charter, which had embraced all major Zionist theses, opened the organization to the charge that it served ethnic, or even foreign interests over those of an *israélite* French Jewry.[138] Cassin had pressed Meiss on the issue repeatedly prior to joining the CRIF in July 1945, and his concerns were shared by AIU leader Maurice Leven and CRIF co-founder Adam Rayski. Their non-Zionism signified an enduring commitment to the assimilating ethos of republican France, and they used the question of Zionism as a vehicle to affirm their personal and collective loyalty to the French state. But by 1947, as the scope of the Holocaust became clear, the AIU emended its position.[139] The CRIF haltingly followed suit. Meiss exemplified its attitude: though revelations over the extent of the Holocaust

[137] On the French-Jewish community in the immediate postwar years, see Maud Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), Ariel Danan, *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF: De la Résistance juive à la tentation du lobby* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011), and Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, eds., *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

[138] Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, "Centralizing the Political Jewish Voice in Post-Holocaust France: Direction and Development," in Hand and Katz, 64-65; Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflitIsraëlo-palestinien* (Paris; Ellipses, 2012), 70; Ethan Katz, 160-61.

[139] On the AIU, see especially Catherine Nicault, "L'Alliance au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale: Ruptures et continuités idéologiques," *Archives Juives* 34:1, 2001: 23-53.

and visits to the *Yishuv* had swayed him to Zionism, as CRIF president he felt he had to maintain a compromise position. Accordingly, when Meiss decided to speak at a demonstration in solidarity with the *Yishuv* in December 1945, he did so in his capacity as president of the Jewish Consistory, and not as the president of the CRIF.[140] It would not be until 1967 and the drama of the Six-Day War that the CRIF would definitively settle its position on Israel and Zionism.

Those looking to express their Zionism politically did have one enduring outlet, however: the French League for Free Palestine (Ligue française pour la Palestine libre). Founded in late 1946, the League joined the 1947 Parliamentary Group for Free Palestine (Groupe parlementaire pour la Palestine libre) in advocating for Jewish independence in Palestine. Though the League retained close ties with Menachem Begin's Revisionist Irgun, its membership was strikingly multi-partisan, drawing leaders from across the French political spectrum. These included Radicals Edgar Faure and Pierre Mendes-France; SFIO minister André Phillip; Christian Democrats Alfred Coste-Floret and Maurice Schumann; and Gaullist René Capitant. The League drew support from an equally diverse range of French intellectuals including Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Raymond Aron, Vladimir Jankélévitch, and Emmanuel Mounier.[141] That it did indicates that Zionism was seen as a humanitarian, rather than political issue behind which adherents representing diverse political viewpoints could come together.[142]

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[140] "Proces Verbal de la Séance du 19 Décembre 1945," MDI 2, December, 1945, archives du CRIF, CDJC; Ghiles-Meilhac, "Centralizing," 65.

[141] Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 1, 1917-1958* (Paris, Institute des Études Palestiniennes, 1992), 95.

[142] Though not included here, Communists like Florimond Bonte and Madelein Braun were also among the early supporters of Zionism. The League would later shed its multi-partisan character, becoming increasingly allied to the partisans of French Algeria, as the Committee for the French-Israeli Alliance (Comité pour l'alliance France-Israël). Popular French support for Israel would not take on political overtones until the late 1960s, however.

Thus, by the late 1940s French ideas about the Zionist project had undergone a significant evolution, largely as a result of the French wartime experience. Wartime perceptions of Jewish suffering, brotherhood in arms, and shared struggle were the catalyst of this evolution, and gave the Zionist project new connotations of urgency and legitimacy. These new ideas would go on full display in summer 1947 when the Jewish question and its humanitarian dimension quite literally washed up on French shores.

Exodus 1947: Zionists as Survivors and the First Policy Test

By summer 1947 *Aliyah Bet* was in full swing and benefiting from the active and passive cooperation of key French officials. Mid-tier officers like Roger Wybot, the director of the Interior Ministry's intelligence service (the Direction de la surveillance du territoire), played the most critical role. Motivated by moral considerations and bitterness at Britain's role in ousting France from the Levant, Wybot and his deputy Stanislas Mangin had instructed their men not to hinder *Aliyah Bet*, and even explained to Zionist operatives how best to avoid immigration controls.[143] Former Resistance members, now civil servants, remobilized their skills to help the Haganah organize a network of clandestine activities. This was especially true of Édouard Depreux's Interior Ministry and Jules Moch's Ministry of Transport and Public Works. With their help, Haganah and Irgun members received training in aerial and naval navigation, passed unremarked at border checkpoints, refueled arms-laden aircraft in Ajaccio, Corsica, and were allowed to recruit from among the Jews of French North Africa.[144] It was quotidian acts of complicity, like that of a French harbormaster who piloted a Haganah blockade runner to sea despite knowing its true destination, that made *Aliyah Bet* possible. Often, it was

[143] Schillo, 74, 187.
[144] Lazar, 147.

personal attachments that set the stage for such acts: the harbormaster had a Jewish daughter-in-law, and had seen family members deported during the war. He now felt compelled to act.[145] As Haganah commander Yigal Allon later recalled, "the whole world bent over backward to help us. We were surrounded with love and warmth."[146]

It was in this context that the *Aliyah Bet* vessel *Exodus 1947* set sail from the French port of Sète on July 11, 1947 with 4,515 Jewish immigrants aboard. The voyage was ill fated: on July 18 the *Exodus* was intercepted by British warships off the Palestinian coast.[147] Rather than intern the passengers on Cyprus in line with standing practice, British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin decided that they would be returned to France. This was a message that Britain's European neighbors would now be held accountable for allowing clandestine immigration to run through their countries. The passengers were transferred into a trio of prison ships and sailed into the French harbor of Port-de-Bouc, near Marseille, on July 29. France now faced a problem: what would it do now that the Jewish question had been deposited on its doorstep?

Whereas previously France had been able to leave Zionism an internal British matter, the *Exodus* affair forced it to become involved. As a case study it reveals the scope and content of French popular images of postwar Jewishness, and their ability to shape political action in the absence of a unified policy. As one of the earliest and most important moments of Jewish and Zionist visibility at the national level in the immediate

[145] *Ibid*., 97.
[146] Schillo, 187. Hershco notes that clandestine aid was not the product of a binary disagreement between the Interior and Foreign ministries; both, in fact, were internally fractured on the issue, and by summer '47 elements within the Interior Ministry were moving to curb the extent of Jewish clandestine activity. Hershco, 69.
[147] Schillo suggests the Zionist leadership may never have expected the *Exodus* to reach Palestine, and that the voyage was rather predominantly propagandistic. Most ships failed to break the British blockade. Schillo, 187.

postwar years, the affair also formed lasting impressions that colored attitudes toward the future Jewish state. Though the passengers of the *Exodus* were refugees and not universally Zionists as such, the fact that these refugees had been detained trying to enter Palestine was far from lost on French observers. As such, their plight became a symbolic link coupling the desperation of Jewish DPs with the state-building enterprises of the Zionist movement.

French popular responses to the affair were furious, immediate, and virtually unanimous. This was especially true of the French Left, which blasted British handling of the affair in the press and National Assembly as a humanitarian and moral outrage. Viewing the situation through the prism of the Second World War, these voices condemned Britain in the strongest possible terms, associating its actions with the still-fresh memory of Nazi brutality. The Communist daily *L'humanité* accordingly termed the boats "a floating Auschwitz," while the Resistance-affiliated *Franc-tireur* juxtaposed photos of Cypriot detention centers with images of Nazi concentration camps.[148] Recalling the Holocaust led many French journalists to now espouse Zionist theses about the necessity of Jewish statehood, and the refugees' Palestinian destination was consistently characterized as the Jewish "homeland."[149] Even more tellingly, the *Exodus* now came to symbolize wartime Jewish suffering for those who had not seen it themselves, linking the Jewish past with the Zionist present. As a French doctor inspecting the prisoners explained it, though "I didn't see the Nazi camps of death and

[148] "L'Exodus 47: Un Auschwitz flottant," *L'humanité,* July 31, 1947; Coulon, 37-39.
[149] Louis Barral, "Les passangers de 'l'Exodus' arrivés hier," *Combat*, July 30, 1947; Aimé Patri, "Il n'y a ni juifs ni baltes," *Combat,* August 1, 1947; Louis Barral, "Les emigrants de 'l'Exodus' font route pour Hambourg," *Combat,* August 23, 1947.

horror . . . I now have a fairly close idea."[150] The sight of Jews once more behind barbed wire, often appearing in front-page newspaper photos, played on powerful wartime memories to muster popular outrage. In a similar vein, *Combat*, *L'humanité,* and the center-right *L'aurore* each linked the plight of the *Exodus* explicitly with Palestine by juxtaposing the affair with photos and reports of British brutality in the Mandate.[151]

But the French public was not content with talk alone. Protesters were already waiting in Port-de-Bouc when the boats arrived. They were responding to a sense of moral outrage and a pre-circulated tract that framed the *Exodus* affair through the lens of *Résistance* and the fight against oppression: "Frenchmen and Frenchwomen," it read,

> All those who suffered under Nazi oppression for four years, we appeal to you; 4,500 men, women, children and infants, survivors of the torture chambers and crematory ovens, have been brutally assailed by the Royal Navy . . . . Driven back from Palestine, they are even now arriving at Port-de-Bouc . . . . All of you who fought for liberty, come protest with us.[152]

The popular response in the last week of July 1947 was considerable. The Zionist Federation of France (Fédération sioniste de France), the League for Free Palestine, and the Jewish Agency held protests and press conferences while League politicians lobbied Foreign Minister Bidault.[153] As Jewish school children camped near Port-de-Bouc with fresh water and medical supplies, local dockworkers, with the support of the powerful General Confederation of Labor union (Confédération Génerale du Travail, CGT),

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[150] "Avec les émigrants de l'«Exodus» dans les bateaux-cages," July 31, 1947.
[151] "Nos comptes avec les anglais ne sont pas encore réglés," *L'humanité*, August 1, 1947; "'L'Irgoun' fait prendre deux sergents britanniques," *Combat,* July 31, 1947; "Exaspération en Palestine," *Combat*, August 2, 1947; "Loi martiale imminente en Palestine," *L'aurore,* August 1, 1947.
[152] Louis Barral, "Ce matin a 4 heures les pélerins de 'l'Exodus' arrivent à Port-de-Bouc," *Combat*, July 29, 1947.
[153] A. Chassaignon, "Seuls cinq émigrants de l'Exodus ont accepté de débarquer," *L'aurore,* July 30, 1947; Danan, 43; Lazar, 88-89.

declared their unwillingness to help forcibly disembark the Jewish émigrés.[154] Public opinion had shown itself virtually unanimous over the affair, and the Zionist movement gained considerable publicity and sympathy as a result.[155]

As the ships neared the French coast, Britain informed Bidault of its intention to disembark the Jewish passengers, by force if necessary. The French government was now faced with a decision, and met on July 23 to resolve it. The cabinet was divided. On one side was Bidault, who was already under considerable British pressure to curb *Aliyah Bet*. Bidault had been a leader of the French Resistance and sympathized with Zionism personally, but he felt that France could not afford to provoke an incident with Britain and thereby jeopardize its diplomatic footing in Europe. Bidault was also firmly committed to the retention of French Algeria, and worried that showing support for the Zionist *Exodus* might stir up Arab unrest. Quai Secretary General Jean Chauvel and Africa-Levant Director Gabriel Bonneau echoed these arguments, and warned Bidault of "grave consequences" with Britain and the Arab world.[156] In the other camp were Édouard Depreux and Jules Moch. Depreux was a Socialist and former Resistance fighter; Moch, who was Jewish, was also, and both men saw the *Exodus* affair as a matter of principle. As Schillo notes, Depreux and Moch adopted "an essentially moral point of view." Depreux categorically rejected proposals that France allow the passengers to be forcibly landed on its shores, and swore to his fellow ministers that "I will not give a single guard to disembark them!"[157] The division of ministerial powers, which gave

[154] A. Chassaignon, "Le Foreign Office reste muet," *L'aurore,* July 31, 1947; Paul Marcus, *60 ans d'amours contrariées: Les rélations franco-israéliennes de 1948 à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 2008), 35.
[155] Danan, 43, Schillo, 201. There were occasional outliers: the diplomatically-oriented *Le monde* sought to moderate the tone of public discourse, and advised that Britain knew best how to solve the problem.
[156] Schillo, 194-95.
[157] *Ibid;* Marcus, 32-34.

Depreux and Moch considerable control over French ports and border controls, allowed them to carry the day in contravention of Quai efforts to settle the issue in accordance with foreign policy.

On July 24 the French government announced that it would open its doors to the Jewish refugees but not compel them to enter. On July 28 it reaffirmed this position, despite heightened British pressure. The matter was now deadlocked, and a unanimous National Assembly's vote praising the government's position made backtracking an impossibility.[158] It ultimately took the personal intervention of Léon Blum to broker a compromise solution: France would stand its ground, but the *Exodus'*s passengers would be sailed to the British occupation zone in Germany, where they would be forcibly disembarked outside French jurisdiction.[159] The French press would continue to lament the plight of the unhappy DPs until the *Exodus*'s departure on August 22.

Though the *Exodus* affair ended unhappily, it left a powerful set of memories and images that figured the future Jewish state as one populated by Holocaust survivors still struggling to escape persecution as late as 1947. This association would add lasting legitimacy to the project of Jewish statehood.[160] But the affair also created new images. In the stubborn refusal of the *Exodus*'s passengers to disembark, observers now discovered that Jews possessed unplumbed depths of resolve. Press discourse often linked this resolve with Zionist aspirations for statehood. *Combat*'s Louis Barral gave voice to

[158] The motion was proposed by Communist deputy Madeleine Braun in the name of the Assembly Commission on Foreign Affairs. It hailed the government for adopting a position "conforming to [our] humanitarian duties." "Les deux sergents britanniques capturés par l'«Irgoun» sont retrouvés pendus," *Le monde,* July 31, 1947; Lazar, 88-89.
[159] Schillo, 205, 210.
[160] Schillo argues that in subsequent years both French and Israeli discourse would mythologize the importance of the Exodus affair well beyond its original scope. If this is so, the resulting set of images would have assumed even greater power. *Ibid,.* 210.

these perceptions as he described an *Exodus* spokesman on the day of their final departure:

> He seemed puny and weak, especially [under these circumstances]. But what decision, what resolution shone from his blue eyes when he spoke to us! One perceived in him all the strength of an immense despair . . . . [As Hativkah, the Jewish national anthem, was struck up] a thousand voices broke out in chorus. The beginning was sad, terribly sad with all the miseries of the wandering Jew. But, toward the end the voices became stronger. The bodies straightened. The song now spoke of hope. The unshakable hope in Eretz [land], in Palestine, this promised land which is their only reason to live. And the silence fell heavily among the English soldiers and among the journalists of all backgrounds and tendencies. We understood that the [spokesman] . . . had spoken truly on behalf of these Jews: 'Either death or Palestine.'[161]

For Barral and others like him the passengers of the *Exodus* symbolized the new Jew of the postwar age, *the survivor,* one who embodied strength and vulnerability simultaneously. This mantle would be inherited by the Jewish state, and would lastingly shape perceptions of it into the mid-twentieth century. The *Exodus* affair also established a lasting pattern for future French-Israeli relations in which ministerial fiefs and personal initiative could trump foreign policy considerations. In doing so it set a powerful precedent that would be repeatedly echoed over the next twenty-five years.

The Four Questions: Imagining Israel Between Dream and Reality

If opinion had been near-unanimous on the Jewish question when its public image was that of desperate refugees, by late 1947 things had become more complicated. As the Jewish Agency and United Nations took steps to turn the dream of Jewish statehood into a concrete reality, French observers were forced to consider what a Jewish state might actually mean. This transition confronted France with four interrelated questions: Should it support Jewish statehood? If statehood were achieved, was it in French interest to afford Israel *de facto*, and later *de jure* recognition? Finally, what was to be the status of

[161] Louis Barral, "Les emigrants de 'l'Exodus' font route pour Hambourg," *Combat*, August 23, 1947.

Jerusalem and its (particularly Christian) holy sites? The next two years would see France struggle to answer these questions but, following in its established pattern, its responses would be the product of unresolved internal debate and last-minute decisions in which personal intervention tipped the balance. As a result, unofficial material aid would continue to flow into the Jewish state even as the Quai d'Orsay advised against it.

The first of these questions arose with the UN debate on the partition of the Palestinian Mandate and the subsequent Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49. Faced with mounting violence in Palestine, Britain had announced its intention to surrender its mandate in February 1947, turning the issue over to the UN for settlement. Following a series of contested inquiries and proposals, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of partitioning the mandate between independent Jewish and Arab states on November 29, 1947. The decision inflamed a civil war in Mandatory Palestine between its Jewish and Arab populations. Soon this war took on international dimensions: on May 14, 1948 Israel declared its independence. The next day Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Iraqi troops invaded the newborn state.[162]

French debate over partition and Israeli independence would establish the broad contours of public discussion over each of the four questions. For many French observers in 1947-49, the same images which had shaped responses to the *Exodus* affair remained dominant. For some, the creation of Israel was an act of justice done for the survivors of the Holocaust. The Jewish organizers of a May 18, 1948 rally in solidarity with Israel, which assembled some 35,000 Parisians at the Vel d'Hiver, invoked the site's wartime significance by proclaiming that they were "crying out [to the Jews who had been

[162] The history of the UN partition plan and subsequent Jewish-Arab violence in 1947-49 is much contested and deeply bound up with conflicting national narratives to which I cannot do full justice here. My focus will accordingly remain on the French dimension of these events as they unfolded.

interned there] that they were avenged."[163] The conservative *Le figaro* echoed this sentiment, equating the victims of the "cattle cars" and "gas chambers" with "this people" who, having been "delivered from its ghettoes, has constructed cities [in Israel], fertilized the desert, and today [display] the heroism of the Maccabees to defend the land it has received from God."[164] Its political opposite, the Communist *L'humanité*, deployed near-identical language, grounding its support for Israeli independence in the memory of "the suffering and tortures endured during the years of the concentration camps."[165] To this it added its salutations to Israel's "progressive forces" in their struggle against global imperialism, though the paper was likely also influenced by the Soviet Union's early support for the partition of Palestine and Israeli statehood. That such disparate political voices were unified in their language indicates that Israel remained a matter of principle as much as politics within the French public sphere. With the exception of *L'humanité,* which would turn from Israel in response to the 1956 Sinai War, in adherence to the Soviet line, public discourse on Israel would retain this bipartisan character into the late-1960s.

Israel also inherited Zionism's association with the powerful symbols of French resistance. Joseph Kessel, writing for the centrist *France-soir*, accordingly compared the tiny Jewish state to "a vast maquis," and *Le monde's* Jacques Salebert did likewise.[166]

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[163] The rally's sponsors included the Fédération Sioniste de France, Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France, the Union des Juifs pour la Résistance et l'Entraide, the Union des Sociétés juives de France, and members of the CRIF leadership. Danan, 48.

[164] François Mauriac, "Le destin juif," *Le figaro,* May 4, 1948.

[165] *L'humanité* credited imperialistic British oil interests with the Arab invasion of Israel. Catherine Varlin, "Tel-Aviv proteste à l'O.N.U.," *L'humanité*, May 21, 1948; Derek Katrun, "'J'ai assité à Tel-Aviv à la proclemation de l'état d'Israël,'" *L'humanité*, May 15, 1948; Pierre Courtade, "L'indépendence d'Israël," *L'humanité,* May 16-17, 1948.

[166] Schillo, 350; Jacques Salebert, *Le monde*, May 26, 1948, quoted in Lazar, 116. *L'aurore*, meanwhile, likened Israel's wartime ethos to the *union sacrée* of the first world war. "Union sacrée dans l'état d'Israël," *L'aurore*, May 19, 1948.

The images of Jewishness that had characterized the *Exodus* affair remained strong into 1948, and continued to pervade public discourse. When war broke out between Israel and its neighbors the French public accordingly polled in favor of Israel by a 10 percent margin. This sympathy was even more pronounced on the Left, where newspaper polls reported readership support for Israel by margins of 40 to 56 percent.[167] A bipartisan National Assembly resolution saluting Israeli statehood similarly passed by a vote of 302 to 136, and drew support from across the political spectrum.[168] French Jewry, meanwhile, had responded to Israeli statehood with a mix of enthusiasm and consternation. Amidst an outpouring of popular Jewish support, Jacob Kaplan, who would become French Chief Rabbi in 1950, hailed Israel's birth as "a miracle," while collections for the Haganah raised over 200 million francs in a six-month period.[169] But *Israélite* leaders like Parisian Consistory president Georges Wormser remained tepid. Wormser felt French Jews had to demonstrate their enduring commitment to assimilation, and called on his co-religionists to "abstain from any attitude which could lead to political consequences concerning the international order . . . . We [must] remain, before and after the creation of [Israel], good citizens of our homeland, France."[170] For these voices, the patterns that had defined pre-independence attitudes toward Jewish statehood continued to pervade.

New images were also developing. Watching Israel withstand the onslaught of its neighbors and subsequently prevail radically reconfigured images of Jewish vulnerability

[167] Such left-wing papers included *Le populaire, L'humanité,* and *Franc-tireur*, whose readerships likely sympathized with the openly socialist inclinations of Israel's new leadership. A narrow majority of French citizens, however, did not feel strongly about the conflict either way. Coulon, 56.
[168] "La bataille de Jérusalem," *L'aurore*, May 2, 1948.
[169] "Western Europe: France" *AJY* vol. 50 (1948-1949), Philadelphia: JPS, 1949, 338-39; Danan, 11, 57-59, 294-95; "Proces-Verbal de la Réunion du CRIF du 27 Avril 1948," MDI 5, archives du CRIF, CDJC. This figure is given in pre-1960 old francs.
[170] Danan, 50-51.

as embodied in the Israelis. In the words of journalist Arthur Koestler, Israel had become a "David who accepted the challenge of Goliath, and triumphed."[171] In doing so Israel demonstrated that Jews could not only be industrious state-builders and agriculturalists, but valiant combatants in the face of difficult odds.[172] Echoed across the French journalistic spectrum, the trope of the Israeli "David" would prove tremendously enduring in mid-century France, and dominate public discourse on Israel into the 1970s.

Not all new images were flattering, however. Catholic voices were particularly troubled by the prospect of Jewish statehood, and energetically protested against the treatment Christian institutions had received, or might receive, at Israeli hands.[173] In June 1948 leading Catholics accordingly called for the internationalization of Palestine's holy places.[174] This would entail placing Jerusalem, Bethlehem and their environs under direct UN control. In this they echoed the position of the Vatican, which had long pushed for internationalization, and evoked a traditional French role as guarantor of Levantine Christianity. The Catholic press also spoke out against Jewish sovereignty. *La croix* routinely condemned the presence of Israeli troops in Christian institutions in remarks laden with antisemitic undertones.[175] Catholic Father Pierre Chaillet's *Témoignage chrétien*, meanwhile, was from the onset a vigorous critic of Israel, and in August 1948

[171] Schillo, 328.
[172] Laurence Coulon argues that this image solidified during the first ceasefire of the Arab-Israeli War (June 11 - July 8, 1948), and particularly in response to reports of the desperate siege of Jerusalem. Coulon, 42; Lazar, 246; Roger Ikor, *Peut-on etre juif aujourd'hui?* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1968), 200.
[173] A few Christian institutions in Jerusalem had been struck by Israeli mortar fire, to the outrage of some French Catholics. "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 51 (1950), Philadelphia: JPS, 1950, 303; Coulon, 137-38.
[174] Signing the appeal were Louis Massignon, Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, Emmanuel Mounier, and Father Pierre Chaillet, among others.
[175] *Ibid.*

termed it "a knife in the side of the exasperated Arab nations."[176] Its criticism peaked in December 1948, when Louis Massignon likened Israeli actions to the Nazi massacre at Oradour, reversing established moral binaries that cast Zionists as the victims of Nazism.[177] Tellingly, David Lazar observes, these outlets almost always referred to Israelis as "Juifs" or "Israélites;" the neologism "Israéliens" (Israelis) was almost never used. In so doing, these voices framed Israel as part of a Jewish-Christian confrontation, and at times evoked antisemitic tropes of a Jewish plot against Christianity.[178] It was Israel's Jewishness that made it troubling to these circles, just as it was Israel's Jewishness that aroused the sympathy of others.

Popular debate was reflected in the French government's vacillation on the question of partition. Bidault was a devout Catholic and was not wholly comfortable with Jewish sovereignty over Christian holy sites. His Consul General in Jerusalem, René Neuville, fanned these concerns with reports of Jewish "fanaticism," terming Jews "fundamentally racist — at least as much as their German persecutors," inclined to "religious particularism," "xenophobia," and "chauvinism."[179] When the Jews felt strong enough, he warned, there would be little place for Christian or French culture in Israel. Career diplomats including René Massigli, Vincent Monteil, Georges Catroux, and Quai Secretary General Jean Chauvel also advocated against voting in favor of partition,

[176] Hecker, 49.
[177] *Ibid.*
[178] Lazar, 181. Catholic outlets provided the most consistent attention to the Arab refugees produced by the war, and *Témoignage chrétien* would champion their cause in decades to come. Not all French Christian voices were opposed to Israeli statehood, however. David Lazar has noted considerable Christian support for Israel as early as the late 1940s, which grounded their position in a "Christian responsibility to the Jewish people" in the aftermath of genocide. Lazar, 77-78, 177, 212, 139.
[179] Quoted in Hershco, 88-90. Though Neuville would eventually recommend partition on the grounds that the final proposal included provisions for the protection of Christian sites, he would later recant and remain a staunch opponent of Jewish sovereignty.

arguing that doing so would jeopardize French ties with Britain and Muslim North Africa.[180]

As in the past, however, the Quai establishment had its opponents, and with just three days to the UN vote, French debate on the matter remained deadlocked. Moch, now Interior Minister, and Minister of Labor Daniel Mayer both advocated against abstention: backing down before Arab pressure, they argued, would be a dangerous sign of weakness to the Arab world.[181] Bidault was torn himself: defense and intelligence advisers warned that an Arab victory would strengthen the Arab League and its hostility to French North Africa, and he hesitated to diverge from the American position in favor of partition.[182] Ultimately it took the personal interventions of high-profile personalities to tip the balance. Léon Meiss, Léon Blum, Marc Jarblum, André Blumel, and René Cassin, together with Israeli diplomat Maurice Fisher, each lobbied for partition with a mix of pragmatic and moral arguments. Their words had an impact on Bidault and French President Vincent Auriol, who took the unusual step of intervening in a foreign policy debate in favor of partition.[183] In the end, however, the government's decision was made for it, rather than by it: time for debate had simply run out. Fearing that a UN framework and the principle of internationalization might perish, France acceded to the will of the

[180] Meir Zamir, "'Bid' for *Altalena:* France's Covert Action in the 1948 War in Palestine," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46:1, 2010, 19; V. Monteil, Note, September 1948, GR 1 Q 31, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[181] Though both were Jewish, they took pains to disassociate their arguments from their religion. Hershco, 95; Birnbaum, 157-58.
[182] Zamir, 19.
[183] Hershco, 95, Birnbaum 157-58; Danan, 54-55.

Soviet and American-led UN majority.[184] The vote went ahead on November 29, 1947 with France among those voting in favor.

The first of the four questions had been settled, but even then France vacillated. In the face of Arab lobbying and mounting violence, it announced on March 5, 1948 its readiness to withdraw support for partition in favor of renewed debate. Zionist lobbyists again scrambled to make entreaties. Ultimately France's stance on partition stood, but in a compromise to the Quai it refrained from recognizing the new Jewish state.

As a result, French-Israeli relations began under a cloud of ambiguity: circles within the French civil and military services sympathized with the Jewish state and wished to support its struggle for independence, but diplomatic concerns precluded any significant official aid. The result, in Meir Zamir's analysis, was a sort of "double policy" that sometimes curbed clandestine assistance to Israel and at other moments encouraged it.[185] This was never more visible than in the clandestine movement of arms through France to Zionist forces. At times French practices were so contradictory that they were almost comedic: in one instance, mere days after Haganah arms depots was seized by French police, Bidault informed the Council of Ministers that there "was no harm in letting the Jewish Agency purchase arms in France and transport them to Palestine."[186] On another occasion, the security chief of Toulouse, who had assisted Zionist groups since leaving the Resistance in 1944, instructed Haganah operatives to pose as French intelligence officers in order to retrieve and abscond with a haul of impounded

[184] Schillo, 293; Hershco, 77. The UN Partition Plan included clauses calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem and its environs as a *corpus separatum* "under a special international regime . . . administered by the United Nations."
[185] Zamir, 21.
[186] A major pipeline of this transport ran through the Corsican airport at Ajaccio, whose commander, General de Larminat, furnished considerable aid to Israel during its war. Whether he did so with official authorization remains unclear. Schillo, 304-5.

weapons.[187] In the absence of a clearly-enforced French policy, individual actors were left with room to maneuver and act as they saw fit.

The most exemplary episode of this ambiguous period concerned the Irgun arms freighter *Altalena*, and its provision involved the highest echelons of the French government. By spring 1948, Bidault was becoming anxious over Palestine again. The fate of the Arab-Israeli war was uncertain, and Bidault worried that Jordan's King Abdullah, with unofficial British support, might overrun French institutions in Jerusalem and turn an ambitious eye toward Syria. Already working to stymie Anglo-Arab arms deals, Bidault now looked for a way to prevent a Jewish defeat in Jerusalem.[188] Thus, when an Irgun delegation under Shmuel Ariel approached him in March 1948 with a request for aid, Bidault was inclined to listen.

By this time, the Irgun enjoyed a favorable reputation in France. Fierce opponents of the British, the Irgun were seen as a rising power, popular within the *Yishuv*, and a check on pro-Soviet elements within David Ben-Gurion's interim Israeli government.[189] Against the recommendations of the Quai's Africa-Levant director, Bidault allowed his cabinet director, Jean Morin, to negotiate a deal.[190] Though the agreement's exact phrasing has been lost, historian Meir Zamir has reconstructed its key details: France would provide the Irgun arms free of charge. In exchange, the Irgun promised

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[187] Lazar, 240-41.

[188] Zamir, 18, 21, 25-26. The authoritative account of the *Altalena* affair belongs to Meir Zamir, whose research into the French dimensions of the episode is unparalleled. See Zamir (2010). He contends that Michael Bar-Zohar's presentation of Bidault's foreign policy as fundamentally anglophilic is oversimplifying; while Bidault supported British diplomacy in Europe, its rivalry was "unabated" in the Middle East.

[189] Schillo, 76-77; Zamir, 25-26. French estimations of the Irgun's military potential consistently overestimated its strength.

[190] Direction d'Afrique-Levant, "Note," June 8, 1948, 318Q1, Israël 1944-1952, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France; Zamir, 21-23; Hershco, 71.

unspecified advantages to France and assistance against Muslim subversion in North Africa, were it to come to power.[191]

The decision ultimately fell to Bidault. Though he initially hesitated, escalating fighting in Jerusalem made up his mind: in consultation with each of the ministries involved Bidault approved the deal. The arms France provided the Irgun were valued at 153 million francs and included 5,000 rifles, 250 Bren light machine guns, fifty bazookas, ten armored carriers, five million rounds of ammunition and several thousand grenades. They were delivered to the *Altalena* under the care of the French army and police amidst the utmost secrecy, and sailed on June 11, 1948.[192]

It was this insistence on secrecy which defined French policy: Bidault and his advisers wished to support Israel, but felt they could not be seen to do so without jeopardizing other vital French interests. As a result, aid, when it came, had to be as discreet as possible; only in this way could France satisfy all its interests. Though the *Altalena* itself ultimately fell prey to internal Israeli power struggles, the affair established discretion as the guiding principle of French policy toward Israel.[193] At the same time, the affair demonstrated that, at least within the Foreign Ministry, decision-making was ultimately in the hands of the minister and his closest advisers, who could — and often did — ignore the recommendations of the Quai's Middle East experts. This too set a precedent which would last for the duration of the Fourth Republic, wherein a conflicted Foreign Minister would overrule his officers to Israel's benefit.

Going on Record: The Question of Recognition

[191] Zamir, 25-26.
[192] Zamir, 30; Jacques Soustelle, *La longue marche d'Israël* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 278.
[193] The *Altalena* was sunk, along with about half the arms, on June 20, 1948 off the coast of Tel Aviv by Haganah shelling after negotiations broke down between the Irgun and interim Israeli government over the division of her cargo.

If the *Altalena* affair was possible because it was clandestine, the question of recognition demanded France take a public stand on the international stage. But France now showed itself reluctant to follow in Soviet and American footsteps by recognizing Israel. This reluctance was the product of both pragmatic and personal considerations compounded by a series of government crises producing unstable, short-lived French governments — four between 1948 and 1950 alone. What was more, the question of recognition was tied to those of Israel's borders and the future of Jerusalem, both of which remained in doubt due to the ongoing Arab-Israeli war. These questions confronted France with a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, France was the sponsor of over seventy cultural, educational, and religious institutions throughout Palestine, with forty in contested Jerusalem alone.[194] These institutions were seen as a key pillar of France's cultural position in the Near East, and the Foreign Ministry felt pressured to quickly safeguard these institutions and the fiscal privileges they had received under Ottoman and British rule. On the other hand, recognition presented France with an opportunity to reassert its position in a region where its power had been wilting under British pressure since the Second World War. Recognition accordingly became a bargaining chip allowing France to buy its way back into the Middle East and sparked a debate demonstrating the overlap of pragmatic and personal attitudes toward Israel.

By late June 1948, the French Foreign Ministry was in the hands of Robert Schuman, who approached the question of recognition with a cold pragmatism.[195] The Quai's Africa-Levant directorate would have been relieved, and had just submitted a policy note recommending France adopt a more practical attitude. Wary that sentiment

[194] Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Note, "a.s Reconnaissance de l'état d'Israël," May 29, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Hershco, 179.
[195] Hershco, 207-8.

might influence policy, the directorate sought to nip sentimental arguments in the bud: "France is always attached to liberal causes," it confessed, "[and] this is one of the traits . . . that our children must continue to find in their history books." But France should not disregard

> a decisive and clearly perceived national interest. Today that interest is the French Union . . . It is evident that an isolated recognition on our part would have no practical utility to the Zionist cause . . . . We can help the Jews in a manner that is less detrimental to us and more advantageous for them from a practical and diplomatic perspective.[196]

The Quai had been busily trying to persuade Morocco and Tunisia to join the French Union, its association with the former French empire, and feared that recognizing Israel would agitate an already restive Muslim North Africa. Similar concerns were voiced by French diplomats stationed throughout North Africa and the Middle East, who warned that recognition would produce a near-total collapse of France's diplomatic and cultural position.[197] Quai legal experts also submitted reports that the UN resolution on partition placed France under no obligation to recognize the resulting Jewish state, particularly as its borders were still in dispute. They advised that recognition, if it came, could wait until a more opportune moment.

The question of Jerusalem and its holy sites added a religious dimension to the Quai's position, and the uncertain future of France's institutions made the issue a pressing one. French-sponsored institutions had been occupied, damaged, and, according

[196] Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Note pour le Ministre, "Reconnaissance de l'état d'Israël," June 5, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.

[197] Neuville à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 594-595, May 30, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Du Chayla à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram, May 21, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Arvengas à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 708-709, May 22, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Tunis à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram, May 19, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Du Chayla à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 7/8, January 4, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Jean Bourdeillette, *Pour Israël* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1968), 242.

to Jerusalem Consul General René Neuville, looted by Israeli troops.[198] As a result, France was under pressure to assert its authority over these buildings, and ensure that tax and educational exemptions they had previously enjoyed would be respected. Neuville, who became the champion of the Jerusalem issue, was a traditionalist who objected to the transformations taking place in Palestine. His repeated calls to limit Jewish immigration, authority, and land acquisition in Jerusalem reflected a deep discomfort with the prospect of Jewish sovereignty grounded in his perception of Jews as xenophobic religious fanatics.[199] Now he warned that Israeli control threatened the immutable character of Jerusalem and the French presence therein, and implied that damage to Christian sites were part of a deliberate campaign of Judaization.[200] Other diplomats, as well as elements in the French Catholic press, echoed his concerns; Pierre Landy, the Consul in Haifa, protested against the "profanation of the city's religious sites by the Jews," and consistently compared Israel to Nazism.[201] Such reports, together with Vatican pressure, led Schuman to condemn the "savage repression" of Christian religious life in Jerusalem by the Israeli government.[202]

Seeking to reestablish French relevance in the Levant, Schuman now proposed that France mediate the Jerusalem issue. Brokering talks would give France added leverage in its negotiations with Israel and the Arab League, and complement recent efforts to improve ties with Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. In December 1948 France accordingly joined the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine, and its special

[198] Neuville à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 594-595, May 30, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.
[199] Trimbur, 62; Hershco, 88-89, 201, 219.
[200] Neuville à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 37, January 10, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.
[201] Schillo, 349-50; Hershco, 186-87. Landy was also one of the few diplomats for whom the question of Palestinian Arab refugees was important.
[202] *Ibid.*, 235-36.

Committee on Jerusalem, in which it pushed for the city's internationalization. Recognition could be leveraged against Israel's willingness to cooperate with the Committee's work.

There were some voices advocating for Israel's immediate recognition, however. The French Consul in Tel-Aviv, Albert Vanthier, argued for recognition by merging practical and religious rationales. He asserted that the Israeli nation constituted a 'living temple' in whose redemption France should not sit idle, and argued that Israel would prove an ally to local Christians and a bulwark against pan-Arabism.[203] Reports within the French Defense Ministry meanwhile suggested that Jerusalem's internationalization was "impossible."[204] After some hesitation, the CRIF too dispatched letters to the government calling for recognition.[205] Left-wing political parties in the National Assembly, including the Communists, Radicals, and SFIO also called for recognition. Often these calls were grounded in explicit reference to a moral debt owed to survivors of the Holocaust, whom Israel symbolically embodied.[206] *L'humanité*'s André Carrel posed the matter as a question of French honor: "All our people . . . remember the suffering and tortures endured by the *Israélites* during the years of the concentration camps. [But] Misters Bidault and Schuman . . . . inflict a humiliation on our people [by not recognizing Israel] . . . . Once more our government has given proof that it is not within the camp of France."[207] For Carrel and those who shared his view the essentially diplomatic question

[203] Schillo, 337.
[204] "Note Secrete Sur la Politique Française en Israël," 1948-1949, GR 1 Q 31, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[205] "Proces-Verbal de la Réunion du CRIF du 5 Janvier 1949," January 5, 1949, MDI 6, archives du CRIF, CDJC; R. Grinberg, CRIF Interim President to Schuman, Letter, January 19, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.
[206] Hershco, 147-49.
[207] André Carrel, "Vont-ils s'enforcer un peu plus dans l'ignominie?" *L'humanité*¸ May 21, 1948.

of recognition became a prism for understanding France itself when coupled with the memories of the Holocaust. Taking a stand on Israel now clarified what it meant to be French by harkening back to politically valid pre-war traditions of humanitarianism and justice. Episodes like these illustrate how Israel was already becoming, in Ronald Schecter's words, "good to think."

As with the question of partition, France wavered between competing pressures until events outpaced it and prompted a new calculus. By late 1948 the Arab-Israeli war was turning in Israel's favor, and by November Israeli troops had advanced eight kilometers into Lebanon. As Lebanon's longstanding patron, the Quai felt compelled to ensure a prompt Israeli withdrawal, and seized on the matter as a chance to build trust with Lebanon. While the importance of the Lebanese dimension has been somewhat understated in recent scholarship, Quai documents make clear that France conditioned recognition on Israeli withdrawal.[208] This initially proved a major sticking point: Israel sought to exchange withdrawal for direct negotiations with its Arab neighbors on a permanent peace settlement. France, however, would not budge.

Ultimately the Foreign Ministry settled on a flexible framework that deferred the trickiest issues. In an exchange of letters on January 24, 1949 France afforded Israel *de facto* recognition. The question of its borders, however, was left to the determination of the UN. In a follow-up letter, France also expressed its commitment to the principle of Jerusalem's internationalization, leaving the question deliberately unresolved. In exchange, Israel promised the immediate evacuation of all French institutions and indemnification for any damages caused. Israel also provided guarantees that these

[208] Direction Afrique-Levant à Cairo, Telegram 10-17, January 5, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE. Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, January 8, 1948, 218QO1, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.

institutions would continue to benefit from any fiscal privileges they already enjoyed, and exempted French-sponsored schools from Israeli ministerial oversight.[209] Following a series of armistices with Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan on February 24, March 23, and April 3, respectively, Israel would also evacuate Lebanese territory. These agreements stabilized Israel's frontiers, and France extended *de jure* recognition to Israel shortly thereafter on May 11. A final armistice between Israel and Syria ended the war on July 20.

France had adopted a wait-and-see attitude over the question of recognition and was rewarded with a satisfactory settlement on its most important concern: its cultural, religious, and educational institutions. By waiting until Israel's survival was no longer in question France put off recognition until it was almost irrelevant. As a result, it could inform its Arab partners that it had done nothing to prejudice their war effort. Recognition was accordingly met with a muted Arab response.[210] The settlement had also left the important question of Jerusalem open, allowing the Quai to revisit it during moments of Israeli diplomatic weakness into the late 1960s.[211] In this way the middle two of the 'four questions' were settled, and the last, that of Jerusalem, deferred. Addressing these questions taught the Quai that a wait-and-see approach paid dividends in the Middle East, and if it were indiscreet for France to act, a problem could be stalled or deferred until a more favorable moment. One man who learned this lesson carefully was

[209] Schuman to Fischer, Letter, January 24, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Chauvel to Fischer, Letter, January 24, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Fischer to Schuman, Letter, January 24, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.

[210] Jean Mons à Schuman, Telegram 126, "A/s. Reconnaissance de facto d'Israël par la France," January 25, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Jean Mons à Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 39, January 27, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE; Gilbert Arvengas à Schuman, Telegram 73.10, "A/s: Entretien avec le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères au sujet de l'Etat d'Israël," January 24, 1949, 218QO4, Israël 1944-1952, MAE.

[211] Indeed, one could argue that the French position on Jerusalem remains unresolved.

Schuman's cabinet director, Maurice Couve de Murville. As Charles de Gaulle's future foreign minister, Couve would put this lesson into practice time and again throughout the 1960s; another pattern in the course of French-Israeli relations had been established.

Urgency Absent: Pattern and Policy, 1950 - 1953

Formal recognition produced a change in the character of French-Israeli relations that colored their relationship for the next several years. With recognition came an ambassador and a formalization of relations which supplanted existing channels of unofficial assistance. As a result, the Foreign Ministry's Middle East experts assumed a predominance that they had previously lacked. The sympathetic consul in Tel-Aviv, Albert Vanthier, was now replaced by the distant ambassador Édouard-Félix Guyon, whom some Israeli diplomats would characterize as an "unreasonable anti-Israeli."[212] Israel's old friends would continue to seek to help it, but their actions would be constrained by the Quai's commitment to discretion.

The Quai finally held sway over the tone of French-Israeli relations and this was due in part to the easing of popular pressure. The Arab-Israeli War was over. Israel had been recognized and its future seemingly assured; the French Left could now rest comfortably in the knowledge that "justice" had been done to the survivors of the Holocaust. Much of the urgency which had inflected earlier attitudes toward Zionism now dissipated.

By 1951, the French-Jewish organizational scene, which had been an outspoken if inconsistent pro-Israel voice, had also collapsed under the weight of internal division. The CRIF position on Israel had become operationally defunct, particularly after Jewish

[212] Schillo, 427. French ambassadors were posted to Tel-Aviv, not Jerusalem, in a symbolic rejection of Israel's annexation of those parts of the city under its control.

communist groups withdrew from its fundraising efforts in mid-1949, angry at growing Israeli cooperation with "imperialist" America.[213] The Zionist organizations of the CRIF were also succumbing to factionalism. In the words of the American Jewish Committee's representative in Paris, Abraham Karlikow, these groups "were busy maintaining their internal political distinctions and rivalries, often to the exclusion of more valuable work."[214] Finally, much of the French *Israélite* elite had never warmed to Zionism: in the words of future French ambassador Pierre-Eugène Gilbert, these people "don't understand why they should have greater interest in the affairs of [Israel] than in those of Costa Rica or Guatemala."[215] The petering-out of popular voices for Israel made it easier for the Quai to pursue a policy more in line with its own pragmatic outlook.

The Quai now hoped for quiet and stability in the Middle East as it sought to pacify the pan-Arab agitation that was jeopardizing its North African interests. Maintaining the political and military status quo were thus among its top priorities. France accordingly joined Britain and the US in articulating the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, which aimed to curtail regional tensions by guaranteeing the 1949 Arab-Israeli armistice settlement, and by regulating the sale of arms to the region. Implicitly, these

[213] The Communist break with Israel would be further exacerbated when Soviet-Israeli relations soured in 1948-49 amidst internal Soviet purges. By 1956, this break would be compounded as the French Communist Party adhered closely to the Soviet Union's critical line on Israeli involvement in the 1956 Suez War, and the PCF's turn will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter. Not all Jewish communists chose Soviet dogma over Israel, however: the *AJY* reported that the communist Union des Societes Juives de France had lost considerable membership as a result of the Communist break with Israel. "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 51 (1950), Philadelphia: JPS , 1950, 301; "Leon Shapiro, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 52 (1951), Philadelphia: JPS, 1951, 277; Maurice Carr, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 53 (1952), Philadelphia: JPS, 1952, 284.

[214] Fundraising dipped and became the purview of a few wealthy donors. Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 54 (1953), Philadelphia: JPS, 1953, 257, 260; Winock, 269.

[215] P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 1389/AL, "A/S. Les Juifs de France," July 15, 1953, 218QO50, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Ghiles-Meilhac, "Centralizing," 66-67. It would be incorrect to suggest that French Jewry was completely disinterested in Israel during these years, however. Danan notes rising popular interest in Israel in the early 1950s, and annual celebrations of Israeli independence became occasions to gather an often disorganized French Jewish community, particularly outside Paris. Danan, 320-29, 340.

measures also checked Soviet regional penetration by precluding border wars and cornering the arms market. The Quai's most important interests, however, were maintaining its foothold in the Arab world, particularly Syria, and preventing the Anglo powers from boxing it out of regional defense frameworks.[216] Thus, insofar as Israel remained of interest to the Quai, it did so as a secondary avenue for retaining a regional role. This was to be achieved by taking up the still-unsettled Jerusalem issue, which allowed France to push for internationalization and style itself as an Arab-Israeli peace broker.[217] Beyond this, it was content that French-Israeli relations remain "correct but very distant."[218]

Some circles within the French defense and diplomatic establishments were pushing for closer military ties, however, and gradually they were able to effect a modification of French policy. Most often these advocates were former Free French or Resistance fighters, or Radicals who sympathized with Israel's stand against Arab nationalism. A strong admiration for Israel's civic and military development convinced them that Israel would soon become a regional leader in which France should have some influence. Defense experts hailed the "high professionalism . . . spirit of organization, and the ease of adaptability" of Israeli society and characterized it as a bastion of western

[216] Despite strident protests, France was largely excluded from frameworks such as the Baghdad Pact, as US analysts rated French prestige in the Middle East too weak to make any meaningful contribution to regional defense. *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1951 vol. IV, part 1, Europe: political and economic developments, 1951, ed. William Z. Slany, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 157; "Note Presence et Notre Action dans le Bassin Mediterranéen," February 15, 1951, GR 9 R 5, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Sous-Direction du Levant, Note pour le Secretaire Général, "A/s.-Livraison d'avions Ouragans à Israël," October 8, 1952, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[217] Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Bulletin 183, "Bulletin d'Information de la sous-Direction du Levant du 1er au 31 Janvier 1950," January 31, 1950, GR 10 T 225 sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Schillo, 475.
[218] Lt.-Colonel du Boucher, Memorandum 152/IG, "Informations Générales," August 5, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

culture and a check on pan-Arabism.[219] The Defense Ministry was also deeply interested in Israel's military service and mobilization techniques. The *kibbutz* movement and Israel's paramilitary *Nahal*, which coupled military service with the agricultural development of Israel's frontiers, were particularly singled out as models to be emulated.[220] These analyses coalesced into the trope of "the armed nation," which characterized Israeli society as progressive, dynamic, united, and resolute, yet ultimately still vulnerable.[221] In this it echoed the image of the Israeli-as-survivor exemplified by the *Exodus* affair, serving to further link the Jew of the 1940s to the Zionist Israeli of the 1950s. This image would become a longstanding trope in the French perception of Israel, and appear in the reports of ambassadors and military observers alike.

Eventually, the Quai allowed that closer military and economic ties with Israel might prove useful, but only on the condition that they were handled discreetly.[222] Consequently, a slow trickle of French arms gradually made their way to Israel. Yet in 1952 the pace of sales jumped: Britain had succeeded in edging France out as the principal suppliers of the Syrian military, and the French defense establishment was pushing Israel as an alternative market. P.E. Gilbert, who had become France's ambassador to Israel in 1953, was the key advocate, pushing this argument and encouraging direct ties between the French and Israeli defense ministries.[223] As a result,

[219] "Note Secret sur la Politique Française en Israël," 1948-1949, GR 1 Q 31, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Lt.-Colonel du Boucher, "Note à l'attention de Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de France," May 20, 1953, 218QO38, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Lt.-Colonel du Boucher, Note d'informations 192/IG, November 19, 1953, 218QO38, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[220] Coulon, 28.
[221] Lt.-Colonel du Boucher, Note d'informations 123/IG, March 25, 1953, 218QO38, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[222] Coulon, 55-56.
[223] P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 350/AL, "a.s. Fourniture d'armes à Israël," March 12, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 1412/AL, "a.s. fournitures d'armes," July 16, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

by mid-1953 France had supplied Israel arms including one hundred Sherman tanks, twenty-seven Spitfire fighters, sixty Mosquito bombers, at least seventy-five 75mm guns, with contracts for twenty-six 155mm howitzers.[224] By 1950 Israeli officers were also receiving training in French military colleges, and Israeli scientists were among the only foreigners allowed to move unrestrictedly within the French scientific community and nuclear research centers.[225]

The Quai was alarmed by the pace at which French-Israeli military ties were developing, and actively tried to curb them. Deals were torpedoed, deliveries stalled, and the Tripartite Declaration invoked to stem the flow of arms. Gilbert was quick to protest. In March 1953 he wrote to Bidault, who was again foreign minister. He complained that a number of proposed deals had fallen through due to Quai opposition and warned that there was "a certain gap between the two administrations [Defense and Foreign Affairs]" over France's arms policy. He rearticulated the arguments in favor of arming Israel and pressed Bidault not to throw away an important opportunity. Bidault's reply reflected his ministry's commitment to a Syria-centric regional policy and the necessity of discretion. There was no "gap," he affirmed, and it was French policy to avoid the "spectacular" sale of heavy equipment to Israel: "Regrettable as it is for our economy and the future of our influence in Israel," Bidault concluded, "the primary concern of safeguarding the close relations between France and Syria does not allow us to ensure the balance of air power

[224] From 1949 to 1954 French sales to Israel amounted to some $5 million. French arms had flowed at a far greater rate into Syria until late 1952, well in excess of Tripartite guidelines. France excused this by attesting that the Syrians "had to defend themselves against the Jews. Few understood as well as the Syrians what aggressive intentions the Israelis harbored." Levey, 58-60; "Livraisons de matériel militaire française," September, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

[225] Among the Israeli physicists spending extended periods in France were Zvi Lipkin, Israel Pelach, and Amos de-Shalit. Binyamin Pinkus, "Atomic Power to Israel's Rescue: French-Israeli Nuclear Cooperation, 1949-1957," *Israel Studies* 7:1 (2002), 114-16.

between Israel and the Arabs by ourselves."[226] But however much Bidault might insist it did not, a "gap" existed. Soon it would become a gulf. The lines of communication between the French and Israeli defense establishments had been opened; it would be difficult to close them up again.

Conclusions

By the end of 1953 the pattern and defining characteristics of French-Israeli relations were accordingly in place. French officials who admired Israeli state-building and sympathized with Israel as both a symbol of Jewish survival and a check on pan-Arabism did what they could to aid the Jewish state. The foreign policy establishment, meanwhile, did its best to stall and minimize this aid in the service of a policy of discretion. It remained committed to traditionalist views of France as a "Muslim power" whose future lay in the resumption of pre-war French hegemony in North Africa and the Arab Levant. Often, however, the Quai lacked the power to translate its outlook into a uniform policy, and at key moments its career diplomats even failed to win over their own bosses. As a result individual actors at both the ministerial and bureaucratic levels had considerable freedom to deal with Israel as they saw fit, and could act in accordance with the dictates of their conscience or personal sense of national interest. French policy toward Israel between 1944 and 1953 was consequently the vacillating and disjointed product of competing visions.

These patterns were rooted in the French experience of the Second World War and the images, power structures, and priorities which had emerged from it. Short-lived coalition governments and a division of foreign policy powers created an environment of

[226] P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 350/AL, "a.s. Fourniture d'armes à Israël," March 12, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à l'Ambassader de France à Tel-Aviv, Telegram 214/AL, "Fourniture d'armes à Israël," April 21, 1953, 218QO39, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

ministerial independence in which individuals like Édouard Depreux and Jules Moch were empowered to meddle in foreign policy questions. At the same time the individual agency and clandestine networks of resistance built up during the war had not yet disappeared. These were frequently mobilized to Israel's advantage by those who viewed Israelis first through the lenses of survival and shared suffering. Powerful memories of wartime cooperation, occupation, and Jewish victimhood also played a key role, mobilizing support for Jewish statehood among Gaullists and the French Left. These memories crystallized during the 1947 *Exodus* affair, and cemented new understandings of an Israeli Jewishness that was at once both strong and vulnerable. Encapsulated in the tropes of the "armed nation" and the Israeli "David," these images would have an enduring salience and dominate French discourse on Israel in the decades to come.

The patterns and images established in the 1940s would see a resurgence in the mid-1950s, when perceptions of Israeli vulnerability again coupled with France interests. Only by understanding the origins of these patterns can we fully explain the resulting French-Israeli alliance and the arguments which promoted it.

Chapter Two

Between Munich and Nasser: Context and Contingency in the French-Israeli Alliance, 1954-1958

Introduction

In early 1954, Israel's new point-man on arms acquisition, Director General of Defense Shimon Peres, was in France looking for new opportunities. As Peres recalled, "I really didn't have the slightest idea how to start . . . . but the name 'Israel' opened doors . . . and I was received as a lost son. Nobody refused to listen to me and everybody tried to help me."[227] Peres's encounter with his French counterpart, General Paul Ély, began to illuminate why. Ély had invited Peres to discuss the purchase of arms over dinner, and the two were joined by Ély's wife. It was she who unambiguously set the tone of the discussion: "You don't have to tell me what you are looking for," she told Peres. "I myself was in a Nazi concentration camp."[228] In her eyes, Peres was not an Israeli, but a survivor, a Jew whose needs required no articulation in the wake of the Holocaust.[229] Madame Ély's experience during the Second World War told her everything she needed to know about the Jewish state and its needs, and she was determined that neither she nor her husband would stand idle when Israel came looking for help. Thus, when Peres left the table, it was with General Ély's support. Peres would have dozens of similar encounters.

[227] Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.
[228] *Ibid.*
[229] The irony was that Peres had emigrated to Palestine in 1934 at age eleven; he himself had never been in a camp. He did, however, lose most of his extended family in the Holocaust.

The ministers, politicians, and bureaucrats who received Peres and other Israeli emissaries were remarkably forthcoming, and many took extraordinary steps to help Israel meet its military needs. Over the next five years these encounters produced a French-Israeli relationship of exceptional political breadth and personal depth.[230] By 1954, France had provided Israel military hardware valued at over 4.3 billion francs. By mid-1956, this number had surpassed 15.8 billion, and by the end of 1958, had reached 23.9 billion.[231] The equipment delivered was not out-dated World War Two-era materiel, like that with which Israel had won its independence, but modern equipment capable of taking on the latest Soviet armaments. This hardware included not less than 375 tanks (180 AMX-13s and 195 Sherman variants), 200 75mm and 60 105mm tank guns, 174 modern combat aircraft (including thirty-six Ouragan, eighty-four Mystère-IV, thirty Vautour, and twenty-four Super-Mystère B2 fighter-bombers), and the plans and materiel for one plutonium reactor.[232] To this was added eight torpedo boats, four mobile radar stations, hundreds of shoulder-mounted rocket launchers, dozens of artillery pieces, and explosives, munitions, support equipment, and replacement parts worth billions of francs.[233] This pattern of aid would continue into the early 1960s against a backdrop of broad public sympathy for the Jewish state. The years between 1954 and 1958 also saw

[230] Contrary to popular belief and the rhetoric of successive American administrations, the United States has not always been Israel's closest international partner; until 1967, this position was held by France. American-Israeli relations, by contrast, were rather cool until the late 1960s.

[231] "Exportation de Materiel de Guerre, Evolution de 1956 à 1961, Pays depassant 10 millions de NF," Table, 1961, GR 9 Q1 41, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, la Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France. Note that while the table cited here is in new francs, I have converted these sums into their pre-1960 old franc equivalents.

[232] The total values given above do not include the estimated 75 million USD allotted to the Israeli reactor at Dimona. Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 128. Levey estimates French military aid to Israel from 1955-1967 at over 600 million USD in total.

[233] "Recapitulation General par Gros Postes de 1948 à 1956," June 20, 1956, 20 R 159, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; "Fiche sur la Satisfaction des Besoins exprimés par Israël," April 26, 1956, 20 R 159, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

French and Israeli troops fight side by side against Nasser's Egypt, and stand together under American and Soviet diplomatic pressure.

Though the French-Israeli alliance was never formalized, there was, in the words of French ambassador Pierre-Eugène Gilbert, "no need for any treaty, just as in loving a woman there is no need for a marriage contract."[234] This lack of formality was a boon in disguise: French-Israeli aid maintained the irregular, semi-clandestine character it had assumed over the previous decade, and with it, an emphasis on individual initiative. The relationship which developed was "an alliance without protocol," forged not in the palaces of government, but in private homes, hunting lodges, and the residences of mistresses.[235] Above all, it was a friendship, built by and contingent on the personalities involved. Given the long history of French colonial and cultural ties to the Arab Mediterranean, how was such a relationship possible?

I contend that the French-Israeli relationship of the mid-1950s was the product of analogical thinking, French cultural images of Jewishness, and pragmatic considerations arising from the 1954-62 Algerian Revolt. Catalyzed by ministerial changeover and the Suez Crisis of 1956, this relationship was grounded as much in the ideas and memories of the 1940s as it was the political realities of the 1950s. Though the Algerian conflict was an essential factor shaping French-Israeli relations, its importance has been overstated in much recent scholarship, sometimes to the marginalization of other elements.[236] The

[234] U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 186, September 27, 1954, file 651.84a/9-2754, 1950-1954 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park (USNA), College Park, MD.

[235] This phrase belongs to British Zionist leader Jon Kimche. Jon Kimche, "Une alliance sans protocole," *L'arche* no. 1, January 1957.

[236] Those who argue for the centrality of Algeria include Sylvia Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance: France and Israel from Suez to the Six Day War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Zach Levey, (1997); Frédérique Schillo, *La politique française à l'égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012), Mordechai Bar-On, *The Gates of Gaza: Israel's Road to Suez and Back, 1955-1957*, trans. Ruth Rossing

argument in favor of Algerian centrality presumes a foreign policy formed by rational analysis. In this view, as France's war against the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) undermined its position in the Arab world, Israel became an increasingly appealing, if surrogate, partner. Israel offered a replacement market for French arms, and buttressed French Algeria as another obstacle to pan-Arab nationalism. Arming Israel and levering it against Egypt's pan-Arabist leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, accordingly appears to be a calculated move of political pragmatism. All this played an important role. But careful analysis of diplomatic, popular, and recently-declassified defense records reveal a more complex picture.

Algeria was never the only rationale used to advocate for French-Israeli ties. Important for some and incidental to others, the Algerian factor was often coupled with sentimental and ideological arguments about principle and Jewish vulnerability. This was not mere rhetoric: sentimental and ideological arguments circulated in private as well as public, framed French debate on Israel as a moral issue, and tipped the scales at critical moments. In her recent study of the French-Israeli relationship, Frédérique Schillo cautioned against adopting the "emotional register" of her subjects in favor of a foreign policy analysis privileging the records of the French Foreign Ministry.[237] I argue, by contrast, that the emotional dimension was central to the development and articulation of French-Israeli ties, which cannot be fully understood without an analysis of the ideas, images, and memories upon which they were predicated. In doing so, I emphasize the

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(New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), André Martin, "Military and Political Contradictions of the Suez Affair: A French Perspective," in Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), and Michel Abitbol, "Introduction," in Michel Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 2004).

[237] Schillo, 9.

contingency of the resulting relationship, the importance of contacts outside traditional diplomatic channels, and the agency of the individuals involved.[238]

Analyzing these factors additionally reveals that the question of French-Israeli ties was not simply a diplomatic one, but part of a wider debate about France itself. Like Algeria, debating Israel became a way of articulating an idealized France, one variably defined by its values, past, or geopolitical interest. Thus, in asking themselves how they should behave toward Israel, French politicians, officials, and journalists were often asking, by implication, what kind of society France wanted to be: when ethics and interest appeared to be at odds, which would France choose?

Israel also became a prism for thinking about French Algeria. For key politicians like Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury and Jacques Soustelle, Algeria's fate was linked to Israel's. In the minds of these men, Israel, like French Algeria, appeared as a stable island of western civilization amidst a sea of anti-French Arab nationalism. This image drew on longstanding colonial lenses that posited a civilizing west, of which Jews were a part, against volatile Arabs who could be only partially assimilated.[239] Israel's endurance in the face of Nasserist pan-Arabism convinced partisans of French Algeria that, if French

[238] Methodologically, my work aligns with the scholarship of Guy Ziv, "Shimon Peres and the French-Israeli Alliance, 1954-9," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:2 (April 2010): 406-29; Gadi Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage: French-Israel Relations, 1958-1967," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21:2 (2010): 240-58; Michael Bar-Zohar (1964, 1979, and 2007), and Tsilla Hershco, *Entre Paris et Jérusalem: La France, le sionisme et la création de l'état d'Israël, 1945-1949*, trans. Claire Darmon (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003), and builds on Alexander Wendt's constructivist approach to international politics; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[239] On French state images of "civilization," Muslims, and Jews in the Algerian context, see especially Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). As Shepard notes, the French government's decision to allow the "repatriation" of Algeria's Jews, but not its Muslims, enshrined the belief that Algeria's Muslims were not "European" and had not sufficiently assimilated. See also Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (Rochester: The University of Rochester Press, 2002). On the figuration of Jews within the civilizing framework, see Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

Algeria could mobilize its population along Israeli ideological and military models, it too could survive. By contrast, key French policy makers reasoned that, should Israel succumb to the hostility of its neighbors, the anti-French movement in Algeria would gain considerable strength and confidence. As a result, defending Israel became an extension of the defense of French Algeria, and the French empire writ large.[240] This seemed especially important in the wake of France's defeat in the 1946-54 Indochina War, which had stripped France of a major colony and called into question its standing as a great, imperial power. For many French nationalists, Algeria (together with its Israeli stanchion) thus became a line in the sand. Amalgamating the destinies of these two places impelled the formation of the French-Israeli military partnership, and made Israel a French issue as much as a Middle Eastern one. In these ways, Israel once again proved itself an important mirror for thinking about France.[241]

French images of Israel as "David," a resolute yet vulnerable and explicitly Jewish state, were central to these debates and the formation of French policy. As we have seen, the defining patterns and images of French-Israeli relations were established in the late 1940s. As revealed in public discourse surrounding the 1947 *Exodus* affair, many French people viewed Israel through the prism of the Second World War. In this light, Israelis were seen first as Jews and fellow victims of Nazism. Israel came to symbolize the survivor, one defined by a dual image of vulnerability and endurance.

[240] The French-Israeli relationship was not, however, a neo-colonial one. As Gadi Heimann has persuasively argued, the French-Israeli alliance of the mid-1950s was understood as a partnership of equals, rather than a patron-client relationship. This understanding would begin to change in the mid-1960s. See Gadi Heimann (2010).

[241] I build here on Ronald Schechter's study of Jewishness as a lens for conceptualizing the French republic. Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 7.

These images had been powerful in the late 1940s, but by 1956 they had assumed a new urgency, responding to and coloring French perceptions of growing tension in the Middle East. Egypt's Nasser had become increasingly bellicose in his rhetoric against Israel, and several of France's highest leaders were convinced of his "desire to one day strike Israel from the map."[242] As they listened to Nasser promise the destruction of the Jewish state, some French citizens heard an echo of the recent Nazi past. When Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on July 26, 1956, the parallel between Nasser and Hitler concretized around a powerful trope: that of the "new Munich." The Munich agreement of 1938, which had allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland under threat of force, had been universally repudiated after the Second World War as a symbol of appeasement. Faced with Nasser's *fait accompli* and overt hostility to the Jewish state, many French politicians and journalists turned to the symbolism of Munich and the Second World War to make sense of their present. This kind of analogical thinking was explicative, not instrumental, and provided a powerful framework with which to make sense of the present.[243] France's leaders used the Munich analogy in private as well as public to explain Nasser and the threat he posed to Israel and French Algeria. But the particular French-Israeli context made the Munich analogy particularly potent as a framework of understanding. For many key policy makers, Munich was something they had lived, something that had led indirectly to the

[242] Prime Minister Guy Mollet, quoted in *Journal Officiel de la République Française* (*JORF*), *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1956, No. 108 A.N., October 31, 1956, 4421-22.

[243] For an analysis of analogical thinking and the Munich analogy in foreign policy, see especially political scientist Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. I build on Khong's conclusion that such analogical thinking was not simply a misuse of the past, but a powerful symbolic framework through which to understand the world.

occupation of their country, and often, to personal incarceration.[244] That it was the *Jewish* state that was threatened by this "new Munich" added additional salience to the Munich analogy, as few of these politicians could disassociate the memory of Nazism from the victimization of the Jews. The centrality of the Munich trope in French policy toward Israel attests to the powerful impact of ideas in foreign policy, and only careful analysis can reveal how these ideas were translated into action.

1956 was thus a critical moment. If the *Exodus* affair of 1947 had allowed the French to express their remorse for the Holocaust, Suez gave them a chance for a do-over. This seeming Munich-in-miniature gave France an opportunity to correct its past mistakes, stand up to a "dictator" before it was too late, and seemingly save the Jews from destruction. Key French policy makers explained their actions in precisely these terms. In the 1957 analysis of US diplomatic officer Robert McBride, "many a Frenchman . . . viewed [Israel] sentimentally — as a sort of Buchenwald with trees and cows . . . . France will defend Israel whenever and wherever it believes it necessary. In the process it will feel much self-satisfaction."[245] The 1956 Suez Crisis illustrated the enduring power of the Second World War as a lens for thinking about Israel, and served as an opportunity for France to redefine its relationship to its wartime past. By opposing Nasser, France could repudiate the appeasement of Munich, and stave off a possible massacre of Israeli civilians. Major currents of French public discourse reflected this perception, and consequently, when the Arab-Israeli Sinai War broke out on October 29,

[244] While the Munich trope was not new in 1956, having already appeared during the Korean War, for example, it seems to have had particular resonance for the French, who had themselves been occupied by Nazi Germany.

[245] U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Airgram 1464, February 15, 1957, file 651.84a/2-1557, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

1956, a significant sector of the French public supported their government's involvement and its policy of arming Israel.

French-Israeli relations were accordingly contingent on powerful images and analogies that coupled with and occasionally displaced the pragmatic in the formation of policy. The lenses of David, Munich, and Algeria distorted the Israeli reality, and left in its place an imaginary Israel whose meaning largely derived from French cultural and ideational currents. These lenses should not be dismissed as hollow cognitive shortcuts. Instead, they were ethical and ideological frameworks facilitating the conceptualization of the present in light of a mythologized past. In order to be fully understood, we must frame the French-Israeli relationship, and international diplomacy more broadly, as the product of these types of imaginaries, and not solely materialist considerations. The French-Israeli friendship was accordingly catalyzed, rather than created by the Algerian War and Suez Crisis, and remained contingent on the images and experiences of the 1940s. These images would survive Israel's battlefield victory over Egypt and continue to operate into the 1970s, demonstrating that, once formed, such imaginaries were slow to change.[246]

The key factors facilitating the rapid expansion of the French-Israeli friendship in the mid-1950s were shifts in the composition of the French cabinet and the ministerial balance of power. Whereas Israel's closest friends had had limited power to shape foreign policy in the early 1950s, by 1954 this was beginning to change. This period of transformation can be broken into two phases. Under the June 1954 – January 1956

[246] Here I contest Jonathan Judaken's claim that the Suez War inverted Israel's image on the French Left, shifting it from that of "victim" to "perpetrator." While this was partially true for French Communists, I will demonstrate that much public discourse from the Socialist Left remained beholden to earlier, sympathetic images. Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 198.

governments of Pierre Mendès-France and Edgar Faure, French policy on Israel continued to be contested by the rival ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and the Interior. Defense and the Interior's oversight of the 1954 Algerian War gave them an inflated voice in foreign policy, and Nasser's support of FLN rebels made him a mutual enemy of France and Israel. Consequently, these ministries felt that it was within their purview to thwart Nasser's ambitions on Algeria and Israel alike, and acted to do so by promoting military cooperation with Israel. Often, this cooperation was pursued against the wishes (and sometimes outside the knowledge) of the Foreign Ministry officers of the Quai d'Orsay, who continued to advocate for a policy of reconciliation with the Arab world. This period marked the ascendancy of middle-tier officials in the formation of French-Israeli relations, as individuals like P.E. Gilbert and Shimon Peres advocated against and circumvented Foreign Ministry opposition. Their efforts to build a framework of cooperation outside the traditional channels of international relations made the French-Israeli friendship possible, and gave it its distinctly unorthodox character.

A second phase began with the February 1956 government of Guy Mollet, which placed the key ministerial triumvirate of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and the prime ministry into the hands of men who viewed Israel primarily through the lenses of Munich, the Holocaust, and Algeria. Critically, the French Foreign Ministry, which had heretofore maintained its staunch opposition to partnership with Israel, now became the purview Socialist minister Christian Pineau. Pineau was an outsider to the world of foreign affairs, open to sentimental arguments, and often at odds with a Quai establishment largely beholden to traditionalist positions on the Middle East. Against the recommendations of his subordinates, Pineau became a supporter of French-Israeli cooperation. While this did

not erase all disagreement, France's top officials were at least now pulling in the same general direction. The harmonization of these key ministries in 1956 produced an unprecedented level of French-Israeli cooperation. Yet in bypassing the French diplomatic corps and taking foreign policy planning directly unto themselves, these ministers set a lasting precedent. For the next eighteen years, policy on Israel would remain the personal purview of the head of state, to Israel's eventual dismay.

The unofficial French-Israeli alliance of the mid-1950s was thus the product of already established patterns and images. These were reenergized by internal political shift, and international developments that lent new urgency to the question of Israel. Images of Israel as a vulnerable nation of survivors continued to predominate French public discourse on Israel after 1948. These images, together with the stigma of appeasement, underpinned the powerful trope of the 'new Munich,' and made the Suez Crisis a matter of principle as much as politics. The Algerian War was an equally important precondition, undermining French efforts to rebuild its position in the Arab world, and creating common ground for a French-Israeli partnership. Finally, Israel functioned as a vehicle for articulating and reflecting upon France's relationship to its wartime past, French Algeria, and its republican present, at both the popular and official levels. Rooted in the experiences and images of the 1940s, these factors dictated the course of the French-Israeli alliance, and would continue to do so over the next fifteen years. Ultimately, French-Israeli relations were contingent on the people involved at the levels of both policy formation and execution. Turning to the realm of ideas allows us to understand their agency in this often-oversimplified period, and exposes the powerful role of imaginaries in policy formation.

Context, Contingency, and the Ascendency of the Middle-Men, 1954-1955

Israel's first persistent overtures to the French defense establishment came at a time when standing French policy on the Middle East began to appear increasingly untenable. Into late 1953 and 1954, dominant circles within both the Foreign and Defense ministries had continued to view France as "a Muslim power, whose traditional interests in the Middle East [were well] known."[247] These included a defense of the regional status quo as enshrined by the Tripartite Declaration of 1950; French cultural interests and holy sites in Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt; a growing Syrian arms market; and the steady flow of oil.[248] Syria was seen as France's most important partner for achieving these goals, and French-Israeli relations "were deliberately sacrificed" in order to maintain Syrian goodwill.[249] But between February 1954 and February 1955 this position suffered a series of setbacks that created space for the exploration of alternative partnerships.

In February 1954, France's Syrian partner, the military dictator Adib Shishakli, fell to a coup d'état. The government of his successor, Hashim al-Atassi, had troubling pan-Arabist leanings, and aroused concerns that Syria might be annexed to Iraq as part of a resurrected vision of 'Greater Syria.'[250] As a result, the French Foreign Ministry was forced to put its Syria-centric policy on hold.[251] The Quai's worries were compounded by British and American efforts to encourage anti-communist Arab nationalisms as a

[247] Lt-Colonel de Boisredon, "Bordereau d'Envoi à la Présidence de la République," no. 4273 EMFA/2/D/S, December 2, 1954, GR 1 Q 60, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[248] "A/s. Réajustement de la politique française au Moyen-Orient après la visite du Général Dayan.-", Note de Dossier, August 11, 1954, 218QO50, Israël 1953-1959, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France.
[249] *Ibid.* These circles felt that Syria could be influenced through its army, and between 1949 and 1952 had accordingly provided Syria with military materiel valued at some ten billion francs. Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 415.
[250] Schillo, 492.
[251] "A/s. Réajustement de la politique française au Moyen-Orient après la visite du Général Dayan.-", Note de Dossier, August 11, 1954, 218QO50, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

framework on which to build an anti-Soviet regional defense organization. Annoyed that it was being excluded from this organization and feeling the backlash of Arab nationalism in North Africa and the Levant, France now announced its opposition to the proposed 'Baghdad Pact.'[252] As a result, by mid-1954, France found its position unexpectedly aligned with that of Israel, which shared its opposition to pan-Arabism, Greater Syria, and the Baghdad Pact. The Israelis had also expressed interest in purchasing French arms, adding an economic incentive that helped make up for lost Syrian sales.[253] As a result, though many within the Quai d'Orsay remained committed to rebuilding France's position in the Arab Middle East, international developments had created fertile ground for a policy reevaluation.

At the time, however, few French diplomats saw much value in expanding the French-Israeli relationship; Israel was a pariah in the Middle East, and most felt that partnering with Israel would only worsen France's standing in the Arab world. But a handful of mid-tier French and Israeli officials felt differently, and their individual efforts to challenge the standing wisdom of their respective Foreign Ministries laid the groundwork of the future French-Israeli alliance. The first impetus to alliance thus came neither from the top nor the bottom, but the middle, as those tasked with the execution of policy sought to become its architects. The most successful of these officials shared two essential skills: an ability to creatively circumvent obstacles in their way, and a capacity to tailor their arguments to fit a variety of audiences. The growth of the French-Israeli friendship was conditional on their skillfulness in doing so, and it is their flexibility

[252] Schillo, 493. The Pact would form in February 1955, with Britain, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Pakistan as members.
[253] *Ibid.,* 536, 570.

which accounts for the fusion of the sentimental and the pragmatic which so defined French-Israeli relations.

The most important of these mid-tier officials were French Ambassador Pierre-Eugène Gilbert, French defense aide Abel Thomas, and Israeli Director General of Defense Shimon Peres.[254] Gilbert had become France's ambassador to Israel in late 1952, and from the outset had advocated against the Quai's conventional wisdom in favor of expanded military cooperation with Israel. A career diplomat who had worked for Free France, Gilbert did not feel himself bound by the dictates of protocol. Rather, he adhered to the maxim that "everything depend[s] upon human contacts," and took it upon himself to foster a closer French-Israeli relationship.[255] His relations with Israel reflected his commitment to this goal: Gilbert was one of the few foreign diplomats to learn Hebrew, and his relations with his hosts were warm, well-publicized, and direct.[256] Gilbert also sympathized personally with Israel's position — too much so, in the eyes of his Paris-based colleagues — and became Israel's primary spokesman within the Quai d'Orsay.[257]

This sympathy was grounded in both sentimental and pragmatic factors. Gilbert viewed Israel partly through the symbolic lens of David, the brave yet vulnerable Jew. Though Israel possessed, in Gilbert's words, "a strong army," "intelligent leaders," and a "calm and soberly resolved" population, it remained a place where "the Jew . . . now has

[254] Abel Thomas will be discussed later in this chapter in the context of the ministerial changeover that granted his boss, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, the key Ministry of Defense.
[255] U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 363, November 25, 1959, file 651.84a/11-2559, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 69: General Records of the Department of State, UNSA; Schillo, 521.
[256] *Ibid.*, 511.
[257] Gilbert's deep identification with his host country likely factored into his recall and subsequent retirement in 1959. Tel Aviv to State, Despatch 363, November 25, 1959, 651.84a/11-2559, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 69, USNA.

his back to the wall."[258] In the face of Egypt and Syria's determination "to destroy Israel," he argued, Israel faced a permanent struggle for survival. In Gilbert's eyes, Israel's defensive needs were accordingly immediate and legitimate, and demanded counterbalancing lest Israel soon be confronted with a dangerous military disadvantage. But Gilbert also saw the pragmatic gains to be had from a French-Israeli partnership, and where sentimental arguments fell flat, he was capable of shifting gears. In telegrams to French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault, Gilbert accordingly argued that sacrificing the Israeli arms market to appease the Arab League was not paying off. As he pointed out, League representatives continued to voice hostility toward France, and were turning increasingly to Britain for their military needs.[259] The Quai's response was cool, so Gilbert turned elsewhere. He now promoted direct contacts and intelligence sharing between the French and Israeli defense ministries, and encouraged the French Defense Ministry to make the Israeli army a bastion of French influence in the Middle East.[260] It was Gilbert, too, who first consistently linked supporting Israel to the Algerian rebellion, and he facilitated a visit to France by Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan in August 1954 for the purpose of arms procurement.[261] Though a minority voice, Gilbert's advocacy had provided a broad framework upon which military ties with Israel could be predicated, and

[258] P.E. Gilbert à le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 1421/AL, "A/s. Israël à croisée des chemins," October 30, 1955, 218QO52, Israël 1953-1959, MAE. Similar reports appeared within the Ministry of Defense. See for example Général de Berchoux, Rapport 867 E.M.C.E.A./2/D, "Rapport du Général de Berchoux sur son séjour en Israël," July 6, 1954, 218QO51, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[259] P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 133/AL, "A.s. influence française dans l'armée israélien et fourniture d'armes," January 11, 1954, 218QO51, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[260] Schillo, 512-13.
[261] This deal entailed an agreement in principle for the provision of 25 Ouragan fighter-bombers, 30 AMX-13 tanks, radar equipment, SS-10 anti-tank missiles, and six Mystère-II fighter-bombers. Levey, 61. It would be an exaggeration to call Gilbert a rebel within the Quai d'Orsay, however: he remained committed to the French position in Syria, and proposed arming Israel under the understanding that it would not then embark on an offensive against this important French ally. He had far fewer qualms about military action against Egypt, however.

by early 1956, both his pragmatic and sentimental arguments would be adopted at the highest levels.

In the short term, however, Israel needed arms, and twenty-nine year old Shimon Peres was not content to wait. His efforts attest most to the power of the individual in the formation of French-Israeli relations, and to the productive fusion of the sentimental and the pragmatic at the interpersonal level. In 1952, as Deputy and later Director General of Defense, Peres was charged with finding suppliers for the Israeli military.[262] Turning to France was his idea. As Peres later explained it, "France had suffered greatly during the war and at the hands of the Nazis directly. I felt they could understand our agony and our alarm."[263] The Anglo-oriented Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, was staunchly against the idea, however, and Peres, who did not even speak French, was not taken seriously. But Peres was undeterred; he appealed to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, and was told to go ahead. By late 1953 he was in Paris. There he worked with Israeli military attaché Yosef Nahmias to establish direct ties with the French defense establishment outside the channels (and largely, knowledge) of either country's foreign ministry.[264] In doing so Peres became, in most respects, the architect and executor of Israeli policy toward France.[265]

Over the course of hundreds of meetings with French political, military and cultural leaders, Peres's instincts about France proved to be correct. Though keenly aware

[262] Peres became Director General in 1953.
[263] Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015. As Guy Ziv notes, "Peres was virtually alone in trying to steer Israeli procurement efforts in the direction of France," and it was largely through his efforts that the attempt was made. Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 412.
[264] Sharett and Israel's ambassador in France, Jacob Tsur, would often protest Peres's activities, and were frequently left in the dark. Matti Golan, *Shimon Peres: A Biography* trans. Ida Friedman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 38, 41. Zach Levey notes, however, that though Sharett was initially opposed to the French angle, his ministry "spared no effort to obtain arms from that country." Levey, 57.
[265] Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 420-21.

of the complexities of France's diplomatic position, Peres found that sentimental arguments resonated strongly with his interlocutors, and did not hesitate to mobilize them when it served his needs. As Peres recorded in his diary, "In France there was a deep sympathy for the Jewish people, to its fate, to the terrible tragedy that it suffered . . . . We received many negative answers, but we never had the feeling that the answers were final . . . . And even though you may lose a debate . . . you can suddenly subdue [the French] with a sentimental argument."[266] Outside the detached experts of the Quai d'Orsay, Peres later recalled,

> Israel appeared in quite another light . . . . To them, Israel was not an unfortunate new spot on the map . . . but a bright and hopeful link in the chain of Jewry . . . . It was natural that the people of post-war France, who had themselves tasted the bitterness of Nazi horror, should feel a kinship with the victims of Nazism . . . and should wish to help the pioneers of Israel create conditions in which another Holocaust would never again be possible. Many of the new leaders of the Fourth Republic had spent terms in Nazi concentration camps. There they had seen what was done to the Jews; they had seen the gas chambers, seen the ovens, smelt the smoke. For many, therefore, the Jewish tragedy was felt as a personal experience.[267]

Peres's remarks highlight what many of his interlocutors felt instinctively: that Israel and "the Jews," and specifically those who had suffered in the Holocaust, were indelibly linked. This critical semantic connection, rooted in Israel's self-identification as a Jewish state, its absorption of Holocaust survivors, and the overlapping goals of Zionists and Jewish Displaced Persons in the late 1940s, is key to understanding the welcome Peres received. Israelis *qua* Jews were seen by many as a nation of survivors, fellow victims who had suffered enough, and therefore deserved French support. Peres added to these sentimental arguments by emphasizing Israel's utility as a strategic partner against Nasser's Egypt, its value as a source of intelligence on the Algerian revolt, and its

[266] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres: The Biography* (New York: Random House, 2007), 108.
[267] Shimon Peres, *David's Sling* (London: Weidenfelt and Nicolson, 1970), 44-45.

potential as a market for French arms. The fusion of these sentimental and pragmatic arguments proved a potent combination.

One of the first officials Peres approached was Israel's longtime admirer General Marie-Pierre Kœnig who, by 1954, had become Minister of National Defense and the Armed Forces in the government of Pierre Mendès-France. Peres had turned to Kœnig because Mendès-France, though personally sympathetic to Israel, was also committed to rebuilding French standing in the Arab world, and was thus uncomfortable providing Israel the kind of military assistance Peres had in mind.[268] In his 1958 memoirs Mendès-France would recall how, "in order to not hurt the feelings of the Muslims of North Africa, we did not want to enter into relations that were too close or too friendly with Israel."[269] Instead, in January 1955, he instructed Kœnig to expand arms sales to Egypt and Syria "as much as possible," insofar as they "constitute an important factor in the French presence in this region."[270]

Kœnig, however, had no qualms about forming closer ties with Israel. It was Kœnig who had been so impressed by Jewish soldiers during the 1942 Battle of Bir-Hakeim, and he wasted no time in recalling it to Peres. Kœnig was now in a position to express his admiration concretely, and he continued to view Israelis as brothers-in-arms imbued with the spirit of the French Resistance. The brewing storm in Algeria also left him cool toward Nasser, and he was committed to weakening Egyptian military power

[268] Mendès-France was Jewish, and by 1958 he would call for closer relations with Israel. However, as Jules Moch and Daniel Mayer had done during the *Exodus* affair of 1947, he took considerable pains to prevent his confessional identity from shaping his outlook on Israel. In this he embraced the strictly confessional identity of a republican *israélite*.

[269] Pierre Mendès-France, *La politique et la vérité: Juin 1955-septembre 1958* (Paris: René Julliard, 1958), 47-48.

[270] Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à M. le Ministre de la Défense Nationale, No. 64 C.M., January 19, 1955, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

however he could. As he later recalled, "I am proud to have been the first to help the Israeli army during these difficult hours. When Peres, and later Dayan, came to see me . . . . I was convinced already, and the conversation didn't need to take long." Kœnig promised to treat the Israeli army like his own, and agreed to provide it with 30 AMX-13 tanks and a number of 155mm howitzers.[271] Executing the deal proved tricky, however: this was among the first official arms agreements between France and Israel, and standardized contract forms did not yet exist. Rather than risk Foreign Ministry interference, Peres and Kœnig settled the matter on the spot. As Peres recalled, this entailed "a somewhat abnormal procedure, stimulated, I should add, by the fact that the head of the [Defense] Ministry's sales division was a retired French Colonel whose dream it was to bring his wife on a visit to the Holy Land."[272] Without consulting his government, Peres wrote out a check for one million dollars, paid "[for] an appropriate number of guns," and the deal was settled.

Peres had a similar encounter with Mendès-France's Secretary of State for Air, Diomède Catroux, whose attitude toward Israel was deeply shaped by his experiences during the Second World War. In 1943, at age twenty-three, Catroux had been charged with the care of Jewish children whose parents had been killed. As he recalled, "I suddenly found myself faced with eleven pairs of eyes, eleven hungry mouths . . . it gave me a shock. This is when I began to reflect." This experience, together with postwar service in Nazi concentration camps, "awakened my humanitarian conscience, and I

[271] Probably twenty-six guns, of which eighteen were delivered by the end of 1954. He would also propose a deal for Mystère-II aircraft, but it fell through. Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015; Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les Gaullistes et Israël* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 51; Schillo, 553; Golan, 37; Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale à Le President du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, No. 1720 DN/EG, August 5, 1954, GR 8 Q 321, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[272] Peres, 50-51.

found myself attached to these children, these Jews."[273] When Peres visited him, Catroux accordingly said to himself "that I could not become an accomplice to a new massacre, and refuse to help the Israeli people defend itself."[274] For Catroux, the Jews, Israeli or otherwise, were defined by their vulnerability. By acting in 1954, Catroux felt he could prevent a repetition of the suffering he had witnessed a decade earlier. In December, he signed a contract for thirty Mystère-II fighter-bombers, and promised "all my support" in future negotiations.[275]

Peres had dozens of similar encounters. Though the pragmatic dimensions of a French-Israeli partnership (pressuring Nasser, intelligence sharing, and an arms market) were always important, sentimental factors were frequently evoked alongside them, and often contributed to Peres's success. Prime Minister Edgar Faure, who replaced Mendès-France in February 1955, framed his support for Israel as part of a general sympathy for minorities grounded in his background as a Huguenot and a Socialist. Faure consequently instructed the Israeli ambassador to tell Ben-Gurion "I will always do my best to help you. You can count on me."[276]

Faure's new Defense Minister, Pierre Billotte, similarly cited the Jewishness of his wife and mother among the reasons he sympathized with Israel. Peres had also appealed to Billotte's right-wing leanings, and the Defense Minister responded favorably

[273] Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-Secret,* 76.
[274] *Ibid.,* 75; Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres,* 109. Catroux's concerns would have been heightened by internal Foreign and Defense Ministry reports, which consistently stressed the arms disparity facing Israel. See for example Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Sous-Direction du Levant à Ammane, Telegram 453/56, "Fournitures d'armements à Israël," March 29, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[275] This was eventually whittled down to six by Quai objections. Secrétaire d'État aux Forces Armées "Air" à le Ministre de la Défense Israelienne, Letter 0003/SAF.Exp, January 5, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; "Avenant No.1 au Contrat du 23 Aout 1954," December 27, 1954, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Though the contract cited above stipulates nine aircraft, six were ultimately delivered. Bar-Zohar reports that Catroux agreed in principle to a number of Ouragan fighter aircraft as well, likely either twelve or twenty-five, but they are not specified in the contract cited above. Bar-Zohar, *Suez*: *Ultra-Secret*, 76.
[276] Jacob Tsur, *Prelude à Suez: Journal d'une ambassade 1953-1956* (Paris: Presses de la Cite, 1968), 214.

to the idea that "a strong Israel" might "defeat the Egyptians," and thereby curtail support to the FLN.[277] Consequently, in October 1955, convinced that "the danger [facing] Israel is immediate and real," Billotte and Faure circumvented French Foreign Minister Antoine Pinay to approve a sizable contract for Mystère-II aircraft.[278] This was but one agreement of many: between late 1953 and December 1955, various voices in France had committed themselves to provide Israel with at least fifty-five AMX-13 tanks, two hundred 75mm canons, fifteen Vautour fighter-bombers, thirty Fouga-Magister training aircraft, forty-four Mystère-IIs, and twelve Mystère-IV fighter-bombers. To these were added 5 AMX tanks, twenty-four Ouragan fighter-bombers, eighteen 155mm artillery pieces, fifty-five refitted Sherman tanks, and thousands of pounds of munitions and support equipment already in Israeli hands.[279]

Fierce inter-ministerial infighting made following through on these promises difficult, however, and most agreements were annulled, modified, or delayed. The French Foreign Ministry was not content to stand idle, and between 1953 and 1956 it exerted a tremendous effort to cancel, stall, downgrade, and counterbalance shipments to Israel. The results can only be described as chaotic. Virtually every agreement signed was contested by Foreign Minister Pinay and his officers. The Quai raised protests when it was not consulted, deployed delaying tactics to hold up deliveries, and undermined deals

[277] Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres,* 112.

[278] The deal was later modified to include Mystère-IVs, but ultimately came to naught due to Foreign Ministry opposition and the internal needs of the French military. Israel would not receive Mystère-IVs until April 1956. *Ibid.,*112-16; Tsur, 261.

[279] France had furnished Israel considerable military aid before 1953 as well, including at least sixty Mosquito fighters in 1950, and one hundred Sherman tanks in 1951. Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Note pour le Directeur Général Politique, August 17, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Affaires Économiques et Financiers, Note pour le Directeur du Cabinet du Ministre, "Vente d'armes à Israël," April, 1956, 218QO43, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées à le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et al., Commission Interministérielle pour L'étude des Exportations de Matériels de Guerre (CIEEMG) Report 0108DN/EG, January 14, 1956, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Levey, 64.

at the Near East Arms Coordinating Commission (NEACC), the Tripartite Declaration's regulating body.[280] Pinay and his men remained committed to rebuilding France's position in the Arab world, and felt that the Defense Ministry's backroom dealings would undermine months of diplomatic efforts to reconcile with Cairo and Damascus, and end their anti-French propaganda.[281] Eager to demonstrate France's regional impartiality to its Arab partners, the Quai now delivered significant quantities of AMX-13 tanks, Mystère-II fighter-bombers, and artillery to Egypt, as an assurance of goodwill.[282] To those outraged by Nasser's support of the FLN, and particularly those who viewed Israel through the prism of the Second World War, these deliveries must have seemed like appeasement. But Quai efforts ensured that, prior to 1956, only a fraction of what Israel was promised was ultimately delivered.

Consequently, between late 1953 and early 1956 we can speak of not one, but two French policies toward the Middle East. These were the product of divergent visions of the French past and Mediterranean future, a split between those whose outlooks were shaped by the trauma of the Second World War and a hostility to Arab nationalism, and a professional diplomatic corps committed to its self-perception as a "Muslim power."[283]

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[280] Direction Afrique-Levant, Sous-Direction du Levant à Tel-Aviv, "Vente d'armes et d'avions," June 25, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Sous-Direction d'Afrique à Pinay, Telegram, October 29, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Le Secrétaire Général, Note, "A.s. Démarche de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël auprès du Secrétaire Général," November 17, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

[281] Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à le Ministre de la Défense Nationale, Section des Cessions à l'Étranger, "A.s. du programme de livraison de matériel de guerre à Israël," July 19, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Direction d'Afrique-Levant, "Note pour le Directeur General Politique, August 17, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à le Ministre de la Défense National et des Forces Armées, "A.s.- Cession de biréacteurs 'Fouga' à Israël.-", July 23, 1955, 218Qo40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Secrétariat Général à Pinay, Telegram Geneve 304/307, November 10, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

[282] The Quai sold at least fifty to sixty AMX-13s to Egypt, as well as artillery pieces, transports, and twenty to twenty-five aircraft. It had also negotiated with Syria for the provision of forty tanks and fifty to fifty-five artillery pieces. Schillo 592; Levey, 62-67.

[283] Peres explained as much to senior Israeli Defense Ministry officers in April 1956. Golan, 43.

Mutually inhibiting, neither faction achieved its goals. It would take a ministerial and international shakeup to break the deadlock.

Old Images, New Actors: 1956 and the Turn Toward Alliance

The second phase in the development of the French-Israeli alliance began with a shock that added new urgency to Israel's pleas for assistance. Feeling pressured by the February 1955 formation of the Baghdad Pact, Nasser had turned to the Soviet Union for assistance.[284] He got it on September 27, 1955 in the form of an arms shipment that even the Quai recognized as a decisive rupture in the balance of arms in the Middle East.[285] The shipment, delivered by way of Czechoslovakia, included 230 T-34 tanks, 100-170 MiG-15 and MiG-17 fighters, 50 Ilyushin-28 bombers, 70 Il-15 transport aircraft, and 200 armored personnel carriers, together with anti-aircraft guns, small arms, munitions, and approximately 600 artillery pieces of various types. A naval package of two destroyers, six submarines, and several torpedo boats was also included.[286] French observers estimated that Israel now faced a 3:1 deficit in terrestrial and aerial hardware, as well as a significant qualitative disadvantage.[287] In the eyes of French anti-communists, the Czech delivery also landed Nasser squarely in the Soviet camp, making Egypt a dangerous beachhead of communist penetration in the Middle East. Edgar Faure and Pierre Billotte consequently sought to counterbalance the Czech shipment by forcing through a sale of 12 Mystère-IV aircraft to Israel, but their days in office were drawing to

[284] Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*, trans. Peretz Kidron (New York: Delacorte Press, 1979), 218.
[285] Schillo, 636.
[286] Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 418. Historians are divided as to the exact quantities involved; see Golan, 35. Available French primary documents evidenced the widest discrepancy over the number of combat aircraft delivered to Egypt, though agreed that by mid-1956 it amounted to at least 200. État-Major de l'Armée, 2ème Bureau, "Livraison de Materiel Sovietique aux Pays Arabes," October 1956, GR 1 Q 60, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Rapport sur l'Operation d'Égypte, Tome 1, La Préparation, Annex 5, December 1956, 11 C 2307 AI, sub-series C, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[287] Schillo, 593-94.

a close.[288] France's full response would be made by new leaders, ones more sympathetic to Israel, and less understanding of Nasser. This new cabinet, led by Guy Mollet, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, and Christian Pineau, viewed unfolding events through the dual lenses of Munich and Algeria, and propelled French-Israeli military and diplomatic cooperation to unprecedented heights.

Guy Mollet came to power on February 1, 1956. Mollet was a longtime Socialist, former Resistance member, and Vice-President of the Socialist International. His center-left government, which included Socialists, Radicals, left-wing Gaullists, and liberal centrists, was anti-communist in outlook and committed to restoring quiet in Algeria. When Peres approached him shortly before his election, Mollet had expressed a sympathy grounded in ideology and his recollections of the Second World War. Mollet's wartime experiences led him to view Israelis as fellow victims and enemies of fascism, and he admired the "model of a socialist society" that Ben-Gurion's Labor Party was building in Israel.[289] When Peres suggested that Israel had been let down by Socialists before, referencing Ernest Bevin's 1945 - 1951 British government, Mollet's response was adamant: "I shall never be a Bevin," he promised. The day following his election, Mollet telephoned Peres and invited him to Paris, eager to keep his word.[290]

Over the next several months, it became clear that Mollet's attitude toward the Middle East was shaped by his perception of the failings of European socialism in the late 1930s and 1940s. Munich was the central symbol of this retrospective. As Mollet watched Nasser fan the flames of pan-Arabism in North Africa and the Middle East, he

[288] Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées à le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et al., CIEEMG Report 0108DN/EG, January 14, 1956, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Schillo, 636.
[289] Tsur, 324-25, Peres, 59.
[290] *Ibid.;* Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.

saw a direct analog to Hitler's rise in the 1930s. Mollet had read Nasser's manifesto, *The Philosophy of the Revolution,* and viewed it as Nasser's *Mein Kampf*.[291] It convinced him that Nasser was "a dictator" motivated by "pan-Arab racism, the hatred of the West, [and] religious fanaticism," and that he threatened Israel's very existence.[292] Thus, even before Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, Mollet was convinced that Nasser had to be checked.[293]

The nationalization of Suez and subsequent closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping cemented Mollet's conviction that he was facing a new "Munich." In his 1958 memoirs, Mollet recalled that he and his cabinet were dominated "by an anti-Munich reflex, and it was a good reflex." Nasser, they believed, aimed "first [at] Suez, then [to] erase Israel from the map . . . . We wanted to put a stop to the expansionism of this new dictator before it was too late."[294] This fear of acting "too late" was central to Mollet's outlook, and stemmed from his conviction that the Second World War and the Holocaust could have been avoided had French and British Socialists dared to act against Hitler in 1938.[295] Israel's Jewishness heightened the stakes: in Mollet's mind, Israelis were defined by their vulnerability, and remained the "survivors of the ghettoes of Europe, [the] survivors of the death camps, [the] sons of the martyrs of Nazism." Saving

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[291] Guy Mollet, *Bilan et perspectives socialistes* (Paris: Plon, 1958), 31.
[292] *Ibid*; Abel Thomas, *Comment Israël fût sauvé: Les secrets de l'expédition de Suez* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), 132-33.
[293] This is particularly significant as *The Philosophy of the Revolution* says very little about Israel directly. Dennis Lefebvre, *Les secrets de l'expédition de Suez, 1956* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 12-13. There is no shortage of important studies on the origins of the 1956 Suez Crisis. See, among others, Mordechai Bar-On (1994); Lefebvre (2010); Michael Oren, "Escalation to Suez: The Egyptian-Israel Border War, 1949-1956" *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no.2, Studies on War (April, 1989): 347-73; and Selwyn Ilan Troen and Moshe Shemesh, eds., *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956: Retrospective and Reappraisal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
[294] Mollet, 31-32. His account is corroborated by the firsthand accounts of Peres and Abel Thomas. Peres, 194-95; Thomas, 111.
[295] Mollet, 31.

them from a new genocide was, in Mollet's words, "my duty as a democrat and a Frenchmen."[296] This was not simply rhetoric conceived for Mollet's memoir: in a July 1956 meeting with US President Dwight Eisenhower, Mollet and his foreign minister, Christian Pineau, characterized Nasser's actions as a repeat of Munich and the German remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, and called for a strong and immediate western response.[297] In this sense, Nasser's apparent threat provided Mollet and his ministers a chance to repudiate the shame of Munich and posit an alternate model of postwar French socialism, one ready to stand up against dictators, and one that was capable of protecting the Jews.[298] When Mollet decided to support Israel, he was accordingly participating in a larger debate about France itself, arguing that the values of the French people and the safety of the Jewish state could not be sacrificed to the interests of French diplomacy.

Mollet's hostility toward Nasser was further enflamed by the ongoing Algerian revolt. Though he personally objected to colonialism and had applauded Mendès-France's withdrawal from Morocco and Tunisia in 1955-56, Mollet felt that a negotiated settlement on Algeria was conditional on the defeat of the FLN. Algeria was home to over a million non-Muslim French citizens, and Mollet's Socialist government was determined to protect their rights as a privileged minority. However, the violence and rhetoric of FLN hardliners left Mollet concerned for the fate of Algeria's "Europeans," should the FLN prove victorious. Algeria was also legally a part of the French Republic,

[296] *Ibid.*; Bar-Zohar, *Suez*: *Ultra-Secret*, 141; see also Jean-Paul Cointet's chapter in Troen and Shemesh (2010).
[297] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1965), 36.
[298] On the symbolism of Jews as a metric for French republicanism, see Schechter (2003); Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); and Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

and many French Socialists, Radicals, and Gaullists felt that France could not afford another retreat in the wake of France's 1954 defeat in Indochina. Consequently, Mollet hoped that France and Algeria would retain their ties, and in March 1956 he told the National Assembly that "a France without Algeria would not be France."[299] Faced with detailed reports on Nasser's military, moral, financial, and diplomatic assistance to the FLN, Mollet had every reason to oppose Nasser on the grounds of national interest as well.[300]

The Algerian dimension was more important to Mollet's new Defense Minister, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, and it was his ministry that directly oversaw military aid to Israel. Bourgès-Maunoury had been a decorated leader in the French Resistance, and had spent time in a German internment camp. It was during the war that his sympathy for Jewish statehood was born, and he afterward felt a moral obligation to the people of Israel.[301] After the war, Bourgès-Maunoury had joined the right-wing of the Radical party, and served as Edgar Faure's interior minister in 1955. In that capacity he had been charged with the maintenance of order in French Algeria, and was angry to discover that French weapons, sold to Egypt by the Quai d'Orsay, had been passed on to the FLN, and were being used against his men.[302] In May 1955, he decided to reach out to Nasser's other enemy, the Israelis, with whom Bourgès-Maunoury sympathized as fellow

[299] Schillo, 656.
[300] *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (*DDF*)*, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 8, 1956 Tome II, 1er juillet - 23 octobre 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 301, October 20, 1956; Christian Pineau, *1956/Suez* (Paris: Opera Mundi, 1976), 52.
[301] Paul Marcus, *60 ans d'amours contrariées: Les rélations franco-israéliennes de 1948 à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi, 2008), 92-93.
[302] Thomas, 25.

socialists and enemies of fascism.[303] His aides first made contact with Israeli military attaché Yosef Nahmias. The choice of venue was telling in its symbolism: their first meeting took place in the home of Couitéas de Faquenberge, a hero of the Resistance. Though Bourgès-Maunoury had no direct control over arms sales as Interior Minister, he promised to use his influence to promote them, and proposed an exchange of intelligence.[304] By February 1956, however, Bourgès-Maunoury had become defense minister, and he used his new position to funnel significant aid to the Jewish state. As Peres recalled, Bourgès-Maunoury became "the most forceful friend I could have imagined. He spoke directly and said 'We shall work together without any formalities and bureaucracies so that we shall have no intervention [from] the Quai d'Orsay.'"[305] His personal determination to strengthen Israel, even if it meant going around the Quai, was a critical precondition for the growth of the French-Israeli alliance.

But Bourgès-Maunoury's support for Israel was not entirely of his own devising: to a considerable extent, he was led to Israel through his aides, and they deserve our particular attention. The most important of these was Bourgès-Maunoury's chief of staff, Abel Thomas. Thomas, like most of Bourgès-Maunoury's staff, had met his boss serving in the French Resistance, and had followed him into government service as the director general of the Interior Ministry. Thomas had also lost a brother in Buchenwald in 1945, and was strongly motivated by the "anti-Munich reflex."[306] Listening to Peres argue in

[303] *Ibid.,* 31;Marcus, 77; Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflitIsraélo-arabe, Tome 1, 1917-1958* (Paris, l'Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1993), 161. Kassir and Mardam-Bey contest Thomas's attempt to date this first meeting to September 1955.
[304] Schillo, 598-99.
[305] Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.
[306] Thomas's memoir, which are tellingly entitled "How Israel was Saved," is dedicated to the memory of his brother, attesting to the proximity with which Thomas viewed the two matters. Certain elements of Thomas's memoir, and particularly his chronology, have been called into question by Kassir and Mardam-

September 1955 that Israel's survival was in jeopardy, Thomas was initially skeptical. But wartime memories of Jewish vulnerability were hard to shake: "[what] if all this were true," Thomas recalled thinking afterward. What if Peres was voicing a desperate "cry for help coming . . . from a people threatened with death?"[307] Israel called up memories of the pitiful *Exodus* affair, Hitler's mobilizing antisemitism, and the long history of Jewish victimhood; Thomas decided to act.[308] As Chief of Staff, Thomas regulated the flow of information across Bourgès-Maunoury's desk. He and his fellow aides now used this power to ensure the Minister's support for Israel.[309] Their efforts were buttressed by men on the ground in Israel, like French military attaché Lieutenant-Colonel Divry, who urged France not to sacrifice its influence in the Israeli military "because of an over-strict Foreign Affairs policy."[310] In so doing, these officers took an active hand in shaping French policy toward Israel, and became the point men of the period's unorthodox diplomacy.

They were not without opponents. Antoine Pinay's Foreign Ministry remained adamantly opposed to arming Israel. Even the Czech arms shipment of September 1955 was seen as an opportunity to pressure Israel into French-brokered peace negotiations, rather than a dangerous shift in the balance of power.[311] The Quai subsequently

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Bey, and thus it should be read cautiously. Despite this, his characterization of the mood within the Defense cabinet correlates with most available accounts. Peres, 56; Schillo, 598.

[307] Thomas, 23-24.

[308] Thomas, 17, 37-38, 87, 103. He was not alone in thinking in these terms: Louis Mangin, another of Bourgès-Maunoury's aides, likened Nasser to Hitler on the floor of the National Assembly while standing in for his boss.

[309] Marcus, 92-93.

[310] "Extraits d'un Lettre Personnelle du Lieutenant-Colonel Divry (8.12.55)," December 12, 1955, GR 9 Q5 13, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[311] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 6, 1955 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1955, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 434, December 21, 1955; Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères à le Secrétaire Générale Permanent de la Défense Nationale, "Fournitures d'armes à Israël," Letter, October 13, 1955, 218QO40, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.

championed a brief embargo on arms deliveries to Israel between December 1955 and February 1956.[312] But the Quai's opposition was not only the expression of its alternate vision of French national interest. For some, Israel increasingly came to symbolize the Defense Ministry's meddling in foreign policy, and the ultra-nationalist ("*ultras*") partisans of French Algeria, men like Thomas and Bourgès-Maunoury. But the mantle of the Resistance hung over the Defense Ministry, and criticizing it openly was difficult. As one Quai expert recalled, "[s]ince we could not attack the army directly, we attacked it indirectly through Israel."[313] In this sense, Israel came to further symbolize Algeria within French internal politics, and was the casualty as much as the beneficiary of the inter-ministerial rivalry of the French Fourth Republic.

The February 1956 ascension of Christian Pineau to the rank of foreign minister shifted the inter-ministerial balance of power further, and produced an important break from the French diplomatic corps's accepted wisdom on the Middle East. Pineau was an outsider to the world of international diplomacy; he had previously held only the Ministries of Finance, and Public Works and Transport. A Resistance leader and former Buchenwald internee, Pineau did not share Mollet's views on the Middle East, and insisted that Nasser "[was] not Hitler."[314] But P.E. Gilbert and Shimon Peres gradually managed to impress upon him the extent of Israeli disquiet. "We couldn't ignore [Peres's] warnings," about "the grave danger threatening Israel," Pineau later recalled.[315] He

[312] France was joined by Britain and the United States, and the embargo was part of a joint response to Israel's major reprisal operation against Syrian positions near Lake Tiberias in December 1955. Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées à le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et al., CIEEMG Report 0008DN/EG, January 4, 1956, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[313] Bar-Zohar, *Suez*: *Ultra-Secret*, 243.
[314] Pineau, 39.
[315] Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres,* 121; P.E. Gilbert, Ambassadeur de France en Israël S.E. Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, "A/S. du 'status quo,'" November 13, 1955, GR 14S 341, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

promised to help. Pineau was further impelled by the sense of alienation he felt from his diplomatic officers, who lacked confidence in Pineau's abilities. Though he was convinced that France must retain a cooperative relationship with the Arab world, and objected to ultranationalist positions on Algeria, Pineau found the "marked hostility of [the Quai's Arab] lobby toward Israel less explicable."[316] He found this lobby orientalist, doctrinal, and, most troublingly, antisemitic. Unable to sympathize with their recommendations, Pineau fell back on his conscience. By April 1956, he was increasingly signing off on arms shipments to Israel without consulting his senior officers.[317] The Quai's ability to check these deliveries correspondingly declined, and Henri Roux, the Quai's Africa-Levant Director General, was left scrambling to keep track of his boss's dealings. The ground was laid for a rapid expansion of French military aid to Israel.

Need to Know: Streamlining the French-Israeli Relationship

The spring of 1956 saw the French diplomatic corps increasingly sidelined from the business of French-Israeli military ties.[318] The subsequent agreements, and the Franco-British-Israeli attack on Egypt in October 1956, accordingly cannot be fully explained by institutional foreign policy models, as the relevant bureaucracies and procedures were increasingly uninvolved. Instead, foreign policy power was progressively consolidated in the hands of men whose outlooks on the Middle East were shaped not by expert knowledge, but by sentiment, memory, and the Algerian revolt.

[316] Pineau, 66; Schillo, 659.
[317] Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Note, April 19, 1956, 218QO43, Israël 1953-1959, MAE. In October 1956, Pineau instructed Israeli Ambassador Tsur to deal with him directly whenever he encountered difficulty with the functionaries of the Quai d'Orsay. Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 166. Meanwhile, as late as June 1956, French arms continued to be delivered to Egypt.
[318] This was also true of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, though to a somewhat lesser extent: Jacob Tsur continued to participate in negotiations, but it was Peres who did the most important work.

By April 1956, Mollet and Bourgès-Maunoury were growing impatient with diplomatic efforts to curb Nasser. Anti-French Egyptian propaganda continued to be broadcast across the Arab world, and Nasser's aid to the FLN continued. Meanwhile, Defense Ministry observers reported that Israel faced an arms deficit of nearly 4:1.[319] Mollet now ordered Pineau to pursue direct sales to Israel without the oversight of the NEACC, upon whose approval all previous deals had theoretically depended.[320] Doing so would circumvent potential British and American objections to the pace and scale of French deliveries to Israel. Hereafter, Pineau informed Israeli Ambassador Jacob Tsur, the Foreign Minister would "deal with these problems alone, according to my conscience."[321]

On April 11, Israel received its first shipment of six Mystère-IVs, part of a deal for twelve authorized in February. Within the week, Peres was back in Paris with a request for twenty-four additional Mystères (IIs and IVs). Pineau overruled Quai objections to approve the deal. He had been won over by an appeal from Israeli Foreign Minister Sharett, who had urged him "to aid Israel in its critical hour . . . . and reinforce the barrier that Israel represents against a general flood of wild and dreadful Arabo-Muslim xenophobia across the Middle East and Africa."[322] Pineau signed off on the

[319] Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées à le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et al., CIEEMG Report 1713DN/EG, January 25, 1956, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Lefebvre, 109-10.

[320] In practice, neither the British, French, nor Americans allowed the NEACC to inhibit arms deliveries when they felt them necessary, and the Commission at times functioned more as a tool of competition than cooperation.

[321] Thomas, 76; Tsur, 344; Schillo 674.

[322] Moshe Sharett to Christian Pineau, Letter, April 16, 1956, quoted in Schillo, 673; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 7, 1956 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 258, April 19, 1956. The sale of Mystère-IVs was complicated by an offshore procurement contract with the United States, and required American approval for export. After some delay, this was forthcoming, though Quai representatives informed their Defense interlocutors it had not, in an effort to delay delivery. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*)*,* 1955-1957, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute,

planes, but insisted that these would be the last that France could provide. He was frustrated that France bore the stigma of arming Israel largely by itself, and encouraged Israel to look to other suppliers.[323] Even then, however, Pineau made repeated entreaties to the Americans on Israel's behalf.[324] This episode, and Pineau's frustrations, are revealing: though sensitive to the damage it was doing to French relations with the Arab world, Pineau was still committed to strengthening Israel. That he chose the latter over the former in this and subsequent instances indicates that he saw Israel's security as the more important of these obligations.[325]

Bourgès-Maunoury, meanwhile, had plans of his own. As Bourgès-Maunoury explained it to the American ambassador in May, he had felt "that while foreign policy was not supposed to be his field, as Minister of Defense he had to take an over-all view to make proper plans . . . . He felt the key to the situation was Egypt and Nasser and he felt that unless Nasser suffered a loss of prestige the West would continue to have increasing trouble."[326] Bourgès-Maunoury had already put his plans into motion. In April, he had taken concrete steps to cut the Foreign Ministry out of the loop. A private committee was formed consisting of himself; advisors Abel Thomas and Colonel Louis Mangin; army

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January 1 - July 26, 1956, ed. John P. Glennon, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 40; *FRUS,* 1955-1957, vol. XV, Arab-Israeli dispute, January 1 - July 26, 1956, ed. John P. Glennon, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 66.

[323] This deal came in the context of an American refusal to sell Israel alternative combat aircraft. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. , 1956 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1955, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 86, February 10, 1956.

[324] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 7, 1956 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 140, March 5, 1956; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 7, 1956 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 289, May 2, 1956; *FRUS,* 1955-1957, vol. XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26 - December 31, 1956, ed. John P. Glennon, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 25.

[325] Pineau's power to control the Quai was augmented by the July retirement of the Quai's long-serving Secretary General, René Massigli, who cited his discontent with the rising power of a pro-Israel "clan" among the reasons for his departure. Schillo, 676-77.

[326] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 5576, May 26, 1956, file 651.74/5-2556, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

Secretary General Max Lejeune; Director General of Arms General Gaston Lavaud; and Lavaud's deputy, Colonel Levêque. They were charged with handling matters related to Algeria and Israel directly, and with organizing the discreet and rapid procurement of arms for Israel.[327] The committee members were anti-Nasserists to a man, and images of Jewish vulnerability pervaded among them: as Thomas recalled, "For a long time France had offered Israel [merely] a sling [with which] to face Goliath . . . . Today that sling became a shield."[328] The committee members went to work, and collaborated closely with Peres in the following months to funnel arms to the Jewish state.

Throughout the remainder of 1956 Israel became the top client of the French arms industry, receiving materiel valued at approximately 10.8 billion francs. This amounted to some 35 percent of all French military exports that year.[329] The largest deal was signed between June 22 and 24 at a private home in the town of Vémars. Present were Abel Thomas; Louis Mangin; General Maurice Challe, the Major-General of the French armed forces; Pierre Boursicot, the director of French military intelligence; General Birambeau, the commander of French forces in Algeria, and others. The Israeli delegation included Shimon Peres, Yosef Nahmias, Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, and Israeli intelligence chief Yehoshafat Harkabi. The parties discussed how they could strengthen Israel's military, coordinate their actions against Nasser, and pool their intelligence on Egypt and the FLN. The result was an 80 million dollar contract for 72 Mystère-IV fighter-bombers, 120 AMX-13 tanks, and 40 Super-Sherman tanks, together with artillery, munitions, and

[327] Thomas, 76; Schillo, 674. The documentary record of the CIEEMG attests to the constant contest between Defense and Foreign Ministry representatives over control of France's arms exports to the Middle East.
[328] Thomas, 83.
[329] "Exportation de Materiel de Guerre, Evolution de 1956 à 1961, Pays depassant 10 millions de NF," Table, 1961, GR 9 Q1 41, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

replacement parts.[330] A second major deal was struck in late September, when planning for a joint military operation against Egypt was already underway.[331] By the outbreak of the Sinai War on October 29, Israel had received an additional one hundred Super-Shermans (along with parts to fit them and the rest of its Sherman fleet with 75mm canons), two hundred armored personnel carriers, three hundred trucks, twenty tank-transporters, one thousand SS.10 tele-guided antitank rockets, and munitions and replacement parts for all its French weapon systems.[332]

If French-Israeli military ties were already close in the spring of 1956, Nasser's July 26 nationalization of the Suez Canal catalyzed them into even greater intimacy. Since the Czech arms deal in late 1955, Egyptian relations with the western powers had been under strain. The United States had unsuccessfully attempted to broker a Middle East peace proposal in the first months of 1956, and on July 19 the Americans had announced that diplomatic and economic concerns made their continued funding of the Aswan Dam project impossible. Nasser responded a week later by nationalizing the Suez Canal, closing it and the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. This last act, in Pineau's recollection, "constituted an act of aggression" against Israel, and violated the 1949 Arab-Israeli Armistice Agreement.[333] The United States, Britain, and France met on August 1

[330] Thomas, 95; Bar-On, 169-71; Schillo, 680.

[331] For analysis of Israel's lead up to the 1956 Sinai War and its policy toward France, see especially Levey (1997), Guy Ziv, *Why Hawks Become Doves: Shimon Peres and Foreign Policy Change in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014); Binyamin Pinkus, *Me-Ambivalentiyut Li-Verit Bilti-Ketuvah: Yisra'el, Tsarfat, Vi-Yehude Tsarfat 1947-1957* (Kiryat 'Sedeh Boker, Hosta'at hasefarim shel Universitat Ben Guryon ba-Negev, 2005); Oren, (1989), and Michael Bar-Zohar, *Gesher 'Al Hayyam Hattikhon* (Tel-Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1964).

[332] "Principaux Matériels Livres par la France à Israël," exemplaire no. 3/3, 1961, GR 20 R 159, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign,* 30; Levey, 70-73.

[333] Pineau determined that "The Israelis had good reason to feel threatened," particularly since its oil supply passed by way of Tiran. Pineau, 77. For the reactions of the British leaders, see in particular Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960) and Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez: A Personal Account* (New York: Mayflower Books, 1978). Eden in particular viewed

to coordinate a diplomatic response, but their efforts, culminating in Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies's attempt to negotiate the internationalization of the Suez canal, proved unsuccessful.[334]

The nationalization of the canal was particularly alarming in France because it aroused the powerful specter of Munich. Key leaders were now convinced that if they did curb Nasser soon, it would be too late. Bourgès-Maunoury said as much to Abel Thomas, stating that failing to act would give the whole Middle East over to the "destructive madness of Nasser" and jeopardize vital French oil access. "I don't see how our country could get [by] any other way except through military action, if negotiations don't proceed. I would feel responsible for the rest of my life! [And so,] for peace, for Israel, for Algeria, what a mess!"[335] Bourgès-Maunoury had internalized the lesson of Munich: if Nasser got away with nationalization, France, her interests, and her friends would soon face greater threats. Bourgès-Maunoury now decided to explore a military initiative, and in the following days secured the stoppage of arms sales to Egypt.[336]

If Bourgès-Maunoury's emphasis was on anti-Nasserism and national interest, Mollet saw the matter as one of democratic and moral principle. Any "military operation [against Egypt] must be undertaken with the goal of demonstrating that democracy will

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Suez through the lens of Munich. Israel, meanwhile, saw the closure of Tiran as a *causus belli*. Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 422.

[334] Eisenhower was deeply committed to preventing war if at all possible. See Eisenhower (1965). France took the nationalization "as a much more serious matter than did the United States" and aimed at "energetic action to cause [a] prompt loss of face to Nasser." U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 2123, November 1, 1956, file 651.74/11-156, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[335] Thomas, 142-43.

[336] These sales had continued on the basis that France was, French President René Coty's 1955 words, "a Muslim power," and that arms sales earned France influence in the Arab states. To this was added the belief that, if France did not provide weapons, the Americans, British, and Soviets would. Comite de Défense National du 14 Juin 1955, no. 1162/D.N., June 22, 1955, GR 2 Q 24, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

not repeat the mistakes of the past," he told French army leaders. He could not accept a *fait accompli*. Above all, he added, it must prevent a course that would "lead to the extermination of Israel or the [Nasserist] domination of the independent Arab states living in the Middle East."[337] He used similar terms standing before the directorial committee of the SFIO on September 5: "The true problem is to know whether we [will] let a dictator march on to world conquest," Mollet announced. As Mollet explained, nationalization itself was not the issue. It was rather the troublingly evocative means Nasser had used: "Of course Nasser is not Hitler," Mollet confessed, "but he uses [Hitler's] methods. We must not permit him a first success that would make him hope for others."[338] Like Bourgès-Maunoury, Mollet's attitude toward Nasser was shaped by his memories of Munich and the Second World War. If "peace in our time" had led to war in 1938, then perhaps war was now necessary for peace.

Accordingly, as the foreign services of the United States and its allies began work on a diplomatic solution, elements within France, Britain, and Israel began planning for war.[339] They did so without informing the United States. In this they correctly reasoned that President Eisenhower's commitment to the containment of communism would lead him to oppose a military operation which might push the Arab world into the Soviet camp.[340] Instead, within pro-war circles, breaking Nasser's prestige was seen as a necessary and obtainable goal, one which, if achieved, would fracture the pan-Arab movement and ameliorate the situations in Algeria and on Israel's borders. Some French

[337] Thomas, 161.
[338] Lefebvre, 156-57.
[339] Britain began planning for a possible strike against Nasser in July 1956. Derek Varble, *The Suez Crisis, 1956* (Osprey Publishing, 2003), 21-26.
[340] In the wake of the 1956 Sinai War, American representatives would lament the realization of this fear.

planners even hoped that Nasser could be toppled.[341] But they were also concerned that Israel would soon be dangerously vulnerable to Nasser's ambitions. Force estimates within the French Ministry of Defense warned that though the excellent training, morale, and leadership of Israel's military somewhat offset its quantitative and qualitative disadvantages, they could "not affirm how much longer this situation might last."[342] The time to act was now.

Within a day of Suez's nationalization, Bourgès-Maunoury invited Peres for talks. France and Britain were already discussing the possibility of a joint military strike on Nasser, and Bourgès-Maunoury wanted to know whether Israel would consider a tripartite operation.[343] Without consulting his superiors, Peres said yes.[344] Back in Israel, David Ben-Gurion proved hesitant, but Peres and Moshe Dayan pressed him to proceed with negotiations. Planning now began to move quickly. On September 8, the French and British cabinets approved an Anglo-French operation to capture the canal. On September 30, Ben-Gurion and his foreign minister, Golda Meir, came to France for secret high-level talks, and France dispatched General Maurice Challe to assess the readiness of the Israeli military. His report that Israel's military could be relied upon, but urgently needed military materiel, convinced French planners to include the Israelis and send additional

[341] General G. Vialet, "La France et Nasser, ou le bilan payant de l'opération militaire franco-britannique sur le canal de Suez," November 30, 1956, GR 8 S 276, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[342] État-Major de l'Armée, 2ème Bureau, no. 803/850, "Les Forces militaires du Moyen-Orient," July 1956, GR 10 T 224, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD. Moshe Dayan wanted to strike at Nasser before this precarious balance broke, but Ben-Gurion was reluctant to embark on a military "adventure." Levey, 70.
[343] He was asking without the foreknowledge of his British counterparts who, at the time, wanted to avoid Israeli participation.
[344] Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 423. Peres claims that he first floated the possibility of joint French-Israeli military action back in April 1956 in meetings with Abel Thomas. This claim has been difficult to corroborate. Peres, 79.

arms.[345] On October 14, Challe proposed the final plan for 'Operation Musketeer Revise,' the tripartite Anglo-French-Israeli operation, and after some convincing, the British signed on.[346]

Military planning now entered its final stages, and from October 22-24 top French, British, and Israeli leaders met at Sèvres to sign a secret accord.[347] The symbolism of the French Resistance literally hung over the gathering: the meeting was held at the home of the Bonnier de la Chappelle family, who were close friends of Bourgès-Maunoury. In 1942 their only son had been executed for assassinating the Vichy high commissioner for French North Africa, Admiral François Darlan.[348] His enshrined portrait now hung portentously over the assembled leaders.[349] Algeria was also in the forefront of their minds: just days prior, a shipment of Egyptian arms had been intercepted en route to the FLN.[350] Bourgès-Maunoury was adamant: it was time to put an end to Nasser and the Algerian rebellion.[351] Mollet agreed, but also framed his decision to help "the tiny people of Israel" in light of France's own bitter sacrifices in the defense of liberty. He announced that France could not stand by and let Israel face the

[345] Many of these arms would not arrive until after the war. Moshe Dayan, *Moshe Dayan: Story of My Life* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1976), 200-4; Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 423.
[346] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet,* trans. Len Ortzen (Engelwood, Prentice-Hall, 1968), 223-24.
[347] Given its secrecy, records pertaining to the Sèvres meeting are particularly scarce, and memoirs, often written well after the fact, remain our primary sources for this pivotal conference. I have attempted to mitigate this overreliance by drawing upon existing scholarly accounts alongside the memoirs of French, Israeli, and British officials including, where possible, those in different ministries. It is worth noting, however, that even among the key participants of the meeting, not everyone seems to have had equal access to the same information. The British, for example, would not be privy to the French-Israeli nuclear agreement negotiated on the wings of the Sèvres meeting.
[348] At the time of his assassination on December 24, 1942, Darlan had already surrendered to invading allied forces.
[349] Dayan, *Story of My Life,* 214.
[350] This was the ship *Athos*. U.S. Department of State to USUN, Telegram 206, October 26, 1956, file 651.74/10-2656, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[351] Pineau, 133.

"attack of a massive human tide, galvanized by Nasser and armed with terrible engines of destruction!"[352] In his view, Nasser had to be stopped, not only because it served French interests in Algeria, but because it was commensurate with his democratic and moral duty as a Socialist and as a Frenchman.[353]

Pineau, however, was not so sure, and the proposed accord required his assent. Pineau opposed the idea of preventative war on principle, and was not convinced that the potential benefits of toppling Nasser, cutting his aid to the FLN, and reopening the canal would outweigh the condemnation of international opinion.[354] Unable to decide where France's best interests lay, Pineau fell back on other factors. His ultimate decision illustrates that when pragmatic considerations appeared equal, it was sentiment and the memory of Jewish vulnerability that continued to tip the balance. "What finally decided [it]," Pineau later recalled, "was concern for the existence of Israel." Debating his decision and thinking about the dangers facing the Jewish state, Pineau could not help but recall a formative experience from his time in a Nazi concentration camp:

> It was a winter morning in 1945. I was then part of . . . the *Lager Kommando* in Buchenwald . . . . We were tasked with greeting a train of Jews brought in from Auschwitz [and] . . . . found ourselves faced with an appalling sight. We had seen and lived horrors, but this was beyond imagination. We went first among the dead . . . about three quarters of the convoy, then the dying . . . . Covered in pus, dust, and excrement, they no longer looked human. Only their eyes were still shining, and those eyes were fixed on us, the living, with extraordinary intensity. They entrusted us with their past sufferings and the slim hope they had left for the future . . . . They were all dead, ALL, within the week that followed, and the crematorium made their remains disappear. Their remains, not their memory! . . . The nightmare vision remained [embedded] in me; twelve years later, I had not forgotten any detail. I also remembered swearing to do everything [in my power

[352] Thomas, 174-75.
[353] Schillo, by contrast, argues that the "Munich reflex" was a secondary factor, and that France's leaders ultimately signed the Protocol of Sèvres out of concerns for empire, Mediterranean power, and worry that Nasser's gravitation toward the Soviet Union represented an "islamo-communist plot." Schillo, 764. As the following episode illustrates, however, sentimental factors played a critical role at Sèvres.
[354] Pineau, 131.

> to ensure] that such sights were never seen by my children and grandchildren. However, I remain convinced [in 1976; *RI*] that the destruction of the State of Israel [would have brought] upon the Jews a similar fate to that which they suffered in Auschwitz and the other extermination camps.
> A true statesman should never base a choice on subjective criteria. His role is to defend the interests of his country based on concrete data, not memory or sentiment . . . . [But] I am not ashamed to recall here the element that, for me, tipped the balance in favor of French intervention at Suez.[355]

The emotional intensity of Pineau's recollection hints at the extent of his personal resolution to prevent a repetition of the horrors he had witnessed. If, in Pineau's view, protecting national interest was the guiding rule of foreign relations, then in the aftermath of the Holocaust, protecting Jews was the exception. Sitting at Sèvres, Pineau could not shake the image of dying Jews from his mind, and in Israel he saw another group of Jews preparing to face destruction. He was thinking about the kind of France he wanted his grandchildren to grow up in, and determined that it would be one that did not stand idly by when Jews faced annihilation. Pineau gave his agreement, and the Protocol Sèvres was signed.[356]

The Protocol of Sèvres stipulated the terms of a tripartite pact against Nasser. Its unstated objectives were the eviction of Nasser, the end to his activities against Israel and Algeria, and the internationalization of the Suez Canal.[357] On October 29, 1956, Israel would invade the Sinai and drive toward Suez. The next day, France and Britain would

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[355] *Ibid.*, 131-33. Like Thomas, Pineau's memoirs appeared in the 1970s, and both men were self-consciously writing to defend their choices in 1956. Despite this, their consistent references to their memories of the Second World War and their readiness to see Israelis specifically as Jews fit within the broad pattern of French thinking about Israel during these years. Pineau alone also seems to have kept a copy of the Sèvres Protocol, and thus we are compelled to rely somewhat heavily on his account. At the least, while we might be skeptical of the degree to which such thinking influenced Pineau's actions in 1956, this emotive recollection suggests that the Holocaust remained a powerful lens for understanding Israel in 1976, when the memoir was published.

[356] Ben-Gurion had to be persuaded to sign as well, but Peres and Dayan convinced him that the future of French-Israeli relations depended on it. Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 424. On Israel's rising tensions with Egypt, see Oren, 353-56 and 364.

[357] Note, "Sur les Développements à donner sur le plan diplomatique à l'affaire de Port Said," November 10, 1956, GR 8 S 276, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

issue Israel and Egypt an ultimatum to cease hostilities and mutually withdraw from Suez. If either Israel or Egypt refused, Anglo-French forces would seize the canal zone to separate the belligerent parties. It would be held until a final settlement on the canal could be negotiated. Meanwhile, France would station a squadron of Mystère-IVs on Israeli soil to protect its population centers, allowing the Israeli air force to focus on offensive operations. French ships would also patrol Israel's coastline to protect it from bombardment.[358]

Sèvres also produced a critical, even more secretive agreement: a French commitment to help construct an Israeli nuclear reactor in the town of Dimona. French and Israeli nuclear scientists had been gradually building ties since 1949. In 1955, Peres had been charged with obtaining foreign aid for an Israeli nuclear program, but actual cooperation apparently began on the initiative of Mollet himself.[359] Over the course of 1956, Peres, Jacob Tsur, Yosef Nahmias, and Israeli atomic energy chief Ernst Bergmann conducted secret negotiations with Bourgès-Maunoury, Abel Thomas, French atomic energy director Pierre Guillaumat, and French Nuclear High Commissioner Francis Perrin. These culminated in talks on September 13, 17-18, and 22, during which the principle of an Israeli reactor was agreed upon.[360] Peres and Abel Thomas drew up the particulars on October 20, and the official signing took place on the wings of the Sèvres meeting, without British knowledge.

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[358] The Protocol has been reproduced by S. Ilan Troen, and it may be consulted at https://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter/about/troen1/TheProtocolOfSevres.pdf.

[359] Binyamin Pinkus, "Atomic Power to Israel's Rescue: French-Israeli Nuclear Cooperation, 1949-1957," *Israel Studies* 7, No. 1 (2002), 114-19; Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 425.

[360] Pinkus notes that while the reactor was stipulated to be 24 megawatts, it was understood that it would be three times that size. The reactor was delivered in 1957. Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 119-20; Michael Karpin, *The Bomb in the Basement: How Israel Went Nuclear and What That Means for the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 58. On the growth of the French-Israeli nuclear relationship, see also Avner Cohen (1998) and Pierre Péan, *Les Deux Bombes* (Paris: Fayard, 1982).

Though French nuclear experts were interested in studying Israeli heavy water research, Israel stood to gain much more than France from this arrangement. Unlike their cooperation against Nasser, who was a persistent thorn in France's side, it is harder to justify French-Israeli nuclear cooperation on the basis of French national interest. Most recent scholarship agrees that the nuclear accord was not a *quid pro quo* for Israeli participation in the Suez gambit; the signing at Sèvres merely ratified already agreed-upon points.[361] Thus, though Israel represented a potential source of scientific expertise that France could apply toward its own independent nuclear program, the potential damage to French international standing was immense, should knowledge of its cooperation with Israel become public.[362] The decision was made anyway, and on October 26 the French inner cabinet gave instructions to "allow [Israel] to attain nuclear capability."[363] The move can only be explained by taking into account the French-Israeli scientific and military cooperation of the previous decade, the idealism of the French leaders, and the endurance of powerful images of Jewish vulnerability. Bourgès-Maunoury explained his decision in terms which made clear the enduring semantic link between the Jewish past and the Israeli present: "I gave you [Israelis] the atom in order to prevent another Holocaust from befalling the Jewish people and so that Israel could face its enemies in the Middle East," he would later inform his Israeli interlocutors.[364] His actions in October 1956 aimed to both relieve the immediate threat facing the Jewish state, and secure Israel into the future.

[361] Schillo, 732; Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 131; Cohen, 54; Ziv, "Shimon Peres," 425.
[362] France was particularly interested in Jewish scientists who had helped build the American nuclear program and now lived in Israel, and in American Jews who might be induced to help France indirectly through Israel. Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 131.
[363] Péan, 87-88.
[364] Avner Cohen, 77.

Thus, by the start of the Sinai War on October 29, 1956, French-Israeli relations had grown from a clandestine trickle of arms to an unprecedented level of military aid. The chief architects of this relationship were men like Shimon Peres, Abel Thomas, and P.E. Gilbert, whose ability to effectively wield both pragmatic and sentimental arguments ensured a deep basis of support for a French-Israeli partnership. The rise to power of Guy Mollet, Christian Pineau, and Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury was equally critical. Attaining office at a moment when French international prestige was wilting under the Algerian revolt and the defeat of the 1946-54 Indochina War, these men were poised to see Nasser's anti-French and pan-Arab activities as a threat that had to be checked. Skeptical of the traditional wisdom of the Quai d'Orsay and determined to pacify North Africa by peace or by war, these men viewed Israel through the prism of the Second World War as the physical and spiritual successors of Europe's slaughtered Jews. Deeply self-conscious that their relations with Israel reflected how France could — and in their minds, should — have behaved in 1938, these key French leaders chose to infuse policy with principle, and let themselves be guided by the dictates of conscience and memory. In this light, Israel became a mirror for reflecting upon France itself, and an opportunity to repudiate the shameful past of Munich.

France and Israel Under Fire Together: The Sinai War, 1956

The Sinai War of October 29 - November 7, 1956, though limited in its success, strengthened the foundations of the French-Israeli friendship and confirmed both the French leadership and French public in their perceptions of Israel. Israel launched its invasion of the Sinai peninsula as planned on October 29. The next day, France and Britain vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate

ceasefire, and instead issued their own ultimatum insisting upon the withdrawal of both Egyptian and Israeli forces from the Sinai and the canal zone. When both combatants refused, Britain and France launched a bombing campaign against Egypt on October 31. As they did, Guy Mollet defended his actions on the floor of the French National Assembly, contrasting Israel's "attachment to the rights of man and the fundamental principles of democracy" against Nasser's "desire to some day strike Israel from the map." His remarks were greeted with loud applause from every group outside the extreme Left.[365] When Pineau informed his diplomatic corps of French-Israeli collusion the same day, many of them for the first time, he used similar language. The Foreign Minister evoked Israel's "desperate situation;" the military imbalance between Israel and its neighbors; and France's legal commitment to Suez, the freedom of navigation, and the Tripartite framework.[366]

Meanwhile, Israel's battlefield successes had outstripped Anglo-French expectations. French officers now called to accelerate the timetable for Anglo-French landings at Suez, but their British counterparts demurred and delayed. Finally, with the canal blocked by scuttled ships and the UN mobilizing a special emergency session, the order was given to para-drop Anglo-French troops on November 5. Naval landings followed the next day. Though successful from a tactical point of view, their invasion was short-lived: British Prime Minister Anthony Eden was facing tremendous public and

[365] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1956, No. 108 A.N., October 31, 1956, 4421-22.

[366] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 9, 1956 Tome III, 24 octobre - 31 décembre 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 77, October 31, 1956. Records show that almost no one inside the Quai d'Orsay knew of the planned invasion until the last moment. See U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 2667, November 29, 1956, file 651.74/11-2956, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; *FRUS,* 1955-1957 vol. XVI, Suez Crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956, ed. John P. Glennon, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 637.

international pressure to end hostilities. American President Dwight Eisenhower was particularly outraged; the notion that France and Britain would intervene militarily in Egypt without consulting him was galling, given the potential for a wider conflict. That they might do so while Eisenhower was condemning the Soviet Union for its October 23 - November 10 invasion of Hungary seemed particularly absurd. Anthony Eden, who had wavered over almost every aspect of the invasion, now pulled the plug, unilaterally agreeing to a ceasefire on November 6-7. The other combatants were soon compelled to follow suit.[367]

Throughout the course of the brief war France had kept its commitment to protect Israel's shores and skies. Israeli pilots took off in borrowed French aircraft with the paint still drying on the stars of David that had been hastily painted over the French *tricoleur*, and at least one squadron of French pilots flew air defense under Israeli colors.[368] As ceasefires were signed, France's support for Israel moved from the battlefield to the negotiating table. In the months that followed, France championed Israel's interests in negotiations with the United States, Egypt, and the UN. France echoed Israel's insistence that Gaza and the Sinai needed to be demilitarized, and that Israel's freedom of navigation be ensured by international guarantees. Meanwhile, on the floor of the UN General Assembly, France alone voted with Israel against UN resolutions calling for Israel's withdrawal.[369] Doing so was not a completely disinterested move — France

[367] Mollet and Pineau's decision to go along with the ceasefire was motivated in part by increasing concern at the prospect of a Soviet military intervention. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 9, 1956 Tome III, 24 octobre - 31 décembre 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 133, November 6, 1956.

[368] Schillo, 739; "Reunion des Chiefs d'État-Major chez le Général ELY, le 31 Octobre 1956," October 31, 1956, GR 6 R 24, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[369] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 10, 1957 Tome I, 1 janvier - 30 juin 1957, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 89, January 29, 1957; *Ibid.,* Document 229, March 9, 1957; Schillo, 808-9.

remained as eager as ever to show that it alone could mediate the Arab-Israeli dispute — but defending Israel's position undeniably cost it on the international stage. Still, it pressed on, and between December 1956 and March 1957 Israel completed a phased withdrawal that left the Sinai in the hands of a UN Emergency Force, its goals largely met.

France defended Israel at the negotiating table because, unlike Britain, where Eden's government had fallen under popular pressure, the views of France's leaders on the Middle East emerged largely unchanged from the short war. Mollet continued to view the situation through the lens of Munich, telling the National Assembly on December 21 that "We have before us a dictator . . . . The weakness and irresolution of the democracies permitted Hitler's rise . . . . Our feeling is that France does not have the right to commit this error a second time."[370] Meanwhile, Israel's seizure of sizable forward munitions stockpiles in the Egyptian Sinai had confirmed Pineau's belief that a major Egyptian attack on Israel had been imminent.[371] In this, Pineau's outlook continued to diverge from that of his diplomatic corps. Foreign Ministry experts lamented that the war had been "painful" and "embarrassing," that in surviving the war Nasser had "regained from us the prestige Israel caused him to lose," and that French relations with the Middle East had been "lastingly compromised." Worse yet, they argued, France had forced Egypt and Syria into the arms of the Soviets, and had sacrificed its role as a mediator.[372] Quai

[370] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1956, No. 142 A.N., December 21, 1956, 1674-75.
[371] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 9, 1956 Tome III, 24 octobre - 31 décembre 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 196, November 18, 1956.
[372] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 9, 1956 Tome III, 24 octobre - 31 décembre 1956, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 158, November 10, 1956; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 10, 1957 Tome I, 1 janvier - 30 juin 1957, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 288, April 3, 1957; Schillo, 774-86.

officers chided that the danger facing Israel was now greater, not less, because henceforth the Soviets would be far more forthcoming in their support of Arab plans to destroy Israel.[373]

By contrast, the French Defense Ministry painted the war in a positive light. Though Nasser had not been ousted, reports within the Defense Ministry concluded that the Sinai War could not be rated a failure. They argued that Nasser's policy of expansion and his aid to the FLN had been significantly checked, that the Egyptian military (and its modern Soviet weapons) had been beaten by outnumbered Israelis with French arms, and that France had succeeded in "safeguard[ing] the independence and territorial integrity of the tiny State of Israel."[374] The situations in Algeria and on Israel's borders would, they hoped, consequently improve.

The war also lastingly affected French perceptions of Israel, reinforcing the dual image of Jewish strength and vulnerability embodied in the symbol of the Israeli David. At first glance, Israel appeared strong and capable in the wake of a war that had given ample evidence of its battlefield prowess. French military onlookers praised Israel's battlefield performance and military infrastructure as "remarkable," "brilliant," and "magnificent," models worthy of emulation.[375] Moshe Dayan, the commander in chief of Israel's military, was singled out for particular praise, and hailed by Pineau and Thomas

[373] The Sinai War had demographic consequences as well: some twenty-five thousand Egyptian Jews fled their homes in the subsequent months, and about half of them sought refuge in France. A similar exodus would take place following the end of the Algerian War in 1962, though it would be over twelve times as large and dramatically change the demography of France's Jewish and Arab populations.

[374] General G. Vialet, "La France et Nasser, ou le bilan payant de l'opération militaire franco-britannique sur le canal de Suez," November 30, 1956, GR 8 S 276, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD. From Israel's perspective, the war had also been, for the most part, a success: Israel's freedom of navigation was restored, a UN buffer established to curtail cross-border attacks, and the myth of Nasser's power proved hollow.

[375] État-Major de l'armée, 2ème Bureau, "Le Systeme de Mobilization Israelien," document no.74/850, 1957, GR 10 T 224, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

alike as one of the greatest military minds of the age.[376] To some, Israel's performance evoked its Jewishness: some senior military observers frequently referred to Israelis as "the Jews," and hailed Israel repeatedly as "a tiny island of western civilization" in the East.[377] Others looked at Israel and saw a model for the survival of French Algeria. If Israel's "intelligence, imagination, enterprising spirit and physical energy" could be reproduced in French Algeria, one analyst mused, Algeria could become "a symmetrical force to the island of Israel," and "exert the same stabilizing force on the south Mediterranean coast."[378]

Yet in spite of Israel's evident prowess, the dominant French image of the Jewish state remained one of vulnerability. This reflected itself in oft-repeated characterizations of Israeli diminutiveness, which contrasted a small and isolated Israel against the combined geographic and demographic weight of the Arab world. Internal reports were rife with references to "this brave little country," "the tiny state of Israel;" meanwhile, support for arms shipments increased after Israel's victory, instead of declining.[379] Three factors explain these enduring images of vulnerability. First, the mental association of Israel with Holocaust survivors remained powerful, and the sympathies this created only

[376] Thomas, 205; Pineau, 128.
[377] General Souard, "Mission de contact et d'observation en Israel (13-18 Aout 1957), Compte Rendu présente le 24 septembre 1957, no. 12, September 24, 1957, GR 14 S 343, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Despatch 1451, February 14, 1957, file 651.80/2-1457 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; General G. Vialet, "La France et Nasser, ou le bilan payant de l'opération militaire franco-britannique sur le canal de Suez," November 30, 1956, GR 8 S 276, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[378] General Souard, "Mission de contact et d'observation en Israël (13-18 Aout 1957), Compte Rendu présente le 24 septembre 1957, no. 12, September 24, 1957, GR 14 S 343, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[379] "Expose du chef du 2ème Bureau à la Reunion des Chefs d'États-Major de Regions du 26 Mars 1957," March 26, 1957, GR 10 T 51, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; General G. Vialet, "La France et Nasser, ou le bilan payant de l'opération militaire franco-britannique sur le canal de Suez," November 30, 1956, GR 8 S 276, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

began to diminish as a result of generational shift in the 1970s. Second, many defense analysis believed that Israel had only bought itself a temporary reprieve; Nasser lived to fight another day, and Israel's neighbors continued to call for its destruction. Another round of fighting was therefore likely, if not inevitable. Finally, Egypt's threat to Israel was now overshadowed by a greater one: that of a Soviet Union more ready than ever to compass Israel's destruction. The Soviet Union made no secret of the massive arms shipments it now dispatched to build up the Syrian and Egyptian militaries, or its intent to train them to a higher degree of combat readiness. This, more than anything, contributed to the belief that another round of Arab-Israeli fighting remained a real possibility, one which Israel might not survive. As a result, many French civil servants continued to view Israel as capable but beleaguered in the wake of the 1956 Sinai War. As we shall see, this image did not exist in isolation, and was rather a reflection of widely held popular perceptions of the Jewish state.

'Brave Little Israel' and the Popular Imagination: Discourse and Politics in 1956-57

French popular discourse on Israel and the Suez Crisis has received only limited attention in French, and even less in English.[380] This is unfortunate, as a discursive analysis reveals that the French-Israeli friendship was not simply the project of a few ministers and state officials, but a broadly-based, politically-inclusive cause with deep popular resonance. This made a policy of French-Israeli cooperation popular and easier to pursue. By contrast, public opposition to the Suez intervention had helped topple Anthony Eden's British government in January 1957. The self-conscious reflectivity

[380] Mine is the first detailed analysis of French popular attitudes on Israel to appear in English. In French, see primarily Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009); relevant sections may also be had in Schillo (2012) and Bar-Zohar (1964). For a quantitative analysis of French press coverage of Israel in 1958, see Jean-William Lapierre, *L'information sur l'état d'Israël dans les grands quotidiens français en 1958* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1968).

Israel produced in Mollet, Pineau, and Bourgès-Maunoury also played out at a societal level. In the press and on the floor of the French legislature, Israel and Suez prompted larger debates about French republicanism, Algeria, and party politics. Debate on Israel also facilitated public discussion of the Holocaust, creating a semantic circuit in which images of Jewish and Israeli vulnerability mutually shaped and informed one another.[381] Finally, the Suez Crisis stimulated an energetic conversation within the French Jewish community about the place of Israel and political activism in their communal lives, once again prompting questions about Jewish citizenship, nationalism, and activism. In this light, it becomes clear that French public discourse on Israel had as much to do with French internal politics as it did the Middle East, with debate about one serving to clarify and concretize thinking about the other.

In October 1956 and the months that followed, the French public showed itself broadly sympathetic to Israel, and press and political discourse on the Jewish state would remain so through the close of the French Fourth Republic.[382] Though Israel had not been a major public concern in 1955, the implied threat of Nasser's military build-up and the nationalization of Suez propelled Israel back to the forefront of the French popular imagination. This was part of a pattern wherein the Jewish state received the most attention during moments of crisis. As a result, the most common images of Israel circulating in the French public sphere were ones of fear, war, uncertainty, and desperation. Accordingly, whereas French popular support for Israel had polled at only

[381] Here I seek to nuance Henry Rousso's discussion of postwar French silence on the particularity of Jewish suffering in World War Two. See Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). On the breaking of this silence in the face of perceptions of Israeli vulnerability, see especially Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
[382] Lapierre, 60, 91-93, 112-13.

11 percent in December 1955, by December 1956 it had spiked to 40 percent, rising to 43 percent in May 1957. By contrast, support for the Arab states polled at a consistent 3-4 percent.[383] Support for Mollet's intervention at Suez also grew over time, with opposition dropping from 37 to 28 percent between November 1956 and March 1957.[384] This shift corresponded to the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, and indicates that an increasing proportion of the French public accepted Mollet's proposition that preventative war might be an acceptable means of defending peace. Support for Israel had remained steady, by contrast, suggesting that the images shaping attitudes toward Israel in late 1956 remained salient after the war's conclusion.

Accordingly, as American Jewish Committee observer Abraham Karlikow reported, in the months that followed the Sinai War, "Israel became the darling of the French press."[385] Outside the extremes of the political Right and Left, which will be analyzed separately below, French public discourse on Israel and the Sinai War revolved around a handful of key themes. These asserted that Nasser posed a real threat to "brave little Israel;" that, in the absence of effective UN intervention, Israel had been justified in its war; and that, confronted with a "new Munich," France had a moral and democratic duty to support Israel, particularly since it was a Jewish state. Press coverage of the war was considerable, and often displaced reporting of the contemporaneous Soviet invasion of Hungary.[386] Numerous newspapers and politicians drew scathing parallels between the two crises: many were outraged that the UN and French Communists had condemned the

[383] Coulon, 60-61.
[384] Support stayed at a steady 43-44 percent. Schillo, 842.
[385] Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJY*) vol. 59 (1958), Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1958, 247.
[386] Most papers provided greater page space to the Middle East crisis. *L'humanité* and *La croix* were among the exceptions, likely as a result of their respective communist and Catholic editorial lines.

Israeli and Anglo-French invasion, while remaining mum over Hungary.[387] To critics, this silence seemed cynical at best.

Meanwhile, the failure of the international community to check Nasser's ambitions left voices across the French political spectrum convinced that Israel had been right to act. While the leftist *Combat* wrote that Israel had "chosen to survive" by opting for war when its existence was threatened, the conservative *Figaro* insisted that Israel had not been the aggressor. "Egypt has [openly] prepared . . . for the annihilation of Israel," *Figaro* asserted. "No offense intended, [but] it isn't the sheep that provokes the wolf!"[388] In *Figaro*'s eyes, Egypt's bruising was thus of its own making. The center-right *L'aurore*, which was a staunch partisan of French Algeria, saw the situation in a starker light:

> Do you pretend that this poor, brave, and tiny state of Israel, which is almost crushed between countries four or five times . . . more populous than it — [countries] which are all hostile to it — has truly [been] the aggressor? Have you shut your eyes and ears on purpose? Have you not paid attention to how Nasser — and others — sneeringly proclaimed that their policy would only be accomplished on the day they annihilated this valiant Israel?[389]

Hostile to Nasser over his Algeria policy and grounded in the principled violence of the French Resistance, *L'aurore*'s journalists viewed the situation as a moral binary between an Israeli David and an Arab Goliath. Israel remained defined by its diminutiveness, and would be justified so long as its neighbors were open in their commitment to its destruction. Voices on both the Right and Left of French politics were accordingly united

[387] "La conscience tranquille," *Combat,* October 31, 1956.
[388] Jean Fabiani, "L'explosion," *Combat,* October 30, 1956; André François-Poncet, "La fiction de l'O.N.U.," *Le figaro,* November 3-4, 1956. Similar themes were expressed by former prime minister Paul Reynaud in "Les réactions des milieux politiques," *Combat,* October 31, 1956.
[389] Jules Romains, "A vous qui nous accusez," *L'aurore,* November 2, 1956.

in their perception that Israel was the injured party, rather than instigator, of the Sinai War.

The harmonization of these otherwise disjointed voices was grounded in powerful memories of Munich and the Holocaust, which loomed large over French discourse on Israel. While *L'aurore* evoked the memory of the death camps by publishing a cartoon featuring a yellow star inscribed with the word "Zionist," *Combat* announced that "We are today at the seizure of the Sudetenland. The difference is that Ben-Gurion is not [Czechoslovakia's 1938 president Edvard] Bénès."[390] Other *Combat* articles evoked the shame of Munich in support of the anti-Nasserist war: "Has the memory of Munich been forgotten in London and Washington?" *Combat* asked. "Are they getting ready to abandon Israel as they abandoned Czechoslovakia? . . . This would be at once an error and an [act of] cowardice."[391] Though it was Israel which had invaded Egypt, the parallel to Munich, together with the closure of Tiran, cast Israel's move as a defensive one; whereas Czechoslovakia had not resisted in 1938, Israel now fought to defend both itself and international law. Accordingly, even before the Anglo-French intervention on October 31, 1956, public voices were calling on France to take Israel's side.[392]

Often, this call was presented as a moral and political duty, one which a democratic France could not ignore. The Radical state councilor Georges Huisman provided one of the most well-developed articulations of this commonly-expressed sense

[390] The title of *L'aurore*'s article similarly evoked the camps: see Z., "Toujours dans l'autre camp," *L'aurore,* November 1, 1956; Jean Fabiani, "L'explosion," *Combat,* October 30, 1956; *Ouest-France*, quoted in "Revue de la presse," *Le monde,* November 1, 1956.
[391] "De Munich à Tel Aviv," *Combat,* October 30, 1956. See also "Israel a l'heure de Munich?", *La Revue du FSJU* (Fonds Social Juif Unifié) no. 17, October 1956.
[392] Discourse on the Holocaust would reappear in late November 1956, as news of the extensive mistreatment of Egyptian Jews began to reach France. See Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 61.

of obligation. "The future of Israel interests not only the Jews," he wrote in October 1956:

> The future of Israel is a moral problem, before it is a political or religious one. It is to know whether if, in 1956, a state which was built by the work and efforts of its citizens has the right to live and carry on its existence. It is to know whether a handful of men, nourishing no dreams of conquest, have the right to work in peace. It is to know whether the constant provocations of those who pretend to be harmed by the existence of a small peaceful democracy will prevent those [Israeli] men of good will from making use of land that no one before them has ever built upon. For me, the existence of Israel is the moral problem *par excellence* of our time. [Will] the great nations . . . once again permit the Jews to be dispersed, after the destruction of their homes, onto the bitter paths of exile? [Would any sincere democrat . . .] hesitate for a second to respond to this question? Israel must live and thrive to prove that our time is capable . . . [of defending] those who have no other ideals than labor and virtue.[393]

For Huisman and others like him, Israel was the test by which France's postwar commitment to democratic principle would be measured: would France defend Israel, and by extension, virtue and international law, or repeat the mistakes of Munich?[394] For the French Jewish philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, the answer was a simple one: "Cowardice doesn't pay, we proved that in 1939 . . . . Here our interests coincide with our honor and the most sacred of our duties. That duty [can be expressed] in few words! The planes to Israel! The planes to Israel!"[395]

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[393] Georges Huisman, quoted in "Israel a l'heure de Munich?", *La Revue du FSJU* no. 17, October 1956. Note also the apparent invisibility of Palestine's non-Jewish populations in Huisman's outlook.

[394] This was a dominant theme of French public discourse on Israel and the Suez crisis. For other examples, see *Le populaire,* quoted in "Revue de la presse," *Le monde,* November 1, 1956, which expressed this duty in terms of the responsibilities of French Socialism; "Au service du droit!", *L'aurore,* November 1, 1956, which evoked international law, "the defense of liberty . . . [and] the moral values [upon which] we have build our civilization"; and Socialist leader Daniel Mayer, quoted in "Israel a l'heure de Munich?", *La Revue du FSJU* no. 17, October 1956, who framed support for Israel as the responsibility of "all French people" in their capacity as principled democrats. Novelist Manès Sperber, by contrast, evoked the memory of the Holocaust, claiming that "He who defends Israel defends an obstacle separating the perpetrators of massacres from their victims — he defends an asylum. Manès Sperber, "Israël. . .", *La Revue du FSJU* no. 15, March 1956.

[395] Vladimir Jankélévitch, quoted in "Israel a l'heure de Munich?", *La Revue du FSJU* no. 17, October 1956.

In contrast to Britain, French popular support for the Suez intervention endured the weight of international condemnation.[396] As a result, Mollet's government was able to focus on successfully negotiating Israel's withdrawal. But popular support produced material results as well. A special campaign to support Israeli soldiers and Magen David Adom (the Israeli Red Cross) met with considerable success; in one notable instance, an elderly woman offered to purchase and donate a med-evac helicopter to transport wounded Israeli soldiers. The Israeli embassy had to refuse: Israel did not yet have a trained corps of helicopter pilots. Only when the donor promised to pay for training as well did the embassy agree.[397]

The Suez Crisis also stimulated considerable new interest in the Jewish state, and late 1956 and early 1957 saw an explosion of French demand for information and media on Israel. As the American ambassador in Paris reported in February 1957, the Israeli embassy was "swamped" with demand for books, films, and lectures on Israeli life. No less than seventeen film producers were anxiously queuing "to turn out everything from short subjects to war films based on the Sinai campaign," the ambassador noted.[398] French publishers were rushing to meet this demand, and books on Israel and unassociated Jewish subjects saw a marked rise in production and consumption in 1956-

[396] There were, of course, outliers. The most significant of these was the Communist *L'humanité,* which shall be examined in detail below. *Le monde,* which shared the Quai d'Orsay's diplomatic outlook on the Middle East, also expressed its discontent by terming the Anglo-French invasion an overreaction and a violation of international law, and stressed the damage being done to France's international image. See for example "Le <deuxième round>", *Le monde,* October 31, 1956; "Le coup de dés," *Le monde,* November 1, 1956; and "Par 368 voix contre 192 l'Assemblée nationale donne son accord a l'action du gouvernement," *Le monde,* November 1, 1956. The Catholic *La croix,* meanwhile, saw the war as an opportunity to reopen discussion on the internationalization of Jerusalem. Pierre Rondot, "Vers un nouvel équilibre oriental et un status de Jérusalem?", *La croix,* November 7, 1956.

[397] Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 16-17.

[398] U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Airgram 1464, February 15, 1957, file 651.84a/2-1557, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

57.[399] Meanwhile, civilian traffic between France and Israel also saw a dramatic increase as French citizens set off to see Israel for themselves. These encounters, either direct or through media, further fed perceptions that Israel fit within the boundaries of "western civilization," and at the same time romanticized the Jewish state by associating it visually and in writing with the geographical and narrative landscape of the biblical world.[400] As a result, French ideas about Israel continued to crystallize around a set of images grounded in the sentimental and the romantic.

The French political scene was, if anything, more uniform in its outlook on Israel. As Peres remarked in 1956, "Assistance to Israel has become a key clause in French politics . . . . Every politician is measured by his aid to Israel."[401] It was therefore not surprising that on November 1 the lower and upper houses of the French legislature approved the French intervention at Suez, by votes of 368 to 192 and 289 to 19, respectively.[402] The president of the French parliamentary committee on national defense, Pierre Montet, subsequently declared that "France is ready to sell Israel all the weapons she needs."[403] As with the press, support for Israel in the French legislature united a broad and otherwise divided range of political parties. The majority of Socialists, Radicals, Gaullists, and smaller parties now rallied to the government. The only groups united in opposition were the French Communists, together with a handful of

[399] Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 59 (1958), Philadelphia: JPS, 1958, 254. These books included Georges Duhamel's *Israël,clef de l'Orient,* David Catarivas's *Israël,* André Chouraqui's *Histoire des juifs,* André Neher's *Moïse,* and others, including the works and memoirs of Israeli writers.
[400] Most of the photographs of Israel that appeared in the French press at this time were either of Israeli soldiers or Israel's bleak, hilly landscape, occasionally depicted being worked by Israeli youths. The composite image was one of young, modern Jews revitalizing a rugged, biblical land.
[401] Golan, 50.
[402] "Par 368 voix contre 192 l'Assemblée nationale donne son accord a l'action du gouvernement," *Le monde,* November 1, 1956.
[403] Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres,* 164.

Progressives and about two-thirds of the populist Poujadists.[404] Few issues matched Israel as a unifying cause: as Socialist politicial Édouard Depreux explained to Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir in summer 1957, "If a national unity party were to be created in France, its initials would be I.S.R.A.E.L."[405]

Political discourse on Israel followed the same broad contours as the French press. Here too Israel appeared as a brave but beleaguered outpost of western civilization. Many politicians also saw Israel's survival as a test for the principles of French republicanism. In March 1957, Socialist deputy Arthur Conte informed the National Assembly that "The defeat of Israel would be a grave defeat for liberty itself," while former prime minister Edgar Faure told Christian Pineau that "We [Radicals] share your concerns and sentiments over this small, courageous people . . . [whose neighbors] impose upon it a permanent [state of] insecurity."[406] Bipartisan political support for Israel quickly crystallized into legislative and organizational frameworks, including a parliamentary group on Franco-Israeli friendship, a National Committee for Solidarity with Israel, a reinvigorated Association France-Israel, and the right-wing French Committee for the Alliance France-Israel.[407] Each of these featured a high-profile bipartisan membership, and the parliamentary group alone included members of the

[404] "«La position de la France et de l'Angleterre n'a pas changé depuis le 26 juillet»', *Combat,* November 1, 1956. The Poujadist and Communist movements both had currents of antisemitism within their parties, and while this does not fully explain their coolness toward Israel, it did contribute.
[405] Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret,* 243-44.
[406] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1957, No. 41 A.N., March 27, 1957, 1868-69; Samy Cohen, 105. June Edmunds argues that the dominance of the Israeli Labor party within Israeli politics significantly stimulated French Socialist support for Israel. June Edmunds, *The Left and Israel: Party-Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 139.
[407] Whereas the Association France-Israel pursued cultural, economic, and social ties, the Alliance France-Israel, discussed below, was motivated by political objectives.

Socialist, Radical, Gaullist, Independent parties on its governing committee.[408] Former French president Vincent Auriol, who now assumed the presidency of the Solidarity Committee, explained that Israel's cause was, in his eyes, a universal one: in fighting for its existence, Auriol affirmed, Israel "fights for us all, for liberty and human dignity."[409] For Auriol and his politically diverse peers in the pro-Israel movement, the question of Israel was accordingly one of principle. Though the case for a French-Israeli alliance based on interest was articulated, this argument never stood in isolation, and was always coupled to a discussion of ethics. By adopting this practice on the question of Israel, French journalists and politicians alike rejected a world in which French policy would be shaped by interest alone.

If majoritarian discourse on Israel in 1956-57 was inclined to view the Suez Crisis as a matter of principle, groups on the far right and left wings of French politics responded with different frameworks. On the French Right, it was Algeria which most informed perceptions of Israel, while the French Left was divided in its response. Prior to the mid-1950s, the French extreme Right had viewed Israel with ambiguity. French antisemitic currents had not disappeared as quickly as the Vichy government, and Catholic groups were particularly troubled by the prospect of Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land. But the Algerian War convinced many French *ultras* that their greatest enemies were pan-Arabism and communism, and some now began to see Israel as a potential ally against these common foes. As Abraham Karlikow reported in 1957, "French right-wing elements previously noted for their coolness to things Jewish

[408] On the diverse membership of these organizations, see Hecker, 17; Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret,* 254-55; and U.S. Consulate Strasbourg to Department of State, Despatch 101, January 31, 1957, file 651.84a/1-3157, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[409] Vincent Auriol, "Solidarité de la France avec Israël," *L'arche* no. 1, 1957.

suddenly saw in Israel a true Crusader standing staunchly against Islam. Even the openly anti-Semitic press began to find favorable qualities in the new state."[410] Accordingly, for Gaullist senator Michel Debré, France's defense of Israel at Suez was a good first step against the "Islamization of the African continent," but one which should not let "us forget that our first worries are Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria."[411]

As Ethan Katz notes, partisans for and against French Algeria now mapped the Arab-Israeli conflict onto the ongoing struggle in North Africa, using each as a lens for understanding the other.[412] Many *ultras* consequently saw Israel's struggle as their own, and hailed Israel's success as a victory for French Algeria. This phenomenon was most visible in the project of the Committee for the Alliance France-Israel and its president Jacques Soustelle. Soustelle was a Free French fighter, close advisor to Charles de Gaulle, and staunch partisan of French Algeria, which he had governed since late 1955.[413] Now, in the wake of the Sinai War, he and the Alliance France-Israel partnered with Menachem Begin's right-wing Israeli Herut party to call for a formal French-Israeli alliance.

Soustelle and his supporters saw Israel as an analog to French-Algeria, a parallel society trapped in similar circumstances facing a common enemy. As Soustelle explained

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[410] Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 59 (1958), Philadelphia: JPS, 1958, 247. On the attitudes of French antisemites toward Israel during these years, see particularly Richard C. Viven, "The End of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," *The Historical Journal* 37 no. 2 (June: 1994): 365-88. On the confluence of pro-Israel and anti-Arab currents in France, see Yvan Gastaut, "La Guerre de Six Jours et la question du racisme en France," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 71 (2005): 15-29.

[411] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Conseil de la République,* Année 1956, No. 29 C.R., May 30, 1956, 871; *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Conseil de la République,* Année 1956, No. 64 C.R., October 31, 1956, 2135. Debré was a vociferous critic of Nasser and partisan of French Algeria. He would later be the first Prime Minister of the Fifth Republic, under Charles de Gaulle.

[412] Katz points out that Israelis, at times, did likewise, favorably paralleling their position to that of the French Algerian settlers as part of a shared struggle. Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 102-3, 180

[413] An *ultra,* Soustelle would defect to the terrorist Organization de l'Armée Secrète, the OAS, in 1960 in an effort to defeat the FLN and the new Gaullist policy.

it, "The *fedayeen* who murder in Israel are emulated by the *mujadhideen* who murder in Algeria. These are the same enemies, and in each case they are struggling against a people they wish to annihilate and a western culture they want to see disappear. The same hand arms them, and the same mind directs their bullets."[414] Casting Israel and French Algeria as bastions of western civilization struggling against a fanatical pan-Arab nationalism, Soustelle drew upon the powerful essentializing binaries which had guided French imperialism and its "civilizing mission." These framed Israel's conflict as part of a larger East-West confrontation, and helped mobilize nationalist and anti-Arab sentiments on Israel's behalf. Similar themes appeared in government reports, like that of Defense observer General Souard. Souard argued that Israel's efforts to encourage the education of female Muslims and curtail polygamous marriage could be applied in Algeria to undermine the sexual, religious, and racial forces that he felt were fueling Algerian unrest.[415] At the same time, Souard and other observers felt that the Zionist movement's ideological mobilization and spirit of self-sacrifice had contributed significantly to Israel's military and state-building efforts, and encouraged French Algeria to adopt a similar societal ethos. In this light, significant voices on the French Right saw Israel as both a blueprint for, and a condition of, French Algeria's continued survival.

We must take care, however, not to dismiss the Alliance France-Israel as the simple product of anti-Arab racism. A predominantly Gaullist movement, the Alliance France-Israel reflected that party's commitment to French empire, and was deeply

[414] Quoted in Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-Secret,* 257.
[415] On the tropology of the worldview articulated by Souard, see Shepard (2006). General Souard, "Mission de contact et d'observation en Israel (13-18 Aout 1957), Compte Rendu présente le 24 septembre 1957, no. 12, September 24, 1957, GR 14 S 343, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

distrustful of the Soviet Union and its clients in the Arab world. Many within the Alliance France-Israel were also genuinely committed to Israel's wellbeing, and remembered both the friendship of Zionists and the suffering of Jews during the Second World War. Thus, though powerful anti-Arab currents existed within the Alliance France-Israel, it would be an overestimation to say they were its primary stimulus.

The French Left's response to the Sinai War was equally nuanced, and we must be careful not to homogenize its divergent currents. Jonathan Judaken has argued that the Sinai War produced a dramatic and sudden shift in Israel's image on the French Left. No longer the victim, he argues, Israel now appeared the perpetrator, "the vanguard of international capitalist colonization in the Middle East."[416] Judaken dates this shift too early, however, and we must avoid letting the New Left's turn from Israel in the mid and late 1960s color our perceptions of this earlier period. Some on the French Left *did* critique Israel's 1956 war as part of an imperialist plot against a socialist Arab anti-colonial national awakening. But such voices were few in number, and largely restricted to the Communist and Christian Socialist Left.[417] On the non-Communist Left the situation was more complex, and perceptions of Jewish vulnerability frequently overrode the dictates of anti-colonialist ideology.

A February 1957 questionnaire dispatched by the Jewish monthly *L'arche* to a number of France's leading left-wing journalists and politicians provides a microcosmic snapshot of Leftist discourse on Israel. While many of the respondents regretted Israel's participation in the tripartite war against Egypt, they did so not because they objected to

[416] Judaken, 198; Judaken's analysis is build on François Furet's 1978 assessment of the split between the French Left and Israel.
[417] Coulon, 65-67. See in particular the coverage of *L'humanité*, *Témoignage chrétien,* and *France-observateur.*

the Israeli invasion, but because they felt Israel's cause had been sullied by its association with Anglo-French imperialism. For newspaper editors Jean Daniel (*L'express*) and Jean-Marie Domenach (*L'esprit*), as well as Socialist leader Daniel Mayer and Christian Socialist Jacques Nantet, Israel's "defensive" war against Egypt had been justified, even if Mollet's intervention was not.[418] These individuals lamented Israel's tragic "political error" in allowing itself to be dragged into an imperialist war which put it on the wrong side of the global anti-colonialist struggle. Similar arguments were expressed in the National Assembly by Leftist opponents of the war.[419] Others, like French-Algerian writer Albert Camus and Radical leader Pierre Mendès-France, called on Arabs and Israelis to work together to build a brighter, socialist future. But whereas Mendès-France urged Israel not to be a "pawn" of western imperialism, and objected to preventative war on principle, Camus affirmed that Israel faced death, and refused "to play the role of Pontius Pilate." He grounded his position in the memory of the Holocaust, and laid blame for the war squarely at Nasser's feet.[420] To these thinkers on the French Left, Israel represented a problem because it did not neatly fit into the ideological categories of postwar left-wing politics. If Israel was a European settler society in the midst of the Arab world, it was also the product of an anti-colonial nationalist movement; if Israel was the partner of Anglo-French imperialists, it also had legitimate defensive claims. It was difficult for these men to cast Israel and Egypt into a moral binary; as a result, their war was "unfortunate" rather than "just" or "unjust."

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[418] *L'express*'s Jean Daniel was the most forgiving of these voices, while *L'esprit*'s Domenach was the least. "La gauche française contre Israël (?)", *L'arche* no. 2, February 1957; Coulon, 65-67.
[419] Schillo, 832.
[420] "La gauche française contre Israël (?)", *L'arche* no. 2, February 1957; Mendès-France, 47-48. As June Edmunds notes, Mendès-France's opposition to the French intervention at Suez was high profile, but relatively isolated within his Radical party. Edmunds, 135.

The remarks of Gilles Martinet, the Socialist editor in chief of the democratic-socialist *France-observateur*, encapsulated the conundrum Israel presented to the French anti-colonial Left. In early 19567, Martinet affirmed his explicit rejection of settler colonialism and called for the independence of indigenous Arab populations. But he then noted that "this solution . . . evidently makes no sense in Palestine. The antisemitic persecutions, and above all the horror of the concentration camps, created a particular responsibility for us . . . . The safety of fifteen hundred-thousand Israelis implies the recognition of the state they created, even if this state is founded on the principles of colonization and conquest." Martinet qualified his remarks by affirming the need to critique Israel's treatment of Arab Muslims and Jews, and urged Israel to "become a true Afro-Asiatic state or ready itself, sooner or later, to perish."[421] But the overall message was clear: in the wake of the Holocaust, France's moral obligation to the Jews extended to Israel, and it trumped anti-colonial politics. In the eyes of Martinet and his fellow respondents, Israelis remained "survivors," their moral ascendancy unblemished by battlefield success.

In contrast, the French Communists Party's (PCF) turn from Israel was abrupt, and largely in lockstep with Soviet policy. Whereas in late 1955 the PCF had electioneered among French Jews by proclaiming that "THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF FRANCE IS A SINCERE FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL," by late 1956 it had become a pronounced enemy.[422] The Hungarian and Suez crises amounted to a test of the PCF's loyalty to international (i.e., Soviet) communism, and its spokesmen were

[421] La gauche française contre Israël (?)", *L'arche* no. 2, February 1957.
[422] "La Fédération de Paris du Parti communiste français s'addresse aux Israélites," 1955, MDI 68, archives du Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF), Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris, France.

determined not to be found wanting. In Tony Judt's analysis, this response stemmed from an unwillingness on the part of French Communists to admit that, in the wake of Stalinist purges, communism might have its inadequacies. As a result, the PCF and its supporters practiced a sort of "faith" in communism, which manifested in doctrinal moral binaries.[423] PCF deputies in the National Assembly accordingly affirmed that the nationalization of Suez "had nothing to do with the annexation of the Sudetenland by Hitler." They instead attempted to monopolize the legacies of Munich and the French Resistance for themselves, asserting that "We were the first to stand up [then], we who were the first to denounce the capitulation of Munich."[424] The Second World War, these deputies thereby implied, had given Israel's cause no special legitimacy; the *only* moral struggle was international communism's fight against fascist imperialism.

The PCF's press organ, *L'humanité*, also articulated a consistent binary, contrasting a criminal Anglo-French imperialism against the Soviet Union's socialist intervention in Hungary. According to *L'humanité*'s journalists, the "Israeli aggression" against Egypt had only been a "pretext for revenge against Nasser" by "reactionary and colonialist forces," "a senseless and premeditated act" that could lead to a "global conflagration." By contrast, the situation in Hungary was "confused," and the USSR's

[423] Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 131, 153-54. This was apparent to French observers in 1956: put on the spot in the National Assembly to defend Communist leader Waldeck Rochet's claim that the Suez canal was open to Israeli navigation in May 1957, Rochet's fellow Communist Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour asked for time to telephone the Soviet ambassador. When Rochet later blasted Mollet by shouting "We don't subordinate French policy to Israel!", Mollet retorted: "Indeed! You prefer to subordinate it to Russia!" Throughout late 1956 and early 1957, PCF legislators speaking out against the Sinai War in the National Assembly were often greeted with jeers of "Hungary!" and "Budapest!" *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1957, No. 56 A.N., May 22, 1957, 2595.

[424] Deputy Roger Garaudy, quoted in "Le débat sur Suez a tourné court a l'Assemblée," *Le monde,* October 18, 1956. Late in his life, Garaudy would be convicted of Holocaust denial and sentenced to a prison term. It is the PCF that best reflects Henry Rousso's conclusions about the erasure of Jewish victimhood in postwar France, though as we have seen, though vociferous, the PCF did not reflect mainstream discourse on Israel or the Holocaust. See Rousso (1991).

invasion a defensive response to "counter-revolutionary" and "neo-fascist" forces.[425] Though it hailed Soviet intervention in Hungary as a defense of workers' rights, *L'humanité* took considerable pains to emphasize international and local condemnation of the Anglo-French invasion.[426] Even within *L'humanité*'s reporting, however, there was important nuance. Though Israel's "aggression" against Egypt was consistently critiqued, it was often spared the tongue-lashing allotted to France and Britain. This was because, in the PCF's view, Israel had itself been endangered by the imperialist powers. As a pawn rather than a partner of Anglo-French imperialism, Israel *could* yet be redeemed, and saved from the dangerous risks into which its leaders had been led.[427] This perception limited the extent of *L'humanité*'s criticism of Israel, and would remain in effect until the Six-Day War of June, 1967.

The particularity of the Jewish response to the Suez Crisis also merits our attention. Conventional historiographic wisdom holds that French Jews remained lukewarm toward Israel until their political "awakening" during the 1967 Six-Day War.[428] However, this is an oversimplification, and well before 1967, French Jewish

[425] "Israël attack l'Egypte," *L'humanité*, October 30, 1956; "Caution!", *L'humanité*, October 30, 1956; "Situation confuse en Hongrie," *L'humanité*, October 30, 1956; "Halte à la guerre!", *L'humanité*, October 31, 1956; "Déclaration du Bureau politique du Parti communiste français," *L'humanité*, October 31, 1956; Pierre Courtade, "Un machination," *L'humanité*, November 1, 1956; Pierre Courtade, "La Hongrie et l'Egypte," *L'humanité*, November 6, 1956.

[426] Though there were popular protests against the invasion in France, these were almost always organized through PCF-affiliated unions and student groups. *L'humanité* was also the only paper to report that Israel had sustained "heavy losses in men and materiel" during its Sinai campaign (it did not). "Premières protestations populaires en France," *L'humanité,* October 31, 1956; "Extrême émotion dans le monde entier," *L'humanité,* November 1, 1956; "L'agression Franco-Britannique condamnée par l'opinion publique mondiale," *L'humanité,* November 1, 1956; "Le Caire bombardé," *L'humanité,* November 1, 1956.

[427] "L'U.R.S.S.: Le Conseil de sécurité doint prendre des mesures immediates pour metre fin au conflit," *L'humanité,* November 1, 1956; "L'appel du Comité central du Parti communiste français: Unité d'action pour le rétablissement immédiat de la paix," *L'humanité,* November 2, 1956.

[428] See for example Rousso, 132-39; Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 257-58; Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 5, 47, and

support for Israel was taking significant steps.[429] Though still a far cry from the mass mobilization that would arise during the Six-Day War, 1956-57 saw, in Abraham Karlikow's words, "an outburst of Zionist support unequaled since 1948."[430] As Ariel Danan notes, supporting Israel in 1956 was easier for French Jews than it had been in 1947-48: the Suez Crisis saw French and Israeli interests clearly align, and French Jews did not have to worry as much about accusations of divided loyalty.[431] French Zionist leader André Blumel gave voice to this sentiment in October 1956, arguing that there was "no incompatibility between the Zionist effort and . . . being a loyal citizen of a state."[432] Accordingly, after some internal debate, the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF) affirmed its support for Israel's invasion, which was based "solely on the [the needs] of legitimate self-defense." It did so again in March 1957, adopting a resolution endorsing Israel's right to security, freedom of navigation, and proactive self defense.[433] The outspokenness of the CRIF should not come as a shock: despite heated internal debate, the CRIF typically came out in support of Israel in the end, as it had done in 1948. Additionally, the 1954 departure of Georges Wormser from the presidency of

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141; and Joan B. Wolf, "Anne Frank is dead, long live Anne Frank:" The Six-Day War and the Holocaust in French Public Discourse," *History and Memory* 11:1 (June, 1999), 105, 108.

[429] In this I align with Coulon (2009); Katz (2015); Mandel (2014); and especially Ariel Danan, *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014).

[430] Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 59 (1958), Philadelphia: JPS, 1958, 256.

[431] Danan, 60.

[432] André Blumel, "L'avenir du sionisme française," *La Revue du FSJU* no. 17, October 1956. Blumel's views were not without their critics. The French Jewish writer Roger Ikor explicitly rejected Jewish nationalist feeling for Israel in the same edition of *La Revue du FSJU.* In his view, support for Israel had to be moral, based "at the level of humanity, not of nations." Roger Ikor, "Israël est par nature un anti-ghetto," *La Revue du FSJU* no. 17, October 1956.

[433] "Assemblée Pleniere du 15 Novembre 1956," November 29, 1956, MDI 14, archives du CRIF, CDJC; "Assemblée Pleniere du 25 Janvier 1957," March 1, 1957, MDI 15, archives du CRIF, CDJC. Over the next two years the CRIF would continue to pass resolutions supporting Israeli diplomatic positions and protesting threats to its security.

the Central Consistory of French Jews had removed a major voice of *Israélite* non-Zionism, and strengthened the pro-Zionist camp.[434]

Despite this, mass displays of French Jewish support for Israel were limited in 1956-57, and only one major street demonstration took place.[435] Danan argues that this may have been because French Jews were already satisfied with the close French-Israeli alliance.[436] The CRIF's overtures to the government seem to confirm this thesis, and were most often congratulations on, rather than critiques of, policy. Nonetheless, there was a notable increase in French Jewish mobilization for Israel. French Jews fundraised over $1,235,000 in 1956, collecting more than half this sum in November and December alone. At the same time, the number of French donors to pro-Israel collections jumped by 80 percent, to over fourteen thousand. Fundraising produced an additional $570,000 in 1957. Hebrew language classes now began to grow in popularity, and civilian traffic between France and Israel reached its highest level yet during these years.[437] The Jewish press, meanwhile, was energetic and outspoken, providing extensive coverage of the Sinai War and subsequent negotiations, and editorializing against the Arab boycott of Israel.[438] These voices shared the wider popular perception that Israel was in danger, and also took up the cry of "Munich." French Zionist leader Jules Jefroykin accordingly insisted that "Jerusalem is not Prague, and the people of Israel are not ready for a

[434] P.E. Gilbert à Georges Bidault, Telegram 208/AL, "A/S. Présidence du Consistoire Israélite de France," February 2, 1954, 218QO Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[435] It was held on November 5, 1956 under the organization of the Association France-Israel and the Fédération sioniste de France. Danan, 63.
[436] *Ibid.,* 64.
[437] The above sums do not reflect the entirety of French Jewish fundraising, and separate funds existed for the Jewish National Fund, the support of North African Jewish refugees, the United Jewish Welfare Fund, and other organizations. Israel bonds were also sold. Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 59 (1958), Philadelphia: JPS, 1958, 256; Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 58 (1957), Philadelphia: JPS, 1957, 252-53; Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 57 (1956), Philadelphia: JPS, 1956, 328.
[438] See for example "Le boycott arabe," *L'arche* No. 4, April 1957.

Munich."[439] Thus, if the French Jewish response to 1956 remained a far cry from the mass support of 1967, it was nonetheless an important showing by a community still organizationally divided and still uncomfortable with minority politics. Israel had served as the mobilizing catalyst for this limited display of Jewish political activism, once again illustrating how perceptions of Israel stimulated and shaped internal French politicization.

Popular sympathy for Israel did not diminish in late 1957 and 1958, though with negotiations ending in spring 1957, the urgency of Israel's cause began to bleed off. Yet while opinion polls demonstrated rising ambivalence to the Arab-Israeli conflict, press discourse on Israel remained largely sympathetic.[440] Throughout the remainder of the Fourth Republic, the same images and tropes which had dominated 1956 and early 1957 continued to pervade. Israel continued to be depicted as a 'brave little nation'; an analog to French Algeria in the fight against pan-Arabism; a refuge for the survivors of the Holocaust; a bastion of Western civilization; a socialist triumph; and a vulnerable David in the midst of its enemies. These images, prevalent everywhere outside the Communist Left and Poujadist Right, shaped perceptions of the Jewish state, and gave valuable popular support to France's ongoing policy of partnership with Israel.

Israel and the Fourth Republic in the Wake of Suez, 1957-1958

It was not only French popular support for Israel which continued after the Suez Crisis; official aid now entered a new period of depth and consistency. This was in part

[439] Jules Jefroykin, *Le terre retrouve,* October 1, 1956, quoted in Danan, 65. The language of the Holocaust and Munich was also used within Jewish circles to critique Nasser's repression of Egyptian Jews in the aftermath of the Sinai War. See Danan, 68.

[440] For poll data in 1958, see Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 256-57. Dipping national interest in the Middle East contrasted against the tone of public discourse on Israel, which has been thoroughly reproduced and quantitatively analyzed in Lapierre (1968). See also Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le monde diplomatique et Israël 1954-2005* (Paris: Éditions Le Manuscrit, 2006). 1958 also saw the first "twinning" of an Israeli and French city, linking Haifa and Gaston Deffere's Marseille.

the result of a shift in Foreign Minister Pineau's thinking, who resolved that France would pursue a policy of "disengagement" from the Arab states until the war in Algeria had been concluded. Prior to that point, he reasoned, there would be little use in cultivating Franco-Arab ties at the expense of a productive relationship with Israel.[441] The appointment of a Soviet-sympathizing officer as chief of staff of the Syrian army in August 1957, and the official union of Syria and Egypt under the United Arab Republic in February 1958, further distanced France from Israel's enemies, and impelled deeper Franco-Israeli ties.

Consequently, French arms continued to flow into Israel following the Suez Crisis. By January 1958, major contracts had been signed for thirty Vautour fighter-bombers and twenty-four Super-Mystère B.2 fighter-bombers, bringing the offensive capabilities of the Israeli air force to new heights.[442] France also provided Israel with remarkably generous terms of credit with which to pay off the arms it had acquired since 1956. As Shimon Peres recalled,

> They offered us discounts we had never dreamed about. The purchase of weapons before the Sinai Campaign amounted to 60 million dollars. Out of that we paid 20 million, which left us a debt of 40. From those 40 million, they agreed to subtract 12 million as 'Lend-Lease equipment' . . . . they gave us a discount of 6 million — for taxes and subsidies . . . . out of [the remaining] sum, 6 million dollars [was discounted] for 'legal' deals, and they gave us a loan of five years to pay for it. We had 16 million dollars left. Of these [they agreed to pay 3 million] . . . . they said 'We cannot give you any more discounts . . . [but] pay us in cash and we'll give you a cash discount of 25 percent . . . .[443]

[441] Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret,* 222.

[442] A major contract was also signed for sixty 105mm canons with which to upgrade Sherman tanks, and for the production of munitions and replacement parts in Israel. "Principaux Materiels Livres par la France à Israël," exemplaire no. 3/3, 1961, GR 20 R 159, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD. See also Schillo, 872-75. Under Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Louis Joxe, however, the Quai d'Orsay continued to lobby against sales to Israel. See for example Direction d'Afrique-Levant, Service du Levant, Note, "A.s.- Rapports franco-israéliens," April 12, 1957, 218QO51 Israël 1953-5959, MAE; and U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 649, June 11, 1957, file 651.84a/6-1157, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[443] Quoted in Bar-Zohar, *Shimon Peres,* 163-64.

The discounts continued; in the end, France eased some twenty-eight million dollars of Israel's debt. Faced with such figures, the argument that French policy on Israel was simply the product of pragmatic interest seems to fall short. Meanwhile, as these sales were taking place, French-Israeli military contacts continued at all levels. Intelligence reports continued to be exchanged, and dozens of Israeli officers trained in French war colleges, at air bases, aboard submarines, and with French tank crews.[444] At the same time, bipartisan parliamentary groups and military missions continued a steady stream of visits to the Jewish state. As one French general reported, "I don't know a [single] French officer who went to Israel at that time and didn't return pro-Israeli."[445] Grounded in perceptions of an Israeli David, the principles of French socialism, and a robust anti-Nasserism, these points of contact created strong bonds which would endure into the 1970s.

It was the nuclear question which proved the ultimate test of the French-Israeli friendship, however. Though Mollet and David Ben-Gurion had signed a technical agreement in late 1956, this had been an intermediary step, and the operational phase of the Dimona reactor project had been delayed. By spring 1957, with Egypt's threat to Israel significantly curbed, Mollet and Pineau now began to have serious misgivings. On the one hand, the two ministers were deeply troubled by the potential military dimensions of a plutonium reactor. On the other hand, however, Soviet threats against Israel in late

[444] Schillo, 862-63.

[445] While military observers were impressed by the morale and quality of Israel's soldiers, parliamentary delegations were "struck by the disadvantageous position of the Israelis," and praised the socialism being practiced within Israeli kibbutzim. P.E. Gilbert à Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 760/AL, "A/S. séjour en Israël d'une mission parlementaire française," August 19, 1957, 218QO82 Israël 1953-1959, MAE; P.E. Gilbert à Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 111/AL, "A/S. séjour en Israël d'une mission parlementaire française," February 8, 1958, 218QO82 Israël 1953-1959, MAE; Schillo, 859.

1956 left Mollet convinced that "I owe [Israel] the bomb, I owe it to them."[446] But opposition to the agreement from Quai Secretary General Louis Joxe, French atomic energy director Pierre Guillaumat, and the pacifist French Nuclear High Commissioner Francis Perrin eventually swayed Mollet's mind. In late May 1957, he attempted to backtrack his agreement with Ben-Gurion.[447] Mollet's government fell on June 13, however, and the matter was deferred to his successor.

This was a windfall for the Israelis, and likely saved the deal, for Mollet's successor was none other than Israel's long-standing friend, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury. Sitting atop a shaky government, Bourgès-Maunoury's days in office were evidently numbered. The new prime minister was prepared to sign a nuclear agreement with Israel, but only with the accord of his Socialist coalition partners.[448] Shimon Peres now began an intense diplomatic blitz to make the most of this fleeting opportunity. The key days fell between September 30 and October 3. Using the combination of pragmatic and sentimental arguments that had served him so well in the past, Peres managed to narrowly win over both Pineau and Perrin. But by now Bourgès-Maunoury's government was being voted out of office, and Peres was on the verge of being too late.[449] Peres reached the government council chambers a few minutes before the close of Bourgès-Maunoury's final cabinet meeting with a public mandate. The Prime Minister excused himself to speak with Peres, and promised he would obtain the cabinet's approval for a nuclear agreement before their meeting concluded. He did. That evening, his government was voted out of office.

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[446] Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 121-23.
[447] *Ibid.*, 124-29; Schillo, 884-88.
[448] Pinkus, "Atomic Power," 128.
[449] *Ibid.,* 127-29; Schillo, 888-93; Karpin, 90-92. Perrin would maintain afterward that he had been badgered into granting his approval.

The formal agreement was signed on October 2-3, and committed France to providing Israel with the technical and material assistance it needed to build a plutonium reactor. In return, Israel promised to consult with France on all matters pertaining to the reactor's operation.[450] It was a fateful step forward on Israel's road to nuclear capability, and without Peres's dogged legwork or Bourgès-Maunoury's personal feeling for the Jewish state, the deal for the Dimona reactor would likely never have been signed.

Throughout the remaining seven months of the French Fourth Republic, the wheels that Peres, Mollet, and Bourgès-Maunoury had put in motion continued to turn. France now entered a period of protracted ministerial crisis culminating in the attempted coup of May 1958, but the patterns and images that had underpinned French-Israeli relations over the previous fourteen years remained operative. In Israel, however, Ben-Gurion's government began to worry that the high water mark might have passed. Concerned that close French-Israeli relations might not prove as enduring as he hoped, Ben-Gurion now began looking to expand cooperation with the United States, even if this meant adopting positions contrary to French policy in the Middle East.[451] The United States would prove unwilling to match the ardor of the French-Israeli relationship, however, and France remained Israel's most important partner for several years to come. But the 1958 Fifth Republic would bring with it significant institutional and ministerial reforms. These would have a lasting and dramatic effect on the future shape of French-Israeli relations, and gradually eliminate the ambiguity and unorthodoxy in which they

[450] Sources on the French-Israeli nuclear relationship are scarce, and while Binyamin Pinkus has recently uncovered important documents in the MAE archives, most accounts rely heavily on the interviews conducted by investigative journalist Pierre Péan for his 1982 book.
[451] Schillo, 770; Levey, 85.

thrived. As a result, over the course of the next nine years, French-Israeli relations would slowly shift from intimacy to ambiguity, and ultimately, crisis.

Conclusions

Given Shimon Peres's centrality to the formation of the French-Israeli relationship, it seems fitting to give him the final word on this critical period. Though he insisted that mutual interest was at the core of the French-Israeli partnership, Peres concluded that,

> [I]t would be utterly false to the very nature of this bond to conceive of it in terms of interest alone. It had about it a romantic quality — a strange manifestation in a cynical world — the kind . . . [that] gives [one] the inspiration to gaze anew at human values . . . . The new Franco-Israeli relationship showed that traditional policies of 'what's in it for me,' based on self-interest, could give way to policies informed by generosity, understanding, and comradeship.[452]

Peres's characterization is accurate. Between 1954 and 1958, France furnished Israel with an unprecedented level of military aid in a framework best characterized as an informal alliance. This alliance was grounded in the political realities of French Middle East policy, and particularly the anti-Nasserism of the supporters of French Algeria. But it was also indelibly rooted in an array of sentimental factors upon which the course of French-Israeli relations was equally dependent. These included powerful memories of the Second World War, enduring perceptions of Jewish vulnerability, and a renewed commitment to principled interventionism. French-Israeli ties were also dependent on the institutional structure of the French Fourth Republic. An inter-ministerial division of foreign policy powers allowed Defense and Interior Ministry personnel to pursue their own relationships with the Jewish State, often in contravention to the wishes, and outside the knowledge, of the French Foreign Ministry. The growth of the French-Israeli

[452] Shimon Peres, *David's Sling,* 64. Peres expressed similar sentiments in our brief correspondence. Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.

relationship was finally contingent on the individuals involved, leaders like Guy Mollet, Christian Pineau, and Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, who were ready to view Israel through the dual lenses of sentiment and interest. It was equally dependent on middle-tier officials like Shimon Peres, Abel Thomas, and P.E. Gilbert, who were able and determined to pursue a French-Israeli alliance. Without their efforts, a French-Israeli alliance would not have been possible. The timely confluence of these factors in 1955-56 combined to produce a military, diplomatic, and popular friendship unrivalled in Israel's first decade of existence.

But the French-Israeli relationship was not only a relationship between states. The French public showed itself deeply committed to Israel's wellbeing in 1956-57, and once again adopted the question of Israel as a framework for thinking about France itself. Speaking about Israel accordingly became a way of articulating an idealized France, whether that France was a "Muslim empire," the guardian of French Algeria, or one that rejected the legacy of Munich. To French *ultras*, Israel also served as a blueprint for what French Algeria could become, a model settler society that had succeeded in staving off Nasserism. In these ways, Israel served to clarify French political thought, prompting debate about the kind of country France wished to be. Though Israel's ability to stimulate French self-reflectivity would continue into the Fifth Republic, the contours of the French-Israeli relationship would undergo significant changes, and it is to these that we now turn.

Chapter Three

Mirage: The Decline of French-Israeli Official Relations, 1959-1967

Introduction

In mid-May, 1959, the French Socialist leader Guy Mollet finally saw Israel for himself, two years after the end of his tumultuous premiership. He was travelling as the chosen emissary of France's new head of state, President Charles de Gaulle, and Mollet came bearing his felicitations. "I want it to be known in Israel," de Gaulle had Mollet announce on his behalf, "that even if I, de Gaulle, was not in power in 1956, I was nonetheless completely in agreement with the aid given to Israel . . . . if you find your existence unfortunately endangered once more, you can count on the same active willingness of France."[453] For a time, this seemed possible: in 1961, and again in 1964, de Gaulle hailed Israel as a "friend and ally," and from 1960-68 Israel remained the best overall customer of the French arms industry, purchasing materiel valued at some 2.16 billion francs.[454] But by late 1967, French-Israeli relations had made an about-face. France now maintained a military and diplomatic embargo against Israel, and worked against it at the United Nations. In a major press conference in November, 1967, five months after the June 1967 Six-Day War, de Gaulle himself blasted Israel by attacking Jews generally as "an elite people, sure of themselves and domineering . . . [charged with] a burning and conquering ambition." Israel, meanwhile, was characterized as "a

[453] "Israël peut compter sur la volonté agissante de la France," *L'information,* May 16, 1959.
[454] Note this sum is given in the 1960 *new francs*; each new franc was valued at one hundred old francs. All subsequent references to "francs" refer to this revalued currency. Comité Nationale d'Expansion pour l'Industrie Aeronautique (CNEIA), No. 901/62, February 7, 1969, GR 1 R 152, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France; "Entretien du Général de Gaulle et de M. Levi Eshkol, Le 29 Juin 1964," June 29, 1964, 218QO106, Israël 1960-1965, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France.

warlike state, resolved to aggrandize itself."[455] At the official level, the French-Israeli friendship had taken a mortal blow. It would never fully recover. How can we explain this seemingly sudden reversal in the French-Israeli friendship? Was it merely a response to the Six-Day War?

No. To begin with, we must recognize that the collapse of the French-Israeli alliance was not as sudden as it first appears. Despite coming against the backdrop of the dramatic Six-Day War of June 1967, de Gaulle's decisive rupture with Israel had come on June 2, three days *before* Israel's preemptive strike on its neighbors. De Gaulle's break with Israel was thus a *cause*, not the *consequence*, of French-Israeli tension during and after the Six-Day War. Contrary to prevailing wisdom, the Six-Day War produced only a limited immediate reevaluation of Israel at either the policy or popular strata.[456] Instead, the war served to confirm *existing* perceptions of Israel at each of these levels.[457] The breakdown of the French-Israeli alliance must accordingly be understood as a process, rather than a moment of disintegration, in which the Six-Day War figures as one fracture among many in an already crumbling relationship. This process was spurred by the French Fifth Republic's institutional consolidation, the political realism of France's new leaders, and their reimagining of France's international role and Israeli Jewishness. Together, these factors gradually eroded the institutional and conceptual space in which

[455] "Conference de Presse du General de Gaulle, Président de la République, Le 27 Novembre, 1967, au Palais de l'Élysée," November 27, 1967, 2038INVA 1771, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[456] Here I resist those who argue that the Six-Day War produced a critical moment of rupture, including Elie Barnavi and Luc Rosenzweig, *La France et Israël: Une affaire passionnelle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 31, 168-69; Michel Abitbol, "Introduction," in Michael Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 2004), xiv; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, "France and the June 1967 War," in Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, eds., *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247. Marc Hecker (2012), June Edmunds (2000), and Michel Winock (2004) each also argue for the centrality of 1967. De Gaulle's memoirs do likewise, though there was significant disjuncture between de Gaulle's thinking in 1967 and his later accounts thereof.
[457] This chapter focuses on the collapse of French-Israeli relations at the official level. The endurance of French popular images of Israel is the subject of subsequent chapters.

the unorthodox French-Israeli friendship had flourished, undermining the French-Israeli alliance.

With the aid of French and previously underutilized American diplomatic records, I demonstrate that de Gaulle, though initially sympathetic to Israel, was by 1960 committed to reining in the "excessive" French-Israeli relationship. Initially, however, de Gaulle aimed only to moderate, rather than break with Fourth Republican policy on Israel. The President hoped to maintain favorable relations with both Israel and the Arab states, and consequently, considerable French aid continued to flow into Israel with de Gaulle's approval. By 1962, however, and increasingly thereafter, de Gaulle became progressively convinced that French-Israeli interests no longer aligned. The conclusion of the Algerian War in 1962 was part of this calculus, but not the only important factor. De Gaulle's personal perceptions of Israel were also souring, and admiration for Israel's achievements was gradually replaced by skepticism and frustration. As a result, by the mid-1960s, French policy on Israel was poised for a change.

Though de Gaulle has often been characterized as a detached political realist, his shift on Israel was grounded in both pragmatic and ideational factors.[458] Historians are most familiar with the pragmatic interests shaping Gaullist policy. De Gaulle was personally committed to rebuilding French international standing through a "politics of grandeur," an active assertion of French "greatness" and independence as an equal and neutral Cold War power. Inheriting a costly war in Algeria, de Gaulle was from the outset interested in overhauling France's position in the Mediterranean. This entailed a threefold

[458] Indeed, de Gaulle saw himself this way, and often urged other statesmen to assess Israel, and politics broadly, without emotion. See for example *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (*DDF*), *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 1 juillet 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 319, June 19, 1967.

revision. First, de Gaulle felt that the French-Israeli relationship was out of balance: Israel, as the junior partner, had taken advantage of French largesse while giving insufficiently in return. This had to be changed. Second, the Algerian War had to be ended, and favorable ties reestablished with the Arab countries. De Gaulle now permitted his new foreign minister, Maurice Couve de Murville, to begin rebuilding ties with Egypt and France's traditional clients in the Arab world. Relations with Israel accordingly had to become more discreet, lest they prejudice this effort. Finally, following the settlement of the Algerian War, the Mediterranean would become a theater in which to demonstrate the independence of French policy, and assert France's role as a mediating power between the Cold War blocs. By 1965, de Gaulle felt that Israel had become too close to the United States; keeping Israel at arm's length allowed de Gaulle to assert his independence from American regional aims, and build his credentials as a neutral mediator with the Soviet bloc.

But important ideational and emotional factors were also at play, and these have received only limited scholarly attention. Unlike Guy Mollet or Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, de Gaulle was never convinced that Israel faced a serious threat from its neighbors. This perception was central to de Gaulle's thinking and policy on the Jewish state. In his eyes, rather than a vulnerable "David," Israel appeared to be a serial exaggerator, an irresponsible 'boy who cried wolf' ignorant of its own strength. De Gaulle would eventually come to view this exaggeration as a function of Israel's Jewishness, something, the President would quip in 1969, that "the Jews have done since the days of Moses."[459] De Gaulle viewed Arabs in a similarly essentialist light, telling

[459] This was not an isolated incident. It is worth noting, however, that this particular remark came in 1969, at a time when de Gaulle was nearing the end of his life and was increasingly prone to irascibility. Gadi

Israel's prime minister in 1964 that his neighbors were, "after all, Arabs, and as such tend to overreact" and "exaggerate."[460] But whereas Arab "overreaction" simply had to be accommodated, de Gaulle urged Israel to act with moderation.[461] Accordingly, from his first official meetings with Israeli leaders, de Gaulle remained adamant that the threat facing Israel was more imaginary than real.

The collapse of the "David" trope at the official level removed one of the key pillars of the French-Israeli alliance. It was replaced by a new image, that of the "exaggerator," which viewed Israel as both strong and duplicitous. This transition casts de Gaulle's Israel policy in a revealing light. By 1964-65, official French-Israeli friendship was being expressed predominantly through words, rather than action, as de Gaulle repeatedly assured Israel that he would not let it be destroyed. But if Arab threats to Israel were empty, this guarantee became equally hollow. Thus, well before the Six-Day War, de Gaulle was seeking to minimize French commitments to Israel. In his mind, it was the Jewish state, rather than the Arabs, that had to be restrained.

Gadi Heimann has demonstrated that de Gaulle's mounting disapproval of Israel's reprisal policy against border incursions reflected a new conceptualization of the French-Israeli relationship, and I build here on his analysis. Rather than a partnership of equals, Heimann argues, de Gaulle conceived French-Israeli ties as those of patron and client.[462] In exchange for French beneficence, de Gaulle now expected Israel to adhere to his

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Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible' to 'Immoral': The Shifts in de Gaulle's Perception of Israel and the Jews," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 46, No. 4 (2011), 914.

[460] *Ibid.,* 905; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 25, 1964 Tome I, 1er janvier - 1 juillet 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 667-71, June 29, 1964.

[461] This should be understood as a double standard rooted equally in orientalism and perceptions of Israel as an at-least-partly western country. Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 906-7.

[462] Gadi Heimann, "From Friendship to Patronage: France-Israel Relations, 1958-1967," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21, No. 2 (2010), 240.

dictates and act in accordance with French interests. Israel's leaders, however, were not prepared to do so at all times. As a result, over the course of the 1960s, de Gaulle increasingly viewed Israel as a disobedient client irresponsibly endangering French regional goals, and even world peace.[463] Uncertain that Israel would obey him with war on the horizon, de Gaulle severed French-Israeli military ties and voided French defensive guarantees to Israel days prior to the outbreak of the Six-Day War. By the end of that brief conflict, Heimann writes, Israeli disobedience had assumed moral connotations as well: having willfully ignored de Gaulle's admonition against war, the President now characterized Israel as an expansionist, immoral aggressor. In the days that followed, de Gaulle took Israel's disobedience as a personal affront. With well-documented fury, the President openly imputed Israel's faults to its Jewishness, and adopted a policy meant to punish his rebellious client as much as serve French interests.

Thus, between 1959 and 1967, French-Israeli diplomatic relations gradually normalized, transitioned into ambiguity, and ultimately, sank into hostility. This was centrally preconditioned on institutional changes within the French state. The French Fifth Republic of 1958 had created a strong executive presidency with expanded powers over foreign policy. No longer subject to the whims of fractious ministers, France's Israel policy would be now shaped almost exclusively by the President. At the same time, the end of the Algerian War in 1962 had curtailed the French Defense Ministry's influence over foreign affairs. A failed putsch by *ultra* officers in 1961 had also discredited many of Israel's closest friends, severing key links in the French-Israeli alliance. Thus, by 1962, the inter-ministerial tension in which French-Israeli relations thrived was steadily disappearing.

[463] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 897-99.

French-Israeli relations accordingly remained contingent on both structural change and the personalities and worldviews of a few key actors. Though de Gaulle's politics of grandeur critically shaped his relations with Israel, these relations remain unintelligible without an assessment of the images and conceptualizations upon which they relied. French relations with Israel during de Gaulle's presidency thus serve as a case study demonstrating the power of the ideational in foreign policy. At the same time, Israel continued to serve as a mirror for thinking about France itself. If Israel no longer appeared as a vulnerable Jewish enclave whose protection was a matter of principle, it now became a testing ground for French international prestige. De Gaulle sought to use the Arab-Israeli conflict as a platform from which to promote French grandeur and a four-power international framework. The failure of these efforts was, for de Gaulle, a personal and national humiliation for which Israel was responsible. The collapse of French-Israeli ties at the official level was accordingly the product of gradually mounting practical and personal estrangement, rather than a single moment of crisis. Though considerable currents of French sympathy for Israel would endure into the 1970s, de Gaulle's turn from Israel marked the practical end of the French-Israeli alliance.

Before a Fall: Continuity and Momentum between the Fourth and Fifth Republic

At the outset of the Fifth Republic in late 1958, the French-Israeli alliance seemed healthy, and French aid to Israel expanded rather than declined in the wake of de Gaulle's election to the presidency in January 1959.[464] De Gaulle had spoken out in praise of Israel's military and domestic achievements several times since 1955, and had expressed approval for its 1956 invasion of the Sinai.[465] Many of de Gaulle's new ministers, such as

[464] De Gaulle had served as interim Prime Minister since June 1958.
[465] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 900.

Minister of Information Jacques Soustelle, were also outspoken supporters of Israel, and in 1956, five of them had signed a manifesto calling for a formal French-Israeli alliance.[466] Policy from the Fourth Republic was also still in the process of implementation. In his final days as Foreign Minister, Christian Pineau had forced through a cultural accord with Israel that would expand the presence of the French language and culture in Israeli society. Despite the strident objections of French diplomatic advisors, de Gaulle allowed the agreement to be implemented.[467] Within his first year in office, de Gaulle also approved the sale of thirty Vautour and twenty-four Super-Mystère B.2 fighter-bombers to Israel, materiel valued at thirty-five million dollars.[468] With pro-Israel advisors on hand and policy bridging the Fourth and Fifth Republics, many Israelis had reason to believe de Gaulle's May 1959 promise that they could "continue to count on France."[469]

Similarly, the transition to the Fifth Republic produced little turnover within the French Ministry of Defense, and it remained a bastion of both practical and ideational support for Israel.[470] There, images of the Israeli "David" continued to pervade. Throughout de Gaulle's presidency, Defense reports continued to characterize Israel as a vulnerable nation facing a "current, quotidian" and existential threat from "adversaries

[466] These were Jacques Soustelle, Michel Debré, Edmond Michelet, Louis Jacquinot, and Robert Buron. Pierre Péan, *Les Deux Bombes* (Paris; Fayard, 1982), 124; Frédérique Schillo, *La Politique Française a l'Égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012), 899.
[467] Afrique-Levant, Service du Levant, Note "A/S - Risques que comporterait la signature prochaine d'un accord culturel franco-israélien," January 31, 1959, 218QO80, Israël 1953-1959, MAE.
[468] Afrique-Levant, Service du Levant, Note, "Rapports franco-israéliens," February 9, 1959, 218QO50, Israël 1951-1959, MAE; Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 900-1.
[469] This promise was delivered orally by Guy Mollet to the Israeli people. "Israël peut compter sur la volonté agissante de la France," *L'information,* May 16, 1959.
[470] Sylvia Crosbie, *A Tacit Alliance: France and Israel from Suez to the Six Day War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 222.

more or less determined to wipe it off the map."[471] Defense experts argued that Israel's qualitative advantage in training, morale, and leadership was also shrinking, and would not be able to offset the delivery of Soviet materiel to Egypt and Syria for much longer. Reports in the early 1960s accordingly urged the government to continue arming Israel.[472] At the same time, the reputation of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) had an important impact on French perceptions of the Jewish state. The "dynamism," "discipline," and "youth" of Israel's military was widely admired by French officers, and many felt that the IDF's virtues reflected the "complete osmosis between the Israeli nation and its army."[473] This perception was part of a wider belief that Israel constituted an "armed nation," one whose bravery and prowess was essentially *societal* in nature, yet *necessary* for survival. In this light, the IDF came to symbolize the Israeli people as one that was capable but beleaguered, strong and vulnerable at the same time.[474] As such, Israel's conflict with its Arab neighbors figured as a societal struggle in which a vulnerable-seeming Israel remained the underdog, despite its capable military.

[471] "Compte rendu d'une mission effectuée en Israël par des officiers français dans le cadre d'échanges au pair (11 au 25 Juin 1963)," No. 111 79/EMA2/2-BY, October 2, 1963, GR 10 T 818, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; "Revue d'information militaire, Novembre 1959; Israel," November, 1959, GR 10 T 813, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Service de Renseignement, "Position Actuelle d'Israël," no/125/REN, January 22, 1959, GR 10 T 813, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; La Colonel Lacolle, Attaché Militaire, Naval et de l'Air à M. le Général chef d'État-Major Général de la Défense Nationale, Division Renseignement, Report No. 207/S, October 19, 1960, GR 14 S 341, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[472] Division du Renseignement, Report No. 4, 926/EMGDN/REN/CER/D/S, June 4, 1961, GR 10 T 224, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Le Général de Brigade de Rougemont, Fiche, "Vente de matériel militaire à l'Arabie Seoudite," No. 564/DN/R/CER/D/, June 25, 1962, GR 9 Q1 41, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[473] "Rapport des Commandants Massias, Scherdlin, et Legrand sur le stage d'Information en Israel effectue du 24 novembre au 6 décembre 1965," December, 1965, GR 10 T 818, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; "Compte rendu d'une mission effectuée en Israël par des officiers français dans le cadre d'échanges au pair (11 au 25 Juin 1963)," No. 111 79/EMA2/2-BY, October 2, 1963, GR 10 T 818, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[474] This symbolism had a basis in reality: Israel's draft laws meant that much of Israeli society did in fact serve in the IDF.

In the same vein, many French defense officials saw the Arab-Israeli conflict as part of a larger East-West struggle that pitted Arab nationalism and communism against a democratic, American-led West.[475] In 1960, one French general remarked that Israel's creation felt like "the free world's only victory since the end of the [Second World] war."[476] Israel was "the representation of the west in [the Middle East]," another defense analyst argued, and "the strong point of the defense of the Middle East against the subversive aims of the [United Arab Republic] and the USSR."[477] French defense observers had reason to be alarmed about rising nationalism and communism in the Middle East: in 1958 alone, Egypt and Syria (tenuously) merged as the United Arab Republic (UAR), Iraq's pro-western government fell to a coup, and the threat of Nasserist and communist subversion saw the United States intervene to prop up the Lebanese state. Against this backdrop, Israel appeared an important ally in a rapidly changing region.

Finally, numerous French *ultras* in and outside the Defense Ministry continued to view Israel as critical stanchion of French Algeria. In their eyes, Israel appeared a parallel society fighting a common enemy, radical Arab nationalism. This perception was stoked by the endurance of strong anti-Nasserist currents within the French defense establishment. *Ultra* support for Israel increased further in late 1959-60, after de Gaulle announced his support in principle for Algerian self-determination. The extremist paramilitary Secret Army Organisation (Organisation de l'armée secrète, OAS), which

[475] Whereas the French defense establishment by and large supported American efforts to contain communism, de Gaulle was increasingly hostile to America's cold war objectives. This East-West divide should be understood as an ideological, rather than racial or colonial binary, as defense documents suggested that newly-independent African countries could be constructive and stabilizing members of this imaginary "West."

[476] Le Général de Corps d'Armée Dodelier, "Rapport de Mission en Israel du Général de Corps d'Armée Dodelier," No. 593/IABC/306, August 10, 1960, GR 10 T 818, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[477] Ministere des Armées, État-Major Général des Armées, "Moyen Orient," No. 9548/EM/2/D/T.S., July, 1958, GR 10 T 225, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; "Le Moyen Orient V," ex.2/8, June, 1960, GR 10 T 225, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

fought to prevent Algerian independence between 1961-62, now viewed Israel with increasing sympathy. In their eyes, Israel was an example of the successful resistance of European settlers to Arab nationalism.[478] Hoping to mirror Israel's success, the OAS's political head, Jacques Susini, called for a "'Palestinian solution' for Algeria," an implicit call to arms, and possibly, population expulsions.[479] Yet despite this sympathy, the OAS was at most ambivalent toward Jews and Israel, as the Algerian question failed to undermine the Maurrasian antisemitism of the French far right.[480] Still, for each of the reasons above, many defense officials felt Israel was fighting France's battle. As a result, Israel remained the darling of the French defense establishment throughout most of the 1960s.

As it had in the 1950s, the defense establishment's sympathetic vision of Israel produced tangible results. Between 1958-68, Israel received approximately 2.5 billion francs in French materiel.[481] Some items were significantly discounted, such as the twenty-five Ouragan fighter-bombers Israel purchased in 1964, while others, like a 1958 shipment of badly-needed mortar shells and an April 1967 delivery of six Super Mystère fighter-bombers, were "loaned" to Israel without charge.[482] The most significant sales, however, were for France's most advanced fighter jets, the Mirage-IIIC. These planes far

[478] Richard C. Viven, "The End of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," *The Historical Journal* 37, No. 2 (June, 1994), 376-81.
[479] *Ibid.* Susini was a self described national socialist.
[480] The sympathy of some Algerian Jews for the OAS's insurrection made the organization better disposed toward Jews than its extreme right politics might suggest. However, though Richard Viven acknowledges important strains of antisemitism within the OAS, its relationship to Israel and Jews was more fraught than Viven suggests. While *ultra* sympathy for Israel ameliorated some antisemitism, some *ultras* blamed the campaign for Algerian independence on the Jews, as such. Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Year Book* (*AJY*) vol. 62 (1961), Philadelphia: the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1961, 233; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 64 (1963), Philadelphia: JPS, 1963, 303.
[481] CNEIA, No. 901/62, February 7, 1969, GR 1 R 152, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, Service Historique de la Défense SHD; "Exportation de Materiel de Guerre, Evolution de 1956 à 1961, Pays depassant 10 millions de NF," Table, 1961, GR 9 Q1 41, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[482] Heimann, "From Friendship," 242-43.

outmatched Soviet-built MiG-19s, and could tangle with the new MiG-21. Israel received seventy-two Mirages between 1961-64, and received de Gaulle's approval to order another fifty in early 1966.[483] It was with these planes that Israel would win the Six-Day War, during which Mirages accounted for the overwhelming majority of Israel's aerial kills. The support of the French Defense establishment also preserved French-Israeli nuclear cooperation in spite of de Gaulle's orders to cancel it in 1958. With the support of Prime Minister Michel Debré and Atomic Energy Minister Jacques Soustelle, a "conspiracy of silence" kept de Gaulle from learning the full extent of Franco-Israeli nuclear cooperation until late 1959.[484]

Technical and defense cooperation between France and Israel also expanded during de Gaulle's first years in office. 1959-61 saw an agreement for the joint development of short-range missiles, and military planning for French assistance should Israel be attacked.[485] French and Israeli intelligence officers also met biannually to share intelligence on the UAR, Algeria, Iraq, and the Soviet Union.[486] Officer exchanges between France and Israel also expanded considerably, against the express wishes of the French Foreign Ministry.[487] French-Israeli cultural and commercial ties were growing as well: by 1967, Israel had become the second most important destination for French

[483] This latter fifty would never be delivered, as they fell under de Gaulle's June 2, 1967 embargo against Israel.
[484] Péan, 126-28; Schillo, 972.
[485] Heimann, "From Friendship," 242.
[486] Division de Renseignement, "Réception d'une mission israélienne," No. 8.015/EMGDN/REN/CER/D.3/S, December 15, 1959, GR 10 T 818, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[487] Archival sources indicate that between 1962 and 1964, Pierre Messmer's Defense Ministry actively sought to deceive the Quai d'Orsay about the extent of these exchanges. See Service du Levant, Note, "A/s - Relations franco-israéliennes dans le domaine militaire," April 27, 1964, 218QO107, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.

domestic exports in all of Asia, and French was being taught in over 200 Israeli primary and secondary schools.[488]

Popular sympathy for Israel also remained steady. Books, films, and recordings with Israeli or Jewish-themed content, such as Leon Uris's bestselling 1958 novel *Exodus*, continued to attract large French audiences.[489] Many wanted to see Israel for themselves, however, and by 1962, some one hundred-thousand French tourists had travelled to Israel.[490] Romantic images of an "old-young" Israel, which juxtaposed ancient architecture with youthful, often female symbols of Israeli modernity, were common in the mainstream and Jewish press.[491] This juxtaposition enshrined Jews' ancient connection to the land of Israel and at the same time framed Israeli society as part of an imagined progressive West. But powerful images of Israeli vulnerability also persisted, and anxiety about Israel's safety was often expressed by reference to the Holocaust.[492] Jean Bourdeillette, who succeeded P.E. Gilbert as France's ambassador to Israel in 1959, explained the synthesis of these images in his 1968 memoir: Israel "has struck the imagination and the hearts of the French," he wrote:

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[488] France's top Asian export destination was China. The Foreign Ministry, however, remained unsatisfied with Israel's implementation of the 1958 Cultural Accord. Le Conseiller Commercial près l'Ambassade de France en Israel à le Ministre de l'Economie et des Finances, Letter MF.MT.42, "Le commerce extérieur franco-israélien," January 10, 1967, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant-Israël 1966-1970, MAE; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 29, 1964 Tome I, 1er janvier - 1 juillet 1966, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 270, April 27, 196; Heimann, "From Friendship," 247-48.

[489] Abraham Karlikow, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 60 (1959), Philadelphia: JPS, 1959, 167.

[490] Edwin Eytan, "Les touristes français en Israël," *L'arche* No. 66, July, 1962.

[491] See for example *ibid*, and especially "Jeune Israël," *L'arche* No. 79-80, August-September, 1963. In a special 1960 edition, *Le figaro*'s editor, Pierre Brisson, similarly saluted "the young homeland of the oldest people of the Earth." Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe: 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 63.

[492] In contrast to Israeli and American society, the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann had, in Joan Wolf's analysis, a "relatively insignificant" impact in France, "a discursive context where most Jews were oriented not toward the painful Jewish past but toward Israel as a beacon for the Jewish future." See Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 30. On the impact of the 1966 Treblinka affair on French public discourse, see Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2005).

> If they are democrats, they . . . [regard] their Jewish compatriots as brothers. If they are Christians, they have never ceased to meditate on the mystery of Israel . . . which continues to be, for them, at the center of the relationship between God and humanity. With men of good will, whatever their political affiliation . . . how could they not consider, with great sadness [and] with secret shame . . . the immense sum of humiliations, suffering, and torture . . . which are the heritage of the [Jewish people]?

"Split between pity and admiration," Bourdeillette concluded, many French people felt that Israel's existence was "good for all humanity."[493]

In light of these extensive military, economic, and popular ties, it might seem logical to assume that the transition between the Fourth and Fifth republics was marked by continuity rather than break. This would be an oversimplification, however, as the continuation of military aid belied important institutional, ideational, and international developments that were progressively undermining the bases of the official French-Israeli friendship.

Shaken Foundations: Re-conceptualizing the Basis of the French-Israeli Relationship

The advent of the 1958 French Fifth Republic replaced the critical institutional context that had made the French-Israeli alliance possible. Under the Fourth Republic, intra-governmental rivalry and ministerial independence had enabled the pursuit of competing visions of foreign policy. The 1958 constitutional settlement, by contrast, aimed to curb the power of bureaucratic fiefdoms. The new republic would instead feature a powerful executive presidency with extensive national security and foreign policy powers, elected to a seven-year term. The new presidency had the power to appoint a prime minister, and by extension, cabinet members, whom he could dismiss with the prime minister's approval. The president could also dissolve the National

[493] Jean Bourdeillette, *Pour Israël* (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1968), 235-36.

Assembly, call for public referendums, and served as the commander in chief of the French armed forces.[494] As a result, French foreign and defense policy would have a stability and uniformity of vision it had heretofore lacked. Foreign policy was now left largely in the hands of two men: the president and the foreign minister he indirectly appointed. By January 1959, these were, respectively, Charles de Gaulle and Maurice Couve de Murville. Their individual outlooks accordingly assumed tremendous importance over the development of future French-Israeli relations.

The powers of the French presidency were further enhanced by de Gaulle's personality. With the support of his Union for the New Republic (Union pour la nouvelle République, UNR), which consistently won 41-48 percent of the National Assembly, de Gaulle molded the French presidency to fit his comportment.[495] By remaining aloof from party politics, the media, and the military, de Gaulle established the presidency as the central figure of the Fifth Republic, while cultivating the persona of a farsighted leader. Though the new president preferred to ground his legitimacy symbolically in the mandate of public referendum, he ultimately did not require it. As John Gaffney explains, "de Gaulle did not need the fundamental legitimation of the people, for, in his view, [his] . . . . legitimation predat[ed] his acceptance by the people, and resid[ed] in" the legacy of having been right when others were wrong, in choosing to fighting on during the Second World War.[496] This self-legitimation left de Gaulle confident that he alone knew what

[494] On the powers of the new presidency and their subordination to the "personality politics" of Charles de Gaulle, see John Gaffney, *Political Leadership in France: From Charles de Gaulle to Nicolas Sarkozy* (London: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2010), 3-6, 29-30.
[495] *Ibid.,* 29-30.
[496] *Ibid.*, 2-3, 6, 10-11, 93-94.

was best for France, and gave him the will to pursue policy even in the face of strident public protest.[497]

A "cynical realist," in the words of long-time political ally Michel Debré, de Gaulle was imperious and, like his Fourth Republican predecessors, prone to relying on his own judgment above expert advice.[498] By 1963, de Gaulle's foreign policy was guided almost entirely by his own analysis, and once set, the President's views on an issue proved difficult to change.[499] These traits contributed to de Gaulle's ability to face down French *ultras* over the withdrawal from French Algeria in 1959-62, confident that the public would eventually see things his way. His success in doing so left de Gaulle self-assured that he could modify policy on Israel in a similarly dramatic way. But, in the words of one-time friend Jacques Soustelle, the 1961-62 revolt of the OAS also convinced the President that "those who were not with him were against him; [and] to be against him was to be against France."[500] This perception would be at play when de Gaulle disengaged from Israel in 1967, and made his break with Israel more confrontational than it might otherwise have been.

De Gaulle's views on French-Israeli relations were shaped by both his wider politics of grandeur and his personal skepticism toward prevailing images of Israeli vulnerability. Upon assuming office, de Gaulle informed his new cabinet that "I approve

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[497] *Ibid.,* 10-11.

[498] U.S. Embassy to Department of State, Airgram A-2441, March 28, 1963, file POL 15-1 FR, 1963 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (USNA).

[499] Both American and Israeli observers were concerned about this aspect of de Gaulle's administration. Charles E. Bohlen to Secretary of State, Memorandum, December 13, 1963, file POL 1 FR, 1963 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; Matti Golan, *Shimon Peres: A Biography*, trans. Ida Friedman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 74.

[500] Soustelle was writing with retrospect after dramatically breaking with de Gaulle over Algeria, and his remarks should thus be read carefully. De Gaulle did, however, demonstrate a tendency to equate himself with the French state and people and, as Gaffney notes, expected total obedience. *Ibid.,* 29-30; Jacques Soustelle, *Vignt-huit ans de gaullisme* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1968), 17.

of only one point [of Fourth Republican foreign policy], that which concerned Israel and the first part of the Suez campaign."[501] But this statement had less to do with the protection of Israel than it did the assertion of French influence in the Middle East. If the 1956 Suez invasion had been, in part, an attempt to uphold France's position as a great power, it had ultimately backfired in the face of American pressure. The Suez crisis instead demonstrated that France's capacity for independent action had been significantly curtailed by an increasingly bipolar Cold War framework. De Gaulle thus approved of the impetus behind the Suez invasion, while lamenting its outcome as one that had humiliated France. More broadly, de Gaulle felt that the Fourth Republic's foreign policy had been "shameful," had cost France its empire, and allowed "the outside world [to obtain] what it wanted from France."[502] The President felt that a new policy was needed, one that would reestablish France's languishing position throughout the Arab world, and ensure that neither allies nor enemies took advantage of France.[503] Policy toward Israel would accordingly need to be modified.

These objectives formed part of de Gaulle's larger commitment to French grandeur, a vision and policy that aimed to reassert French prestige and independence as a major player in a four-power international framework. By 1959, de Gaulle was increasingly disappointed with the American and British-dominated western bloc, which was, he felt, curtailing French freedom of action without protecting its interests.[504] As a

[501] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-secret* (Paris: Fayard, 1964), 250.
[502] Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1971), 8-9, 17-18. De Gaulle's memoirs must be used carefully as they were heavily informed by hindsight.
[503] *Ibid.,* 264; Schillo, 1006.
[504] As de Gaulle explained in a national press conference in September 1960, France could "not leave her own destiny [or security] . . . to the discretion of others." Charles de Gaulle, *Major Addresses, Statements and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle; May 19, 1958 - January 31, 1964* (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 96.

result, de Gaulle resolved to chart a middle course between the western and Soviet blocs, distancing France from the United States while making overtures to the Soviet Union in an effort to establish France as a neutral mediator. Consequently, in 1959 de Gaulle began withdrawing French participation from NATO, pursued an independent nuclear arsenal, and sought to use French mediation in the Vietnam War as an opportunity to promote France's international footprint.[505]

In de Gaulle's view, the Middle East was another arena in which French grandeur could and needed to be reasserted. The Lebanon Crisis of 1958, which saw American troops intervene to stabilize a traditional French client, exposed the limits of French power in the region just as de Gaulle was assuming office.[506] The crisis convinced him that the Americans and the British, rather than Nasser and the Soviet Union, were the major threat to French political and cultural influence in the Levant. In order to shore up France's position, relations with the Arab states would have to be rebuilt, and the Algerian war settled.[507] At the same time, the instability of the region left de Gaulle worried that a general conflict might break out, one into which France might inadvertently be drawn. In summer 1958, de Gaulle accordingly sought to protect the regional status quo by supporting Soviet calls for a multi-power summit.[508] In so doing, de Gaulle sought to use the Arab-Israeli conflict as a vehicle to position France as a

[505] Yuko Torikata, "The U.S. Escalation in Vietnam and de Gaulle's Secret Search for Peace, 1964-1966," in Christian Nuenlist, Anna Locher, and Garret Martin, eds., *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958-1969* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 156.
[506] Schillo, 950-56.
[507] Gadi Heimann, "A Hot Summer: France, Israel, and the Middle East Crisis in 1958," in Nuenlist, Locher, and Martin, 206-7. De Gaulle actually supported the premise of the US intervention in Lebanon, but was angered that the Americans had not consulted him.
[508] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 13, 1958 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1958, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 103, August 5, 1958. Throughout the 1960s, de Gaulle and the Quai would increasingly insist that Soviet cooperation was a precondition for Arab-Israeli peace. See *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 23, 1963 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1963, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 212, June 17, 1963.

mediator between both the Cold War superpowers and the Arab and Israeli camps. This goal, a function of de Gaulle's politics of grandeur, would continue to shape his policy in the Middle East throughout the duration of his presidency.

These were not the only factors shaping de Gaulle's Middle East policy, however, as powerful imaginaries were also at play. By the time he became president, de Gaulle's fundamental vision of Israel, as a state whose existence was *not* threatened, was already in place. Whereas Jews, and by extension Israel, had appeared vulnerable to Guy Mollet, de Gaulle saw Jews and Israel in a different light. As early as 1955, de Gaulle had told Israeli Ambassador Jacob Tsur that he had "always known the talents of the Jews, their clever thought and logic, their energy . . . . I don't see an immediate danger to your existence . . . . Your presence in the Middle East is a reality."[509] Rather than a vulnerable 'David,' Israel was, in de Gaulle's eyes, a fact of life and a minor power in its own right. The President thus had difficulty sympathizing with Israeli anxieties about their security.

De Gaulle's first meetings with Israeli leaders as a sitting president reflected this disconnect. In August 1958, Israel's Foreign Minister Golda Meir anxiously hurried to France to determine whether French support for Israel would continue. Meir appealed to de Gaulle by raising anti-Nasserist and anti-Communist arguments, unaware that the President was already contemplating rapprochement with both Egypt and the USSR. De Gaulle replied that he understood Israeli alarm at the possibility of an Arab attack, but stated that "In my opinion . . . it does not seem that the Arabs, even if truly united, are capable of launching an assault against Israel . . . . There is no reason to be truly worried

[509] Jacob Tsur, *Prelude à Suez: Journal d'une ambassade 1953-1956* (Paris: Presses de la Cite, 1968), 200-1.

about the existence of Israel, unless of course the Soviets come into play."[510] Instead, he urged Israel to respect the status quo, and to avoid anything that might "uselessly complicate an already delicate situation." As the stronger party, it was Israel, in de Gaulle's view, who needed to be urged to moderation.

If de Gaulle fundamentally viewed the Israelis as strong and clever, he saw Arabs in a more troublingly essentialist light. As de Gaulle explained to an American journalist in 1962, "When speaking of the Arabs . . . one can never be sure what has been said. They are always gushing, always unpredictable. It is the nature of the Arab. These are nomads. They're anarchic . . . . They drown in their own rivalries. Nasser tried to create an Arab union . . . . He could not. And it will never succeed."[511] Arabs, de Gaulle would tell the Israeli Prime Minister in 1964, tended "to overreact." Israel, by contrast, was expected to avoid enflaming Arab tempers, and not take Nasserist belligerence too seriously.[512] In light of such statements, Gadi Heimann concludes that de Gaulle judged Israel and its Arab neighbors "on different scales, and the expectations from them were different. Israel was seen as the rational party, expected to react sensibly to 'childish' provocations from the Arabs."[513] When Israel did not, retaliating against border violence, its actions consequently appeared calculatedly destabilizing, and even malicious. When Israel's reprisal policy intensified in the mid-1960s, de Gaulle accordingly became

[510] "Compte Rendu de la Séance du 5 Aout à 17 heures," August 5, 1958, 218QO50, Israël 1953-1959, MAE; see alternately *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 13, 1958 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1958, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 103, August 5, 1958.
[511] Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 2, 1959-1991* (Paris, l'Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1993), 11.
[512] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 905.
[513] *Ibid.*

concerned that Israel aimed to undermine his own efforts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict.[514]

As a result of these images, de Gaulle was from the outset skeptical of Israeli security analyses. In meetings with Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in 1960 and 1961, de Gaulle suggested that Israel was exaggerating its anxieties. The President instructed his interlocutor to speak with him "frankly," and to tell him whether Ben-Gurion "*truly* believed that Nasser would dare . . . launch a war."[515] In both meetings, after listening to Ben-Gurion answer in the affirmative, de Gaulle retorted that he was unconvinced. De Gaulle explained that Israel "exaggerate[d] this threat of destruction . . . No one would dare attack you." Israel was "stronger," Nasser would not risk a world war, and besides, de Gaulle concluded, "he doesn't have the means."[516] On this basis, the President now questioned the logic behind Israel's nuclear program, and expressed interest in scaling back French participation. In parting, de Gaulle reassured Ben-Gurion that "France will not allow Israel to be destroyed," apparently confident he would never have to put his reassurances to the test.[517] With the French head of state now arguing that

[514] Border violence between Israel and its Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian neighbors mounted between 1962 and 1965, particularly over the use of Lake Tiberias. The French Foreign Ministry was particularly perturbed when Israeli reprisal operations made use of French-built aircraft, reminding Arab observers of the French-Israeli connection. *Ibid.,* 902-4, 907-8.

[515] Emphasis added. "Entretien du Général de Gaulle avec M. Ben Gourion Le 17 Juin 1960 à l'Élysée," June, 1960, CM 9, fonds Couve de Murville, Sciences Po, Centre d'Histoire (SPCH), Paris, France; "Entretien du Général de Gaulle et de M. Ben Gourion à l'Élysée, le 6 Juin 1961, de 12h.30 à 13h.25," June 6, 1961, CM 9, fonds Couve de Murville, SPCH.

[516] *Ibid.*; Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: the Armed Prophet,* trans. Len Ortzen (Engelwood: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 268.

[517] "Entretien du Général de Gaulle avec M. Ben Gourion Le 17 Juin 1960 à l'Élysée," June, 1960, CM 9, fonds Couve de Murville, SPCH. During their June 1960 meeting, de Gaulle would also urge Ben-Gurion to tell him what "your real ambitions [are] for the frontiers of Israel? I promise I'll keep it secret." Ben-Gurion reportedly replied that at one time he would have wished to include all of Jordan, "but today . . . we are content in our frontiers." Ben-Gurion then explained his plans to integrate millions more Jewish immigrants within Israel's existing frontiers. De Gaulle was impressed, but skeptical. When Israel conquered the West Bank in June 1967, de Gaulle would think back on this meeting, and see Ben-Gurion's

Israel's future was secured, rather than in jeopardy, a significant ideational pillar of the French-Israeli alliance had crumbled.

Though French Middle East policy was dominated by the personality of President de Gaulle, it was also informed by the outlook of the new foreign minister, Maurice Couve de Murville. While de Gaulle's history of sympathy for Israel left Israeli observers tentatively hopeful that close relations might continue, Couve de Murville was a source of worry.[518] Unlike Christian Pineau, whose tension with the diplomatic corps had curtailed the Quai's influence over foreign policy, Couve de Murville was a diplomatic insider with the confidence and support of his officers.[519] His ascension marked the Quai's return to predominance in French foreign relations. A specialist on the Arab world and a dispassionate realist, Couve de Murville had served as the ambassador to Cairo from 1950-54. Reputed to be pro-Arab and a well-known critic of the Suez expedition, Couve de Murville knew Nasser personally, and was convinced that he was not a Hitler.[520] As Shimon Peres recalls, it was Couve de Murville who was the "source of coolness toward Israel" within the new French government.[521]

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remarks as evidence that Israel had long planned to expand its territory by war. Quoted in Bar-Zohar, *The Armed Prophet*, 268.

[518] Schillo, 915; Arab diplomats in the Middle East, meanwhile, hoped that de Gaulle's ascension marked a break with Fourth Republican policy and would see France resume cordial ties with its "traditional [Arab] friends." *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 12, 1958 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1958, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 394, June 5, 1958.

[519] Diplomatic documents reveal close alignment between the recommendations of the Quai's Levant desk and the policy Couve de Murville ultimately pursued. As one Israeli journalist noted, the Quai's Arab specialists had been sitting on their heels since 1956. By 1958, with Pineau out and Couve de Murville in, they were eager to reorient French policy back toward its "traditional" foundations in the Arab world. See "Traduction 'Ydioth Aharonoth' des 20 et 21 janvier 1960, 'Les Relations Franco-Israeliennes,' par Elie Aviran," 218QO106, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.

[520] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 19913, June 6, 1967, file POL 27 ARAB-ISR, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, The National Security Archive (NSA), Washington, D.C.; U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Airgram 226, August 19, 1958, file 651.74/8-1958, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[521] Matti Golan, *The Road to Peace: A Biography of Shimon Peres*, trans. Akiva Ron (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 58.

US diplomatic records reveal that it was Couve de Murville who was the mobilizing force behind French efforts to ameliorate relations with the Arab world.[522] In 1958-59, de Gaulle was in no hurry to rebuild Franco-Arab relations on anything less than favorable terms. In his view, the Arab states had broken with France over Algeria and Suez; it was thus they who should make the first conciliatory moves.[523] Couve de Murville felt differently, however, and in 1958 he managed to win de Gaulle's approval for a Franco-Egyptian rapprochement. Couve de Murville was successful because his vision of French influence in the Middle East harmonized with de Gaulle's sense of grandeur. On one hand, Couve de Murville hoped, improving ties with Egypt might ameliorate the situation in Algeria, the major obstacle to French standing in the Mediterranean. On the other hand, the Foreign Minister argued, rebuilding Franco-Arab ties demanded that French-Israeli relations be normalized, shedding their excessively close and unorthodox character.[524] De Gaulle, who felt that Israel's intimacy with the French Defense establishment had become "abusive," liked the idea: French-Israeli ties would assume a more appropriate, patron/client reserve, and become a bargaining chip with which to lever improved Franco-Arab relations.[525] These, in turn, would help ensure French energy independence, and serve as a basis on which to rebuild French hegemony in the Mediterranean.

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[522] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 2124, November 15, 1962, file 651.84B/11-1562, 1960-1963 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Airgram A-1808, January 26, 1963, file 651.84b/1-2663, 1960-1963 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[523] Charles de Gaulle, "Copie," July, 1962, CM 7, fonds Couve de Murville, SPCH; Le Secrétaire Général, Présidence de la République à Couve de Murville, Letter, April 14, 1962, CM 7, fonds Couve de Murville, SPCH.

[524] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Airgram A-275, August 23, 1961, file 651.84a/8-2361, 1960-1963 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; Heimann, "A Hot Summer," 210.

[525] Péan, 138.

Thus, as early as 1958, French-Israeli ties were on a trajectory toward normalization. The first step toward curbing the excesses of the French-Israeli relationship was the replacement of the Israelophilic French Ambassador, P.E. Gilbert. Critiqued for having gone native, Gilbert was phased into retirement in fall 1959.[526] His dismissal robbed Israel of one of its most adept French advocates, and began the process of eroding the personal connections upon which the French-Israeli alliance had grown. Gilbert was now replaced by the seasoned diplomat Jean Bourdeillette, who was charged with building a new French-Israeli relationship resting "not on highly precarious feelings, but on cultural and economic realities."[527]

As Bourdeillette recounted in 1965, "The essential goal of my mission was to 'normalize' the relations between [the French] embassy and the Israeli government, after what one might call the 'Suez period.'"[528] Neither a Zionist nor an expert on the Arab world, Couve de Murville trusted Bourdeillette to remain dispassionate — perhaps more than he should have. Bourdeillette was a devout Catholic, and his faith fundamentally shaped his outlook on Israel. In official documents as well as private memoirs, Bourdeillette wrote extensively of Israel's unique "spiritual vocation," figuring Israelis explicitly as Jews by virtue both of their contemporary vulnerability and religious destiny. "The Israelis can never cease being Jews," Bourdeillette informed his superiors.

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[526] "Deux ambassadeurs parlent de la France et d'Israël," *Tribune juive,* April 5-26, 1968; Gilbert did not realize that his recall belied a deeper change in policy; see U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Despatch 363, November 25, 2959, file 651.84a/11-2559, 1955-1959 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[527] Jean Bourdeillette à M. Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A.S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE. See also Jean Bourdeillette à M. Couve de Murville, Telegram 103/PL, "a.s. Rapport de fin d'année," January 21, 1963, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.

[528] *Ibid*.

In his eyes, Israel constituted "a refuge" for "the people of the book."[529] The Israelis themselves, Bourdeillette asserted, were "for the most part, survivors, escapees from hell . . . . if the word 'humanity' has any meaning . . . [the great powers must not] allow the Nazi genocide to be repeated against this same people." But in the years since the Holocaust, the Ambassador continued, "the Jew has proven that he can be a good soldier, just as he has demonstrated that he can be a peasant."[530] In Bourdeillette's eyes, the Jewish citizens of Israel remained first and foremost Jews, even as they set about reinventing themselves. The Quai was not happy with Bourdeillette's effusive prose, but whereas Gilbert had encouraged Israelis to circumvent the Quai, Bourdeillette at least followed orders. As Peres recalled, all business was now conducted "in an official manner," and compared to Gilbert, Bourdeillette has "been very cold."[531]

Other signs of normalization were also apparent, and Bourdeillette noted Israeli leaders' "profound disquiet" at the new tone in French-Israeli relations.[532] In February 1959, Israeli Ambassador Jacob Tsur, in keeping with the pattern established under the Fourth Republic, had approached de Gaulle directly with a request for military aid. Now Tsur was met with formality, and the President directed him to make the appeal through proper channels. Adding to Tsur's worry, de Gaulle informed Tsur that French-Israeli cooperation would continue, but would no longer be allowed to prejudice Franco-Arab

[529] Bourdeillette, 6, 9, 25, 48-49; Jean Bourdeillette à Maurice Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A.S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[530] *Ibid.*
[531] Golan, *Road to Peace*, 58; U.S. embassy Tel Aviv to Department of State, Airgram A-537, Jan 16, 1965, file POL 1 FR-ISR, 1964-1966, Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[532] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 17, 1960 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1960, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 4, January 4, 1960.

relations.[533] Economic and diplomatic developments in 1958-60 compounded Israel's concerns. In October 1959, France's Renault automotive company bowed to the pressures of the anti-Israeli Arab boycott movement, and ceased operations in Israel. One month later, cooperation negotiations between Air France and Israeli airline El Al also broke down. The Israeli press reacted with alarm, and one of Bourdeillette's first acts was to reassure his Israeli interlocutors that these setbacks did not belie a policy shift.[534] But French diplomatic efforts elsewhere raised additional concerns. In spite of Israeli opposition, in December 1959 France voted to include language in a UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) mandate calling for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, and actively pursued reconciliation with Egypt.[535] Thus, though de Gaulle had repeatedly affirmed his commitment to Israel's security, some Israelis worried that French-Israeli relations were shifting in an uncertain direction.

Had Israel's leaders known the true extent of France's policy reorientation, they would have been far more concerned. By 1958, upset that France's allies had left it to bear the onus of arming Israel alone, Couve de Murville was calling for the "immediate termination" of arms deliveries to Israel "in the interest of France's ultimate need to establish normal relations with the Arab world."[536] That year, Couve de Murville proposed an arms embargo on the Middle East in general, and Israel in particular, but faced opposition from the Ministry of Defense.[537] By 1960, however, he prevailed upon

[533] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 14, 1959 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1959, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 103, February 21, 1959.
[534] Crosbie, 133-34.
[535] Service du Levant, Note, "A/S - Etat actuel de nos relations avec Israël," January 14, 1960, 218QO106, Israël 1960-1965, MAE; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 17, 1960 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1960, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 4, January 4, 1960.
[536] U.S. Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, March 9, 1960, file 651.84a/3-960, 1960-1963 Central Decimal File, RG: 59, General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[537] Heimann, "A Hot Summer," 210.

de Gaulle to compromise: France would arm Israel for one additional year, then attempt to pass the burden off to Britain and the United States.[538] Meanwhile, French representatives would signal to Israel that "circumstances would not always permit France to be the major source of Israeli military requirements."[539] De Gaulle agreed that it was time to begin disengaging from Israel's embrace: within the year, he shut down French involvement with the Dimona reactor and cut Israeli access to French nuclear research.[540] Thus, one year prior to the end of the Algerian War in 1962, the close French-Israeli relationship was beginning to unravel as a result of institutional, ideational, and personnel shift. Within the government, only the pro-Israel partisans of French Algeria remained committed to a close French-Israeli alliance, though this lobby, too, was about to suffer a blow from which it would not recover.

The end of the Algerian conflict in 1962 cost Israel many of its remaining friends, and transformed Israel from a strategic ally against Nasserism into an obstacle hindering France's reentry into the Arab Mediterranean.[541] The peace accords at Évian, which ended the Algerian war in March 1962, dramatically improved France's relations with the

[538] The Anglo-Americans proved unwillingness to assume this burden, leaving France stuck as Israel's primary supplier. U.S. Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, March 9, 1960, file 651.84a/3-960, 1960-1963 Central Decimal File, RG: 59, General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[539] *Ibid.*
[540] Worried that knowledge of French participation in the Dimona project would have serious blow-back for France, de Gaulle attempted to impose international controls and inspections on the Israeli reactor. He was unsuccessful, but compelled Israel to agree to French monitoring and control over its uranium imports. France would now provide Israel's only source of uranium, and retrieve it once it had been irradiated. Péan, 138; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 18, 1960 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1960, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 57, August 1, 1960; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 23, 1963 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1963, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 352, April 4, 1963.
[541] Like the Six-Day War, the end of the Algerian War should be understood as a process rather than a moment. Ethan Katz argues that key transformations were underway by fall 1960, as de Gaulle referenced a future, independent Algerian republic and the OAS turned to insurrection in the wake of collapsing negotiations. See Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 201-2. The demographic impact of the Algerian War will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Arab world, and allowed de Gaulle to begin reasserting French grandeur and economic interests in the Arab Mediterranean. His efforts were largely successful, and by 1963, with the notable exception of Egypt, France's "return into the Arab states [was] . . . an established fact."[542] But France's relationship with Israel now came under increased scrutiny. Prior to Évian, most Arab governments had not blamed France for its close relations with Israel. French-Israeli ties were seen as a logical consequence of French difficulties in North Africa, an alliance of convenience helping France retain a Middle East presence.[543] Now, with Algeria at peace, many Arab governments expected a change.

Initially, however, France hoped to retain favorable relations with both Israel and the Arab states, and repeatedly informed its Arab interlocutors that its relations with Israel were not open to discussion. De Gaulle hoped that by mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict he could promote French prestige, and accordingly felt he had to be even-handed in his treatment of both camps. But, with the Algerian War settled, Israel now became the core issue around which Nasserism and the Arab League rallied. By mid-1964, Egypt and Lebanon were signaling that they would have little tolerance for even a "neutral" attitude toward Israel.[544] Now, with Algeria at peace, Quai analysts resumed the refrain that close ties with Israel were a liability rather than an asset. Their efforts were successful, and throughout the remainder of the 1960s diplomatic orders insisted that French-Israeli relations become as discreet as possible, lest they prejudice economically and culturally

[542] Ambassade de France au Liban, Poste de l'Attaché Militaire, No.56/AM "Rapport Mensuel (Janvier 1963)," January 24, 1963, GR 10 T 227, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[543] This was a consistently articulated theme from Lebanon, Jordan, and even Egypt. See for example *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 18, 1960 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1960, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 8, July 5, 1960.
[544] Premier Ministre, SDECE, "Réactions de Pays Arabes au Voyage de M. Eschkol à Paris," No.541 ref D34337/A, August 29, 1964, GR 10 T 819, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

more important Franco-Arab ties.[545]Ambassador Bourdeillette reported in January 1963 that Israel was aware that a sea change had taken place: with the utility of a French-Israeli friendship in question, future relations would have to be handled with delicacy.[546] French-Israeli ties would now return to the shadows in which they were born.

The end of the Algerian War hurt Israel's advocates in the French defense establishment as well. At a practical level, the end of hostilities significantly reduced the French Defense Ministry's stake in foreign policy: ousted from Algeria, the French military could no longer argue as strongly for Israel's utility as a strategic partner against Nasser's Egypt. More significantly, however, many of Israel's closest friends had supported the OAS and the failed Algiers putsch of 1961, which had attempted to overthrow de Gaulle. Friends like Jacques Soustelle, Maurice Challe, and Georges Bidault now fled into exile, robbing Israel of key advocates. Critically, however, their treason reflected back upon Israel, and, in de Gaulle's mind, sullied it by association. These men had lobbied furiously for a French-Israeli alliance, yet now demonstrated that their first loyalty was to French Algeria. The French pro-Israel movement was accordingly stained by the stigma of dual-loyalty, a powerful trope which de Gaulle would lever against Israel's Jewish supporters later in the decade.[547] Worse still, de Gaulle personally suspected Israeli involvement in the failed coup of 1961, a belief which was fostered by Quai and media reports of Israeli sympathy for the OAS.[548] In their 1960

[545] By 1966, exports to the combined Arab world were twenty times more important than those to Israel, at 4,503 million and 232 million francs, respectively. French imports from the Arab world were 199 times greater than those from Israel. Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 43-44.
[546] Jean Bourdeillette à M. Couve de Murville, Telegram 103/PL, "a.s. Rapport de fin d'année," January 21, 1963, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[547] Schillo, 934.
[548] The extent of Israeli involvement in the coup, if any, remains unclear. Israeli attitudes toward the OAS were, however, conflicted: many Israelis were troubled by the movement's evident racism, and skeptical of its treatment of Algerian Jews. Howard Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York:

meeting, Ben-Gurion had attempted to persuade de Gaulle to retain Algeria, and compared the province to Israel explicitly.[549] If de Gaulle thought back on this meeting, as he would in 1967, Ben-Gurion's words might have assumed a more sinister aspect: what if Israel and the partisans of French Algeria both sought to thwart de Gaulle's Mediterranean ambitions? Thus, as the 1961 coup inclined de Gaulle to associate those who protested his policies with disloyalty to France, it also suggested that the pro-Israel movement could no longer be trusted.

This belief was cemented by subsequent developments within French domestic politics. As Richard Viven notes, the French extreme Right became bitter enemies of de Gaulle in the wake of his 1962 pullout from Algeria. Now, dedicated to challenging Gaullist policy wherever possible, the extreme Right took up the Israel issue as a cudgel against the President.[550] Though their efforts were of marginal importance, they did reinforce the apparent link between Israel and de Gaulle's domestic opponents, framing support for Israel as part of an opposition platform. As a result, by 1963 close ties with Israel appeared increasingly at odds with de Gaulle's program of French grandeur, an obstacle to be overcome, rather than an asset.

At the same time, domestic developments left de Gaulle ready and able to propose a major foreign policy reevaluation. The Gaullist Union for the New Republic (UNR) had lost much of its right wing over Algeria, leaving the President in charge of a leaner, more consolidated party confirmed in its loyalty.[551] Despite its losses, the UNR won a larger

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Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), 115; Crosbie, 139-142; Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Relations franco-israéliennes," October 28, 1970, 2038INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

[549] "Entretien du Général de Gaulle Avec M. Ben Gourion Le 17 Juin 1960 à l'Élysée," June 17, 1960, CM 9, SPCH.

[550] Viven, 378-79.

[551] Gaffney, 44-49.

majority in the October 1962 parliamentary elections, and the President's victory in a public referendum on election law seemed to confirm his mandate to govern. By early 1963, de Gaulle had also instituted significant economic reforms. With domestic concerns largely in hand and a new electoral mandate, de Gaulle now felt ready to turn his full attention to international politics.[552]

Thus, by the start of 1963, the foundations of the French-Israeli relationship had weakened considerably. Changes in institutional structure, personnel, worldview, and image left France's leaders much less disposed to French-Israeli cooperation than their predecessors had been. Between 1958 and 1962, these factors led France to normalize its relationship with the Jewish state, and in the aftermath of Algeria, significantly curtailed the ministerial independence and personal relationships upon which close French-Israeli relations relied. By 1963, however, France's key policy-makers were increasingly disposed to see Israel as a liability rather than an asset. French-Israeli relations would consequently have to assume a new character, defined by discretion and obedience, if they were to continue at all. As a result, the mid-1960s saw the French-Israeli relationship enter a new period of ambiguity and mutual dissatisfaction.

"Our Friend and Ally": Ambiguity and Disintegration, 1963-1967

By the start of the mid-1960s, French and Israeli leaders wanted fundamentally divergent things from the French-Israeli relationship. While Israel wanted a continuation of French material aid and "moral support in all circumstances," a Quai report noted, France was unwilling to sacrifice "all its interests in the Middle East to Israeli friendship,

[552] *Ibid*.

[or] appear as Israel's spokesman."[553] Under the direction of de Gaulle and Couve de Murville, new guidelines were now established for continuing French-Israeli relations. They rested on the premise that Israel was a client of the French state, not an equal partner, in keeping with de Gaulle's vision of French grandeur.[554] First, if France was to continue arming Israel, it demanded complete discretion. Official state visits would no longer be heavily publicized; military aid would be limited, and coupled to deliveries to Arab countries; finally, French and Israeli officials were to avoid making new commitments or grandiose displays of friendship. In short, nothing was to be done that might jeopardize France's friendly relations with the Arab world. Second, French aid would now be contingent on Israeli economic and diplomatic concessions; France, by contrast, reserved the freedom to act as its interests dictated. The new, unwritten rules were clear: if a French-Israeli relationship were to continue, it would be on French terms, and Israel was expected to repay patronage with loyalty and service.[555]

Gadi Heimann has carefully documented this transition in the conceptualization of the French-Israeli relationship. Between 1958 and 1961, French defense and economic aid to Israel was already increasingly conditional on Israel awarding France lucrative commercial contracts and favorable trade terms. These included the purchase of several tanker ships, the construction of a commercial port in the town of Ashdod, and Israel's acceptance of French protective tariffs on its agricultural products.[556] If Israel sought more favorable terms with another country, France retaliated by bogging down aid and threatening diplomatic consequences. Meanwhile, Israel was expected to vote with

[553] Service du Levant, Note, "A/S - Relations franco-israéliennes," February 4, 1960, 218QO106, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[554] Heimann, "From Friendship," 243.
[555] *Ibid.,* 240-41.
[556] *Ibid.,* 243-46. On the cultural concessions France expected from Israel, see *Ibid.,* 246-48.

France at the UN, and did so almost uniformly in votes pertaining to Algeria and French nuclear testing in the Sahara. By contrast, France frequently rebuffed Israeli calls for political support in the UN and other international bodies between 1959 and 1966.[557] By 1964-65, France was expressing new interest in the Palestinian refugee issue as well, and was publicly criticizing Israeli reprisal policy more than either the British or Americans.[558] Couve de Murville also refused an Israeli request to station Jewish Agency representatives in the Algerian Jewish community, lest they introduce "an element of ethnic division."[559]

In 1966, however, France did not hesitate to invoke "French-Israeli friendship" to demand privileged access to a captured Iraqi MiG-21, the first such aircraft to fall into western hands.[560] At the same time, though French arms continued to be delivered to Israel, counter-balancing shipments were being sent to Arab states, and deals were negotiated to provision Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan with the same Mirage-III aircraft that Israel was receiving.[561] By 1965, Franco-Egyptian relations had also recovered, and in that year Israel was alarmed to see France extend sixty million dollars in credit to Nasser.[562] The mid-1960s thus marked a departure from the earlier norms of the French-Israeli friendship: now Israel was expected to pay for French support, not only with capital, but with economic and diplomatic concessions as well. In return, France

[557] *Ibid.,* 249-51.
[558] *Ibid.*; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 66 (1965), Philadelphia: JPS, 1965, 367-67.
[559] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 19, 1961 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1961, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 276, June 8, 1961.
[560] MilFrance Tel-Aviv No. 402/ISR/FA/, August 30, 1966, GR 14 S 336, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[561] Only the sale to Lebanon produced significant results; production and funding issues bogged down the others. "Fiche de Presentation du Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale," May 18, 1965, GR 8 Q 292, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[562] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 67 (1966), Philadelphia: JPS, 1966, 317-18.

would furnish Israel with arms, but diplomatic and economic assistance was no longer guaranteed.

It did not help matters that, by June 1963, France was dealing with a new, more pro-American Israeli government. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, whom de Gaulle had respected as "one of the greatest leaders in the West," was replaced in mid-1963 by the businesslike Levi Eshkol. Like his Deputy Prime Minister Abba Eban, Eshkol favored an American orientation in Israeli foreign policy, and worked to cultivate a "special relationship" between Israel and the United States.[563] For de Gaulle, who wanted to pursue a third way between the American and Soviet blocs, this was a problem: close ties with Israel increasingly smacked of pro-Americanism, and appeared to compromise de Gaulle's credentials as neutral mediator. In face-to-face meetings, de Gaulle subsequently urged Israeli representatives not to put their faith in American guarantees, and instead trust their safety to a French-brokered four-power settlement.[564]

The mid-1960s also saw the acceleration of de Gaulle's program of foreign policy independence, and this was reflected in the French-Israeli relationship. As he was doing with NATO, de Gaulle now sought to disentangle France from diplomatic commitments that might restrict his freedom to act. Accordingly, between 1962 and 1967, de Gaulle systematically rolled back France's commitments to Israeli security. This may seem surprising, as de Gaulle twice referred to Israel as "our friend and ally" in meetings with Ben-Gurion and Eshkol in 1961 and 1964. Yet this famous phrase was ultimately empty: as Guy Mollet recalled, these remarks "did not constitute a commitment in the eyes of

[563] Eban would become Foreign Minister in 1966. Crosbie, 170; Abba Eban, *Abba Eban: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 299.
[564] Michael Bar-Zohar, *Histoire secret de la guerre d'Israël* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 212-14.

General de Gaulle."[565] They were rather meant simply to reassure Israel. Accordingly, in winter 1962-63, de Gaulle gave orders to end joint French-Israeli defense planning in the event that Israel was attacked, and restricted intelligence exchanges to the level of the army; in 1966, these exchanges too were ended.[566] In 1963, Quai officers also convinced de Gaulle to make "as innocuous [a] reply as possible" to a personal appeal from David Ben-Gurion, "in order not to give [the] Israelis [the] feeling they could count on special French support."[567] Finally, worried that Israel was seeking uranium supplies elsewhere, de Gaulle definitively ended French-Israeli nuclear relations in early 1964.[568] By 1966, the only meaningful French-Israeli defense ties still in place were the delivery of arms.

Levi Eshkol was worried by these developments, and travelled to France to address them in June 1964. His visit would prove a microcosm of the transformation that had taken place in the tone of French-Israeli relations. In contrast to Jordan's King Hussein, who was welcomed to France with extensive pomp in November 1964, Eshkol was received quietly and without ceremony, and the French government "visibly avoided giving this voyage the character of a show of solidarity."[569] The meeting itself was businesslike and formal; de Gaulle sat behind his working desk, with Eshkol facing

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[565] Patrick Wajsman and René-François Teissedre, *Nos politiciens face au conflit israélo-arabe* (Paris; Fayard, 1969), 114.

[566] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s. - Relations franco-israéliennes," October 28, 1970, 2038 INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE; Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 909.

[567] The President wrote that threats to Israel's existence "will not find France indifferent"; it was not the guarantee Ben-Gurion had hoped for. U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 8, July 1, 1963, file POL 15-1 FR, 1963 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA. This letter can be viewed in Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes et Carnets: Janvier 1961 - Décembre 1963* Vol. 9 (Paris: Plon, 1986), 340-42.

[568] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 25, 1964 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1964, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 86, February 11, 1964.

[569] During his state visits in 1960 and 61, Ben-Gurion too had been received with considerably ceremony. Clearly, something had changed. Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 66 (1965), Philadelphia: JPS, 1965, 367-67; Jean Bourdeillette à Maurice Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A/S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.

him.[570] As the meeting began, de Gaulle offered some general praise of Israel's domestic achievements, and then listened as Eshkol voiced his anxieties about Israel's security. But the President's mind was already made up. When Eshkol was finished, de Gaulle announced that he was unconvinced; he felt the Israelis were overstating their vulnerability, and had been told as much by the Quai d'Orsay since 1960.[571] Arabs, de Gaulle explained, "exaggerate;" by contrast, he asked Eshkol to "be equally patient and peaceful." Egypt's "bellicose declarations," the President explained, "are without major practical consequences."[572] The President expressed his feeling that, by protesting against empty Nasserist threats, Israel gave the impression of "being perpetually opposed to the Arabs." It thereby compelled the rest of the world to choose between the two. It was a contest, de Gaulle implied, that Israel would not win.

"If your country is attacked . . . we will be with you," de Gaulle concluded. "But frankly, I don't believe this will happen. . . . The threat against Israel is no longer real today."[573] Eshkol requested de Gaulle make a public declaration to this effect, but de Gaulle declined: he would not use bombastic rhetoric, as Nikita Khrushchev had done with Israel's rivals. He assured Eshkol that French solidarity would be proved with

[570] Philippe Ben, "La politique gaulliste au Moyen Orient," *L'arche* 165, December 1970.
[571] De Gaulle was no stranger to alarmist rhetoric. He had used it extensively himself in the early 1960s to justify the French nuclear arsenal, likening French nuclear disarmament to French military limitations on the eve of the 1938 Munich crisis. If this kind of analogical thinking was permissible for France, de Gaulle objected to its use by Israel. As the President explained, the threat facing Israel was "no longer real." De Gaulle, *Major Adresses,* 159 and 226; Service du Levant, Note, "Relations franco-israéliennes," June 9, 1960, 218QO106, Israël 19601965, MAE. De Gaulle would personally tell Syrian envoys that the Israelis were prone to exaggeration in 1966. See *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 30, 1966 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre, 1966, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 413, December 20, 1966.
[572] "Entretien du Général de Gaulle et de M. Levi Eshkol, Le 29 Juin 1964," 29 June, 1964, 218QO106, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[573] *Ibid.*

actions, not words. Eshkol departed with only vague assurances that France would continue to supply it with replacement parts for its French-built air force.[574]

Eshkol may not have immediately realized that de Gaulle was conditioning French aid on Israel's 'good behavior,' but Couve de Murville and French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou soon provided clarity. In a follow-up meeting, Pompidou informed Eshkol that France would only commit to delivering Israel the spare parts for which it was "already engaged." Future sales would be guided by two considerations: that "Israel be a friendly country," and that France no longer provide any materiel that could be used "for aggression against others."[575] This formulation was deliberately vague, and left virtually all French arms deliveries at the personal discretion of de Gaulle. The message was clear: Israel needed to obey de Gaulle's directives to keep relations discreet and avoid hostilities with its neighbors, or the supply of French arms would end.

Israel, however, was not prepared to do so. Between 1962 and 1966, the rate and intensity of border clashes between Israel and its neighbors increased. The Israeli public consequently demanded action to quiet their frontiers. Israeli reprisal actions, which aimed to punish border violence and force its neighbors to curb paramilitary groups like Fatah, were often severe and disproportionately extensive.[576] Border skirmishes with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan now escalated into a mounting cycle of violence featuring the use of tanks, artillery, and military aircraft.[577] It also produced embarrassment for France;

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[574] *Ibid.*

[575] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 26, 1964 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1964, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 3, July 1, 1964. Couve de Murville was similarly convinced that "the Arab states speak loudly but act little." *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 27, 1965 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1965, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 124, March 17, 1965.

[576] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 902.

[577] Major Israeli actions included March 1962 skirmishing around Lake Tiberias; Israel's spring 1963 threat to invade Jordan if Hussein were overthrown; Israeli-Syrian border fighting in winter 1964; a November

Lebanon was a valued French client, and French-Jordanian relations had grown warm in the early 1960s. Israel's strikes against these countries suggested that France could neither protect its Arab clients, nor dissuade Israeli raiding. France's difficulties were made worse when Israel deployed French-built warplanes, as it notably did against Syria in late 1964. French diplomatic protests against Israeli reprisals were accordingly extensive, and de Gaulle himself became increasingly convinced that Israeli leaders were acting with a dangerous irresponsibility that jeopardized French regional interests.[578] In de Gaulle's eyes, Israel appeared blind to its own strength, and was lashing out needlessly against its weaker neighbors.[579]

Thus, by 1965, de Gaulle saw Israel as an irresponsible, even aggressive actor in the Middle East.[580] The President was also frustrated by Israel's seeming lack of discretion. The details of French-Israeli cooperation were subject to frequent leaks, which produced difficulties for France in its relations with the superpowers and the Arab states. Worse yet, Gadi Heimann argues, de Gaulle attributed these leaks to a deliberate Israeli

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1965 raid against Lebanese-based insurgents; and a raid on the Jordanian village of Samu in November 1966. *Ibid.,* 903-4.

[578] *Ibid.,* 904-6. One scathing intelligence report likened "savage" Israeli reprisals to a Nazi massacre in the French town of Oradour, and blamed regional instability on an Israeli "superiority complex" that led it to exaggerate its achievements, vulnerabilities, and rights to Palestine. See Premier Ministre, SDECE, "Le Conflit Israélo-Arabe," No. 114, ref: D43223/A, August 9, 1965, GR 10 T 819, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[579] Centre d'exploitation du Renseignement, No. 4273/DN/CER/B1/S, "L'equilibre des forces au Moyen-Orient," March 8, 1966, GR 9 Q1, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[580] Historian Gordon Thomas writes that de Gaulle attributed the 1965 assassination of Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben-Barka to the Israeli Mossad, since, in Thomas's words, "Only the Israelis . . . would show such total disregard for international law." This belief contributed to the President's decision to end French-Israeli intelligence sharing in 1966, and produced a stoppage of arms deliveries to Israel. Though Israel had once explored the possibility of assassinating Ben-Barka as a favor to the Moroccan king, it was ultimately not involved in the hit, which was orchestrated by the French foreign intelligence service. Gordon Thomas, *Gideon's Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad*, 5th edition (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 140.

policy aimed at undermining French relations with the Arab world.[581] This cast Israel's actions in direct opposition to de Gaulle's program of grandeur and French efforts to promote its national interests. Israel accordingly appeared to be violating each of the terms of the revised French-Israeli relationship. With Israeli leaders equally frustrated that their security concerns were not being taken seriously, official French-Israeli ties were becoming increasingly tenuous.[582]

Two final personnel changes in 1965 heralded the end of cordial French-Israeli relations. In September, Ambassador Bourdeillette was recalled from Tel Aviv. If Bourdeillette had been professional enough to oversee the normalization of French-Israeli ties, his strong religious and personal sympathy for the Israeli people made him a critic of the relationship's new direction. By 1965, his reports had called for increased military aid to help Israel preserve its military superiority, "the only guarantee of its security," and he warned that France was "slipping from neutrality into a pro-Arab partiality."[583] Bourdeillette was retired from service, and replaced by Bertrand Rochereau de la Sablière, an Arab-world expert who had served in Ankara, the Jerusalem consulate, and UNWRA.[584] At the same time that Bourdeillette was being recalled, Shimon Peres, the key architect of the French-Israeli alliance, was also leaving the Israeli government. By then Israel's Deputy Defense Minister, Peres was following David Ben-Gurion into the Israeli opposition as part of the new Rafi party. If anyone could have smoothed over

[581] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 907-9. Heimann argues that no such policy existed, though Israel did use "various tricks" to encourage France to make its support for Israel more public, seeking some expression that the French-Israeli friendship was more than the product of short-term interests.
[582] Jean Bourdeillette à Maurice Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A/S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[583] Jean Bourdeillette à Maurice Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A/S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.
[584] Coulon, 84.

French-Israeli tensions, it was Peres; with his departure, the French-Israeli alliance lost its last and greatest advocate.[585] By 1967, with its pragmatic, ideational, and personal foundations disintegrating, the official French-Israeli relationship was ready to crumble.

Breakdown: 1967 and the End of the French-Israeli Alliance

The French-Israeli alliance finally expired on June 2, 1967, as nine years of mounting French-Israeli disagreement and misunderstanding came to a head. By June 2, de Gaulle had made clear that France was not prepared to act on the guarantees of Israeli safety and freedom of navigation it had issued in the 1950s. Instead, he implemented a military embargo whose principal target was Israel. The Six-Day War, which began three days later, was not the cause, but a consequence of this breakdown, which helped convince Israeli leaders to launch a war while their qualitative military advantage still held.

De Gaulle's decisions in the weeks leading up to the June 1967 crisis were consistent with his larger goals and perceptions. The President remained committed to maintaining quiet in the Middle East, lest mounting tensions produce a wider conflict. He viewed these tensions, however, as an important opportunity to assert French grandeur. Israel no longer appeared as an ally, but as a test case for French prestige: could France compel its clients to make peace, and demonstrate that it was, in fact, a great power? France's good relations with Arab states and the Soviet Union left it poised, de Gaulle felt, to mediate both a regional and general peace settlement. At the same time, de Gaulle continued to view Israel as the most powerful country in the Levant, one whose existence was fundamentally assured, yet one that might well spark a general conflict through

[585] Golan, *Shimon Peres,* 137; Jean Bourdeillette à Maurice Couve de Murville, Telegram 693/AL, "A/S: Rapport de fin de mission," August 17, 1965, 218QO86, Israël 1960-1965, MAE.

irresponsible action. Concerned that Israel would continue to ignore his directives and thereby jeopardize French interests and even security, de Gaulle preemptively broke with Israel, trusting that his clout as a neutral mediator would survive what many Israelis saw as a betrayal. The breakdown of the French-Israeli alliance, and de Gaulle's well-documented bitterness in the aftermath, reminds us that this relationship, and foreign relations in general, are the product of ideas and emotion as much as rational analysis. Only by taking these factors together can we develop a complete picture.

The origins of the May-June 1967 Middle East crisis date back to November 1966, when intensifying Israeli-Syrian skirmishing led Syria to sign a mutual defense pact with Egypt.[586] In April 1967, renewed border fighting and heavy Israeli reprisals sent waves of alarm through Syria, which now called on Egypt and the Soviet Union for assistance. The Soviet leadership encouraged Nasser to answer Syria's call, warning on May 13 of an impending Israeli attack on Syria.[587] French diplomatic observers initially blamed Syria for enflaming tensions, and watched with concern as Nasser began to enflame a crisis over which he soon lost control.[588] On May 16, Egypt sent three heavily armed divisions into the Sinai, and the following day, Nasser ordered his navy to blockade Israeli shipping through the Gulf of Aqaba. This, French diplomatic observers warned, could "constitute a *causus belli*" for Israel, but Nasser appeared undeterred: on May 19, he ordered the expulsion of UN troops from the Sinai, and on May 22,

[586] On the lead up to and course of the Six-Day War, see Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[587] Uri Bar-Noi, "The Soviet Union and the Six-Day War: Revelations from the Polish Archives," Wilson Center, Cold War International History Project, July 7, 2011, accessed July 14, 2016, www.wilsoncenter.org/publications.
[588] French observers initially felt that Nasser was attempting to reassert Egyptian sovereignty over the Sinai and Straits of Tiran to its pre-1956 levels. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 204, May 23, 1967; *Ibid.*, Document 628, June 2, 1967.

announced that the Straits of Tiran were closed to Israeli shipping.[589] Israel responded by informing the great powers that it considered this "an act of aggression." The Quai d'Orsay now warned that "if Egypt actually stopped a ship," there was "a high degree of possibility that Israel would attack."[590]

Israeli alarm was also mounting. In mid-May Israel began mobilizing its armed forces, a dangerous gamble, since calling up reservists virtually paralyzed the Israeli economy; Israel could not maintain a war footing for more than a few weeks. On May 19, Egyptian government radio threatened that Egypt was "ready to begin the most brutal and awful war . . . . for the re-conquering of Palestine." "We will destroy Israel," other broadcasts warned, while the Egyptian-sponsored Voice of Palestine radio threatened that invading Arab forces would "have no mercy on children and women."[591] On May 26, Nasser himself announced that "We intend to open a general assault against Israel . . . . Our basic aim will be to destroy Israel."[592] By now, Israeli society was seized by the expectation of imminent war: emergency funding and blood drives began in late May, volunteers and reservists mustered at army posts, and civilian life slowed to a crawl in the face of mass mobilization.[593] Tensions continued to mount. In the last week of May, Jordan signed a defensive pact with Egypt, and invited Iraqi troops to muster on its Israeli border. Saudi, Libyan, Moroccan, and Tunisian troops now joined Egypt in the Sinai, and Syrian divisions began mobilizing on Israel's northern border. Syrian government radio

[589] *Ibid.,* Document 204, May 23, 1967; Oren, 63-75.
[590] U.S. Department of State, "United States Policy and Diplomacy in the Middle East Crisis, May 15-June 10, 1967," NSA.
[591] Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 40.
[592] *Ibid.,* 42.
[593] On the pervasive anxiety and societal mobilization that gripped Israel in May-June 1967, see Oren (2002), and Tom Segev, *1967: Israel the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

now joined the bellicose chorus, promising "holy war" and its readiness to "hang the last imperialist soldier with the intestines of the last Zionist."[594] As Michael Oren reports, by the end of May, some half-million soldiers had gathered on Israel's immediate borders, and had at their disposal over 5,000 tanks and 900 combat aircraft.[595]

De Gaulle, however, did not share Israel's disquiet over this military buildup. "Oh, don't worry," de Gaulle told his aid, Jean d'Escrienne in May 1967:

> Israel is absolutely not at risk of destruction. We won't let it be destroyed . . . but we should not be worried about it: if it has to face its neighbors, as may be the case, Israel won't be destroyed! . . . You know, you must not always trust first appearances. The situation may seem alarming for Israel . . . . But militarily, Israel, by its cohesion, its people's will to survive, the value of its army, its officers, its men, the quality of its materiel, is incontestably in a position of strength relative to its enemies. [Israel's neighbors] should be more careful! Trust me.[596]

De Gaulle was confident that Israel would not have to fight, and even if it did, that it would win. But these remarks belied an important, if subtle facet of de Gaulle's position: France would not intervene in the event of a military conflict between Israeli and its neighbors, as it had planned to do in the early 1960s. Only if Israel risked "destruction" would France contemplate interceding. And this eventuality was unlikely, de Gaulle insisted: the qualities of the Israeli nation left it the stronger party. Only Soviet intervention could tip the balance of power.

Thus, when Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, France demurred from invoking international guarantees to protect Israel's freedom of navigation. De Gaulle made the decision himself. On May 21, French representatives announced that France "was not taking any position" on the validity of the Egyptian blockade, but "felt

[594] Herf, 40-41.
[595] Oren, 162-64.
[596] Jean d'Escrienne, *Le général m'a dit, 1966-1970* (Paris: Plon, 1973), 146.

that it was a mistake to invoke [the 1950 Tripartite Declaration]."[597] Three days later, de Gaulle personally repudiated France's 1957 commitment to Israel's use of Tiran, informing Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban that circumstances had changed, and 1967 was not 1957. As Eban recalls, "France was disengaging herself from any responsibility for helping us if we chose early resistance."[598]

De Gaulle made these decisions because he felt that only a four-power framework could preserve regional peace and satisfactorily promote French interests. In de Gaulle's mind, Soviet cooperation was the linchpin of any possible settlement, and he had argued as much since 1965.[599] This was because de Gaulle felt that the Arab-Israeli dispute, like the Vietnam War, was a function of a wider conflict between the Cold War blocs. The Arab-Israeli conflict would end only when the Soviets acquiesced. In this light, Israel and its neighbors appeared as ancillary players in their own conflict. De Gaulle operated under the belief that the USSR could control Egypt and Syria, and hoped that he would be able to exert similar power over Israel. Through their combined efforts, war could be avoided, and France's position as a neutral mediator cemented. As de Gaulle explained to American politician Richard Nixon on June 8, "Israelis are people who exaggerate, and always have been; just go read the Psalms. The Arabs are, too. So, between people who exaggerate, it is necessary that the great powers be the voice of reason."[600] Confident in this formulation, de Gaulle informed the Soviets that he would restrain his Israeli

[597] U.S. Department of State, "United States Policy and Diplomacy in the Middle East Crisis, May 15-June 10, 1967," NSA.
[598] Eban, *Abba Eban,* 342-44.
[599] See, for example, the analysis in Premier Ministre, SDECE "Le Conflit Israélo-Arabe," No.144 ref: D43223/A, August 9, 1965, GR 10 T 819, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[600] De Gaulle's linkage of Israeli "exaggerating" to a Jewish religious text demonstrates how the President's perceptions of Israel and Jewishness were mutually informing. As I will make clear below, this association strongly colored de Gaulle's attitudes toward both Jews and Israelis in the wake of the Six-Day War. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 275, June 8, 1967.

clients.[601] French diplomats subsequently received instructions to press urgently for French-brokered four-power talks.[602] These efforts were roundly unsuccessful, however, and Soviet leaders dismissed France's overtures in order to pursue a bilateral framework with the Americans. Yet de Gaulle remained undeterred, refusing to give up his plans for a French-mediated settlement.

The extent of the French-Israeli divide became apparent during a May 24 meeting between de Gaulle and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who had urgently travelled to Paris to clarify the French position. France had not yet adopted a public stance on the closure of Tiran, and Eban had prepared an emotional appeal to ask whether de Gaulle would uphold France's commitment to Israeli security.[603] It rapidly became apparent, however, that the President's mind was already set in stone. "Do not make war!" de Gaulle proclaimed before introductions were even exchanged. "In any case, do not shoot first!"[604] Eban reports that de Gaulle appeared to be "in some sort of panic," fearful that rash Israeli action might precipitate a general conflict between the superpowers.[605] De Gaulle instructed Eban to "Stay in your positions. The Big Four need to consult. Do not look for solutions from the west . . . . The Four must confer. I myself am in charge."[606] Only French mediation, de Gaulle argued, could sway the Soviets toward a peaceful settlement, and so prevent war. Eban was frustrated, recalling that de Gaulle "spoke as if [the 'four powers'] were an institutional reality I ought to know about."[607] Eban argued

[601] On the eve of the Six-Day War, de Gaulle reportedly informed the USSR "I have calmed Israel; you calm Egypt." Wajsman and Teissedre, 139.
[602] U.S. Department of State, "United States Policy and Diplomacy in the Middle East Crisis, May 15-June 10, 1967," NSA.
[603] Eban, *Personal Witness: Israel Through My Eyes* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992), 371-73.
[604] Sachar, 180.
[605] Bar-Zohar, *Histoire secret,* 115.
[606] Bar-Zohar, *Histoire secret*, 114-15.
[607] Eban, *Personal Witness,* 375-77.

that Israel had a right to protect itself against a blockade that legally constituted an act of war. De Gaulle disagreed; only opening fire would constitute such an act. "Do not make war," the President repeated; under no circumstances was Israel to attack.[608] Eban left the meeting convinced that France could no longer be relied upon to protect Israel's interests. As he did, de Gaulle's Minister of Information announced that the "appearance of an Israeli vessel in the Gulf of Tiran would be a provocative act."[609]

By early June, however, de Gaulle felt that further pressure was needed to dissuade Israel from attacking. In the wake of the May 24 meeting, Levi Eshkol had written to de Gaulle warning that an Arab attack was imminent, that diplomatic efforts had failed, and that Israel was prepared to defend itself. On June 2, the French Council of Ministers replied by issuing an official statement: "France is on no grounds pledged . . . to any of the states involved . . . she considers that each of these states has the right to live. The state which [is] the first to employ arms will have neither the approbation nor support of France."[610] That afternoon, de Gaulle ordered an embargo on the delivery of French arms to all "battlefield countries" in the Middle East; in practice, it was a targeted embargo against Israel.[611] The French-Israeli alliance was, in effect, over. France and

[608] De Gaulle reports this conversation in similar terms in his own memoirs, though his account, which asserts that Israel launched the Six-Day War to fulfill its territorial ambitions, is grounded in a retrospective assessment of his meetings with David Ben-Gurion in the early 1960s, and the President's shift in attitude after the 1967 war. I have thus chosen not to favor it here.

[609] Eban, *Abba Eban,* 345. De Gaulle also urged Syria to keep the peace, promising "you have everything to gain from being patient" and allowing the Israelis to initiate hostilities. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 238, June 1, 1967.

[610] De Gaulle, *Discours et messages* Vol. 4: *Vers le terme* (Paris: Plon, 1970-71), 181.

[611] Though this embargo nominally included Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, only Israel relied significantly on French armaments. Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya were also briefly embargoed, though these restrictions were eased by June 5. French Defense Minister Michel Debré protested against the decision with the support of leaders within the French arms industry, but de Gaulle overrode him. Still, Israel's remaining friends within the French defense establishment facilitated the transfer of discreet amounts of badly needed replacement parts to Israel in the days and weeks that

Israel each sought support that the other could no longer provide. Leaders in each country in turn decided to pursue their interests independently. For Israel, this meant proactive self-defense; for France, it meant preventative embargo. De Gaulle hoped that such significant signs of French disapproval would convince Israel that a preemptive attack was not in its best interests. They had precisely the opposite effect.

Abba Eban recalls that the June 2 embargo was instrumental in informing Israel's June 4 decision to go to war. Bereft of its priamry ally and its steady supply of replacement parts, Eban notes that the embargo forced "us to conclude that since the balance of forces would now become less positive for Israel, we would be well advised to strike now!"[612] In Israel, a national unity government made the decision to attack. On June 5, Israel's French-built air force launched a surprise attack on Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. Over two thirds of the Egyptian and Syrian air forces were destroyed in the initial assault, and the Jordanian air force eliminated.[613] With uncontested air superiority, Israeli armies advanced rapidly into the Sinai, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, achieving a degree of military success that stunned themselves almost as much as their adversaries. Nasser was forced to seek a superpower-brokered cease-fire on June 8, and by June 10, Jordan and Syria had been compelled to follow suit. The war was over.

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followed. In the aftermath of the war, de Gaulle allowed some paid-for contracts for replacement parts to be fulfilled, but by the end of 1967, French military aid to Israel was reduced to a trickle. *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 32, 1967 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 65, August 1, 1967; Bar-Zohar, *Histoire Secret*, 211-2.

[612] Eban, *Personal Witness,* 407, 447; Sachar, 183. Meanwhile, French intelligence reports noted on June 3 that Egyptian forces were "passing from the step of dissuasion to the stage of a real capacity for combat." MilFrance Tel-Aviv No.369/ISR/FA/CD, June 3, 1967, GR 14 S 336, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armé de Terre, SHD.

[613] Herf, 39.

De Gaulle felt betrayed, furious. The brief war seemed to confirm everything he believed about Israel: the threat facing Israel *was* exaggerated, the Israeli military *was* stronger, and the Israeli leadership *was* unwilling to act as a responsible French client. In de Gaulle's view, Israel had recklessly risked world war, invited a Soviet attack, and attempted to thwart the President's plans for a four-power settlement.[614] Why had Israel taken such risks, if it knew (as de Gaulle believed) that its military was superior? As de Gaulle sought to answer this question, he would reformulate his image of the Jewish state through the lens of hindsight to figure Israel, and at times Jews everywhere, as aggressive, aggrandizing, and duplicitous. In so doing, he would make France a formidable obstacle to Israeli diplomatic aims, alienate wide sectors of the French public, and propel a significant rapprochement between France and the Arab world.

A Bitter Divorce: Imagining Israel in the Aftermath of Alliance

Within days of the outbreak of the Six-Day War, de Gaulle was reimagining Israel in ways that helped him make sense of the developing situation. The resulting image figured Israel as a calculating, expansionist state that had long deceived France about its true ambitions. Feeling that French trust had been abused, de Gaulle now embarked on what Howard Sachar has called "a politics of retribution," which aligned French diplomacy with the Arab world and rejected any territorial changes in Israel's favor.[615] The situation was somewhat more complicated than Sachar suggests, however. Though many observers agreed that de Gaulle's post-June '67 hostility to Israel was the product of considerable personal pique, the President also sought to lever his break with Israel as an opportunity to pursue his four-power framework and further cement French relations

[614] Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, Les Gaullistes et Israel* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 137.
[615] Sachar. 185.

with the Arab and Soviet blocs.[616] His behavior toward Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War, like his policy before it, was accordingly the product of both pragmatic and ideational considerations.

With the outbreak of fighting in June 1967,de Gaulle was furious that Israel had deviated from his explicit instructions to avoid war, protesting repeatedly that "They didn't listen to me!"[617] As the American Ambassador in Paris reported, de Gaulle's reaction was guided by "anger and bitterness" that his plans for a four-power summit had been rebuffed by the Soviet Union, and Israel's disregard for his advice.[618] The President already believed that Israel was prone to acting irresponsibly, but this seemed to go too far. De Gaulle looked for a possible ulterior motive, and when the scope of Israel's territorial gains became clear, he found one by turning to hindsight. As de Gaulle later explained in his memoirs, "Israel's existence was never threatened. But Israel is an imperialist state which dreams of conquest":

> It fought this war with aggressiveness because there was an opportunity to expand its territory and occupy vast areas. When I received Ben-Gurion in Paris [in 1961], he said to me that Israel aspired to expand its territory and population and that it would seize the first opportunity for a war of conquest[619] . . . . France must align itself alongside the Arabs. France is a Muslim power. It has essential interests among the tens of millions of Arabs. We must also ensure the supply of oil for the future. One day the West will thank me for my policy. Because France will now, [and] for a long time, be the only western power with influence in the Arab capitals.[620]

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[616] Sachar argues that anger and embarrassment had an important impact on the President's policy, as do P.E. Gilbert and Christian Pineau. *Ibid.;* Wajsman and Teissedre, 139; "Deux Ambassadeurs Parlent de la France et d'Israël," *Tribune juive*, April 2-26, 1968.

[617] Bar-Zohar, *Histoire secret,* 298.

[618] American Ambassador Bohlen reported that de Gaulle's personal frustration and "subjective prejudices" almost single-handedly guided France's response to the June '67 war. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*)*,* 1964-1968, vol. XII, Western Europe Region, ed. Charles S. Sampson, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1985), Document 74.

[619] This is a misremembering of his conversation with Ben-Gurion. See page 187, footnote 517 in this chapter.

[620] Quoted in Bar-Zohar, *Histoire Secret,* 298; de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 265-66.

In de Gaulle's retrospective, 'brave little Israel' was no more; indeed, it had never existed. Instead, Israel now figured as a power in its own right, one whose disposition was fundamentally "aggressive" and "imperialist." Most scholars agree that this new conception of an aggrandizing Israel was the product of hindsight, rather than foresight, as de Gaulle contends in his memoirs.[621] But the image stuck nonetheless. Over the subsequent weeks, de Gaulle repeated it to American, Turkish, Jordanian, and other foreign leaders as a testament to his own foresightedness, and by extension, his merit as an international mediator.[622]As de Gaulle explained to the West German chancellor, Israel had sought "an opportunity" to start an offensive war and expand its frontiers, "and the Arabs foolishly gave them one in Aqaba."[623] Under no circumstances, de Gaulle informed his interlocutors, must Israel be allowed to keep the lands it had conquered.

Quai diplomats picked up the theme. French official spokesmen blamed the outbreak of war on Israeli "aggression." New reports alluded to "the pretext" under which Israel had attacked, suggesting that Israel's war had been decided upon well before May 1967, while Quai Secretary General Hervé Alphand spoke of Israel's "renewed aggression" and "intention to expand."[624] Israel's image now demonstrated important changes, as the civic and military achievements for which Israel had once been praised were recast as the markers of a warlike people. As French Ambassador Bertrand de la Sablière explained in 1968, "a new Israel was born" in the summer of 1967. No longer a

[621] De Gaulle's belief was not totally without foundation in reality; some Israeli leaders, and particularly Moshe Dayan, expressed a desire to expand Israel's frontiers in the wake of the Six-Day War. Israel's annexation of eastern Jerusalem seemed to provide further proof of Israeli ambitions. Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 899, 911-12; Cohen, 147.
[622] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 911-13. Couve de Murville expressed a similar thesis to the Yugoslav Foreign Minister.
[623] *Ibid*, 912.
[624] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Relations franco-israéliennes," October 28, 1970, 2038 INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE; Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible,'" 913.

'progressive' or 'young' nation, Israel now resembled "a sort of modern Sparta" whose military was its "most original and striking" achievement; it was a pity that Israel had given "up [its] bright prospects for peaceful expansion to turn into a hard and bellicose nation."[625] For these observers, Israel became increasingly defined by militarism and war.

But de Gaulle's retrospective vision of Israel did not extend merely to 1961: now, in the wake of war, de Gaulle began casting doubt over the very origins of the French-Israeli relationship. In a June 19 meeting with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, de Gaulle began to implicitly repudiate Israel's creation. Whereas Gaulle had once emphasized his early approval for Israeli statehood, he now explained that "Israel was established not by us, but by you, by the Americans and by the Russians."[626] France, he explained, had merely gone along. De Gaulle expressed similar feelings to the Libyan Prime Minister on July 12. "If we were in the beginning favorable to the creation of Israel," de Gaulle expounded, "it was because we thought it would be [viable] only on the condition of being modest, peace-seeking, and accepted little by little by its neighbors. Unfortunately, it demonstrated that it is neither modest nor peaceful."[627] By failing to meet these conditions, de Gaulle implied, Israel had called its legitimacy into question. With these remarks, de Gaulle rhetorically washed his hands of his erstwhile Israeli clients, assuming responsibility for neither Israel's creation nor its comportment.

De Gaulle expressed his evolving vision of Israel by actively opposing Israel's diplomatic platform on the international stage. Israel hoped to condition its armies'

[625] It is important to note that these new images had little salience outside the Quai and the Élysée, however. This disjuncture is the subject of the next chapter. Bertrand de la Sablière à Michel Debré, Telegram 216/AL, "A/S: Rapport de Fin de Mission," October 1, 1968, 2038 INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[626] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin, 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 319, June 19, 1967.
[627] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 912.

withdrawal on direct Arab-Israeli negotiations for a permanent peace settlement; de Gaulle would have none of it. Not only would this formula implicitly justify Israel's territorial gains as a bargaining chip for peace, it would also bypass the four-power framework that the President envisioned. Though Soviet leaders remained disinterested in quadrilateral talks, de Gaulle refused to give up his dreams of a French-mediated settlement. French diplomats were accordingly instructed to "lobby like hell" for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal, and in October 1968 de Gaulle himself attempted to dissuade the Jordanian King from entering into direct negotiations with Israel.[628] Throughout 1967 and 1968, de Gaulle went on to reject Israel's conquests by force, and pressed for a four-power framework in almost every dialogue with an Israeli, Arab, American, or Soviet statesman.[629] Israel, de Gaulle explained, had to be "modest," accede to the international majority, and "master its victory."[630] Neither the Soviets nor the Americans took de Gaulle's diplomatic framework seriously, however, and his efforts ultimately served only to bog down negotiations and leave Israel increasingly reliant on American diplomatic support.

Though his plans for a four-power settlement had stalled, de Gaulle did seize on two new opportunities created by the Six-Day War. De Gaulle and the Quai d'Orsay realized that France's break with Israel had won it considerable sympathy in the Arab

[628] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 25, July 3, 1967, file POL 27 Arab-ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 33, 1968 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre, 1968, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 319, June 19, 1968.

[629] See for example the transcripts of de Gaulle's meeting with Soviet Premier Kosygin on June 16, 1967; his meetings with Turkish, Pakistani, and Libyan leaders; and his address to the French public on August 10, 1967: *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin, 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 312, June 16, 1967; De Gaulle, *Discours et messages* Vol. 4, 184, 201, 219, and 275.

[630] D'Escrienne, 154; France, Direction de la Documentation, *La politique étrangère de la France: Textes et documents, 2e semester 1967* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1967), 198.

world, and French diplomats now set out to capitalize on it.[631] Between 1967 and 1969, France's diplomatic opposition to Israel helped stimulate closer military and economic ties with Egypt, Libya, and Iraq. At the same time, Israel's territorial gains reawakened French interest in a long-dormant project: the internationalization of Jerusalem. In 1967 and 1968, French representatives demonstrated a renewed openness to territorial revisionism, pushing for the internationalization of Jerusalem and its environs, and at times proposed land swaps between, or the federation of, Israel and Jordan.[632] Internationalizing Jerusalem would allow France to resume its traditional role as the guarantor of the Middle East's holy sites, and give it an added stake in regional affairs.[633] Though these plans ultimately came to nothing, they demonstrate that France was prepared to accept certain border modifications, provided they enhanced France's regional footprint and fit the President's vision of a peace settlement.

De Gaulle's new image of Israel saw its most complete, and notorious, expression during a nationally broadcast press conference on November 27, 1967. To a listening audience of millions, de Gaulle explained during a question-and-answer segment that Israel's recent conquests were the result not only of long-term Israeli planning, but also Israel's Jewish character. De Gaulle now claimed that he had long been suspicious of Israel's ambitions. Israel's creation had, de Gaulle explained, "raised a certain amount of apprehension." In settling Palestine, "the Jews" had

[631] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 6345, November 8, 1967, file DEF 12-5 ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 33, 1968 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin, 1968, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 77, January 31, 1968.

[632] "Conference de Presse du Général de Gaulle, Président de la République Le 27 Novembre 1967, Au Palais de L'Élysée," 2038INVA 1771, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE; U.S. Consulate Jerusalem to Department of State, Airgram A-78, November 29, 1967, NSA; U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Airgram A-2136, May 15, 1968, NSA.

[633] French interest in internationalization coincided with a similar effort from the Vatican, though by November 1967 the Vatican had given up in the face of Israeli objections.

> established [themselves] on land that was acquired under more or less justifiable circumstances, in the midst of an Arab population that is extremely hostile to them . . . [and had thereby caused] endless friction and conflicts. Some even feared that the Jews, hitherto scattered, but who remained what they had always been, that is, an elite people, sure of themselves and domineering, [might], once assembled in the site of their former grandeur . . . [succumb to] a burning and conquering ambition . . . . The Franco-British expedition [of 1956] saw the emergence of a warlike State of Israel resolved to aggrandize itself. Consequently, the action it undertook to double its population through immigration . . . gave us the impression that the territory which it had acquired would not suffice for long, and that it would seize any opportunity which presented itself to expand . . . . On May 22 [1967], the Aqaba affair unfortunately . . . provided a pretext to those who dreamt of battle . . . . Israel attacked, and in six days of fighting seized the objectives it wanted to achieve. Now, it organizes the occupation of the territories it has taken, which cannot proceed without oppression, repression, expulsions, and . . . resistance against it.[634]

In subsequent remarks, de Gaulle warned French Jews to avoid excessive displays of sympathy for Israel, lest they give the impression of holding 'dual loyalties.'[635] This was a far cry from the "friend and ally" de Gaulle had praised in 1961 and 1964. If French and Israeli observers had been under any illusion that the official French-Israeli friendship might recover, they were dispelled now.

Many observers felt de Gaulle's remarks about Jews were problematic, and even antisemitic. Public outcry in the press was near unanimous.[636] Others protested the President's characterization of the Jewish state, with which the French public still strongly identified.[637] De Gaulle was shocked by the outrage his comments aroused, but stuck to his guns. "I told them the truth," de Gaulle protested to his aid, Jean d'Escrienne.

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[634] "Conference de Presse du Général de Gaulle, Président de la République Le 27 Novembre 1967, Au Palais de L'Élysée," 2038INVA 1771, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[635] Henry Weinberg, *The Myth of the Jew in France: 1967-1982* (Oakville, Mosaic Press, 1987), 34, 46-50.
[636] This was with the exception of antisemites like the Vichy Commissioner for Jewish Questions, Xavier Vallat, who expressed his "highest satisfaction" with de Gaulle's remarks. Jacques Derogy and Georges Suffert, "La vieillesse d'un dhef," *L'arche* No.129, November-December, 1967.
[637] French public sympathy for Israel is the subject of the next chapter.

His remarks about Jews, he insisted, had been meant as "a compliment."[638] De Gaulle refused to retract them.

The President's commentary on Jews is important because it marked a significant evolution in the figuring of Israeli Jewishness. As we have seen, the Jewish and the Israeli had long been blurred in France, informing French sympathies and policy toward the Jewish state since the late 1940s. But whereas this blurring had previously produced sympathetic images of Israel, de Gaulle's remarks posited a negative association between Israel and Jewishness, one which rebounded onto French Jews. French, and especially American Jews, whom de Gaulle viewed as the arbiters of American public opinion and electoral results, began to resemble agents of Israeli policy, and as such, disloyal citizens. In July, 1967, de Gaulle had agreed when Soviet Premier Kosygin described Jews as holding "key positions in the commerce and finance [of the United States]," adding that Jews controlled the press as well.[639] In October, meanwhile, de Gaulle implied to Kosygin and the Egyptian Foreign Minister that Jewish interests controlled public opinion and the media in France, and electoral results in the United States, thereby influencing policy on Israel.[640] In May 1968, de Gaulle reiterated this belief, telling King Hussein of Jordan that American presidential candidates "must humor the Jews because of the press and [their] money"; the United States would accordingly not be able to pressure Israel.[641] Meanwhile, de Gaulle explained to his aid in 1969, Israel's actions

[638] The compliment was backhanded. As de Gaulle explained to d'Escrienne, he would better understand the public's indignation had he had called Jews, "presumptuous, which they in fact often are!" d'Escrienne, 147-48. In both a January 1968 meeting with the French Chief Rabbi, and December 1967 correspondence with Ben-Gurion, de Gaulle refused to backtrack his comments about the nature of Jews.
[639] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 31, 1967 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin, 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 347, July 1, 1967.
[640] Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible'", 914.
[641] *DDF, Série depuis 1954* Vol. 33, 1968 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin, 1968, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 311, May 22, 1968.

were informed by the "warlike" demeanor of "the Jews of antiquity," whose "Bible was filled with the narratives of their battles . . . . 'Once more [in 1967], they have seized a piece of their enemies!'"[642] As de Gaulle saw it, modern Israel had inherited its ancient precursor's predisposition to violence. Though de Gaulle had viewed Israel through the lens of Jewish "exaggerating" prior to 1967, the Six-Day War significantly magnified the degree to which his perceptions of the Jewish and the Israeli became mutually informing.

In 1968, the French political commentator Raymond Aron argued that, with his November 1967 remarks, de Gaulle had "authorized a new form of antisemitism," linking Israel's objectionable behavior to essentialized Jewish traits. At the same time, the President had initiated an "age of suspicion" against French Jews, casting doubts on their collective loyalty, and calling into question their right to political activism.[643] The question of whether or not de Gaulle was an antisemite is a popular, if ultimately unimportant one, as the application of this label simplifies, rather than clarifies his complex attitudes. In the years that followed June 1967, de Gaulle certainly said and believed antisemitic things. These beliefs informed his thinking on the Jewish state, and were at times translated into policy. At the same time, antisemitism was not an overriding principle of de Gaulle's personal or political thought. The French president thus falls somewhere along an antisemitic spectrum, rather than at one if its poles.

The lasting impact of de Gaulle's remarks on French thinking about Israel is hard to quantify. Over the next six years, French Gaullists, Jews, left-wing activists, and extreme nationalists would demonstrate greater readiness to discuss French and Israeli Jewishness in new, sometimes revisionist ways, although Israeli policies and the

[642] D'Escrienne, 150-52.
[643] Raymond Aron, *Memoirs: 50 ans de réflexion politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 19-25.

domestic upheavals of 1968 had a greater impact on this phenomenon. If nothing else, the November remarks helped create a public space for revisionist discourse on Israel and its relationship to France's Jews. De Gaulle's speech helped open a door to a French public sphere in which the Jewish and the Israeli blurred together in new, increasingly political ways. As recent attacks against French Jews in the name of anti-Israel politics have demonstrated, this door has not yet closed.

In light of both his antagonistic diplomatic policy and troubling discourse on Jews, Israeli officials proved reluctant to engage seriously with France on any issue after June 1967.[644] Israeli leaders, la Sablière reports, "were scandalized by the new French policy"; they completely rejected France's proposed four-power talks, and turned instead to the United States as their international partner of choice.[645] As a result, de Gaulle's attempt to position himself as a neutral mediator by distancing France from Israel backfired spectacularly. Rather than producing trust, de Gaulle's actions forced Israel into the arms of the Americans, further polarizing the Arab-Israeli conflict between the Cold War blocs. Much of the Israeli public and national leadership characterized France's treatment of Israel on the eve of the Six-Day War as a betrayal. How, they asked, could they now trust France to serve as a neutral mediator? Totally stonewalled by Israel, de Gaulle now found himself shut out of Middle East peace negotiations. Though he would continue to press for French participation until the end of his presidency in spring 1969, de Gaulle's dream of a French-brokered settlement had perished alongside French-Israeli trust.

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[644] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 9644, June 25, 1969, file POL FR-ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

[645] Bertrand de la Sablière à Michel Debré, Telegram 216/AL, "A/S: Rapport de Fin de Mission, October 1, 1968, 2038INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

Over the next six years, official French-Israeli relations shifted from friendship to confrontation. French and Israeli diplomats increasingly talked past, rather than with one another. The French embargo on military deliveries to Israel also remained largely in force; though a modest amount of replacement parts was eventually allowed through, these too were stopped in January 1969. Heavy equipment, including the fifty Mirage aircraft Israel had purchased in 1966, was never delivered. This created legal difficulties that overshadowed subsequent French-Israeli discussions, and lastingly soured French-Israeli ties. Within Israel, military trainees now refused to study in French war colleges; French language studies declined in Israeli schools, and French cultural centers lost significant patronage.[646] As we shall see, while the sentimental and ideational foundations of the French-Israeli alliance continued to endure at the popular level, official relations would never resume their former amity.

The French-Israeli rupture had significant ramifications. This split was not only between France and Israel, but also damaged growing ties between Israel and much of the Francophone world, which largely bowed to French pressure and toed the Gaullist line in international forums. This was especially true in Francophone Africa, where French influence dovetailed with local perceptions of Israeli aggression to hamper cooperation with the Jewish state.[647] Cut off from its former ally, Israel now became increasingly reliant on American support, and by extension, increasingly beholden to American policy aims. Unwilling to let Israel lose its arms race with Soviet-sponsored Egypt and Syria, the United States now replaced France as Israel's primary source of military materiel. In this

[646] *Ibid.*

[647] Centre d'exploitation du renseignement, Note d'information No. 10.505/SGDN/CER/B/CD, "La penetration israélienne dans le tiers-monde," May 3, 1971, GR 9 Q1 56, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

sense, the acceleration of the American-Israeli relationship grew out of the ruins of the French-Israeli alliance. At the same time, France's unwillingness to act on its commitment to Israeli freedom of navigation left many Israelis skeptical of the value of international guarantees. In the future, Israel's diplomatic position would instead prioritize more concrete elements: land. Territorial withdrawal would now be conditional on formal peace. In this light, the French-Israeli rupture contributed to the deadlock of the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1967 and 1973, in that it encouraged Israeli leaders to rely on strategic depth, rather than international assurances, as the basis of Israeli security.

Conclusions

Between 1959 and 1967, French-Israeli official relations underwent a gradual, rather than sudden decline, as the key pillars of the French-Israeli alliance slowly eroded under the weight of institutional, ideational, and political change. The constitutional settlement of 1958 and the end of the Algerian War in 1962 brought an end to the ministerial independence in which French-Israeli relations had thrived. By 1965, the key architects and supporters of the French-Israeli alliance had also left their governments' service, robbing the alliance of important advocates and personal connections. At the same time, France's new leaders were reimagining their relationship with Israel and the Arab Mediterranean. Rather than an enclave of vulnerable Jews, Israel now began to resemble a strong and disobedient client, a liability to French regional goals, rather than an asset. Unlike his predecessors, President de Gaulle conceived French-Israeli ties as a patron-client relationship, and consequently sought to normalize them on that basis. As a result, French aid became increasingly conditional on Israeli deference, and was subordinated to French efforts to rebuild relations with the Arab world and position itself

as a neutral mediator. When Israel failed to meet de Gaulle's expectations, the President's perceptions of Israel changed further, figuring Israel as an aggressive, militant society whose faults derived in part from its Jewishness. As a result, the dramatic French-Israeli rupture in the early summer of 1967 was a long time coming, the consequence, rather than the cause, of declining French-Israeli relations.

Though gradual, the collapse of the French-Israeli relationship produced a stark transformation. Whereas de Gaulle had hailed Israel as a "friend and ally" in 1961 and 1964, by 1967 he condemned it as an "imperialist aggressor." French Jews, in turn, booed de Gaulle as "Charles Pétain" for his treatment of Israel, likening the President to the Vichy government he had fought in the 1940s.[648] By late 1968, only 3 percent of the Israeli population continued to view France as Israel's closest friend.[649] Yet despite its starkness, this transformation was largely limited to the official level. In contrast to their government, the French public remained overwhelmingly sympathetic toward Israel in 1967 and the six years that followed. Within the French public sphere, the ideational foundations of the French-Israeli alliance proved remarkably enduring, and even powerful enough to undermine official policy at key moments. As a result, French public discourse on Israel would undergo a much slower process of transformation, keeping the spirit of the French-Israeli friendship alive well after its official collapse.

[648] Jacques Derogy and Georges Suffert, "La viellesse d'un chef," *L'arche* No. 129, November-December 1967.
[649] "52% des israéliens considerent les États-Unis comme leur meilleur ami," *Le monde,* December 17, 1968.

Chapter Four

Catalyst and Continuity: French Discursive Responses to the 1967 Six-Day War

Introduction

French President Charles de Gaulle's dramatic break with Israel in early June 1967 came as a shock to most French observers. Largely unaware that French-Israeli relations had been deteriorating for some time, de Gaulle's June 2, 1967 embargo of Israel and affirmation that France owed Israel nothing struck the French public like a thunderbolt. Few shared the President's belief that it was Israel, rather than its neighbors, that needed to be restrained, and many felt Israel faced an imminent and existential threat. Accordingly, before, during, and after the June 5-10 Six-Day War, the French public demonstrated a broad and outspoken sympathy for Israel. Between June and December 1967, French support for Israel polled consistently between 56 and 68 percent, with support growing, rather than declining, as the drama of war shifted to the negotiating table.[650] André Monteil, a senator from the Popular Republican Movement, took to the floor of the French Senate to explain the public's response on June 14, four days after the end of the Six-Day War. "The valiant armies of the small Hebrew people . . . " Monteil explained, have renewed

> the ancient biblical history of David and Goliath, and David struck down Goliath. Ladies and gentlemen, perhaps the French Government can and must remain cold and sensible . . . . Oh well! I, who am not bound by the same responsibilities . . . ask the permission of the Senate of the Republic to say that, during this affair, the immense majority of us have *not* been neutral. How can we be neutral when the morality of the world and of our civilization is at stake . . . ? No, we are not

[650] Support peaked at 88 percent in a survey conducted on July 17, 1967. Gadi Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible' to 'Immoral': The Shifts in de Gaulle's Perception of Israel and the Jews," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 46, No. 4 (2011), 913; Yvan Gastaut, "La Guerre des Six Jours et la question du racisme en France," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 71 (2005), 16.

> neutral, and for my part, I hope that the Senate addresses its praise to these girls, to these Israeli boys whom we have known [for a long time], of whom a certain number are doubtless dead at [this] very hour.[651]

Monteil's characterization of the French public was accurate: a considerable majority had condemned the President's handling of the May-June crisis of 1967, and refused to subordinate their sympathies for Israel to the exigencies of *realpolitik*. Monteil's remarks in the Senate were met with considerable applause from the benches of the Left, Center-Left, and Right, and were being echoed across a broad swath of French public discourse. How can we account for the disjuncture of popular and official French discourse surrounding the 1967 crisis, and how does it inform our understanding of the decline of the French-Israeli friendship and the impact of the Six-Day War?

Broad popular support for Israel during and after the June '67 crisis indicates that, at the popular level, the ideational and sentimental foundations of the French-Israeli friendship survived Israel's military victory to remain powerful and enduring. Despite Israel's battlefield successes and de Gaulle's narrative of an aggrandizing Israel, major sectors of French discourse continued to characterize Israel as a small, nonaggressive, and embattled state whose vulnerability was rooted in its perceived Jewishness. It would take several more years for this image to gradually break down. In the mean time, Gaullist policy on Israel was met with considerable public protest, and at times, subversion from within.

While a splintering of attitudes toward Israel did take place in summer 1967, particularly among some elements of the Left, popular and political images of Israel demonstrated far more continuity than change in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day

[651] *Journal Officiel de la République* (*JORF*), *Débats Parlementaires, Sénat,* Année 1967, No. 24 S., June 14 1967, 634. Emphasis added.

War. To the extent that perceptions of Israel *were* immediately modified, they changed for diverse and often contradictory reasons, different from those articulated by the President. The most significant transformation took place within the French Jewish community, which for the first time found its sympathy for Israel to be in tension with government policy. The result was a hitherto unparalleled level of French Jewish political activism and organization, as longstanding images of Israel were mobilized at an unprecedented level to galvanize new modes of political participation. Israel and Jewishness now became not only prisms for thinking about France, but also lenses for framing the self within and in opposition to the French state. Though these lenses would see their most energetic use in the months following the student revolts of May 1968, they had their roots in the May-June crisis of 1967. In this light, the Six-Day War should be understood as a catalyst impelling new patterns of politicization in France, ones which would inform and set the stage for Jewish participation in the political upheavals of 1968-70.

This chapter is the first of three that seek to challenge the assumption that Israel's international image underwent a profound change in and as a result of the 1967 Six-Day War. According to this widely held view, Israel's popular image collapsed as a direct consequence of the war and the territorial occupations it produced, transforming the Israeli 'David' into a 'Goliath.'[652] This narrative suggests that once Israel had bested its

[652] Those who emphasize the centrality of 1967 for France include Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 10-13; June Edmunds, *The Left and Israel: Party-Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 85; Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003), 257-58, and Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs: De 1979 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 307, 319. Those who focus on the Gaullist rupture often center 1967 in light of the official end to French-Israeli cooperation that occurred in 1967-1968. Included in this group are Elie Barnavi and Luc Rosenzweig, *La France et Israël: Une affaire passionnelle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 31, 168-69; Michel Abitbol, "Introduction," in Michel Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (Jerusalem:

neighbors' armies and conquered parts of their territories, representations of a small and vulnerable Israel rapidly lost their viability. Instead, Israel appeared strong, bellicose, and expansionary, characteristics that alienated many of its former supporters. The war produced an opposite effect on most Jews, this view holds, galvanizing Jewish communities and "reawakening" their political consciousness, supposedly dormant since the trauma of the Holocaust.[653] In France, "*Israélite*" Jews, who had formerly hesitated to act politically *as* Jews out of a sense of trauma or lay civic identity, suddenly shed their reserve, legitimating, almost overnight, Jewish political lobbying as such. These claims, explicit or implicit, often serve as truisms for those retrospectively seeking to explain declining sympathy for Israel in the 1970s and 1980s. They are, however, problematically one-dimensional in their teleological implications and disregard of changes taking place within the French political and cultural landscape.

The present chapter takes issue with these assumptions by arguing that longstanding sympathetic visions of Israel as a small and vulnerable state survived the Six-Day War intact and continued to inform perceptions of the Middle East in both the public and political spheres. Maud Mandel, Ethan Katz, and Laurence Coulon also suggest that the centrality of 1967 may be overstated, arguing that the transformation of

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Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 2004), xiv; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, "France and the June 1967 War," in Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, eds., *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247.

[653] This assumption is more common and more understandable among those assessing the impact of 1967 through its Jewish angle, where the Six-Day War had its most immediate and transformative effect. Works where this assumption is present include Doris Bensimon, *Les juifs de France et leurs rélations avec Israël 1945-1988* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 163-65; Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF: De la Résistance juive a la tentation du lobby* (Paris; Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011), 48-49, 56; Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphael, *Jewish Citizenship in France: the Temptation of Being among One's Own,* trans. Catherine Temerson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 2-3; Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: an Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 112; Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1 and 105; and Erik Cohen, *The Jews of France Today: Identity and Values* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 13.

Israel's image instead took place between 1968-70, largely as a result of French domestic factors.[654] Katz and Mandel argue that the anxieties produced by the Six-Day War served to expand and politicize Jewish mobilization over Israel, rather than create it. Coulon, meanwhile, argues that sympathy for Israel endured beyond 1967 and only gradually eroded.[655] My work builds on these conclusions by using French press and communal records to assess just how much change French attitudes toward Israel underwent between May and December 1967, as part of this larger effort to uncover what the Six-Day War meant to contemporary observers.

Insofar as the war did produce immediate changes in the way Israel was perceived, the resulting shifts were diverse and disjointed, beholden as much to internal French politics as events unfolding in the Middle East. Even among French Jews, where the war had its most immediate effect, responses were more fractured than most historians recognize, particularly among those whose support for Israel came into tension with their political self-identification. Coulon, Mandel, Katz, and Ariel Danan have recently taken steps to illustrate the heterogeneity of French Jewish responses to Israel, and I join in their efforts to illuminate the diverse ways in which the question of Israel

[654] Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 103, 13-14, 445-46; Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 82, 124.

[655] Maud Mandel, 82, 124; Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 243, 255-56; Coulon, 13-14, 103, 445-46. By characterizing 1967 as a moment of catalyst, rather than creation, I also seek to nuance Joan Wolf's assessment of public French discourse on the Holocaust. While Wolf's analysis of the ways in which the subjects of Israel and the Holocaust became mutually informing remains sound, her dating of this phenomenon to 1967 begs revision. As my previous chapters have demonstrated, Israel and the Holocaust served as key frameworks for understanding one another well prior 1967, and had shaped policy as early as 1947. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 1, 26.

impelled Jewish politicization and self-identification within France.[656] Chapter Five carries this task further, charting the process whereby the question of Israel was amalgamated into larger debates about France and political identification within it, in the context of the student revolts of May 1968. There, we shall explore the ways in which French perceptions of Israel *were* beginning to undergo important changes between 1968 and '70. Finally, Chapter Six demonstrates that, by 1970, these changes did not yet reflect French mainstream attitudes toward Israel, and the chapter illustrates the ways in which the ideational and sentimental foundations of the French-Israeli friendship endured to the detriment of official French policy.

The French public response to the Six-Day War accordingly needs to be understood as a multifaceted process playing out over time, rather than a decisive moment of rupture. The ideas, images, and politics that had sustained the French-Israeli alliance over the previous twenty years largely continued to operate, and in some cases, were reinforced by Israel's battlefield victory. In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, many French people continued to view Israel through the lens of 'David' as an explicitly Jewish country that was at once capable and beleaguered. Though a majority of the French public had supported de Gaulle's efforts to stave off a Middle Eastern war, few shared his assertion that Israel was the aggressive party.[657] Many were increasingly disappointed by measures that appeared to prejudice Israel more than its co-belligerents.[658] Public

[656] On anti-Zionist French Jews, see Coulon (2009). For Jewish support for Israel, see especially Ariel Danan *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014). For the triangular relationship between Jews, Muslims, and the French state, see Katz, (2015); and Maud Mandel, (2014).
[657] Polls on June 8 reported that while 70 percent of the French population felt their country should remain neutral with regard to the Middle East war, only 14 percent felt that Israel had been the "aggressor." U.S. Embassy Paris to Department of State, Airgram A-1998, June 16, 1967, file POL 27 ARAB-ISR, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, The National Security Archive (NSA), Washington, D.C..
[658] Over the course of 1967, an increasing proportion of the French public felt that France was not behaving in an even-handed manner, and between August and December 1967, support for de Gaulle's

disapproval of French policy toward Israel was thus more about means than ends, insofar as both the French public and French government hoped for peace in the Middle East.

The gap between public opinion and official policy was nevertheless significant, and expanded as the ineffectiveness of de Gaulle's unilateral arms embargo on "battlefield countries" became increasingly apparent. While elements of the Gaullist Right and Communist Left embraced the President's critique of Israel, most mainstream discourse did not. Rather than accept their government's narrative, a significant proportion of the French public instead turned to sentiment and ideology to make sense of the Middle East. Public responses to the war were accordingly the product of varied forces, including ethnic solidarity, political ideology, memories of Jewish vulnerability, and prejudice. Though critical visions of Israel also emerged from the June '67 crisis, these often expanded preexisting critiques, rather than generating new ones relating to Israel's territorial occupations.[659] Negative images of Israel-as-occupier would instead only develop over the next three years, in tandem with the growth of the French New Left and the foundering of peace negotiations. In the meantime, enduring French sympathy for Israel at the popular level left the Gaullist break with Israel deeply unpopular, and gave some Israelis reason to hope that the French-Israeli relationship might yet recover.

Reflexive Reactions: French Material Responses to the Crisis of May-June, 1967

French public responses to the Six-Day War stand in sharpest relief when compared to official French narratives about the brief conflict. As we saw in the previous chapter, a complex array of factors influenced the government's decision to break with Israel on the eve of the Six-Day War. Government spokesmen, however, presented a

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Middle East policy dropped from 54 to 30 percent. Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 186-87.

[659] Coulon, 446.

simplified calculus in their official statements. Speaking to the French National Assembly on June 16 and 17, Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville articulated a straightforward explanation for his government's unwillingness to challenge Egypt's blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba: all had been done in the service of peace. "We have always said . . . that it would be madness . . . to try to settle the problem [of Israel's freedom of navigation] by war," Couve the Murville explained.[660] It would thus have been a mistake to invoke France's international commitments to force the issue. In the defense of peace, the government had been required to shed its "feelings, memories, [and] preoccupations," any "bases of judgment which are not objective . . . . Our national interest . . . is principally our relations with the states concerned . . . and peace . . . . This is why we adopted, and retain, a position of impartiality."[661] French spokesmen made clear, however, that Israel had risked world peace by taking up arms, had become an "aggressor," an "imperialist," and had "occupied an enormous territory, in proportion to its own."[662] Described as being "infinitely superior to the combined military power of its neighbors," in the weeks that followed the Six-Day War, Israel was cast as the conflict's instigator.[663] Having been responsible for the breach of the peace, Israel could now count on nothing beyond French "neutrality."

Despite a shared commitment to peace, significant sectors of the French public did not share their government's narrative of the Six-Day War. Though some 70 percent

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[660] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, Année 1967, No.50 A.N., June 17, 1967, 1923.
[661] *Ibid.*
[662] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, Année 1967, No.49 A.N., June 16, 1967, 1844-46; "Conference de Presse du Général de Gaulle, Président de la République Le 27 Novembre 1967, Au Palais de L'Élysée," 2038INVA 1771, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France.
[663] Pierre Messmer, quoted in France, Direction de la Documentation, *La politique étrangère de la France: Textes et documents, 2e Semester 1967*, (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1967), 103.

of the French public supported their governments efforts to prevent war, by the outbreak of fighting on June 5 only 6 percent of Parisians and 14 percent nationally felt that Israel was the conflict's "aggressor."[664] As the American ambassador in Paris explained, mounting public anxiety at the prospect of war significantly shaped these attitudes. "The majority of the population is viscerally opposed to France getting into another war," the ambassador explained. Thus, "it is not surprising that a majority has [to June 8th] . . . supported General de Gaulle's official policy of neutrality as a means of keeping France out of any larger war."[665] Yet, by late May 1967, many French observers were also worried that Israel faced a looming catastrophe. Prior to de Gaulle's break with Israel on June 2, French public opinion continued to operate under the assumption that Israel remained a "friend and ally," one whose vulnerability was a cornerstone of mainstream French discourse on the Middle East. As Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, and Iraqi armies mustered on Israel's borders, worry over Israel's future accordingly rose. These anxieties were heightened because, for many, the rapid acceleration to war came as a surprise. The French press had been slow to pick up on mounting border tensions in April and early May 1967, and thus, when Israel and its neighbors began mobilizing their troops, it came as a greater shock than it might otherwise have been.[666]

By the last week of May, significant sectors of the French public began to demonstrate their concern by mobilizing reflexively in defense of Israel's security. Street

[664] By contrast, 54 percent of Parisians felt Egypt was responsible for the crisis. Paris to State, Airgram A-1998, June 16, 1967, POL 27 ARAB-ISR, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA. Poll data was collected by the French Institute of Public Opinion (Institut française d'opinion publique, IFOP) and the French Society of Sample Surveys (Sociètè française d'enquêtes par sondages, SOFRES), respectively, France's leading polling firms.

[665] *Ibid.*

[666] Joan B. Wolf, "Anne Frank is dead, long live Anne Frank:" The Six-Day War and the Holocaust in French Public Discourse," *History and Memory* 11:1 (June, 1999), 105.

protests broke out across France, some organized, others spontaneous. Their scale and frequency should be attributed both to the significant anxiety many participants felt over Israel's future, and to an organizational revolution in the French pro-Israel movement. Among France's Jews, this sudden mobilization was a significant departure from earlier patterns of political participation. Prior to May 1967, the political mobilization of French Jews as such had been extremely limited, if not totally nonexistent. While Jews participated readily in the French political process as individuals, a strong *Israélite* discomfort with acting in the name of specifically "Jewish" interests held most Jewish organizations at arm's length from political affairs. As late as March 1967, articles in the Jewish press had cautioned that the only real "Jewish interest" was the fight against antisemitism, warning against mimicking the politicization of American Jewry by arguing that Jews "neither can nor should claim [a] political [orientation] as Jews."[667] The French Jewish organizational landscape, meanwhile, was ideologically and operationally fractured, bound up in internal rivalries and lacking broad public participation. On the political level, even the CRIF was limited to representing Jewish material interests in the wake of the Holocaust.[668]

This changed in May 1967, as mounting tensions in the Middle East left many French Jews at the popular and organizational level convinced they needed to take some kind of meaningful political action. On May 26, at the instigation of the CRIF, twenty-

[667] "Électionisme et judaisme," *Information Juive*, March 1967. This article came in the context of France's 1967 legislative elections. Despite such warnings, which were relatively common, a few Jewish organizations were already beginning to politicize. In the same month, the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Veterans and Resistants had recommended legislative candidates to its members, citing, among other credentials, candidates' positions on Israel. Christian d'Halloy, Consul General de France a Jérusalem à Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram 128/AL, "A/S Les organisations juives et les élections française," March 15, 1967, 2038INVA 1771 Afrique-Levant, Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

[668] Hecker, 23-24. On the state of the French Jewish organizational scene, see also Danan (2014).

five French pro-Israel groups decided to combine their efforts under the umbrella of a new organization, the Coordinating Committee of French Jewish Organizations (Comité de coordination des organisations juives de France, CCOJF). According to Article 1 of its charter, the CCOJF's goal was "the affirmation and support, by all means, of the natural and absolute right of the State of Israel to exist [and] to coordinate and promote all efforts of support and solidarity in this regard."[669] This was the first concrete step in the formation of a French Jewish "lobby." Under the presidency of former consistorial leader Guy de Rothschild, this central body would now attempt to direct France's pro-Israel sympathies into political action. As a result, the French pro-Israel movement would undergo an unprecedented level of mobilization at both the national and local levels.

The CCOJF immediately went to work in four key areas: fundraising, the mobilization of French youths, the organization of public demonstrations, and the extension of these measures across the nation. For the first time, organizations acting in the name of French Jewry issued concerted declarations aimed at modifying French government policy.[670] Protests, blood drives, and volunteer programs began to take shape rapidly, and the CCOJF called upon Jews and non-Jews alike to take to the streets, sign solidarity appeals, and reach out to elected officials, local leaders, academics, and religious authorities on Israel's behalf.[671]

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[669] Comité de Coordination, Preambule et Articles, MDI 214, archives du CRIF (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France), Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris.
[670] "Assemblée Plenaire du 26 Mai 1967, Proces-Verbal," MDI 25, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[671] All these activities were, in theory, to take place under the auspices of the CCOJF, ensuring that the pro-Israel movement remained at all times centrally directed, disciplined, and respectful. The CCOJF was only partially successful in this goal. Danan, 79-84; "L'action du Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juvies de France," MDXVII Israël-Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC; Michael Salomon, "Israël vivra!," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.

The response was overwhelming. On May 29, the Union of French Jewish Students (Union des étudiants juifs de France, UEJF) rallied seven thousand students for an informational meeting on Israel in downtown Paris; attendees filled the auditorium to capacity and spilled out into the streets.[672] Notable speakers included Daniel Mayer, the president of the Human Rights League; Philippe Berger, the president of the Christian Committee for the Support of Israel; and the Sorbonne's chair of moral philosophy, Vladimir Jankélévitch.[673] Two days later, General Pierre Kœnig's Association France-Israel mustered thirty thousand pro-Israel demonstrators outside the Israeli embassy, with the support of the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme, LICA), the International Union of the Resistance and Deportation, and all thirty-five member organizations of the European Confederation of Veterans.[674] Some of Israel's greatest allies greeted cheering crowds from the balcony of the Israeli embassy: present were Pierre Kœnig, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, P.E. Gilbert, Diomède Catroux, Chief Rabbi Kaplan, AIU president René Cassin, and numerous other politicians, celebrities, and musicians.[675] Below them, protestors chanted and waved banners proclaiming "Israel, our friend and ally;" "Israel must live;" "Down with Arab Nazism;" "Shalom" [Peace]; and "Free Israel, Free Aqaba."[676] Protestors listened avidly as musician Serge Gainsbourg gave voice to their solidarity, singing "I defend the sand of Israel, the land of Israel, the children of Israel. I

[672] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France; Bulletin No. 3," June 4, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[673] Hecker, 23.
[674] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France; Bulletin No. 3," June 4, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC; Hecker, 25.
[675] Other notable attendees included banking magnate Edmond de Rothschild, politicians Jean-Claude Servan-Schreiber and Raymond Schmittlein, the widow of Léon Blum, and celebrities Johnny Hallyday, Rika Zaraï, Guy Béart, Alain Delon, Pierre Dac, Luis Mariano, and Enrico Macias. *Ibid,* 24-25.
[676] *Ibid*.

defend it against any enemy, the sand and the land that were promised me . . . . All the Goliaths who come up from the pyramids will turn back before the Star of David."[677] Then, they marched up the Champs-Élysées, and merged with a second rally of fifteen thousand, organized by the Alliance France-Israel at the Cirque d'Hiver.[678]

Demonstrations of solidarity with Israel were not limited to Paris alone, however, and between May 30 and June 5, tens of thousands more took to the streets across France to show their support for Israel. By June 4, local branches of the CCOJF had been set up in five Parisian neighborhoods and thirty-nine towns and cities; eventually, it would be represented in at least 130 locales.[679] On May 30, 2,500 rallied in Strasbourg, France's second largest Jewish center. The next day, as a group of high-profile intellectuals met in Paris to protest Nasser's threats against Israel, a ten thousand-strong rally took place in streets of Marseille.[680] In Nice, six to ten thousand demonstrated; in Toulouse, five thousand. Lyon, Nancy, Metz, and Montpellier featured demonstrations of at least two thousand each.[681] Israel's security was the undisputed issue of the day; by contrast, a Parisian protest against the Vietnam war scheduled for the same week gathered only a thousand participants.[682]

Longstanding sympathetic images of Israel pervaded at these rallies, and speakers and voices in the press made it clear that, in their eyes, Israel remained the injured, vulnerable party. At the Parisian rally of May 31, Gaullist deputy Raymond Triboulet

[677] *Ibid.*
[678] *Ibid.*; Danan, 75-77.
[679] Maud Mandel, 82.
[680] On Marseille's engagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict during 1967 and throughout its history, see especially Maud Mandel (2014).The city's mayor, Socialist Gaston Defferre, was particularly outspoken on Israel's behalf, and helped mobilize the city into a hotbed of pro-Israel activity. He also notably used the Israel issue as a vehicle to critique his Gaullist political opponents. Maud Mandel, 92-93; Danan, 78.
[681] *Ibid.*; Hecker, 24.
[682] Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, "Introduction," in Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, eds., *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.

proclaimed that, "since Nasser has dared to [take up] the sacrilegious cry 'exterminate the Jews,' we wish to say to the people of Israel that your fight is ours."[683] Groups representing those who had once fought against Nazism were particularly outspoken in the defense of the Jewish state, responding to powerful memories of Jewish vulnerability. Hubert Halin, the secretary general of the International Union of the Resistance and Deportation, invoked the dual legacies of the Holocaust and the Resistance to mobilize support. Israel, he proclaimed, the "refuge of the survivors of the Nazi camps . . . is threatened by fanatical Arab leaders . . . I call to all my comrades to open their eyes. Israel must not lack the support of any resistant."[684] Jacques Orfus, the president of the Association of Jewish Veterans and Volunteer Workers, used similar language, casting Israel's cause as a moral binary. Israel, he informed his comrades, has our "entire and unconditional solidarity . . . at a moment when it is threatened with death. A dictator, disciple and heir to Hitler, aims to destroy . . . Israel, which is the refuge of all the survivors of the death camps. The children, women, and men threatened with destruction . . . have but one desire: to live and work in peace."[685] In the minds of these speakers, Israel remained semantically linked to the survivors of the death camps, and their vulnerability was symbolically extended to the Jewish state. The fight for Israel was thus amalgamated with the struggle against fascism.

In the week prior to the Six-Day War, voices across the French political and journalistic spectrum reaffirmed their commitment to Israel's right to exist, suggesting that many felt this right was in jeopardy. As the leftist *Combat* asserted that "the only

[683] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France; Bulletin No. 3," June 4, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[684] Hecker, 24.
[685] Jacques Orfus, Letter, 30 May 1967, MDLXXIV, archives du Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France, CDJC.

immediate problem is Israel's absolute, incontestable right to live," the conservative *Figaro* warned that "Israel is more than ever directly threatened" by the possibility of a "new 'final solution.'"[686] Opinion and analysis across the French mainstream press denounced the bellicose rhetoric of Egypt and Syria, likened the situation to the Munich crisis, and invoked France's international guarantees to protect the freedom of navigation within the Gulf of Aqaba.[687] On May 29, the French political theorist Raymond Aron articulated his sense of the stakes in no uncertain terms: "By the voice of President Nasser, the threat of extermination sounds again. That which is at stake is not the Gulf of Aqaba but the existence of the State of Israel."[688] Meanwhile, on May 29 and 30, members of Paris's intellectual elite came together to sign petitions affirming their sympathy for both the Israeli and Arab peoples, issuing an explicit defense of Israel's right to exist and freedom of navigation in the context of a negotiated peace.[689] In contrast to the government, which saw defending Israel's freedom of navigation and preventing war as mutually exclusive aims, these public voices felt the two objectives were inseparable.

With the outbreak of war on June 5, the scope and frequency of pro-Israel demonstrations increased. On June 5 and 6, spontaneous rallies including some three or four thousand people broke out outside the Israeli embassy and prominent Parisian synagogues amidst chants of "Israel will win!" and "we are volunteers!"[690] Within the

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[686] Yves Cuau, "Pour Israel le conflict arme peut eclater d'une minute a l'autre," *Le figaro*, June 1, 1967; Winock, 319.
[687] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France; Bulletin No. 3," June 4, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[688] *Ibid.*
[689] Signatories included Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Marguerite Duras, Clara Malraux, Edgar Morin, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Pierre Emmanuel, Claude Lanzmann, Robert Misrachi, and others. The text of their petition explicitly rejected "the identification of Israel with an aggressive and imperialist camp." *Ibid.*
[690] Hecker, 26; Danan, 76-77.

week, others were held in cities across France, including Lyon, Toulouse, Mulhouse, Forbach, and Montpellier. Nice and Marseille witnessed particularly large demonstrations, rallying 10,000 and 15,000 people respectively, with follow up protests in each city mustering 6,000.[691] Between June 7-9, the city of Strasbourg alone produced 1,350 blood donors, while French citizens overwhelmed the Israeli embassy in Paris with offers to volunteer for service in Israel.[692] Israeli diplomats reported that their embassy was flooded with messages of sympathy from French citizens.[693] Meanwhile, flights bearing CCOJF delegations, French politicians, humanitarian supplies, and volunteers continued to arrive in Israel throughout the brief war and the weeks that followed.[694] As the Six-Day War came to a close, CCOJF activities continued, and added new dimensions: CCOJF bulletins now directed activists to oppose de Gaulle's model of a quadrilateral peace settlement, instead endorsing Israel's position that "negotiations must be between only the parties involved."[695] This direct challenge to the French head of state demonstrates just how far organized French Jewry's discomfort with political activism had fallen by the wayside in the space of a single month.

Fundraising for Israel also skyrocketed. Between May 26 and 30, the CCOJF's solidarity fund for Israel raised over a million francs, and by the end of the campaign's

[691] Danan, 78.
[692] By June 21, some 1,500 had done so. Most had to be turned away, as Israel was not prepared to accept a flood of untrained civilians during wartime. By September some 710 French citizens had come to Israel as volunteers, however, most of them serving in factories and kibbutzim in a civilian capacity, taking over jobs left by mobilized Israeli reservists. French volunteers accounted for slightly less than a quarter of all those Israel received in 1967. *Ibid.,* 83-84.
[693] Avi Primor, *Le triangle des passions: Paris - Berlin - Jérusalem* (Paris: Bayard, 2000), 195.
[694] Hecker, 26; Primor, 131-32.
[695] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de coordination des organisations juives de France, Bulletin No. 9," June 26, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

first week, it had reached fifteen million.[696] This was partly a reflection of the fever pitch of French feeling for Israel, and partly the result of organizational efforts by the CCOJF, which dispatched detailed instructions to its activists regarding how best to stimulate fundraising.[697] Individual contributions ranged from sizable donations of thousands of francs to household collections and personal savings stuffed hastily into envelopes. With the CCOJF still in its infancy, many would-be donors did not know where to direct their funds, and early fundraising efforts became a disorganized flood. Some sent checks directly to fundraising director Alain de Rothschild, asking him to pass the funds along to where they might do the most good.[698] Others wrote asking Rothschild to redirect earlier donations for local Jewish charities to the new appeal for Israel, tellingly prioritizing Israel over their own communities.[699] In all, it took the CCOJF almost two months to collate the funds it had raised: by July 28, some sixty to seventy thousand people had helped collect 50 million francs for Israel, a 1,567 percent increase over a typical year's fundraising.[700]

As in the past, support for Israel seems to have had bipartisan resonance. Amongst the general public, support for Israel during the war polled between 56-58

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[696] Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 2, 1959-1991* (Paris, l'Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1993), 129; Maud Mandel, 84.
[697] "Bulletin d'information et de liason du Comité de coordination des organisations juives de France, Bulletin No. 5," June 6, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[698] J. Politis to Alain de Rothschild, Letter, June 6, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[699] Jacques Dennery to Alain de Rothschild, Letter, June 5, 1967, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[700] Primor, 82-83. Danan cites 1963 as one such year, in which 9,500 people raised approximately 3 million francs. According to Maud Mandel, 1967 saw a 50 percent increase in the number of individual donors over the previous year. Though 50 million francs might seem low compared to contemporaneous fundraising in the United States, Danan points out that the French Jewish community was ten times smaller, less well organized, and that fundraising within it had been historically weak. By contrast, figures from the United Jewish Appeal indicate that its US-based fundraising for Israel rose by approximately 133 percent from 1966 to 1967, collecting at least $317 million. Sidney Schwartz, *Judaism and Justice: The Jewish Passion to Repair the World,* (Woodstock, Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), 141. On French fundraising for pro-Israel causes between 1948 and 1980, see especially Danan, 344-65.

percent.[701] Within France's diverse political parties, however, the figure was often higher. On the non-Gaullist Right, support for Israel polled at 73 percent. The figure was 64 percent among Gaullists, and among Socialists, 63 percent. Even within the French Communist Party, where one might expect Soviet guidance to produce the greatest criticism of Israel, fully 50 percent of respondents polled as indifferent toward Israel.[702] Though sympathy with Israel was extensive across the board, it does also seem to have correlated with income: three quarters of high-income respondents polled in favor of Israel, compared to one half of working-class people.[703] Still, every major French workers' union, with the exception of the Communist-affiliated General Confederation of Labor (Confédération générale du travail, CGT), publicly affirmed their solidarity with Israel and its trade union, the Histadrut.[704] As these figures show, support for Israel within the French public sphere retained its bipartisan character throughout the crisis of May-June 1967. Energized by a rapid acceleration to war and de Gaulle's unexpected break with Israel, significant sectors of the French public rallied to demonstrate their solidarity with Israel, reflexively reaffirming the images and ties of friendship that had built the French-Israeli alliance.

Whither Goliath? Mainstream French Discourse on the Six-Day War

An examination of French public discourse uncovers the thought patterns behind these stark numbers, and demonstrates that before, during, and immediately after the Six-Day War, much French mainstream discourse continued to portray Israel as a brave yet

[701] By contrast, support for the Arab states polled at 2 percent. Samy Cohen, 188-89.
[702] Coulon, 79-80. Those who did not explicitly support Israel tended to express indifference, rather than sympathy for other belligerents.
[703] Industrial and commercial workers polled at 64 percent, while middle-class respondents polled at 72 percent. *Ibid.*
[704] Hecker, 22; Coulon, 74.

vulnerable, peace-seeking state. Public expressions of support of Israel ranged from the considered to the effusive. In the aftermath of war, some media outlets, like the centrist *France-soir*, were critical but understanding of de Gaulle's position. Protecting French interests at Israel's expense appeared to journalist Henri Marque as a "tragic" but "inexorable geo-political choice."[705] Others were less forbearing. "How can we not [feel for] . . . the tiny people of Israel," wrote poet Jules Romains for the opposition center-right *L'aurore,* "whom we have so long admired for its valor, resourcefulness, and whose fault in the eyes of its enemies is holding onto a shred of its ancestor's territory?"[706] "Between David and Goliath," echoed *Figaro*'s Yves Cuau in his subsequent book on the crisis, "it was ultimately not difficult to choose [the side of] the victor. The Jewish child slew the Philistine colossus thanks to his cunning and craft."[707]

Many felt Israel's war was legitimate, not the act of unwarranted aggression described by de Gaulle. Instead, political analyst Raymond Cartier argued in the June 24 edition of news magazine *Paris match*, it was Nasser who had "deliberately courted war. The closure of the Gulf of Aqaba constitutes a threat to [the] existence [of Israel]."[708] On June 6, *Figaro* had articulated the same position: "One side [Egypt] battles to conquer territory, [while] the other [Israel] fights against a threat of destruction. For the one, it is a political affair; for the other, a question of life or death. And for the 'united' nations . . . [it is a] question of humanity."[709] "Israel has no territorial ambition," *Figaro* repeated on

[705] Henri Marque, "Les phantom américans redonnent 'l'arme absolue' à Israël, mais . . . ," *France-soir,* September 9, 1967.
[706] Coulon, 74.
[707] Yves Cuau, *Israël Attaque, 5 Juin 1967* (Paris: Laffont, 1968), 337.
[708] Raymond Cartier, "Y a-t-il toujours un risque de guerre mondiale?" *Paris match* No. 350*,* June 24, 1967.
[709] Andrew Frossard, "Responsables," *Le figaro*, June 6, 1967.

June 8. “It has waged its battle not for self-aggrandizement but for survival.”[710] Write-in letters to French newspapers across the political spectrum echoed these conclusions, affirming the legitimacy of Israel’s recourse to arms, and fears for its survival.[711] Later in the year, Socialist leader Daniel Mayer demonstrated that the perceived legitimacy of Israel’s pre-emptive attack had not worn off with time. “The definition of aggression provided by [de Gaulle] means that in 1939, the aggressor was France,” Mayer protested. If the aggressor was whichever party ultimately shot first, Nazi Germany would have to be “rehabilitated” alongside Nasser’s Egypt.[712] To Mayer and others, this seemed untenable.

For some French observers, anxiety gave way to a triumphal, even religious euphoria in the wake of Israel’s victory. Israel’s battlefield successes produced a wave of relief amongst its energetic sympathizers, and French publishing houses now rushed to meet mounting demand for Israeli literature, film, and cultural exhibitions.[713] Yet a pseudo-religious discourse also emerged within some currents of the political Right, suggesting that, at moments of emotional intensity, some observers were more prone to viewing Israel through the lens of Jewishness. As reports of Israel’s battlefield successes came in, *Le figaro* hailed the seemingly “supernatural” “victory of the army of David,” and lauded Israel’s capture of the so-called “Wailing Wall” as the return of “the people of Abraham” to “the Wall of Joy.”[714] Other articles likened Israel’s “soldiers of David” to “a

[710] Roger Massip, "Le vrai problème est celui de la negociation," *Le figaro*, June 8, 1967.
[711] Coulon, 82.
[712] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 46. *Combat*’s Emile Roche articulated a similar argument on June 26. Mayer’s argument was denuded of context, however: in 1939, France was responding to the German invasion of Poland.
[713] Arnold Mandel, “Western Europe: France,” *American Jewish Yearbook* (*AJY*) Vol. 69 (1968), Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1968, 453.
[714] Yves Cuau, "Sur les pas de l'armée victorieuse; J'ai assiste a la reddition des villages arabes," *Le figaro,* June 8, 1967; R. Bauduc, "Le peuple d'Abraham a remis pied dans l'enceinte sacrée du Temple de

modern version of the Maccabees," and referred to Israelis as "the people of God" or the "people of Moses" while paralleling Israeli victories to ancient confrontations at Jericho, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Masada.[715] By framing Israel's conflict in an explicitly religious idiom, papers like *Le figaro* both reflected and reinforced perceptions of Israeli Jewishness. While this association was often philosemitic, we shall see later in this chapter that this was not always the case.

Yet certain forms of prejudice also worked in Israel's favor. Some currents of wartime sympathy for Israel appear to have been motivated by a still-potent anti-Arab racism rooted in the Algerian War and subsequent influx of hundreds of thousands of expatriate French Algerians.[716] Some saw Israel's victory as revenge for the loss of Algeria, expressing a vicarious pride at the performance of Israel's French-built warplanes.[717] Former OAS supporters also professed their satisfaction at seeing Israel humiliate Arab armies, and the three largest national associations of former Algerian colonists were outspoken in their support of Israel.[718] In the streets of Paris, cars now honked to the beat of "*Is-ra-ël vain-cra*" ('Israel will win'), in the way that OAS

Salomon," *Le figaro,* June 8, 1967; Yves Cuau, "Les mortiers jordaniens a l'abri du Saint-Sepulcre," *Le figaro,* June 6, 1967.

[715] Robert B. Isaacson, "Three Visions of Conflict: The Six-Day War and the French Press, 1967," in *North Carolina State Graduate Journal of History* Vol. 2 (2014), 12-13; "Les forces Israélien sont penetre profondement en territoire syrien," *Le figaro,* June 10-11, 1967; Pierre Macaigne, "Lutte contre la montre à Jérusalem...ou les epidemies menacent," *Le figaro,* June 13, 1967; Yves Cuau, "Il y aura d'interminables negotiations mais cette fois les 'monstres foids' de la grande politique auront du mal a imposer le moindre 'diktat' a l'état juif," *Le figaro*, June 9, 1967.

[716] By mid-1967, approximately 700,000 Arabs were living in France, as were some 600,000 Jews (of whom approximately 235,000 were of North African origin), and at least 800,000 former Algerian colonists of "European" origin. Gastaut, 15.

[717] Pierre Voisin, "L'exiguite de l'état juif explique l'omnipresence de ses forces aeriennes," *Le figaro*, June 9, 1967.

[718] These were the Rassemblement National des Français Rapatriés d'Afrique du Nord (RANFRAN); the Association Nationale des Français d'Afrique du Nord, d'Outre-Mer et de leur Amis (ANFANOMA); and the Front Nationale des Rapatriés (FNR). Gastaut, 18.

sympathizers had once sounded the syllables "*Al-gé-rie fran-çaise.* ('French Algeria').[719] Meanwhile, expressions of anti-Arab racism spiked during war, and drew criticism from voices on the Left both for fostering hate and for undermining the legitimacy of Israel's cause.[720] Yet while anti-Arab racism did mobilize an important current of sympathy for Israel during the Six-Day War, it was not the decisive factor. In the end, French responses to the war had more to do with sympathy for Jews, than hatred for Arabs.[721]

As they had done in the past, memories of Jewish vulnerability during the Holocaust powerfully influenced French responses to Israel during moments of crisis, both in and outside the French Jewish community.[722] Unlike earlier episodes, however, anxiety over Israel's survival reached unprecedented levels in 1967, and Joan Wolf concludes that significant sectors of the French public feared that a second Jewish "genocide" was a realistic possibility.[723] The widespread use of a Holocaust idiom attests to this anxiety, and framed Israel's right to exist and freedom of navigation as moral imperatives. Jewish voices were particularly outspoken in this regard, arguing that the knowledge that a Holocaust was *possible* obligated ethical observers to prevent its repetition. In this spirit, the French Jewish novelist Manès Sperber announced on the eve of war that "any attack on the state of Israel would be as intolerable as the resumption of the crematory ovens and gas chambers of Auschwitz in front of Notre-Dame."[724] On June

[719] Katz, 246-47.
[720] In an October 1967 poll, some two-thirds of Parisians identified themselves as holding anti-Arab views. *Ibid.,* 16; Coulon, 80-82.
[721] For an interpretation arguing the centrality of anti-Arab racism, see Gastaut (2005).
[722] On the relationship between public French discussion of the Holocaust and the Six-Day War, see especially Joan Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust* (2004). Wolf argues that debating the war in terms of the Holocaust clarified divergent Jewish and non-Jewish understandings of each of these events. Wolf concludes that the use of the Holocaust as a symbol of persecution and victimization began to be universalized as a result of its 1967 usage, and that many Jews objected to this expansion of its meaning.
[723] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 26.
[724] *Ibid.,* 25-26.

4, French Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan spoke out in the name of his constituency, reiterating the point. "God grant that the free world not forget the lesson of the events which led to the Second World War," Kaplan prayed. "But we Jews, we remember. We also remember Hitler's threats against us, which led to the execution of six million of our brothers and sisters . . . . This is why we take Nasser's [threats] to exterminate Israel — which emulate those of Hitler — so seriously."[725] As war broke out, the Jewish philosopher and president of the French Section of the World Jewish Congress André Neher defended Israel's recourse to battle on the same grounds: Jews "must hold the means to reject a new Auschwitz . . . . the Jews of France in 1936 . . . did not know . . . that Auschwitz was possible . . . . We know. So in 1936, in 1943, the battle was defensive. Today, it is offensive."[726] According to these voices, a genocide of the Israelis had to be stopped before it began.

Jews were not the only ones making such arguments, and mainstream media outlets picked up the theme. On May 24, *L'aurore* warned that "the civilized world cannot permit the possibility of a new Holocaust."[727] Nine days later a front-page article in *Le monde* evoked more graphic imagery to explain Israel's reasoning, asking "what isn't one prepared to do" to prevent others from making "fertilizer out of their parents' bones and soap out of their children's flesh while the universe discretely turns its gaze, as it so recently did."[728] One of the most powerful uses of the Holocaust idiom, however, came from a private citizen: Germaine Ribière, a heroine of the French Resistance and

[725] Jacob Kaplan, "La menace d'un nouveau genocide," MDXVII Israël- Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.
[726] *Ibid.,* 31-32.
[727] Coulon, 73;
[728] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 25-26.

one of the Just Among the Nations.[729] On July 28, Ribière wrote personally to President de Gaulle, urging him to modify his policy on Israel. After establishing her credentials as a member of the Resistance, Ribière evoked de Gaulle's own struggle against fascism to condemn his policies in powerful terms. "Mister President," Ribière wrote:

> The abandonment of Israel by France . . . raises up the shame of Munich. Initially . . . it was difficult to believe it . . . . [but] we soon realized what this neutrality was. France was Israel's provider . . . . can we say that the embargo was a [force] for neutrality? Certainly not . . . . And when we saw France side with those who condemned Israel as an aggressor at the UN vote, and [watched France] vote for this condemnation itself, the depth of our humiliation and pain was bottomless. Mister President, as we said no [to Vichy] with you in June 1940, we say no [to you] today.[730]

Ribière then detailed her own visit to Israel, Hebron, and the Gaza Strip in the wake of the Six-Day War, describing in detail an extensive and murderous antisemitism that she encountered amongst the local Arab population. "In a world like ours," she continued,

> which has experienced, as we have experienced, the hatred and horrors caused by Nazi hate, can we impassively assist this new rise of hated, this neo-Nazism threatening to sweep humanity away once more? . . . No, a hundred times no, and our no is without appeal. [We must] make it known to our children, and to all the children of the world, that it is better to die than be an accomplice to such a crime.[731]

Ribière received a reply from de Gaulle's secretary promising that the President would "take these ideas into account."

Criticism of the President's Middle East policy was not the purview of private citizens and the press alone, however: politicians on both the Right and Left also raised a considerable bipartisan protest.[732] Leading figures within the French opposition were

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[729] This is a Jewish designation denoting exemplary gentiles who saved Jews during the Holocaust.
[730] Germaine Ribière, Letter to Charles de Gaulle, July 28, 1967, MDXVII, Israël-Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.
[731] *Ibid.*
[732] In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, French concern over the fate of Palestinian refugees was similarly bipartisan, if not nearly as broad, a humanitarian rather than political question. As Coulon notes, "the

quick to condemn de Gaulle's break with Israel. Gaston Defferre, whose Federation of the Democratic and Socialist Left (Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste, FGDS) had rallied the non-Communist Left to make considerable legislative gains, affirmed frankly that "Our friends in the Federation and I have chosen our camp: we are for Israel."[733] The leaders of the Socialist SFIO and Center Democratic parties, Guy Mollet and Jean Lecanuet respectively, each also spoke out against de Gaulle's policy of neutrality, the blockade of Aqaba, and the President's unilateral condemnation of Israel.[734] France had become too close to the Soviet Union, warned Lecanuet, and was bordering on "active complicity" when "the life or death of a tiny state" was at stake. Even de Gaulle's coalition partners, the center-right Independent Republicans, raised critiques of official policy, and by the end of 1967 its leader, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, had called on the President to adopt an attitude more in favor of Israel, "whose need for security, and whose vulnerability is evident."[735]

As the Six-Day War broke out, vociferous debates also opened on the floor of the French Senate and National Assembly, where elected representatives were impatient to speak out on a policy they had had no part in shaping.[736] When Foreign Minister Couve de Murville visited the French legislatures to defend French policy on June 8 and June 14, objections by former Socialist prime minister Guy Mollet and Popular Republican

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Palestinian dimension of the conflict was not yet perceived" by a majority of French observers, and press and political attention fixated instead on building an equitable peace that would include some sort of settlement for displaced civilians. Insofar as anyone was blamed for the suffering of Palestinian refugees, the most common target was Nasser, who was widely seen as the war's instigator. Coulon, 92.

[733] Winock, 316.

[734] "La position du Général de Gaulle," *Le monde,* June 24, 1967; "Conference de presse de M. Lecanuet," no./7761/B1 GFL, July 18, 1967, GR 10 T 815, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France.

[735] Samy Cohen, 199.

[736] "This is shameful!" one deputy from the Progress and Modern Democracy group blurted out during a June 7 session of the National Assembly. "They're fighting in Israel and we're discussing bankruptcy!" *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1967, No. 43 A.N., June 7, 1967, 1604.

André Monteil won applause from representatives on the Right, Center-Right, and Left. Mollet and Monteil challenged de Gaulle's definition of aggression, and argued that France had shamed itself by abandoning its commitments to Israel's security and freedom of navigation on the eve of a crisis. The shame was even worse, explained Mollet, because Israel was a country were "all the survivors of the death camps . . . can finally live free. Save by dishonoring itself, the world doesn't have the right to abandon Israel."[737] Monteil made a similar case, evoking the death camps, the victory of David over Goliath, and France's international obligations in order to critique de Gaulle's neutrality. France had lost something of itself by breaking with Israel, Monteil lamented: "France is, alas, no longer the great nation of yore, always on the side of right and morality."[738] How, he asked, could France expect other countries to take its word seriously, now?

These critiques appear to have had particular resonance with the non-Communist Left. Before, during, and after the short war, FGDS and Socialist legislators critiqued French neutrality as a blow to regional balance and a violation of the ethical principles upon which the French republic was founded. While Israel's recourse to arms was, for some, unfortunate, it was ultimately justified by the bellicosity and annihilationist rhetoric of its neighbors. Frequently, support for Israel was framed explicitly in light of the Holocaust and France's moral obligation to its survivors. In this sense, Socialist Senator Antoine Courrière affirmed that he would refuse to allow French diplomacy to "play at Pontius Pilate" by abandoning Israel to the mercy of its neighbors.[739]

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[737] *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1967, No. 44 A.N., June 8, 1967, 1647-51.
[738] *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Sénat,* Année 1967, No. 24 S., June 14, 1967, 634-39.
[739] *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Sénat,* Année 1967, No. 24 S., June 14, 1967, 640-42; *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1967, No. 47 A.N., June 14, 1967, 1828;.*JORF, Débats*

Political critique was not limited to the Left, however. De Gaulle's policy of detached neutrality also spurred considerable division within the ranks of the Gaullist Party, which had recently reorganized as the Union of Democrats for the Fifth Republic (l'Union des démocrates pour la V^{e} République, UD-V^{e}). Prior to June 2, outspoken support for Israel had not appeared to be in tension with official policy. The June 2 announcement that France was embargoing and no longer beholden to Israel had not been debated at either the party or national level, and thus came as a shock leaving many confused.[740] With Israel's survival seemingly on the line, Gaullist politicians were forced to make quick decisions as to where their loyalties lied: to party or principle.

Gaullist responses can be broadly grouped into three tendencies: a majority adhered to de Gaulle's interpretation of the conflict, but a sizable minority objected to the President's policies. Meanwhile, a small minority of left-wing Gaullists, headed by Louis Terrenoire, took the war as an opportunity to rearticulate longstanding anti-Zionist positions. These divisions, Samy Cohen argues, did not correspond to preexisting cleavages within the Gaullist movement, such as that over the fate of French Algeria.[741] Yet the Gaullist party had not experienced so much internal division since the decision to withdrawal from Algeria.[742] Longstanding friends of Israel, including Philippe Dechartre, René Capitant, and Association France-Israel directorial committee member Léo Hamon now felt compelled to "reaffirm [our] confidence in General de Gaulle" in his search for

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Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, Année 1967, No. 49 A.N., June 16, 1967, 1857-58; Questions Orales, Assemblée Nationale 1967, No. 104 5992 du 6 Avril 67 au 23 Déc. 67," GR 3 R 67, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[740] Samy Cohen, 222.

[741] *Ibid.*, 294-95.

[742] *Ibid.*, 222.

"peace and justice."[743] Meanwhile, Gaullist 'loyalists' took to the press and the floors of the Senate and National Assembly to defend their President, arguing that French economic interests and the cause of peace demanded de Gaulle act as he did.[744] Their efforts were bolstered by unlikely allies: the French Communists. Communist legislators like Senator Raymond Guyot now joined the Gaullist chorus by blasting Israel's preemptive war, and warned that the "French people have been abused by a propaganda campaign speculating on the memory of the suffering of millions of Jews at the hands of Hitler's racism."[745]

Yet other Gaullists broke with the party line, and many wartime demonstrations in support of Israel took place under the aegis of UD-V^{e} members.[746] Gaullist politicians including Jean-Claude Servan-Schreiber, Joël Le Tac, Pierre Clostermann, and Robert-André Vivien were among the first to travel to Israel in affirmation of their solidarity, touching down on June 6 with the first group of French volunteers. Servan-Schreiber had taken a particular interest in mobilizing volunteers for service in Israeli factories and kibbutzim, and his French Rally for Israel group registered thousands of volunteers within the first days of June.[747] Others Gaullist politicians, including Albin Chalandon, Raymond Triboulet, Bernard Pons, Diomède Catroux, Pierre Kœnig, Jacques Hébert, Pierre-Charles Krieg, and Lucien Neuwirth became outspoken critics of de Gaulle's

[743] Coulon, 88-89.
[744] *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1967, No. 49 A.N., June 16, 1967, 1862-65; Questions Orales, Assemblée Nationale 1967, No. 104 5992 du 6 Avril 67 au 23 Déc. 67," GR 3 R 67, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[745] *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Sénat,* Année 1967, No. 24 S., June 14, 1967, 641-42.
[746] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 69 (1968), Philadelphia: JPS, 1968, 450.
[747] Jean-Claude Servan Schreiber, *Le huron de la famille* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1979), 156-58.

neutrality, critiquing it at pro-Israel demonstrations, in the legislature, and in the press.[748] Even close allies of de Gaulle, like Michel Debré and Defense Minister Pierre Messmer, expressed their concern to the President. Messmer himself went so far as to delay the June 2 embargo by twenty-four hours, encouraging his Israeli contacts to export as much as possible during the brief reprieve.[749] Though many of these politicians acknowledged de Gaulle's logic in trying to serve as a neutral mediator between the warring parties, they worried that the unilateral character of French neutrality disproportionately disadvantaged Israel at a moment when its very existence seemed threatened. Only if the Soviets and Americans adopted a similarly neutral policy, embargoing the belligerents, would de Gaulle's policies be able to bear fruit. In the end, however, these critics were unable to reverse official policy. Policy on Israel remained under the direct control of President de Gaulle, who refused by be swayed by public criticism. Rebellious deputies were threatened with ouster from their party, and critics failed to offer a viable alternative that still allowed France to protect its interests while promoting Middle East peace.[750] As a result, the effect of these critiques lay primarily in mobilizing public protest, rather than successfully modifying policy.

"France is with us!": Jewish Responses

French popular mobilization during the Six-Day War was most pronounced and most groundbreaking within the French Jewish community, and thus we should speak of specifically "Jewish" responses in the weeks surrounding the brief war. While the war did

[748] Samy Cohen, 221-24; Coulon, 88-89; Questions Orales, Assemblée Nationale 1967, No. 104 5992 du 6 Avril 67 au 23 Déc. 67," GR 3 R 67, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; *JORF, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale,* Année 1967, No. 49 A.N., June 16, 1967, 1862-65.
[749] Samy Cohen, 223-24.
[750] This was the analysis of American observers. U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Airgram A-2076, June 30, 1967, file POL 15-2 FR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park (USNA), College Park, MD.

not *create* French Jewish interest in Israel and activism on its behalf, as many have argued, it did catalyze the French Jewish community *as such* into unprecedented levels of political outspokenness in defense of matters that were important to it. The transformation was striking in its rapidity. As late as April 1967, mere weeks before Jewish Parisians took to the streets to rally *en masse*, Jewish communal leaders were lamenting the disinterest and lethargy of most French Jews in their communal life.[751] The outburst of activity in May-June 1967 can be largely attributed to three factors. First, Jewish anxiety over Israel's future in May 1967 reached its highest level since Israel's war for independence in 1948-49.[752] The war propaganda coming out of Egypt and Syria in May was explicitly exterminationist.[753] Many observers heard the powerful echo of Nazism, and genuinely worried that a potential second genocide was in the offing. As Israel professed to shield Jews globally from just such a genocide, French Jews worried that the looming war would not only destroy Israel, but by extension, magnify the vulnerability of Jews everywhere. Thus, in May '67, many French Jews saw Israel's fight as their own; accordingly, while protest banners in Paris read "France is with you," chanting crowds proclaimed "France is with *us.*"[754]

Second, the Six-Day War for the first time left French Jews facing an awkward choice between the policies their government and their sympathy for Israel. This was a difficult moment for a community whose collective loyalty to, and membership in the French nation had been called into question within living memory, with deadly consequences. Yet because they felt the stakes in the looming war were so high, many

[751] Gérard Weill, "L'action culturelle et educative, condition primordial de notre survival," *L'arche* No.122, April 1967.
[752] Arnold Mandel, "Le 'nouvelle' religion," *L'arche* No.124, June 1967.
[753] See Chapter Three, pages 208-209.
[754] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 69 (1968), Philadelphia: JPS, 1968, 450.

French Jews nonetheless raised their voices to protest a policy they felt was endangering Israel's existence. This was a watershed moment in which French Jews took to the streets *en masse* to advocate for a particularist cause explicitly at odds with French interests as articulated by the head of state. Jewish communal leaders and organizations which had previously worried that attempting to influence policy might compromise their civic identity as *Israélites* — Jews by confession only — now took up Israel's cause with vigor. In a June 4 meeting with 1,200 delegates from the CCOJF's newly formed National Coordination Committee, Guy de Rothschild affirmed that "The current crisis moved the Jews so that we all feel an irresistible need . . . to do something . . . . the attitude of our government . . . worries us as Frenchmen, it makes us wonder whether we should be embarrassed, if not ashamed . . . . we [now] state our critiques and this is our right as citizens."[755] In Rothschild's view, speaking out for Israel no longer detracted from Jews' Frenchness, but rather enshrined it. Critique was an exercise of their rights as citizens in defense of the principles upon which the French state was founded.

Claude Kelman, the Vice President of the Coordinating Committee, built on this view in more unequivocal terms. "I would like to insist upon a very important fact:" Kelman informed the same meeting of delegates. "Our efforts are the effect of taking a clear position without ambiguity or prevarication: we act as *Jews*, our reactions are Jewish reactions."[756] Kelman's remarks reflected both anxiety and a new confidence in the legitimacy of self-interested Jewish political mobilization. Kelman insisted Jews identify themselves as such to avoid any impression of attempting to manipulate policy in

[755] Rothschild did hedge, however. Noting that there was "no simple solution," he called upon his coreligionists to comport themselves with "dignity and courage, discretion and modesty." Anxiety about undertaking political action as Jews did not disappear completely overnight. Guy de Rothschild, "Nous nous identifions a Israël pour le droit a la vie," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.
[756] Claude Kelman, "Le peuple juif premier allié d'Israël," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.

secret, as antisemites had long charged. If Jews were going to oppose official policy, Kelman demanded, they must do so openly. Yet despite concerns that Jews risked public and official ire by attempting to influence politics, Kelman remained committed to the idea that acting politically *as Jews* was fundamentally legitimate in light of the stakes.

For French Algerian Jewish leader Haïm Cherqui, this activism was not only Jews' right as citizens, but their duty as Jews. In light of the added "dignity" Israel's existence had bestowed upon all Jews, Cherqui argued in July 1967, "the Jews of the Diaspora and those of France in particular realize that these threats concern them personally."[757] Acting to defend Israel's interests was, Cherqui wrote, at once "a family affair" and an attempt to steer France away from a course which "aligned the homeland of liberty with the enemies of liberty." For Kelman, Rothschild and Cherqui, protesting France's Middle East policy was thus not only an act in support of Israel, but one which defended a particular vision of the French state: one which, in Cherqui's words, did not surrender principle to "Maurassian realism."

The final factor shaping French Jewish responses to the Six-Day War was a demographic one. Since the mid-1950s, and particularly the independence of Algeria in 1962, French-speaking North African Jews had migrated to France in significant numbers. By the mid-1960s, at least 235,000 had done so, doubling the size of the French Jewish population. The effect on French Jewish communal life was considerable. As a community that had not been "directly victimized" by the Holocaust, Susan Suleiman argues, many North African Jews lacked the anxiety about public Jewishness expressed

[757] Haïm Cherqui, "Le judaisme française a l'heure d'Israël," *Information juive* No. 175, July 1967.

by some of their metropolitan coreligionists.[758] North African Jews accordingly expressed far less reticence about mobilizing publicly in defense of their interests, and were consequently disproportionately represented in pro-Israel demonstrations.[759] Their unabashed readiness to participate politically in the name of their Judaism served as a model that other French Jews followed, impelling both the politicization and "Zionization" of French Judaism.[760]

Nonetheless, French Jewish responses to the Six-Day War were not uniform. Though the heterogeneity of these responses would become most apparent in the context of the political upheavals of 1968-70, which will be examined in the next chapter, French Jewish discourse in the weeks surrounding the short war evidenced a range of responses. We must therefore view French Jewish responses to the war not as the monolithic gut reaction of a unified community, but as the expression of Israel's symbolic figuring through distinct, if broadly harmonious, lenses.

Some of these lenses were explicitly religious, framing the survival of Israel through the prism of spiritual and national redemption. "Israel is 'the remnant which has returned,' the remnant of our people," Rabbi A. Hazan argued in a late May edition of the Alsatian Jewish newspaper, *Bulletins de nos communautés*. It is "the only justification for 2,000 years of obstacles, of suffering and sadness . . . . For 2,000 years our mission and our vocation has had but one goal: the birth and existence of Israel . . . . [which erased] from our souls the shame of the *Golus* [Exile]." Israel's survival was thus a spiritual

[758] Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Orphans of the Shoah and Jewish Identity in Post-Holocaust France: From the Individual to the Collective," in Seán Hand and Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust France and the Jews, 1945-1955* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 131.On the character and politics of the expatriate Algerian Jewish community, see especially Ethan Katz (2015) and Maud Mandel (2014).
[759] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* vol. 69 (1968), Philadelphia: JPS, 1968, 450.
[760] Barnavi and Rosenzweig, 143.

imperative, Hazan concluded. Otherwise, "why stay Jewish? Why remain a man?"[761] French Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan articulated a similar outlook, calling for Jewish solidarity with Israel on the grounds of shared spiritual destiny. "The tragic ordeal which confronts Israel is [also] that of the Jews of France and the Jews of the entire world," Kaplan announced on June 4:

> Jerusalem is our spiritual capital, the land of Israel is the country of our ancestors . . . the homeland of the survivors of the death camps . . . . In this sense it is the Jewish consolation of our time. But it is also more . . . The State of Israel has given a new dignity to each Jew of the Diaspora; it is a subject of pride, a title of honor for every Jews regardless of which nation he belongs to.[762]

For these rabbis, the spiritual bond between Israel and French Judaism made Israel's struggle their own.

The Six-Day War also saw the institutional structure of French Judaism politically mobilized in unprecedented ways. Rabbis, community presidents, and consistorial leaders now affirmed their solidarity with Israel in the name of their constituencies and offices. On June 5, the Association of French Rabbis issued an "[urgent] demand that the great powers not repeat the irreparable [crime] committed a quarter of a century ago when they allowed the monstrous Nazi genocide to be perpetrated . . . . [Israel's] destruction would constitute a crime not only before God, but a defeat for the human conscience."[763] Synagogues too became sites of political mobilization and fund-raising, and adhered to

[761] Rabbi A. Hazan, "Pour toi seul, Israël," *Bulletins de nos communautés*, May 26, 1967.
[762] Jacob Kaplan, "La menace d'un nouveau genocide," MDXVII Israël- Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.
[763] Draft statement of the Association des Rabbins Français General Assembly, June 5, 1967, MDXVII, Israël-Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.

consistorial directives to participate in nation-wide prayer services for Israel on May 26 and 27.[764]

Others saw the May-June crisis in ethical, if no less absolute terms. For philosopher André Neher, the president of the French Section of the World Jewish Congress, Israel's struggle encapsulated the global battle for progress, which he explained in a June '67 special edition of the Jewish monthly *L'arche*:

> Yesterday I was leading [the fight] for the most noble human values, for truth, for peace, for justice. Today I lead the unique struggle for Israel, as it binds up all the others . . . . and I say to my comrades of yesterday: 'come with me, because the fight for Israel is the human struggle *par excellence*. If, analyzing, hesitating, dithering, you don't come, well! we shall fight alone. Once again we will be as Abraham . . . . [and] re-instruct the world in the ways of justice.' Yesterday . . . I gave only a fraction of myself to Israel. Today the whole of my action, my persona, identifies with Israel . . . . Yesterday my love for Israel was without risks. Today . . . [I must run the risk] as a citizen of a free state . . . of crying out my disagreement with the policy of my state . . . . in the certainty that we can prevent a new Auschwitz.[765]

Neher's framework, which posited Israel's struggle as a universal one, was a powerful prism for those who identified with the humanitarian ethos of the socialist Left, and variations of this argument cropped up frequently in the press and in public meetings.[766]

Yet this prism also exposed mounting tensions between the universal and particular dimensions of the Israel debate. Significant sectors of the French and global Left, and particularly those committed to the principles of Communist solidarity with the Arab world or Maoist revolution, rejected arguments on the universality of Israel's cause,

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[764] "Crise ou drame: Le point de la situation," *Bulletins de nos communautés*, May 26, 1967; Maud Mandel, 82.

[765] André Neher, "Israël vivra! L'arrière d'acier," *L'arche* no. 124, June 1967. Neher was a leading voice in the French Jewish community, and issued repeated calls to his coreligionists to demonstrate a total, unreserved solidarity with Israel. See for example his remarks in André Neher, "Comme Israël comme solidarité," *Bulletins de nos communautés,* May 26, 1967.

[766] See for example H. Smolarski, "Suis-je le gardien de mon frère?" *Bulletins de nos commuanutés*, May 26, 1967.

instead casting Israel as an enemy of socialist liberation.[767] This was troubling for those who increasingly saw Israel's struggle as their own, and many Jewish university students found this a particularly confusing moment in which they felt pressured to choose between ideology and pseudo-ethnic solidarity. Many chose Israel. Pro-Israel students organized a solidarity campaign, challenged the National Union of Students of France (UNEF) for its ambivalent response to war, debated peers, or volunteered for service on Israeli kibbutzim.[768] Some Jewish students found that debate over Israel exposed surprising contradictions between their ideological and personal worldviews. "I, who never missed an opportunity to shout 'Algeria for the Algerians,' 'down with Yankee imperialism, [and] 'Vietnam for the Vietcong,'" remarked one Parisian student, "was surprised to say, when I learned that Hanoi was supporting Nasser, . . . 'let them rot!'"[769] Others found dearly-held commitments to peaceful conflict-resolution cast into doubt by the reality of a war that struck too close to home. "I have always been a convinced partisan of dialogue with the Arabs," another Parisian student confessed, "but Nasser's appeal to a holy war disgusted me. You can't dialogue with hate. I will fight against the Arabs more ruthlessly than those who have never believed in the virtue of the Dialogue. After Israel's victory, I will resume the discussion."[770] With solidarity with Israel seemingly at odds with both Gaullist policy and the avant-garde of the political Left, such Jewish students felt a powerful yet isolating need to speak out on Israel's behalf.[771]

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[767] The French Left was extensively fractured on the question of Israel between 1967 and 1970, and these divisions will receive extensive treatment in the next chapter.
[768] "Crise ou drame: Le point de la situation," *Bulletins de nos communautés*, May 26, 1967; Patrick Wajsman, "Israël vivra! Notre jeunesse retrouve son ame," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.
[769] *Ibid.*
[770] *Ibid.*
[771] Some Jewish observers, like the essayist Manès Sperber, were particularly concerned for the fate of Palestinian refugees, affirming "we have a debt toward them." Most of these voices, however, favored a solution which settled displaced refugees in their countries of residence or dislocation, rather than

In other quarters, Israel's war functioned as a call to arms in a discursive battle over Israeli legitimacy. For Jews with Marxist inclinations, like the anti-Zionist linguistics professor Maxime Rodinson, the war presented an opportunity to question the basis of Israeli statehood. Rodinson termed Israel "the most absolute incarnation of colonialism, and a barrier to the global progressive movement," and his call for Israel's dissolution became a rallying point for anti-Zionists throughout France.[772] Such individuals viewed Israel through the lens of an international anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist struggle, likening Israel's confrontation with its neighbors to the conflicts in Algeria and Vietnam. Others, like Jewish ethicist and one-time Lehi bomber Robert Misrachi, were quick to take up their pens to answer such criticism. Articles critiquing anti-Israel currents within the French Left appeared frequently in the Jewish press in the weeks surrounding the Six-Day War, blasting Israel's left-wing critics as hypocrites subordinating socialist principles to post-colonial guilt and binary solidarity with the Arab world.[773] In a June '67 article, Misrachi argued that denouncing Israel had become a cultural code used to identify oneself with the revolutionary wing of the French Left. This had produced an unwitting yet "partisan *suspension* of the [Left's] objectivity and generosity" in its treatment of Israel, which needed to be identified and challenged.[774] Over the next several years, Misrachi, Rodinson, and those like them would turn their efforts to this debate, enlisting themselves as soldiers in a battle over Israeli legitimacy.

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repatriation, citing the recent exoduses of Algerian settlers and the Jews of the Middle East as comparable examples. Manès Sperber, "Israël vivra! Terre des hommes," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.

[772] Quoted in "Crise ou Drame: le Point de la Situation," *Bulletins de nos Communautés*, May 26, 1967.

[773] Misrachi was the most prolific of these voices. For a representative example, see Robert Misrachi, "Israël vivra! Les ambiguités de la gauche française," *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.

[774] *Ibid.*

Though the Six-Day War produced diverse, and at times competing responses within the French Jewish community, it did have one near-ubiquitous effect: the question of Israel now became a front-and-center element of French Jewish identity. Whether one sympathized with Israel or not, ignoring it became an increasingly difficult proposition.[775] For some, like writer Arnold Mandel, this was a worrying development, with the "new religion" of Zionism threatening to eclipse other areas of Jewish communal and personal identity.[776] Others, like filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, embraced this 'religion' without reserve, declaring "Israel is my freedom."[777] Either way, for a wide cross-section of French Jewry, the question of Israel was beginning to assume new import in the formation of personal and communal politics, catalyzing Jewish politicization in ways and on a scale heretofore unknown in France. Though the Six-Day War did not mark the first expression of Jewish politicization, it did force the floodgates wide, catalyzing mass Jewish activism in defense of their perceived, particularist interests for the first time. Hereafter, French Jews would demonstrate less reticence about speaking out for themselves, Israelis, and Jews elsewhere in the world, even when this meant critiquing their government.[778]

Outliers: Shifting Perceptions of Israel in the Immediate Wake of War

[775] Difficult, but not impossible. A middle-aged Jewish woman in Dijon remembered being struck by the powerful images of Israeli soldiers capturing the Western Wall in 1967, but being generally too busy with her children to have anything more than a surface-level interest. Robert I. Weiner and Richard E. Sharpless, *An Uncertain Future: Voices of a French Jewish Community, 1940-2012* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2012), 155.

[776] Arnold Mandel, "Le 'nouvelle' religion,'" *L'arche* No. 124, June 1967.

[777] Maud Mandel, 82.

[778] By the end of June 1967, French Jewish bodies were already beginning to broaden their political engagement beyond the Israel issue. Between June 20 and 25, the French central consistory began taking international action to protest violence being perpetrated against Jews living in Arab countries. "Note a l'attention de M. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères sur la situation des Juifs dans les Pays Arabes," June 20, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

Though mainstream French discourse on Israel remained largely beholden to preexisting images in the weeks surrounding the Six-Day War, there were outliers that evidence the beginning of important, if subtle transformations. Even these outliers did not appear overnight, however. Often, they were instead an expansion of existing critiques, the updating, rather than creation of images. In the latter half of 1967, they also had limited salience, and represented a minority voice within mainstream French discourse. Nonetheless, these changing visions do point to the beginning of important developments in Israel's French reception: critical images of Israel would assume greater mainstream resonance in and as a result of the expansion of the New Left between 1968-70. The subtle discursive changes of 1967 helped set the stage for this subsequent shift, even if they do not account for it single-handedly. They thus merit our attention.

These changes were broadly the result of two factors, one ideological, the other editorial, and case studies of the French press allow us to bring them to light.[779] The French Communist Party's (PCF) journalistic mouthpiece, *L'humanité*, best exemplifies the ways in which ideology modified discourse on Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War. Both before and after the war, *L'humanité*'s editorial staff presented Israel's conflict with its neighbors as a microcosm of the wider struggle against the forces of global imperialism. Yet whereas prior to the war Israel was predominantly represented as a pawn, or even victim of American imperialism, it was afterward figured increasingly as an imperialist power in its own right. In other words, while Israel's colonial past, socialist ideology, and conflict with its neighbors left it ambiguously straddling the imperialist/anti-imperialist divide prior to June 1967, the Six-Day War helped French Communists clarify this ambiguity, ranking Israel among the imperialists.

[779] For additional analysis of press discourse surrounding the Six-Day War, see Isaacson (2014).

In the weeks leading to the Six-Day War, *L'humanité*'s commentary echoed moral and ideological binaries being articulated by the Soviet Union by presenting a narrative of American aggression against sovereign and democratic Arab states. At times, this interpretation obscured Israel's own role in the nascent crisis, figuring it as an American pawn, rather than an independent actor. On June 2, a front page article juxtaposed Egypt's willingness to negotiate against an American, rather than Israeli, refusal to compromise.[780] According to the article, "the right of the Arab peoples to independence [and] the right of the State of Israel to exist" were equally threatened by America's "global [anti-communist] strategy."[781] The Middle East rivals, the paper advised, should therefore bury their disagreements in order to better face their common American enemy.[782] At times, *L'humanité*'s editors carried their focus on American imperialism to surprising lengths: one June 3 article analyzed the diplomatic positions emerging from Cairo, Moscow, Paris, and Washington, while only indirectly referring to Israel itself.[783] Other articles attempted to downplay the Arab-Israeli dimensions of the conflict, expressing skepticisms about the existence of an Arab antisemitism, and trivializing or underreporting the bellicose war propaganda emerging from the Arab world.[784] Israel's "right to exist," meanwhile, remained a muted refrain in both *L'humanité* and among the spokesmen of the PCF.[785] The overall impression *L'humanité*

[780] Yves Moreau, "Le choix," *L'humanité*, June 2, 1967.
[781] *Ibid*;, Isaacson, 7.
[782] Similar commentary had appeared in a reprinted article from *Témoignage chrétien* the same day. Pierre Durand, "Des arguments de bon sens," *L'humanité*, June 2, 1967.
[783] *Ibid.;* "Moyen-Orient: Nouvelle journée d'expectative," *L'humanité*, June 3, 1967.
[784] Jacques Coubard, "Pour que le paix revienne au Moyen-Orient," *L'humanité*, June 2, 1967; Pierre Durand, "Arabs, européens et antisemitisme," *L'humanité*, June 5, 1967; "A propos d'une declaration de M. Choukeiri," *L'humanité*, June 2, 1967.
[785] French public support for Israel, meanwhile, was downplayed extensively in the paper's reporting, and some articles lamented that the Middle East crisis was diverting attention from "the real crimes" taking place in Vietnam. Isaacson, 8-9.

created was accordingly one in which the United States stood alone in the face of a broad international consensus for a negotiated peace protecting the immediate security of both Israel and the Arab states.[786] While this view suggested that Israel was wrong to allow itself to become a pawn of America's imperialist agenda, it could yet be redeemed.

Over the course of the brief Six-Day War, this interpretation underwent a subtle crystallization. As the scope of its victory became clear, Israel figured increasingly as an aggressive imperialist state in its own right, again in keeping with wider patterns of international Communist, and especially Soviet, discourse. Israel's territorial gains gave the impression that its war was one of expansion, rather than self-defense. Articles now vigorously critiqued Israel's "aggression," "annexationist aims" and its pursuit of "an expansionist policy at the expense of the Arab states."[787] Reports likened Israel repeatedly to South Vietnam, and its supporters to the anti-Algerian OAS.[788] Like President de Gaulle, *L'humanité*'s writers also reconceived Israel's past to fit its new characterization as an aggressor, reimagining Israel as an expansionist state that had been at odds with the peaceful aspirations of the global community since its creation.[789] As a result, the Six-Day War was cast as the latest in a long string of Israeli "*faits accomplis*" dating back to its 1948 War of Independence. This too was now characterized as a war of

[786] *Ibid.,* 9.
[787] René Andrieu, "Persistance des perils," *L'humanité*, June 8, 1967; Pierre Durant, "Plus de mystère dans l'origine de l'aggression," *L'humanité*, June 9, 1967.
[788] "Un agent american," *L'humanité*, June 6, 1967; Yves Moreau, "A qui la faute?" *L'humanité*, June 9, 1967; "A qui appartient le golfe d'Akaba?" *L'humanité*, June 7, 1967; "Le Général Ky: 'Je suis pour Israël,'" *L'humanité*, June 9, 1967; René Andrieu, "Sang et petrole," *L'humanité*, June 7, 1967; "Dans notre courrier," *L'humanité*, June 12, 1967.
[789] Isaacson, 9-10.

imperial conquest, while Israelis were described as "racists" in league with American "bankers" and West German capitalists.[790]

Like their compatriots, PCF spokesmen too discussed Israel's war by reference to the Holocaust. Unlike them, however, the PCF's discourse inverted existing paradigms, mobilizing the powerful symbols and memories of the 1940s against the Jewish state. While this was not the first such use of Holocaust memory, it was the first consistent articulation of this alternative discourse in the French public sphere.[791] By June 10 , articles in *L'humanité* sought to delegitimize Israel's territorial gains by likening them to Hitler's search for "living space."[792] Other voices within the Communist and radical Marxist Left took up the refrain "No Munich!" to protest Israel's occupation of conquered territory. As Joan Wolf notes, "the editorial headline 'No Munich!" which in 1948 would have meant 'No Nazis!' and in pre-Six-Day-War discussions 'No Arab Nazis!' here became 'No Jewish Nazis!'"[793] The Six-Day War thus marked a turning point in which the Holocaust could no longer function as a hegemonic discourse in defense of Israel. Its meaning was instead beginning to be universalized, assuming symbolic, rather than particular meaning.[794]

Accordingly, between May and July 1967, French Communist discourse on Israel shifted from limited critique grounded in anti-Americanism to ideological polemic

[790] "A qui appartient le golfe d'Akaba," *L'humanité*, June 7, 1967; Jacques Couland, "Comment est ne l'état d'Israël," *L'humanité*, June 8, 1967; René Andrieu, "Prime a l'agression," *L'humanité*, June 12, 1967; "Dans notre courrier," *L'humanité*, June 12, 1967.
[791] See especially Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust,* 40-41.
[792] Pierre Durand, "Des visees annexationnistes," *L'humanité*, June 10, 1967.
[793] Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust*, 40-41.
[794] Unlike outlying voices in the radical Christian Left, like those of Louis Terrenoire and Vincent Monteil, *L'humanité* rarely used the Holocaust idiom to characterize Israel's treatment of Palestinians explicitly. Instead, *L'humanité*'s reporting focused primarily on Israel's aggression toward the "anti-imperialist" governments of Egypt and Syria. The particularity of the Palestinian displacement was thus subordinated to the ideological binary of the Cold War. By contrast, for examples of this fringe discourse on the radical Left from summer 1967, see Samy Cohen, 276-80; and Wolf, "Anne Frank," 166.

echoing the language, if not theoretical bases, of de Gaulle's rupture with Israel. The shift in Communist discourse can be attributed largely to the ideological framework and politics of the Soviet-led branches of the international Communist movement. PCF commentary on the Six-Day War adhered closely to the themes being articulated by the official mouthpieces of the Soviet Union, reflecting both the PCF's loyalty to the international anti-imperialist struggle and, in June Edmunds's analysis, "its inability to break free from orthodox Communist themes."[795] The Six-Day War presented French Communists an opportunity to demonstrate their adherence to the party line, while resolving the ambiguity surrounding Israel's relationship to the global anti-colonialist struggle. Hereafter, minority currents within French popular discourse would be more inclined to position Israel within the imperialist camp, and treat it accordingly.

A second shift in France's Israel debate also began to emerge in the weeks surrounding the Six-Day war, yet this was, at least initially, editorial rather than ideological in nature. In May-June '67, media outlets with a diplomatic focus were at significant pains to present quantitatively and editorially balanced coverage of the developing crisis. In doing so, they helped frame the Six-Day War and wider Arab-Israeli conflict as a dispute between morally equivalent parties. Previously, this had not been a given, and it marked a departure from prior representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which Israel had figured consistently as the injured party. At the same time, the increasing frequency with which Jewish and Muslim commentators were juxtaposed in

[795] Isaacson, 15; Edmunds 151.

oppositional roles helped reinforce perceptions that the Arab-Israeli conflict reflected a deeper Jewish-Muslim binary.[796]

The centrist diplomatic journal *Le monde* was emblematic of this trend. Throughout the weeks surrounding the Six-Day War, Jewish and Muslim voices, domestic or international, were consistently juxtaposed side by side on equivalent page space.[797] Editorial space was also divided fairly evenly, creating an atmosphere of abstract debate and rebuttal. Meanwhile, analysis emphasized the moral equivalency of the belligerent parties, noting "each camp has their extremists."[798] These editorial choices helped distance the conflict as one of religions and ethnicities, categories of belonging that were at odds with the civic ethos of the French Republic.

France's television networks, which provided extensive coverage of the Middle East crisis, exhibited similar patterns, juxtaposing segments sympathetic to Israel's position with spokesmen representing Egypt, Syria, and Palestinian organizations.[799] The state-run nature of these networks, however, meant that criticism of French government policy was typically muted.[800] Some journalists were quite frank about their efforts to present an equivocal picture. During a radio interview shortly after the end of hostilities,

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[796] Ethan Katz argues that the Jewish-Muslim dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict was gradually constructed over time, pigeon-holing Jews and Muslims into an oppositional binary. Media efforts to juxtapose Jewish and Muslim voices in the months and years following the Six-Day War played a central role in this process. See Katz (2015).

[797] One factor contributing to *Le monde's* quantitatively balanced coverage may be the depth of its journalistic roster, as, more than many contemporary papers, *Le monde* was able to support multiple special correspondents throughout the conflict zone.

[798] For examples of these layout and editorial choices, see Edouard Saab, "Union nationale ou cabinet de guerre?" *Le monde*, June 3, 1967; Le *monde*, June 2, 1967; "M. Giscard d'Estaing approuve Le Général de Gaulle," *Le monde*, June 4-5, 1967; M.A. Ammoumi, "Les arabes, les juifs, la Palestine," *Le monde*, June 4-5, 1967; Ph. D, "Orgueil militaire et sentiment religieux dominent les reactions des Israéliens," *Le monde*, June 9, 1967; Robert Escarpit, "Au jour le jour; antisemitismes," *Le monde*, June 10, 1967.

[799] See for example the June 13 Channel 2 broadcast of *Zoom*; the discussion of French television media in Jerome Bourdon, "L'esprit du temps: les intellectuels, la télévision et Israël," in Dennis Charbit, ed., *Les intellectuels français et Israël* (Paris: Éditions de L'éclat, 2009), 213-23; and Coulon, 81.

[800] *Ibid.*

Le monde's Eric Rouleau explained that "I exercise a sort of self-censorship on myself [in refraining from discussing Egypt's treatment of Israeli POWs] . . . . You understand, the Egyptians already have enough troubles, and I don't want to add to them."[801] These efforts at balanced coverage gave critics of Israel mainstream coverage and audiences they had heretofore lacked, significantly expanding French public exposure to critical representations of the Jewish state. As a result, previously hegemonic characterizations of Israel as a small, vulnerable, and peace-seeking country became increasingly contested.

This process was furthered by *Le monde*'s broad endorsement of the diplomatic position of the French government. Together with the monarchist *La nation* and the Catholic *La croix*, *Le monde* joined the government in calling upon Israel to "master its victory," promptly withdrawal from conquered territories, and adopt a four-power framework for peace.[802] Echoing the President, articles published after the end of hostilities described the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba as a "pretext" facilitating Israel's invasion. Others critiqued the French public's extensive support for Israel as well-meaning but misplaced sympathy, rooted in memories of the Holocaust, that might be better directed toward more "noble causes" in Vietnam and South Africa.[803] Still, in their efforts to faithfully report the tenor of French public opinion, *Le monde*'s editorial staff ultimately published far more material expressing sympathy for Israel, than criticism.

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[801] Jacques Hermone, *La gauche, Israël et les juifs* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1970), 227.

[802] Wolf, "Anne Frank," 118; André Scemama, "Pour Israël, le problème de sa reconnaissance commande la solution des questions territoriales," *Le monde,* June 24, 1967; Claude Bourdet, "Israël et ses amis . . . ," *Le monde,* June 10, 1967; Andre Scemama, "Les israéliens adopteront des positions 'dures' dans la phase diplomatique," *Le monde*, June 10, 1967; and especially Eric Rouleau, "L'affrontement soviéto-américain au Moyen-Orient explique la prise de position gaulliste," *Le monde diplomatique*, August, 1967.

[803] P. Viansson-Ponte, "L'opinion, les parties et le conflit," *Le monde*, June 13, 1967; Claude Bourdet, "Israel et ses amis . . . ," *Le monde,* June 10, 1967.

Accordingly the paper's discourse on Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War should be understood as the beginning, rather than the culmination, of a gradual realignment.

The Six-Day War did stimulate one final current of popular discourse, in that it reawakened interest in a territorial revisionism which had been largely dormant since 1948-49. In the wake of Israel's victory, some analysts called for the federation of Israel and Jordan under a new, bi-national Palestinian state.[804] Others called for territorial modifications on explicitly religious grounds. Christian theologians published editorials calling for the internationalization of Jerusalem and its holy sites, warning that the "entire problem [of religious conflict in the Levant] resides in the *exclusivism* Israel does not seem able to renounce," and Jewish "monopolization of the patrimony of Abraham."[805] Though such voices represented a small minority, they did echo certain thinking within the French Foreign Ministry which was uncomfortable, for both religious and political reasons, leaving Jerusalem's holy sites in Jewish hands.[806] In either case, however, the June '67 war reaffirmed perceptions within certain French circles that the question of Israel and its final borders remained unsettled. Scenarios still existed in which an independent State of Israel might cease to exist, and for some, this was a desirable outcome.

Ultimately, however, while the Six-Day War did energize both new and longstanding critiques of the Jewish state, these voices remained a minority current within French public discourse. Though the images and patterns established in the

[804] *Le monde* was the most outspoken advocate of such formulae. Andre Scemama, "Les israéliens adopteront des positions 'dures' dans la phase diplomatique," *Le monde*, June 10, 1967.
[805] Père Michel Hayek, "A Akaba, il y a 4000 ans . . . ," *Le monde,* June 11-12, 1967; See also the full page coverage devoted to this position in *Le monde*'s June 14, 1967 edition; and R. Bauduc, "La liberation de Jérusalem pose maintenant des problems diplomatiques," *Le figaro*, June 9, 1967.
[806] See for example *Documents Diplomatiques Français*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 32, 1967 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1967, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 54, August 27, 1967.

summer of 1967 would eventually rise to mainstream prominence, they would do so only as the result of a gradual process of discursive shift. In the meantime, French popular sympathy for Israel would rise before it would fall, growing to 68 percent by October 1967.[807]

Conclusions

French public discourse on Israel between May and December 1967 transformed less profoundly and less rapidly than has been typically recognized. In the wake of the Six-Day War, many disagreed with President de Gaulle's policies of embargo and neutrality toward Israel, and by July 1967, Israel polled with greater popularly than the President himself.[808] While the French government had broken abruptly with Israel on the eve of the Six-Day War, majority sectors of the French public proved slower to follow suit, and powerful pre-war images of Israeli Jewishness and vulnerability largely retained their salience. As we shall see, the images and ideas stimulating sympathy for Israel would remain powerful well into the 1970s, at times effecting French politics and policy. The impact of the Six-Day War must accordingly be understood as a process playing out gradually over time, rather than a rapid moment of transformation.

In fact, in important ways, the June '67 war brought sizable segments of the French population closer to Israel. In the past, French-Israeli friendship had not proved a contested issue. Now, the intense anxieties and official French-Israeli rupture of May-June '67 convinced significant numbers of French people that they needed to speak out in defense of French-Israeli ties. While the cause of French-Israeli friendship had held bipartisan resonance throughout much of the last two decades, in 1967 it briefly became a

[807] Bensimon, 167.
[808] U.S. Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation with Abba Eban, Ambassador Avraham Harman, and Emanuel Shimoni," July 15, 1967, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.

mass movement, demonstrating that pro-Israel voices within France would not passively accept their government's vision of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli observers took note of this show of support, and it fed hopes that French-Israeli ties might yet ameliorate once de Gaulle left office. As one Israeli officer put it in late June 1967, "we know the real sentiments of the French people and therefore our love for them is irrevocable."[809] The French-Israeli rupture of 1967 was thus not a clean break, but a contested parting of ways galvanizing both support and criticism of Israel. Insofar as the June '67 war did have an immediate effect on popular attitudes, it did so in diverse and often contradictory ways, catalyzing new modes of Jewish politicization and stimulating alternative ideological and editorial representations of the Jewish state. As a result, the question of Israel assumed growing significance within the politics and identities of many French Jews, even as a once hegemonic discourse of sympathy with Israel began to encounter more frequent challenges. Even then, these transformations marked the beginning, rather than the end of a reconfiguration of Israel's image, a process that would accelerate significantly in response to French domestic factors over the next three years. It is to this tumultuous period that we now turn.

[809] Major Adi Ben Or to Baron Alain de Rothschild, Letter, June 26, 1967, MDI 98, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

Chapter Five

Debating Israel and the Self: Political Tumult and the Politics of Sympathy, 1968-1970

Introduction

The 1967 Six-Day War had upended the status quo of the Middle East, but by 1968 France was undergoing a crisis of its own. In May of that year, student protests and massive worker strikes paralyzed the country, catalyzing new parliamentary elections and briefly threatening revolution. The revolt was more social than political, however: the renamed Gaullist Union for the Defense of the Republic (Union pour la défense de la République, UDR) emerged from summer elections stronger than before, even if de Gaulle's personal popularity was dipping.[810] But the mobilizing ideas of May '68 did not dissipate along with the strikes and street confrontations. The French New Left emerged from the crisis energized, and its messages and ideologies had been carried nationwide by media coverage of the May student revolts. The mass politicization of May '68, coupled with left-wing calls to international solidarity and revolution, and the increasing legitimacy of identity politics, galvanized alternate ways of understanding and acting politically at both the local and international levels.

French thinking about Israel underwent important changes amidst this political and social shake up. The Six-Day War had generated limited challenges to hegemonic discourses of sympathy with Israel; the social and political upheavals of 1968 gave new energy to these challenges, and introduced them to wider audiences. As the May revolts

[810] The UDR would rename itself in October 1968 to the Union of Democrats for the Republic (Union des Démocrates pour la République), but retain its abbreviation.

seized national attention, significant numbers of students, workers, and the viewing and reading public encountered sustained criticism of Israel that disputed dominant narratives surrounding the Middle East. These critiques did not go unanswered. A heated confrontation between Israel's defenders and detractors rose on the sidelines of the student protest movement, and by the end of 1968, French works discussing Israel were being published with record frequency.[811] Through television, print, and face-to-face encounters, Israel's policies and place in the world were debated and fought over — sometimes with words, sometimes with fists and clubs. Alternative visions of Israel emerged from the ensuing debates as the Jewish state was re-theorized in light of the principles of social revolution, international solidarity, identity politics, anti-colonialism, and peace.

It would be wrong, however, to conceive of this debate in terms of a concrete binary between Israel's supporters and critics. While the revolutionary fervor of the May Events stimulated partisanship both for and against Israel, many leading intellectuals and political personalities on the French Left professed themselves uncomfortably torn between two friendships.[812] As the libertarian Jewish student revolt leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit explained, "I was torn in two [over the question of Israel] . . . . Even during the wildest time, when things were completely crazy, I was never pro-Palestinian, nor was I pro-Zionist . . . . In my view, they're both right."[813] Thus, while the May '68 revolt and ensuing debates provided clarity for some, others experienced the 1968-70 period as one

[811] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Yearbook* (*AJY*) Vol. 70 (1969), Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1969, 335.
[812] Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 13-14, 103, 445-46.
[813] Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: an Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 93-94.

of confusion and contestation when it came to Israel. This was particularly the case for left-leaning French Jews who had celebrated Israel's victory in 1967, yet by 1968 increasingly found Israel's cause cut off from the global progressive movement. 1968-70 accordingly constitutes an important period in the gradual decline of French public sympathy for Israel, one during which national consensus on Israel fractured further into debate, uncertainty, and increasingly theoretical formulations in response, primarily, to local social and political developments.

Chapter Four revealed that, in the immediate wake of the Six-Day War, French popular attitudes toward Israel demonstrated far more continuity than is generally supposed, as Israel continued to figure, for many, as a small state whose enduring vulnerability remained a function of its Jewishness. Rather than an overnight metamorphosis from 'David' into 'Goliath, Israel's image in France instead underwent a gradual transformation.[814] This chapter charts the course of that transformation as it began to play out during the tumultuous years of 1968-70. Even then, however, 1968-70 ultimately constitutes a brief period of activity and rethinking about Israel, whose energy would largely peter out by 1970. Nonetheless, these years lay the discursive and theoretical groundwork for significant future modifications to Israel's image. By 1970, counter-narratives of the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts were reaching intellectual maturity, if not mainstream acceptance, and for the first time these two conflicts began to figure as separate disputes. Throughout this period, widespread sympathy for Israel began to slide into indifference, equivocation, and growing concern at the absence of successful peace efforts. Between September 1967 and January 1970,

[814] For a contrasting interpretation, see Jonathan Judaken, *Jean-Paul Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 198, which argues that the French Left's perceptions of Israel shifted definitively in 1956.

partisan sympathy for Israel dropped from 68 to 33 percent, while those expressing indifference or neutrality rose from 16 to 43 percent.[815] Israel had not become widely unpopular, but neither had it retained the hegemonic sympathy it had commanded in previous years. The 1968-70 period accordingly marks the beginning, not the end of the transformation in Israel's French reception. While 1967 illustrated the extent of French consensus on Israel, 1968-70 demonstrates the *direction* its breakdown would take.

Until recently, however, scholars have insufficiently assessed the impact of 1968-70 on French attitudes toward Israel, and have neglected to examine the ways in which thinking about Israel shaped French politics in turn. I join Maud Mandel and Ethan Katz as part of a recent effort to explore this relationship by contextualizing the rise of French identity politics and perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict in light of one another.[816] As Katz and Mandel have demonstrated, local social and political factors significantly shaped French attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. These conflicts in turn became lenses for thinking about the self, the other, and the state, helping build Muslim-Jewish binaries at the local and national levels. I adopt Katz and Mandel's multilateral framework to analyze the ways in which Israel's symbolic meaning was

[815] These numbers must be read carefully, as support for Israel would spike again (though not to 1967 levels) during the 1973 Yom-Kippur War. Sympathy for the Arab states, meanwhile, retained a steady 6-7 percent during this period. "Un française sur trois est pro-Israël," *Paris-match*, January 19, 1970. For additional analysis of these attitudes, see Coulon, 165, 189, whose assessment largely correlates with my own.

[816] Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 243-44; Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 9. Judaken's work on Jean-Paul Sartre's use of the Israel question to define the role of the public intellectual is also part of this effort; see Judaken (2006). See also Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010) for an analysis French intellectuals' figuring of postwar Jewishness as a legitimizing symbol of difference outside dominant paradigms of French civic and communal belonging. I build on Hammerschlag by integrating the question of Israel into the politics of universalism and particularism in France.

reconfigured, increasingly universalized, and both shaped, and was shaped by, local processes of politicization.

Generational shifts in French politics, demographics, and memory now saw Israel assume new patterns of meaning within the French public sphere. This was particularly true for French Jews and Arabs, among whom thinking about Israel stimulated politicization and helped concretize what Katz terms "a new ethno-religious identity politics."[817] Within the French New Left, meanwhile, the particularity of the Arab-Israeli conflict would be increasingly subordinated to the universal ideological frameworks of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, as viewed through the lenses of the Algerian and Vietnam Wars — a phenomenon journalist Henri Smolarski would label "*algerianization*."[818] This was a critical transformation, in that universalizing the Israeli-Arab conflict increasingly disassociated it from the memories of Jewish vulnerability which had so powerfully shaped French-Israeli relations in the past. A new generation of French political observers would instead begin to refocus the Arab-Israeli conflict on an alternate paradigm of vulnerability, one revolving around the suffering and national aspirations of displaced Palestinians.[819] This in turn spurred the growth of radical anti-Zionism, which called for the dissolution of Israeli statehood as an imperialist and colonial project.[820] The roots of some currents of contemporary French anti-Zionism can accordingly be traced to this period of transformation.

[817] Katz, 244. On Arab politicization in general and Jewish-Muslim relations in particular, see especially Katz (2015) and Mandel (2014). See also Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012).
[818] Henri Smolarski, "Le vietcong du moyen-orient," *Tribune juive* no. 25, December 20-26, 1968; on algerianization, see page 302, below.
[819] Coulon, 165.
[820] For a terminological discussion of anti-Zionism, see pages 31-32 of the Introduction.

The Israel debate also assumed new performative dimensions as a result of this universalizing process. Amalgamating the Arab-Israeli conflict into larger anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist binaries made it emblematic of those larger struggles, particularly amongst Maoist groups who adopted the Palestinian struggle as a *cause célèbre*. Israel consequently became a cultural code within certain currents of the French New Left, and a discursive vehicle for positioning and articulating the self.[821] For some, taking a stand against Israel thus became a way of identifying themselves with peers and larger ideological struggles in which the particularities of the Arab-Israeli dispute mattered only so much. While this phenomenon facilitated group belonging for some, it produced alienation for others, as those who outwardly sympathized with Israel were met with exclusion and hostility. Within some pro-Israel circles, meanwhile, this pattern played out in reverse, as those critical of Israel faced social ostracizing. As a result, those who felt 'torn' between two friendships came under increasing pressure to choose sides as partisan voices attempted to frame the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in binary terms.

1968-70 must accordingly be understood as an important period of transition, both for France itself, and for French popular perceptions of international politics. The French-Israeli relationship was no exception, and the social and political changes taking place within France contributed significantly to the fracturing of French consensus on the Jewish state. However, Israel also continued to function as a mirror for understanding the French state and one's position within it. Whereas the question of Israel had formerly helped French citizens clarify their relationship to socialism, French Algeria, and the

[821] On cultural codes as they pertain to Israel and antisemitism, see Shulamit Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," in *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 25:1, 2006: 51-62.

Holocaust, it now became a vehicle helping a rising generation debate imperialism, colonialism, and identity politics. Between 1968 and 1970, critiques of Israel emanating from the New Left and Gaullist Right also harmonized, raising a significant obstacle to the resumption of cordial French-Israeli relations.[822] Though political activism over Israel would drop off markedly by 1970, these years are nonetheless significant for laying the ideational and organizational groundwork for the subsequent polarization of the Israel debate between partisan camps. As such, we must approach it as another step in the gradual transformation of French public discourse on Israel.

Seeing the International through the Lens of the Local: France, 1968

Between 1968 and 1970, the fracturing of French popular attitudes toward Israel underwent a marked acceleration. While the subsequent chapter will examine some of the Middle Eastern factors driving this process, local developments within France were in large part responsible for declining consensus on Israel. The French student revolts of May 1968 were central to this process, and though I do not seek to discuss the '68 events in their totality here, it is important that we draw out some of their political and identity-making dimensions, particularly as they pertain to questions of political mobilization and identity politics within France. This is because the May '68 crisis, and the broad ideological movement that emerged from it, created new ways of seeing Israel, France, and its minority populations, and spurred renewed debate on the relationship between Israel, the Left, and French Jewry.

By March 1968, social and political discontent was mounting within some sectors of the French student population, particularly those dissatisfied with capitalist models of

[822] Doris Bensimon, *Les juifs de France et leurs relations avec Israël, 1945-1988* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 249.

social living, and orthodox Marxist critiques thereof. The recent failure of France's Radical and Socialist parties to present viable political alternatives to Gaullist dominance combined with growing interest in ideological revolution and frustrated sexual liberty to create a powder keg scenario. Discontent began to coalesce within French university campuses, particularly the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris, where students were disaffected by an administration they felt was deaf to their social, educational, and sexual needs. On May 2, fearing that student protests would escalate out of control, university authorities closed the Nanterre campus. Student protestors shifted their activities to the Sorbonne, where protests were violently suppressed by riot police. Rather than quelling the protests, however, this suppression galvanized them, and student leaders issued a call for massive rallies.[823]

On May 10-11, nearly 40,000 student protestors took to the streets in the so-called "Night of the Barricades," and met police in a violent overnight confrontation that created significant national sympathy for the student protestors. In the weeks that followed, upwards of ten million students, workers, and sympathizers took up the mantle of political and cultural revolution, participating in general strikes and protest rallies. The flexible '68 movement now amalgamated workers' rights, sexual liberation, environmentalism, the anti-war movement, anti-racism, and immigrants' rights into a loose platform calling for a near-complete societal overhaul. Student activists organized into utopian popular action committees and experimented with alternate modes of political and cultural organization as they sought to break the existing hegemonies of

[823] A concise summary of the May Events may be found at the Encyclopedia Britannica (https://www.britannica.com/topic/events-of-May-1968). For a recent reevaluation of the May Events as a period, rather than a moment in time, see Julian Jackson, Anna-Louise Milne, and James S. Williams, eds., *May 68: Rethinking France's Last Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

"everyday life." When rising unrest caused President de Gaulle to flee the country on May 29, the prospect of political revolution briefly appeared possible. Yet de Gaulle returned on May 30, and with the support of the army and a negotiated settlement with the French Communist Party (PCF), he set about restoring order. The President announced the dissolution of the National Assembly, and called for new elections to be held on June 23. Hundreds of thousands of Gaullist supporters took to the streets in support of the president. Within days the PCF acceded to new elections, and the threat of immanent revolution bled off. Large scale protests continued into June, though strikes and protests gradually gave way in the face of a larger population exhausted by the events of the past month. The Gaullist UDR emerged from the June elections stronger than ever, although the President's personal clout had been irretrievably damaged, and he would lose the public's mandate to govern within a year.

Though the May events had failed to produce a political revolution, they did unleash a wave of politicization that significantly changed the way students, minority groups, and members of the New Left engaged with international politics. Attitudes toward Israel consequently continued to fracture. The gradual breakdown of French consensus on Israel was stimulated by three developments in particular, which were exacerbated by the May '68 crisis. First, the '68 movement expanded the international orientation of the French New Left in general, and its interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. As Daniel Gordon writes, "internationalism was the defining feature of the New Left," and it entailed an intense interest "in the experiences of parts of the world with which [adherents] had few or no personal links."[824] The May events, and extensive

[824] Daniel Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May '68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool: The Merlin Press, 2012), 23-24.

national media coverage of them, brought Maoist-inspired messages of anti-colonialism and Third World revolution to increasingly broad audiences. The promulgation of these discourses disseminated alternate ways of viewing the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, which challenged existing narratives of Israeli vulnerability and legitimacy by linking these conflicts to larger anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist ideological binaries. In this light, the particular distinctiveness of Vietcong fighters, FLN rebels, and Palestinian guerrillas became secondary to their shared symbolic role as "revolutionaries." For some on the New Left, being part of the international forces for progress entailed supporting anti-imperialist revolution in general, and thus Palestinian revolutionaries in particular. Israel, as the opponent of these revolutionaries, accordingly found itself on the wrong side of progress. As a result, the question of Israel began to take on significant partisan connotations in France — though, as we shall see, many activists and politicians resisted this development.

Second, the '68 movement heightened public awareness and use of Jewishness as a flexible, even universal political symbol. The semantic link between Jewish vulnerability, the Holocaust, and Israel that had developed over the previous two decades consequently lost some of its power, as hitherto monopolized meaning was diffused. As Joan Wolf notes, the extensive use of discourses of Jewish vulnerability during the Six-Day War exposed the emotional power of this symbolic repertoire, and opened it for broader use.[825] The most notable appropriation of this symbolic discourse took place in early May 1968. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a leader of the student protest movement, was at the time threatened with deportation for his left-wing activism. Critics of the student

[825] Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 49.

movement both in and outside the governemnt made a particular point of using Cohn-Bendit's German and Jewish origins to brand him a "foreign" agitator.[826] Protestors responded by chanting "We are all German Jews," adopting and universalizing Cohn-Bendit's Jewishness as symbols of both vulnerability and the legitimacy of politicized ethnic particularity.[827] For some protestors, Jewish writer Arnold Mandel observed, this adoption entailed genuine solidarity; for others, it was a strictly performative act.[828] Yet either way, by temporarily adopting the mantle of Jewishness, the '68 movement subordinated its particular meaning to a wider program of anti-racism and resistance to available forms of political identity.[829] Elements within the New Left would subsequently transfigure Jewishness into a symbol of all forms of victimhood, rather than one linked specifically to the Jewish historical experience.[830]

Finally, the May '68 movement and its claim that identity politics were inherently legitimate further stimulated Jewish activism on Israel's behalf, even as it exerted a dampening effect on some forms of French Jewish identification with Israel. While the Six-Day War and the influx of a large and outspoken community of North African Jews had opened the floodgates for Jewish politicization in France, the '68 movement created a public space that explicitly embraced particularism as a legitimate category of political activism.[831] Jewish student activists, of which an increasing proportion were North

[826] PCF leader Georges Marchais, for example, famously denounced Cohn-Bendit as a "German anarchist," and on May 22 Cohn-Bendit was expelled to Germany as a "seditious alien," where he would remain for the next two decades.
[827] See Hammerschlag, 4-8, who argues this moment marked a turning point in the figuring of Jews as a French cultural and political symbol.
[828] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 70 (1969), Philadelphia, JPS, 1969, 332.
[829] Hammerschlag, 7.
[830] Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew*, trans. Kevin O'Neill and David Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), xi, 33, 177.
[831] Katz, 246; Erik Cohen, *The Jews of France Today: Identity and Values* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 90; Ariel Danan, *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), 168.

African Sephardim, consequently felt encouraged to speak out in the name of explicitly "Jewish" concerns, including Israel. At the same time, some existing forms of solidarity with Israel began to lose momentum, as France itself became an increasingly attractive site for progressive politics. As we saw in the previous chapter, the Six-Day War produced intense emotions within large segments of the French Jewish population, leading some to affirm that fully authentic Jewishness could only be achieved in a majority-Jewish environment — Israel. Jewish immigration to Israel, *Aliyah*, had subsequently spiked, as those newly enamored with the Jewish national project emigrated to experience it for themselves.[832] The May events curtailed this movement, demonstrating to young French Jews that the global struggle for progress could be waged at home as well as abroad. Leaders of the Union of French Jewish Students (UEJF) made this attitude clear during a roundtable discussion in June-July 1968. One, MJC Rabinowicz, had been on the verge of departing for Israel when the student protests broke out. Now, he explained, "If the ['68] Movement succeeds, I don't see any sense in departing for Israel." His colleague Edith Ochs voiced a similar sentiment, noting "I was quite close to [making] Aliyah, [but] I am now impassioned for the Movement: I feel myself concerned like I have never been before . . . . Israel will come after."[833]

Other young Jews felt differently, however, and some rallied to Zionist groups in an effort to couple Israel's cause to that of the wider '68 movement, characterizing Zionism as the national independence movement of an oppressed people. Some, like Zionist students at the Voltaire Secondary School in Paris, were dismayed that pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian activists sought to use the '68 movement as a vehicle to condemn

[832] Erik Cohen, 374.
[833] Albert Memmi, "Jeunes juifs de la revolt," *L'arche* no. 136-37, June - July Special Edition, 1968.

Israel as a colonialist and imperialist aberration, and took up their placards, pens, and at times, fists to challenge these efforts.[834] Universities now became discursive battlegrounds in which pro- and anti-Israel activists fought for control of Israel's image, a development which Maud Mandel argues "had a decisive impact on Muslim-Jewish relations, particularly among students."[835] Ultimately, the leaders of the '68 student movement felt this contest was so disruptive that the stands of both the Zionist Hashomer Hatzair and the Palestinian Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement) were banned from the Sorbonne, as the question of Israel raised difficult ideological questions that student movement leaders were not prepared to answer.[836]

The choices of protest leader Benny Lévy were emblematic of this tendency to defer, rather than confront the tensions simmering within the '68 movement. Lévy found himself alarmed by the antisemitism he encountered among working-class Arab activists, but decided to keep quiet on the matter, lest it reflect poorly on the '68 movement.[837] As French North African Jewish essayist Albert Memmi explained in mid-1968, pro-Israel student activists now faced a difficult predicament: "This is the problem: must a young Jew of the revolt, who observes amongst his comrades violently anti-Israel tendencies . . . raise this problem, or be silent so as not to harm the Movement?"[838] Responses by the UEJF national bureau indicate that there were no clear answers, and that many Jewish student leaders were struggling to reconcile their dual commitments to Israel and the '68

[834] "Stands sionistes dans les lycées," *Tribune juive* no. 99, May 22-28, 1970.
[835] Maud Mandel, 100-101; Meir Waintrater, "La propagande arabe en France," *L'arche* no. 153, November 26 -December 25, 1969.
[836] UEJF leaders reported, meanwhile, that while this dealt a significant blow to Zionist activism at the Sorbonne, the Fatah platform was quickly integrated into the Marxist-Leninist booth. Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 70 (1969), Philadelphia, JPS, 1969, 332-33; Albert Memmi, "Jeunes juifs de la revolt," *L'arche* no. 136-137, June - July Special Edition, 1968.
[837] Gordon, 110.
[838] Albert Memmi, "Jeunes juifs de la revolt," *L'arche* no. 136-137, June - July Special Edition, 1968.

movement.[839] Like Cohn-Bendit himself, these Jewish students, and others like them, felt "torn," wishing to harmonize their sympathy for Israel with the wider '68 movement, while being stymied by currents within it that positioned Israel on the wrong side of powerful ideological binaries. The result was an energetic debate both within the French Jewish community and across communal lines that sought to clarify the relationship between Jewishness, Israel, and the Left in France.

Mainstream Jewish Politics and the Question of Israel, 1968-70

As we have seen, the drama and activism of the 1967 Six-Day War reignited debate within the French Jewish community about what it meant to be Jewish in France in light of Israel. Maud Mandel suggests that the war catalyzed "a new willingness to pursue an ethnically infused Jewish politics even when it conflicted with France's international agenda."[840] According to Joan Wolf, Jews now struggled to explain "to themselves and others when and why they might present themselves not as unalloyed French citizens, but as Jews with political commitments rooted in their Jewish identity. This was a radical revision of the terms under which citizenship had been negotiated; it required dramatic new ways of thinking about how to be both Jewish and French."[841] For young Jews especially, Israel infused Jewishness with new meaning. Even among ostensible anti-Zionists, one young Jewish communist reported, Jews "slyly rejoiced at the power" of Israel's troops; "we shared the secret of our Jewishness. It was simple. The [Israeli] Jews struggled, fought, won. They had cleansed the Jewish people of the

[839] *Ibid.*
[840] Maud Mandel, 82.
[841] Wolf, 19.

infamous accusation of cowardice."[842] "Israel . . . gives me the possibility of being a man," another young Jewish activist explained in 1968, instead of "remind[ing] me that I am a Jew, different from others. I want to [live as] . . . a Jew unashamed [to be who he is]."[843]

The '68 movement added an additional dimension to the question of Jewish politics, prompting a renewed interrogation of the relationship between Zionism and the global progressive movement. Some intellectuals, like the Jewish anti-Zionist linguist Maxime Rodinson, felt the two ideologies were irreconcilably at odds: as a colonial state, Rodinson argued, Israel was an enemy of the progressive movement and the world it hoped to create.[844] More frequently, however, Jewish activists and intellectuals argued that Zionism and progressivism were commensurate ideologies. Yet disagreement arose around the question of priority. Jewish intellectual Pierre Vidal-Naquet argued that a general progressive movement took precedence over the particularly Jewish question, arguing that the "salvation of all" would lead naturally to the salvation of the Jews. By contrast, writer Jacques Givet suggested that defending the legitimacy of Jewish nationhood and particularism first would better equip French society "to deal with its various other problems."[845] Other questions were also causing division. What, asked Jewish intellectuals Raymond Aron and Roger Ikor, was the appropriate relationship between French Jewish citizens and the Jewish state? How closely could a French Jew

[842] Pierre Goldman, quoted in Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF: De la Résistance juive a la tentation du lobby* (Paris; Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011), 51.
[843] "Le mois affaires communautaires," *L'arche* no. 133, March 26 - April 25, 1968.
[844] Quoted in "Crise ou drame: Le point de la situation," *Bulletins de nos Communautés*, May 26, 1967.
[845] Jacques Givet, *The Anti-Zionist Complex*, trans. Evelyn Abel (Englewood: SBS Publishers, Inc., 1982), 34.

identify with Israel before being legitimately accused of double loyalty?[846] These questions prompted a triangular debate between Zionists, anti-Zionists, and those torn between them, that sought to define Israel's relationship to the Left and French citizenship, and by extension, clarify the meaning of the Left and the French state themselves.

Between 1967-70, French Jewish intellectuals met frequently to discuss these questions, and records of their meetings indicate that, rather than diminishing their Frenchness, leading Jewish intellectuals felt that their support for Israel enshrined it. Raymond Aron accordingly affirmed in late spring 1968 that "I claim the right, accorded to all citizens . . . [to] freedom of belief and of opinion . . . . Only a totalitarian state demands an allegiance excluding all other attachments." Besides, Aron quipped, "I hardly know of any Jews [who are as] unconditionally loyal to the State of Israel as the communists are (or have been) to the Soviet Union. [Jews'] sympathy for a small threatened state doesn't compromise the security of France."[847] It would therefore be hypocritical, Aron asserted, and contrary to the ethos of French republicanism, to demand Jews surrender their sympathy for Israel in the name of French citizenship. Jacques Givet reached a similar conclusion, which he articulated frankly in late 1972: rather than belie a double loyalty, Givet affirmed, "the categorical imperatives which animate the friends of Israel identify them with the fundamental principles [and] ideas of France."[848] To be for Israel was, for Givet, itself a way of being French.

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[846] Raymond Aron, quoted in Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 27; Roger Ikor, *Peut-on etre juif aujourd'hui?* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1968), 229-32.

[847] "La guerre des Six Jours a-t-elle modifié la conscience juive en France?" *L'arche* March 26 - April 25, 1968.

[848] J.G., "D'une fausse interprétation de la double allégeance," *Tribune juive*, October 13-19, 1972.

All the more reason, then, that many of these intellectuals were perplexed to still find their sympathy for Israel being called into question. This was especially troubling, as critique of French Jewish identification with Israel came not only from the Gaullist government, whose policies many pro-Israel activists opposed, but also from elements within the Left, where sympathy for Israel had once been a matter of principle. In early June 1968, against the backdrop of the student protest movement, the French Jewish academic Richard Marienstras attempted to break down the critique being leveled against Israel's Jewish supporters, and its implications for French Jewish identity. "The danger which threatens us," Marienstras explained,

> is not only that which threatens Israel . . . *but equally that which threatens Israel in us*, because [our habitual friends on the Left] say we are not who we are . . . . No, this friend of ours says: 'you don't have any right or reason to tremble [with emotion], nothing ties you to Israel, and furthermore, this is a state which doesn't have the right to exist which, being here [in France], you don't have the right to tremble for.' And, he adds: 'you aren't what you are, or rather, what you believe yourself to be.'[849]

Drawing on the '68 movement's idealization of self-defined authenticity, Marienstras rejected this critique, positing instead a doubly-rooted transnational Jewish identity which *entailed* Israel. "That which we defend," Marienstras continued,

> in defending Israel's right to exist, is not only the right of a UN members state to remain what it is, it is also the right of the Jews to be themselves . . . . The Jews of the diaspora are, in fact, doubly-rooted: on the one hand they are in their respective diasporas; and this is a true and profound rootedness . . . . But besides this first geographic and cultural rootedness there is another, which is the participation in a historical space — that of the Jews — in a second cultural space which doesn't overlap with majority ethnic groups. This transnational existence results in an important consequence, [in that] the appearance of national sentiment is experienced as a fact of nature [among others, while among Jews it is seen] as an element of culture, not a fact of nature.[850]

[849] Richard Marienstras, "Une diaspora nouvelle," *Les nouveaux cahiers* no. 13-14, June 1, 1968.
[850] *Ibid.*

As a result of this transnational mode of existence, Marienstras concluded, it was natural for Jews to feel attached to both their countries of residence *and* Israel. Critics, whether they came from the nationalist Right or internationalist Left, were accordingly wrong to demand Jews surrender their transnational identities.

If Marienstras was content to posit an alternate model of Jewish authenticity in light of French Jewish sympathy for Israel, other Jewish writers and intellectuals felt compelled to interrogate the criticism their identification with Israel had generated. In doing so, they sought to contest the unsympathetic images of Israel that were beginning to coalesce within some elements of the New Left. By the end of 1967, Jacques Givet, Arnold Mandel, philosopher Élaine Amado Levy-Valensi, and writer Emile Touati each reached the conclusion that significant currents of French sympathy for Israel were contingent on perceptions of Jewish vulnerability.[851] "What is significantly Jewish," Mandel accordingly concluded, "must be maintained within the limits of debility and precariousness," or else become offensive. Sympathy for Israel, Touati added, "was limited to a certain *compassion* before persecution or the threat of persecution . . . . Israel victorious antagonizes, irritates, worries."[852] While we noted in the previous chapter that perceptions of Jewish vulnerability survived the Six-Day War largely intact, we also observed that marginal currents within the Communist and Gaullist Right were beginning to re-imagine Israel as an aggressive, warlike state. As we shall see later in this chapter, elements within the 1968 student protest movement embraced these new images as part of a broader anti-imperialist platform. Jewish writers and intellectuals were sensitive to this development, and took up their pens to contest such images in the press and other

[851] Wolf, 45-46.
[852] *Ibid*; Emile Touati, "Plus que jamais solidarité avec Israël," *Tribune juive* no. 179, December 1967 - January 1968.

media. Their public discourse on the question of French Jewry's relationship to Israel aimed to give theoretical footing to their co-religionists, and provide models of political engagement that framed Zionism within, rather than outside, the umbrella of the '68 movement.

Accordingly, both within and outside the activist milieu of the student protest movement, many French Jews remained convinced that acting in the name of specifically Jewish political interests — which might entail support for Israel — remained both necessary and legitimate. At the organizational level, meanwhile, the Coordinating Committee of French Jewish Organizations (CCOJF) had not ceased its activities in support of Israel, and while the fever pitch of summer 1967 had partially bled off, the CCOJF was growing in confidence and refining its lobbying techniques. Throughout 1968-70, CCOJF member organizations, not least of all the CRIF, spoke out consistently in support of Israel, whether to critique Gaullist policy, or international acts of hostility against the Jewish state.[853] As CCOJF president Guy de Rothschild explained in March 1968, the French Jewish commitment to Israel had not expired with Israel's 1967 victory; rather, Rothschild explained, Israel "counts, it has the right to count, upon the support of Jewish nationals of other states."[854] Voices in the Jewish press echoed the sentiment, affirming, as did one *Tribune juive* editorialist in April 1968, that French Jews had "a duty [to] raise our voices" to challenge the French government's condemnation of Israel in international forums.[855] That these arguments endured and became commonplace, even

[853] See for example "Projet de Motion," January 12, 1968, MDI 47, archives du CRIF (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France), Centre de documentation juive contemporaine (CDJC), Paris.
[854] Guy de Rothschild, quoted in "Les fondements de l'Appel unifié juif de France," *L'arche* no. 132, February 26 - March 25, 1968.
[855] C.H., "Encouragement au meurtre," *Tribune juive* no. 5, April 6-16, 1968; J.G., "Les définitions de M. Maurice Schumann," *Tribune juive* no. 100, May 29 - 4 June, 1970.

after the seemingly immediate threat to Israel's existence had been lifted, indicates a growing degree of French Jewish comfort with identity politics.

Fundraising drives for Israel consequently continued, and were streamlined in 1968 with the creation of the United Jewish Appeal of France (Appel unifié juif de France, AUJF) under the direction of Guy de Rothschild. With the assistance of 150 local committees and 1,500 volunteers, the AUJF raised over 30 million francs for Israel in 1968, and another 33 million in 1969.[856] While this was a significant decrease from the approximately 50 million that had been raised in 1967, we should recall that Israel was no longer fighting a full-scale war, and that 30 million francs still represented a ten-fold increase over a typical, pre-1967 year's fundraising.

Pro-Israel activists also continued to meet and organize along the lines established in May-June 1967. The Alliance France-Israel, which had lobbied for close French-Israeli friendship since the 1950s, held conferences and produced publications in 1968 and 1969, bringing together activists and politicians to reaffirm France's commitment to Israel. On May 7, 1968, sitting politicians and former ministers, including Diomède Catroux, André Monteil, J. Pierre Bloch, Jacques Dominati, Max LeJeune, and Raymond Triboulet joined General Pierre Kœnig and 2,000 listeners at the Mutualité in Paris to reaffirm that "Now more than ever we must aid Israel in the fight . . . to ensure its existence," and, in Monteil's words, "remain loyal to David against Goliath."[857] Subsequent conferences organized in 1969 also gathered crowds, and reported that close to 200 members of the

[856] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 70 (1969), Philadelphia, JPS, 1969, 334; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 71 (1970), Philadelphia, JPS, 1970, 421; Bensimon, 67.
[857] "Le Général Kœnig exalte l'amitié France-Israël," in Editions Alliance France-Israël, "La solidarité française avec Israël," 1968.

French National Assembly, from across the political spectrum, remained members of the Parliamentary France-Israel Group.[858]

Yet whereas the expansion of pro-Israel activism in 1967 had been largely extemporaneous, feeling its way as it went, the national and local branches of the CCOJF were now beginning to refine their techniques, transforming themselves into a standing, well-organized lobby. Local branches, reporting back to a national center, now organized a steady stream of press conferences, petitions, and letter writing campaigns utilizing template letters to lobby local politicians and press outlets.[859] These campaigns appear to have met with some success, and foreign ministry records indicate that several French deputies brought their constituencies' concerns to the attention of Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann, or spoke out publicly against the ongoing arms embargo against Israel.[860]

Furthermore, by 1968-69, the question of Israel appears to have exerted some influence on Jewish electoral politics. In both the legislative elections of 1968 and the presidential election of 1969, French Jews demonstrated a heretofore unparalleled readiness to allow policy toward Israel to shape their voting patterns. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that the Israel issue was a decisive factor, numerous parliamentary

[858] "Conference Organisée par le Comité: Alliance France-Israël; 27 Novembre 1969 - 21 Heures," November 29, 1969, MDI 214, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

[859] See for example A. Geudj to Viterbo, Letter, January 21, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC; Robert Weill, Letter, February 10, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC; "A retourner à Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de France, Section de Bordeaux," Letter, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC; Albert Finkelstein to Kauffman, Letter, January 19, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC; Albert Finkelstein to Jacques Fauvert, editor in Chief of *Le monde*, Letter, May 13, 1968, MDI 157, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

[860] See for example Deputy Bernard Tremeau of Saone-et-Loire to Maurice Schumann, Letter, March 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France. Additional examples attesting to the success of the letter writing campaign include Louis Bazerque to Maurice Grynfogel, Letter, January 20, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC; and P. Abraham to Monsieur Lavielle, Letter, February 3, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

candidates in 1968, and particularly Gaullist ones, reported being queried by Jewish voters on their attitudes toward the Middle East conflict.[861]

The pattern repeated itself in 1969. In spring of that year, de Gaulle had convened a public referendum on regional and senatorial reform, seeking a renewed mandate to govern. His referendum was narrowly defeated, and de Gaulle triggered new presidential elections by subsequently resigning in late April. As Gaullist Georges Pompidou and Christian Democrat Alain Poher rose as the leading contenders for the presidency, Jewish and Gaullist observers alike suggested that de Gaulle's break with Israel had prompted some Jewish voters to vote "no" in the April referendum.[862] In the subsequent presidential election, candidates and their spokesmen felt compelled to answer, on multiple occasions, questions posed to them by Jewish organizations and the Jewish press regarding their positions on Israel. Responding to queries from the Jewish periodicals *Tribune juive* and *L'arche*, Pompidou kept his intentions toward Israel and his predecessor's embargo ambiguous, implying a possible policy modification. Poher, by contrast, promised significant changes to France's Israel policy, were he to be elected.[863]

Politicians in both candidates' camps sought to use Israel as a basis on which to rally the support of Jewish voters. That they did so indicates that France's leading political figures were well aware that Israel was becoming an important facet of French Jewish political identity, and that they were prepared to cater to it. Accordingly, in an

[861] Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israel* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 205-6. Note, however, that Jews were a marginal constituency in French electoral politics, representing approximately 1 percent of the electorate in 1969. *Ibid.*, 211.

[862] According to Samy Cohen, de Gaulle himself reported that Jewish influence in the media, and anger over his policy toward Israel, had helped mobilize opposition to the referendum. *Ibid.*, 209-10; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 71 (1970), Philadelphia, JPS, 1970, 417.

[863] "Les elections du 15 juin," *Tribune juive* no. 42, June 6-12, 1969; "La France et le Moyen-Orient," *L'arche* no. 148, June 26 - July 25, 1969

endorsement of Poher, centrist deputy General Paul Stehlin affirmed that Poher holds "the reestablishment of relations between France and Israel on the traditional basis of friendship" "particularly close to his heart." Consequently, Stehlin asserted, "the lifting of the embargo and the reestablishment of normal and friendly relations with Israel would figure among the first measures [Poher] would take if he were elected President of the Republic."[864] Though both candidates sought to use Israel to mobilize the Jewish electorate, Poher was demonstrably readier to revise standing policy on the Jewish state. Arnold Mandel thus reports that in 1969 the Jewish vote, insofar as it existed, was "anti-Gaullist on the whole," to Poher's benefit.[865]

Still, it is difficult to be certain how impactful the question of Israel was for French Jewish voters: while Jewish voters in Lyon, Toulouse, and Marseilles indicated they might vote against Gaullist measures in part over Israel-related issues, other communities and Jewish leaders rejected this kind of voting.[866] The CRIF exemplified this ambiguity: while it frequently asked candidates to express their views on Israel, and disseminated the responses, it never issued explicit voting instructions. Others were less hesitant: in 1970, *Tribune juive* called on French synagogues not to invite any elected official who had not taken a public position opposing standing policy on Israel, and even suggested that weekly prayers for the nation be modified to express the wish that "France enjoy a lasting peace and *recover* [instead of "retain"] its glorious place among the nations."[867] Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan echoed this sentiment in a 1970 address, linking support for Israel to the core values of the French state. "Ah France! Dear France,

[864] "Les elections du 15 juin," *Tribune juive* no. 42, June 6-12, 1969.
[865] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 71 (1970), Philadelphia, JPS, 1970, 417.
[866] Danan, 154-55.
[867] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s 'Tribune Juive,'" December 30, 1970, 2038INVA 1765, Afrique-Levant - Israël, 1966-1970, MAE.

country of the Rights of Man and the Citizen," intoned Kaplan, lamenting its rupture with Israel:

> Generous and humane nation . . . where is your image in the world? What of the magnificent tradition that made your providence that of people whose lives and security are threatened, the defender of Law and Justice? . . . We will raise up our prayers to God . . . that France remain loyal to its noble tradition of always defending right and liberty.[868]

Only by defending Israel, Kaplan suggested, could France stay true to itself. By contrast, Jewish intellectuals like Richard Marienstras cautioned that French Jewish culture risked becoming dependent on Zionism for its vitality, and called for greater "distance" with regard to Israel.[869] Thus, while the French Jewish community broadly agreed that Israel mattered to it, and felt that questioning their elected representatives' positions on the Middle East was legitimate, the community remained divided over how much Israel should influence its domestic politics. Nonetheless, this remained a major departure from the civic *Israélite* identity of earlier years.

Pro-Israel activists also sought to engage with the discursive themes of the growing student protest movement, positioning Zionism within the movement's progressive umbrella and, where this proved impossible, directly challenging criticism of Israel that emerged from the movement. At times, these efforts were formally structured and organized. On March 21, 1968, Israeli ambassador Walter Eytan served as the keynote speaker in a conference commemorating Israel's twentieth anniversary. Using language that might have appealed to the student activists of the '68 movement, Eytan characterized Zionism as the national liberation of a long-oppressed people in their

[868] Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, "Vignt Cinquième Anniversaire de la Libération du Camp d'Auschwitz," January 18, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[869] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 72 (1971), Philadelphia, JPS, 1971, 344-45.

efforts to build a state founded on equality, peace, and the acceptance of immigrants.[870] Jewish journalists, meanwhile, published articles dissecting the themes of anti-Israel criticism, and exhorted Jewish student activists not to remain silent in the face of it.[871] Student groups responded to these calls, and to the discourse they heard around them. In high schools and university campuses, Arnold Mandel reports, "Jewish students displayed Zionist newspapers and books on stands they set up directly opposite those showing pro-Arab materials. Fights and near-riots usually ensued."[872]

While the UEJF worked to defend Israel within the '68 protest movement, reaching out for conciliatory discussions with Fatah and the movement's Palestine Committees, others adopted a more confrontational approach. Groups like the right-wing Jewish Students' Front (Front des étudiants juifs, FEJ), which organized in 1968 over dismay with the "anti-Zionist tendencies" of the UEJF, were at the forefront of these efforts, using protests, publications, and at times, the threat of violence to challenge anti-Zionist and antisemitic currents within the university milieu. In response to their efforts, FEJ members reported being harangued with chants of "Death to the Jews, Palestine will win!" and "Jews, fascists, racists, and murderers!" for failing to support "the proletarian ideal" and the "Palestinian revolution."[873] The FEJ's response was cryptically combative, warning "All aggression directed against a Jew will yield an appropriate response from us."[874] Such exchanges made it clear that the identification of Israel with France's Jews

[870] Walter Eytan, quoted in Les Conferences des Ambassadeurs, "Israel a vignt ans," May 21, 1968.
[871] Simmy Epstein, "Les themes de la propagande arabe," *L'arche* no. 153, November 26 - December 25, 1969.
[872] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 72 (1971), Philadelphia, JPS, 1971, 342-43.
[873] "Le F.E.J.," 1968, MDI 146D, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[874] *Ibid.*

was becoming increasingly concrete, as international antipathies began to be mapped onto local identities.

Overall, then, Jewish interest in and activism over the question of Israel continued to expand between 1968-70. The pro-Israel organizational scene grew and matured during this period, even if it failed to attain the mass mobilization the Six-Day War had produced. At the same time, however, the French Jewish community remained divided over the nature of its relationship to Israel, as well as the degree and direction its activism should take. This period should accordingly be understood as one of debate and uncertainty, one in which the subject of Israel raised challenging new questions about the political lives of Jews and their relationship to national and international politics. Nowhere was this climate more pronounced than in the French Left, where the question of Israel proved most divisive.

Reappraisal and Division: Israel and the French Left, 1968-70

Since its creation in 1948 Israel's cause had proved capable of rallying diverse, even contradictory political currents in France, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it continued to do so. Yet, between 1968 and 1970, Israel became an important source of division as well. While Israel's transformation from a source of unity into a source of division neither began nor ended during these years, it was here that the changes first became significantly visible. In 1967-68, the Gaullist break with Israel had created fissures within the Gaullist movement; by mid-1968, new fault lines were beginning to appear within the French Left as well. Israel and its legitimacy were now debated with heretofore unknown energy as Israel began to be reevaluated in light of alternate criteria of legitimacy — namely, support for the anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist, and anti-

capitalist struggle of the Third World. In light of Israel's recent military victories, its growing closeness with the United States, and its tension with Palestinian national aspirations, many left-wing activists found Israel wanting in this regard. The result was a fracturing of opinion on Israel, one that also drove wedges of division into the '68 movement. In so doing, the question of Israel served to help clarify who and what would be part of the French New Left.

As we saw in the previous chapter, prior to the Six-Day War significant elements within the French Communist Left had not yet cast the Middle East conflict in terms of an Arab-Israeli moral binary. Israel and its Arab neighbors were both characterized, initially, as victims of an American imperialist agenda, in the hope that the Middle East rivals might yet reconcile and work together to fight imperialism. As we noted, however, this framework began to disintegrate in the wake of Israel's victory, as French Communist spokespeople recast Israel as an imperialist aggressor in its own light. Initially, this attempt to reframe Israel's image had only a limited impact. The explosion of Maoist-infused revolutionary politics in the '68 student protest movement, however, saw this alternate image gain new traction.[875] Increasingly binary visions of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, for the first time significantly, Israeli-Palestinian dispute, now began to emerge.[876]

French interest in the humanitarian dimension of the Palestinian question was not new, and ameliorating the condition of displaced Palestinians had been a minor trope

[875] Coulon, 68.

[876] Still, it is worth noting, as Laurence Coulon does, that even by 1972 a silent majority of French observers remained largely disinterested in the Palestinian issue. In 1978, sociologist Jean Stoetzel reported that, for most French people, the term 'Palestinian' connoted the pre-state Jewish *Yishuv* more than Palestinian Arabs. To the extent that Palestinian Arabs were perceived as such, Stoetzel argued, it was usually in negative association with international terror. Coulon, 244-45.

within the French government and press since the 1940s. This interest had expanded in the context of the 1967 Six-Day War, when regional tensions prompted the French press to interrogate the sources of the Arab-Israeli dispute.[877] Jacques Fauvert's *Le monde*, which began realigning to the Left under his directorship in 1969, and Jean Daniel's social-democratic *Le nouvelle observateur* were at the forefront of this effort. By 1970, both papers were increasingly articulating the thesis that the key to regional peace lay in resolving the Palestinian question.[878] Between 1968 and 1970, meanwhile, French interest in the national aspirations of the Palestinian people had begun to grow. Within the Gaullist movement, where government officials had started to articulate support for Palestinian nationhood, this was part of an official effort to cultivate France's position in the wider Arab world.[879] Within the New Left, however, where interest reached its greatest levels, the Palestinian cause was now embraced as a revolutionary one, as Palestinian nationalists successfully linked their cause to the wider '68 movement and its audience.

Writing in late 1968, the French Jewish writer Henri Smolarski described this process as "the *algerianization*" of Arab-Israeli relations. "For a certain Left in Havana, Nanterre [the hotbed of the student protests], and Peking," Smolarski explained,

> the fight of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] and Fatah for the *liberation* of Palestine and the destruction of the usurping Jewish state and spearhead of American imperialism is exactly the same as that of yesterday's Algerian FLN . . . and the struggle of today's Liberation Front of South Vietnam

[877] French provincial papers like the *Voix du nord* called on its readers to "understand [the] bitterness" of displaced Palestinians, even before fighting broke out in June 1967. M. Moch to Pierre Kaufmann, Letter, June 2, 1967, MDI 65c, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[878] Coulon, 176-78, 239-43; Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le monde diplomatique et Israël, 1954-2005* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011), 39; see for example Eric Rouleau, "Israël: Le ghetto des vainqueurs," *Le monde*, July 5, 1969.
[879] Coulon, 226-28.

> against the American occupiers . . . . That Israel was born in the struggle against English imperialism is unimportant . . . . Fatah = Vietcong.[880]

Maoist posters in 1968 gave credence to Smolarski's analysis, and posited this equation in terms which unambiguously situated Israel on the wrong side of a global anti-imperialist struggle: "Vietnam, Palestine, FLN, El Fatah: The same combat."[881] GUPS, the General Union of Palestinian Students, did likewise, and the stand it erected at the occupied Sorbonne linked Palestinian nationalism to the language and images of Maoist popular revolution and anti-imperialism.[882] Just as the Algerian conflict had once helped frame Socialist support for Israel as part of a struggle against a fascist-inspired Nasserism, Algeria now offered an anti-colonial conceptual framework for understanding the larger Middle East. Within it, the PLO assumed the moral legitimacy of the FLN, while Israel was cast, unsympathetically, as France itself. As a result, Laurence Coulon argues, Palestinian *fedayeen* fighters joined South American guerrillas, Algerian *fellagha*, and the Vietcong as romantic symbols of anti-imperialist and anti-American revolution.[883]

Within some currents of the French Left, and even elements of the Gaullist left-wing, the Palestinian cause now began to be associated with the powerful symbolism of the French Resistance. This was an important process, as the legitimating memory of the Resistance had formerly functioned as a semantic link bridging anti-fascism, the Holocaust, and Israel. 1968-70 saw this symbolic link become contested for the first time. Proponents of Palestinian revolution now challenged this ideational pillar of the pro-Israel movement, and sought to repurpose it in support of Palestinian nationalism. Among

[880] Henri Smolarski, "Le vietcong du moyen-orient," *Tribune juive* no. 25, December 20-26, 1968.
[881] Maud Mandel, 100-1.
[882] Hecker, 36.
[883] Coulon, 166.

French politicians, meanwhile, opinion was split on whether Palestinian militant activity should be considered "resistance." While many in the Gaullist UDR felt that the activities of Palestinian guerrillas constituted *a* resistance, if not paralleling *the Resistance*, there were some exceptions: as Gaullist deputy Edgar Pisani noted, "If I were Palestinian, I would be in the Resistance."[884] As one looked further to the Left, Pisani's sentiment became more common. Louis Terrenoire, a leader of the Gaullist left-wing Democratic Union of Labor (Union démocratique du travail, UDT) who had long espoused radical anti-Zionist views, not only likened Palestinian militants to Resistance fighters, but compared Israelis, unfavorably, to the Nazis. Israeli methods, Terrenoire asserted, were

> different from the Nazi's, but equally serious! The soldiers of Hitler killed; the soldiers of the Tsahal [the Israeli Defense Forces] also killed, but they also destroy the houses of all Arab suspects and the parents of *résistants*. I was arrested twice by the Gestapo in different houses: the Israelis would have destroyed the two houses, and those of my parents also, who had . . . given me asylum and assistance.[885]

Meanwhile, Terrenoire's asserted, Palestinians who "accommodated" themselves to the Israeli occupation were no better than "Vichyists." For Terrenoire and especially those on the revolutionary Left, enshrining Palestinian guerrilla activity as "Resistance" was doubly legitimating, linking it to both the anti-fascist struggle of the 1940s and the larger anti-colonial struggle of the revolutionary Third World.

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[884] Wajsman and Teissedre, 36. Though individual Gaullists, including France's ambassador to the UN, Armand Berard, at times likened Palestinian terror to the French Resistance, internal reports indicate that this comparison was not taken very seriously. Ambassadorial reports on Israel's occupation of Arab territories were favorable on the whole, noting that Israel had not yet instituted a regime of collective punishment, as the Nazis had done. For the Foreign Ministry, at least, this seems to have been the key criteria limiting comparison to the occupation of France. See Ambassadeur Huré à Schumann, "La politique des représailles en territoires occupes," Ambassade de France en Israël Telegram no. 180/AL, GR 10 T 813, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France. For a detailed sampling of French political views on the concept of "Resistance" as it applied to the Palestinian case in 1968-69, see Wajsman and Teissedre, 34-41.

[885] *Ibid.,* 37-38.

A number of factors contributed to the algerianization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At the most basic level, to those inclined to see the world through anti-imperialist and anti-colonial binaries, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seemed to fit the bill. Israel, which was actively courting American assistance, had conquered and occupied foreign territories and caused the significant displacement of their inhabitants. A significant portion of Israel's population was European in origin, and had settled in Israel within their lifetimes; the displacement of Palestinian Arabs was consequently seen, by some, as the direct result of a colonial policy promoting the interests of a white-skinned European settler population. Speaking from within the anti-colonial Left, activist and journalist Albert-Paul Lentin tellingly reposed the question commonly being asked within the Jewish press: 'Why is the Left anti-Israel?' "Why is the Left anti-Palestinian?" Lentin countered; "It seems to me that the majority of [the Socialist] Left is unconditionally pro-Israel, [was] especially during the Six-Day War, and remains strongly pro-Israeli today."[886] It was the Palestinian struggle for liberation which better exemplified the anti-colonialist principles of the Left, Lentin argued. In his eyes, it was the Left's *support* for Israel that was inexplicable.

Prominent voices on the anti-colonial Left shared Lentin's perspective, condemning Israel as a colonialist, capitalist, and pro-American imperialist outpost. Louis Terrenoire asked "How can the Arab states accept Israel, a racist state founded on the Jewish religion . . . ? It cannot, because Israel is a foreign body introduced into the Middle East! . . . The Hebrew state appears as a colonizing element which runs in the

[886] Albert-Paul Lentin, quoted in "Israël et la gauche," *Tribune juive* no. 44, April 1969.

counter-current of history."[887] Unified Socialist Party leader and '68 activist Michel Rocard voiced similar concerns, warning that the "bourgeoisie in power in Israel" were pursuing "a policy with all the characteristics of the most aggressive imperialism: territorial annexations, military occupations, brutal reprisals, a politics of force, etc."[888] Jewish Marxists, including Maxime Rodinson and Jacqueline Hadamard, together with Lentin, asserted meanwhile that 'the Jewish people' did not exist, in an effort to negate Zionist claims to nationhood.[889] As Lentin explained, the nation-state of Israel was thus inherently illegitimate; it was instead "a colonialism," and only "an end to political Zionism" and the stoppage of Jewish immigration to Israel would produce peace in the Middle East.

These themes had particular resonance within the progressive Christian Left, and it was there that the cause of Palestinian revolution found some of its most enthusiastic supporters.[890] In press outlets like Georges Montaron's progressive Christian *Témoignage chrétien*, anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism merged with a religious rejection of Jewish exegesis to produce an energetic anti-Zionist critique. Zionism, *Témoignage chrétien* asserted in December 1969, "by its racial character, expansionist desire, by the confusion it maintains between the sacred and the temporal, by its materialist interpretation of the Bible and utilization of Holy Texts for political goals, represents a grave danger for all believers."[891] Palestinian resistance, Montaron meanwhile affirmed at a March 1969

[887] Quoted in Patrick Wajsman and René-François Teissedre, *Nos politiciens face au conflit israélo-arabe* (Paris: Fayard, 1969), 47.
[888] *Ibid.,* 48.
[889] Albert-Paul Lentin, quoted in "Israël et la gauche," *Tribune juive* no. 44, April 1969; Coulon, 124-29.
[890] Louis Terrenoire wrote primarily from within this milieu, for example.
[891] Coulon, 152.

meeting of the Franco-Arab Solidarity Association (ASFA), which he administrated, was "a sacred duty."[892]

As Laurence Coulon observes, Montaron and *Témoignage chrétien* discursively Christianized the Palestinian people as part of their rejection of Jewish election, sacralizing the suffering of displaced refugees as a mirror of the Jewish rejection of Christ.[893] As Montaron explained in a December 1969 editorial, together "with the poor, Jesus Christ is a Palestinian refugee . . . . These [people] are the real holy places of Palestine, the true witnesses of the living God."[894] An article by Father Paul Gauthier fleshed out this analogy: by granting Palestine to the Jews in order to assuage its own conscience in 1947, Europe had imitated Pontius Pilate, and "crucified" the Palestinian people. "It is among these [people], innocent saints all," Gauthier explained, that Jesus "wanted to suffer . . . . It is always amongst the vanquished that the Lord raises up his apostles, because the All-Powerful is always on the side of the weak, the poor, the oppressed . . . . He is with them to liberate them from the slavery of Pharaoh."[895] For these journalists, Coulon explains, it was the Palestinians (the weak), not the Jews (the strong), who had inherited the mantle of divine election; Israeli statehood was consequently contrary to the divine plan, a spiritual as well as moral and ideological injustice.[896]

At the same time, Montaron and his associates sought to disassociate Israel from the powerful memory of the Holocaust, which Montaron accused Israel of

[892] Hecker, 46-49. Montaron and other spokesmen of the Christian Left echoed this conclusion during the first World Conference of Christians for Palestine, held in Beirut in May 1970. There, progressive Christians and PLO leaders came together to affirm their rejection of Israeli "apartheid."
[893] Coulon, 148.
[894] *Ibid.,* 150.
[895] *Ibid.,* 149-50.
[896] *Ibid.,* 151-52.

"monopolizing."[897] Israel had to be evaluated in light of its present, Montaron contended, not the tragedies of the Jewish past; the sympathy of the Left should instead lie with a new set of Palestinian victims.[898] Ultimately, however, *Témoignage chrétien* was an outlying, if outspkoen voice within French Christianity. Throughout 1967-70, a majority of Christian voices, both Catholic and Protestant, remained broadly neutral toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, or were sympathetic to Israel in line with long-standing patterns of pro-Israel sentiment.[899]

Other groups on the far-Left also embraced the algerianization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Organizations including the Maoist Proletarian Left (Gauche prolétarienne, GP) of 1968 and the Trotskyite Revolutionary Communist League of 1969 were quick to integrate the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts into their platforms. Maud Mandel observes that this was, in large part, a Jewish enterprise. Eleven out of twelve League leaders were Jewish, as were the GP's two leaders, Alain Geismar and Benny Lévy. Having come of age during the Algerian War, these young intellectuals rejected Jewish nationalism in favor of a universalist anti-fascist and anti-racist commitment to Maoist-inspired social revolution.[900] Under their leadership, the GP would become a powerful force of pro-Palestinian politics. Numerically and ideologically significant in

[897] Wolf, 124; Jean-Marie Domenach, the director of the Catholic *L'esprit*, posited near-identical arguments.

[898] Alain Finkielkraut suggests that such remarks were part of a larger debate over whether the Holocaust should continue to be discussed at all. Within this debate, opinion was divided between those who saw the Holocaust as instructive, an incentive to activism, and those like Montaron who saw it as distracting from contemporary problems. Both, Finkielkraut argues, conceived of the dead only in terms of their usefulness. Finkielkraut, 53-54.

[899] Poll data from early 1967 noted that only 10 percent of French Christians viewed the creation of Israel unsympathetically. Coulon, 144-45; Uri Dan, *L'embargo* (Paris: Éditions et Publications Premières Paris, 1970), 139; "Si tous les resistants du monde voulaient se donner la main," MDI 101, archives du CRIF, CDJC.

[900] Maud Mandel, 106-9; Katz, 265-67. Other key leaders of the '68 student movement, including Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Alain Kirvine, were also Jewish.

the wake of May '68, the GP and the League integrated the militant anti-Zionism of Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), respectively, and dispatched members to study guerrilla training camps in Jordan.[901] The Communist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) likewise affirmed its support for the Palestinian victims of Israeli "imperialism and colonialist aggression," while the Maoist Organization of Revolutionary Jewish Students rallied to oppose Israeli "imperialism" and the activities of the Zionist FEJ.[902]

Representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an anti-colonial struggle were compounded by both domestic and transnational politics. During the 1968 student revolts, Marxist and Maoist activists like Gilbert Mury sought to attract the support of France's significant population of North African immigrants, whom they wished to embrace as both marginalized immigrants and proletarian workers.[903] Adopting the Arab and Palestinian struggles against Israel was one vehicle for doing so. In May 1968, the Committee for the Support of the National Liberation Struggle of the Arab Peoples was founded with the explicit aim of using Arab nationalism to bridge gaps between Arab and French workers.[904] By late 1969-70, numerous 'Palestine committees,' including Mury's Workers' Palestine Committee of Nanterre, subsequently appeared in French university campuses, and sought to link workers' revolution to Palestinian nationalism by building on the pre-existing infrastructure of North African workers' organizations. Immigrant workers, Mury's committee proclaimed, were "facing the exploiter like the *fedayeen* [Palestinian guerrillas] face the Zionists." The French Section of the Movement Against

[901] Coulon, 168-70; Katz, 265-67.
[902] "Graves difficultés économiques en Israël," *Le parisien*, September 16, 1969; "Bureau du C.R.I.F. (4 Fevrier 1970), February 6, 1970. MDI 49, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[903] Gordon, 5, 108-9; Maud Mandel, 105-7.
[904] Gordon, 108.

Anti-Arab Racism issued similar remarks, affirming: "Workers, the fedayins [*sic*] are also fighting for you."[905] As Maud Mandel notes, among students and workers radicalized by the politics of 1968, Palestinian nationalism accordingly became "a rallying cry for oppressed Muslims in France," a way to politically self-define and explain their own discontent by situating it in a transnational framework.[906]

At the same time, Palestinian nationalist groups like Fatah were seeking new allies among France's workers and North African students and immigrants, and worked to build this link from the other side.[907] In January 1969, Palestinian nationalists like Mahmoud Hamchari and Muhammad Abou Mayer arrived in Paris and set about building a local infrastructure for the Palestinian cause. Additional Palestine committees were established; a newspaper, *Fedayin*, was founded; and contacts fostered with radical left-wing and immigrant leaders like Alain Geismar and M'hammed Yazid.[908] The Black September events of 1970, which pitted Palestinian and Jordanian forces against one another, further stimulated interest in the Palestinian cause among France's immigrant and radical left-wing communities.[909] The effort to couple the Palestinian nationalist cause to the politics of the revolutionary Left was thus driven by both internal and

[905] *Ibid.*, 109; Maud Mandel, 24.
[906] *Ibid.,* 105-7. Algerian immigrant organizations, like the Association of Algerians in Europe (ADAE) and the Franco-Arab Solidarity Association (ASFA) embraced this practice.
[907] *Ibid.*
[908] Katz, 265-67.
[909] Gordon, 108. From September 16 to 27, 1970, Jordan was gripped by a brief but bloody civil war in which Jordanian government forces sought to suppress Palestinian militant factions. These groups had threatened Jordanian sovereignty by establishing semi-autonomous regions, clashed frequently with Jordanian forces, and brought unwanted international pressure onto Jordan through high-profile acts of terrorism. Palestinian spokesmen would later condemn the suppression as a Jordanian betrayal of the Palestinian cause, terming it "Black September." For a representative example of the interest that Black September generated within the radical French Left, see Jean-Luc Godard's 1976 Maoist film *Ici et ailleurs*.

external elements, though, as Maud Mandel notes, only a small segment of the French Arab community became actively involved in pro-Palestinian politics.[910]

The rising pace of terror attacks against Israeli targets also played a role. Palestinian terror attacks and border infiltrations appeared to mirror the efforts of the FLN and the Vietcong, while Israel's often spectacular reprisals, including a December 1968 raid that destroy unmanned aircraft at Beirut's international airport, evoked French and American efforts to stamp out guerrilla activity with helicopters and fighter-bombers.[911] The '68 movement's massive mobilization for peace in Vietnam made the comparison easier, providing a ready-made ideological framework for understanding the violence and motivations of asymmetrical warfare. Under these circumstances, Israel appeared to align in theory *and* practice with the forces of the colonialism and imperialism.[912]

Timing was another important factor: peace negotiations to end the Vietnam War began in Paris itself in spring 1968. Though negotiations would not bear fruit until 1973, the opening of peace talks did shift some currents of anti-imperialist activism from Vietnam to other revolutionary causes — including that of the Palestinians.[913] Together,

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[910] Maud Mandel, 101; Katz, 267. By 1970, the Palestine committees were already beginning to reorient from a focus on Palestinians to immigrant worker conditions, which represented a more immediate concern to local activists. While the Palestine issue would remain important for these groups, particularly among North African immigrants, the relationship became increasingly symbolic. Gordon, 121-22. On French Arab politicization in relation to the Middle East, see especially Katz, (2015) and Hecker, (2012).

[911] Coulon, 190-94.

[912] At times, efforts to frame Palestinian terror as part of a legitimate struggle for independence went to surprising lengths: when PFLP gunmen murdered Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, journalists in *L'humanité, Témoignage chrétien*, and the Gaullist *La nation* used the occasion to defend terror as a means of resistance. "This is what happens when weakness is outraged," wrote *La nation*'s Jacques de Montalais, suggesting that Israel had brought the murders upon itself. Louis Terrenoire similarly affirmed that Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir "decided on the death of the Israeli athletes; it is she and she alone who pronounced the verdict." "Le drame de Munich; Dans la presse parisienne," *Le monde*, September 7, 1972; Coulon, 232-38.

[913] *Ibid.,* 168.

these factors spurred some elements on the French Communist and New Left to distance themselves from Israel, and re-imagine the Jewish State on the wrong side of powerful ideological binaries.

1968-69 subsequently saw a significant proliferation of French-language publications challenging France's traditional sympathy for the Jewish state, and calling Israel's legitimacy into question. These included but were not limited to Ania Francos's *The Palestinians* (*Les palestiniens,* 1968); Daniel Guérin's *Fatah* (*El Fath,* 1968); Pierre Dameron's *Against Israel* (*Contre Israël*, 1968); Maxime Rodinson's *Israel and the Arab Refusal* (*Israël et le réfus arabe*, 1968); L. Gaspar's *History of Palestine* (*Histoire de la Palestine,* 1968); Nathan Weinstock's *Zionism Against Israel* (*Le sionisme contre Israël*, 1969); and S. Gabries's *The Arabs in Israel* (*Les arabes en Israël*, 1969). The French Jewish community experienced facture as well, particularly among students, and some, like journalist Maxim Ghilan, voiced worry that the occupation of foreign territory was teaching Israeli society "to be hard, brutal, even to hate."[914] Between them, these texts and voices helped raise significant challenges to once-hegemonic discourses of a small and beleaguered Israel, recasting the Jewish state in the role of a colonizing, imperialist 'Goliath.'

Even within the French Left, however, these efforts did not go unchallenged. Jewish intellectuals on the Left, including Claude Lanzmann and Jacques Givet, debated their peers in person and in print to contest the algerianization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. "If you took us seriously when our positions were identical to yours," Lanzmann asked his colleagues on the anti-Israel Left in early 1969,

[914] Maxim Ghilan, "Les autres visages de l'armée d'Israël," *L'arche* no. 161, July 26 - September 26, 1970; on the breakdown of ethnic solidarity between Jewish students over the question of Israel, see especially Maud Mandel, 116-17.

> why have [you] decided that we have suddenly become fools or traitors . . . ? We spend our time saying that we understand the reasons of the Palestinians in their struggle. I don't know that our adversaries — or rather our former comrades — make an identical effort to understand those of the Israelis . . . . [It] stinks of hatred, the refusal to inform oneself, pure passion. It is nothing other than polemic.[915]

Refusing to view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a moral binary, Lanzmann rejected the notion that sympathizing with the Palestinian cause necessitated a total negation of Israel. "Rather than a case of colonial occupation," echoed Jewish philosopher Robert Misrahi in an attempt to link Israel with the legitimacy of anti-colonial politics, "Israel is one of Liberation and Return."[916] Why, he asked, were French Marxists "ready to sacrifice *one of the few socialist achievements in the world* . . . . [to assuage] military honor, Arab pride, humiliation, [and] pseudo-revolutionary verbiage . . . ?"[917] The International Union of the Resistance and Deportation, and the Action Committee of the French Resistance, meanwhile, energetically contested the use the legitimating mantle of the Resistance to justify terror in Israel.[918] As spokespeople for the groups explained, Israel's cause remained indelibly tied to the anti-fascist "battle for peace and liberty"; it was Arab nationalism, they argued, not Zionism, that was undergoing a "nazification."[919]

In spring 1968, Jewish writer and activist Marek Halter attempted to describe the "malaise" he felt the question of Israel had cast over the French Left: "friends that were always found on the same side," Halter wrote, "instead of doing positive work, instead of working for the rapprochement of two parallel and equally legitimate [Israeli and Palestinian] national aspirations, are today divided, and unilaterally support one of these

[915] Quoted in "Israël et la gauche," *Tribune juive* no. 44, April 1969.
[916] Robert Misrahi, "Le mythe du colonialisme israélien," *L'arche* no. 126, August - September, 1967.
[917] *Ibid*.
[918] "Si Tous les Resistants du Monde Voulaient se Donner la Main . . .", March 1968, MDI 101, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[919] *Ibid.*

aspirations to the detriment of the other."[920] Halter, like Lanzmann and many other leading figures on the French Left, was uncomfortable viewing the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts as moral binaries, and was convinced that mutual understanding was the key to peace. He and those like him accordingly professed themselves, in the words of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, "torn in two."[921] These intellectual leaders represented an important alternative approach to the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, one which rejected partisanship in favor of negotiation and understanding. Their efforts to promote this approach further illustrates that the French Left did not turn suddenly and completely from Israel in 1967-68. Rather, important elements within it instead sought to reconcile their sympathy for both Israelis and Palestinians with the politics of progress and international solidarity whenever possible.

Jean-Paul Sartre was at the forefront of this effort, and the understanding he demonstrated for all parties of the conflict best exemplifies the thinking and aims of this alternative approach to the violence of the Middle East. As early as May-June 1967, Sartre had used his journal *Les temps modernes* as a vehicle for articulating the parallel legitimacy of Israeli and Arab claims. In February of that year, he and Simone de Beauvoir had travelled to Egypt and Israel, not to insist upon a way of viewing their conflict, but to listen to its competing narratives; as Sartre affirmed, "I have come here to learn, not to teach."[922] As Sartre understood it, his duty as an intellectual was not to pontificate, but to impartially allow each side to fully assert its point of view.[923]

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[920] Marek Halter, quoted in "Israël et la gauche," *Tribune juive* no. 44, April, 1969.
[921] Schnapper, 93-94.
[922] Judaken, 190-91; Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs: De 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 303.
[923] Judaken, 190-91.

Jonathan Judaken argues that, by 1967, Sartre's stance on the Arab-Israeli conflict reflected an alternate conception of the role of the public intellectual, which Sartre had first articulated in 1966. Breaking from his earlier position in *What is Literature?* (1948), Sartre now argued that the militant intellectual's duty was to "communicate the incommunicable," and live in impartial tension as a witness to the *differend* between legitimate viewpoints.[924] The intellectual's role, for Sartre, was thus to provide tension, rather than doctrinal clarity. The dual legacies of the Holocaust and the Algerian war, Sartre explained in 1966, rendered him deeply bound to both Israel and the anti-colonial struggles of the Arab world. Surrendering either would be a betrayal of the self as much as the other.[925] Thus, in a 1969 interview, Sartre affirmed that "I don't reproach the Palestinians for doing that which I approved of [acts of terrorism] when it was the FLN that did it . . . [but] I no longer reproach the Israelis for retaliating, because one cannot demand they let themselves be systematically killed without response. "[926] Sartre reiterated the sentiment in a November 1969 interview with Arturo Schwarz: "I totally understand the Israel of today," Sartre remarked, "with this feeling . . . [that] if we lose a single battle, the state is lost . . . . I similarly understand how the Arabs, who have been humiliated may times by Israeli victories . . . [and why they have] resisted Israel and the presence of Israel."[927] Accepting Israeli, Arab, and Palestinian viewpoints as equally legitimate, Sartre strove to embrace the 'torn-ness' in which some elements of the French Left found themselves, seeking to become comfortable in the uncomfortable. Only by

[924] *Ibid.,* 189-91, 195.
[925] *Ibid.,* 190-92.
[926] Winock, 303; Arturo Schwarz, "Sartre: Israël, la gauche et les arabes," *L'arche* no. 152, October 25 - November 26, 1969; see also Judaken, 197-98.
[927] Arturo Schwarz, "Sartre: Israël, la gauche et les arabes," *L'arche* no. 152, October 25 - November 26, 1969.

doing so, Sartre suggested, could a French intellectual remain fully faithful to themselves and the people they observed.[928]

Sartre was not alone in rejecting the application of moral and ideological binaries to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Intellectuals including Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Clavel, and Marek Halter similarly professed themselves both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli, and spoke out between 1967-69 against efforts to characterize Israel as a colonialist and imperialist aggressor.[929] Their efforts to promote dialogue between Israelis and Arabs in service of a negotiated peace attracted the support of many prominent intellectuals and writers, including Jacques Derogy, Eugène Ionesco, Albert Memmi, Vladimir Jankélévitch, Jean-Pierre Faye, Jean Cassou, and Clara Malraux.[930] These individuals felt that binaries did not map neatly onto the Arab-Israeli conflict, as journalist Michel Salomon explained in 1969: "The truth is that Israel is a victor, but [also] a tiny threatened state which must fight very hard for its organic survival."[931]

Many intellectuals proved unable to mirror Sartre's balancing act, however, and as a result felt compelled to choose between Israeli and Palestinian camps that partisans increasingly presented as being mutually exclusive.

Algerianization: Consequences and Confrontation

The fusion of radical left-wing politics and the question of Israel had significant consequences for French society and politics. By the close of 1970, once-uncontested

[928] Sartre did admit, however, that the Left often had to concede to Arab pressures, as Arab leftists often refused invitations for facilitated dialogue with Israelis, whatever their politics. Since much of the French Left was unwilling to jeopardize its ties with the North African Left, it felt compelled to accede to this refusal. Meanwhile, Sartre also suggested that, in light of its "heritage of permanent persecution . . . Israel must be an exemplar and one must demand more of it than others." This rationale would later be folded into critiques of Israel, which argued that, as the self-professed heirs to the victims of Nazism, Israeli Jews 'ought to know better.' *Ibid.*

[929] Coulon, 173-75.

[930] *Ibid.,* 175.

[931] J.G., "Entretien avec Michel Salomon," *Tribune Juive* no. 35, February 28 - 6 March, 1969.

currents of French left-wing sympathy for Israel had significantly fractured into debate, confusion, and partisanship. The Gaullist rupture with Israel further compounded this fragmentation. Voices in the UDR and UDR-sympathetic press continued to cast Israel as a 'Goliath,' and in February 1968, UDR deputy Michel Habib-Deloncle urged his countrymen to remember that "David killed Goliath . . . . David thus became stronger, even if he appeared weaker."[932] Yet whether one was torn between two sympathetic causes or ideologically committed to a partisan camp, the days of broad left-wing identification with Israel were ending in France. As a result, it was during this period that the question of Israel began to take on significant partisan connotations in French politics, and over the next several years, disagreement over Israel helped spur new political divisions.

Within the French Left, fracturing positions on Israel spurred the breakdown of personal and political alliances, as those who felt themselves on opposite sides of an Israeli-Palestinian binary began to determine that their views were incompatible. In 1973, for example, Social Democratic Party (PSD) president Emile Muller asserted that the Socialist Party's failure to condemn Communist anti-Zionism was one of the factors that led numerous Socialists to split off and form the PSD.[933] Left-wing tension with Israel raised particular challenges for French student activists. As one UEJF leader recalled in 1972, Jewish leftists who had embraced Israel in 1967, yet wished to participate in the

[932] Michel Habib-Deloncle, quoted in "De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël," *Tribune juive,* February 9-23, 1968. Voices in the Gaullist-sympathetic press and the UDR increasingly attributed terror attacks against Israel to Israel's treatment of Palestinians, and warned that, in the words of one French ambassador, it was now the Arab states, not Israel, which needed protecting. See, for example, Associated Press Bulletin 34, DT0342FST, January 30, 1969; Claude Bourdet, "De Gaulle, Israël et l'«antisémitisme»", *Le monde*, January 16, 1969; Henri Marque, *De Gaulle veut obliger l'O.N.U. à agir*," *Paris presse*, January 10, 1969.
[933] At the time, Socialist leader François Mitterand was cultivating an alliance with the PCF. Emile Muller, "L'amitié franco-israélienne," *Tribune juive* no. 240, February 2-8, 1973.

radical politics of the post-68 university scene, were faced with a difficult choice: either "renouncing almost entirely their Jewish dimension . . . [or] entering into a Jewish movement in order to not sacrifice that specificity."[934] Often, the choice was made for them: as one Jewish student explained, during the height of the '68 movement, "pro-Israeli Jews found themselves rejected from the leftist paradise."[935] For groups like the GP, the revolutionary Palestinian struggle against Israel had become a vehicle of performative self-identification and delimitation; subsequently, those who challenged revolutionary interpretations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often faced ostracism.

Others, motivated by growing anti-Israel rhetoric on the radical Left, broke their organizational and political affiliations themselves. Disappointed with the UNEF's criticism of Israel in 1967 and '68, Jewish students like Maurice Bensoussan answered a UEJF call to break with the national student union, and "sent in our membership cards, saying 'This is the end!'"[936] Rejecting Israeli-Palestinian binaries, UEJF leaders felt that their sympathy for Zionism could be coupled to legitimate critique of Israel and participation in the radical politics of the New Left. The group's members subsequently affirmed Israel's right to exist, defended Israel's actions in the Six-Day War, and contested anti-Israel narratives within France's universities.[937] For the adherents of the Zionist FEJ, however, these activities did not go far enough. The FEJ criticized UEJF activists for attempting to foster dialogue with their peers on the anti-Zionist Left, and

[934] Martine Okonowski, quoted in "Table ronde: Les étudiants juifs face au eux-mêmes," *Tribune juive* no. 232, December 8-14, 1972.
[935] Maud Mandel, 114.
[936] Robert I. Weiner and Richard E. Sharpless, *An Uncertain Future: Voices of a French Jewish Community, 1940-2012* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2012), 155; Morder, 20-22.
[937] Maud Mandel, 114-15.

actively disrupted pro-Palestinian displays and meetings.[938] Thus, even within the pro-Israel student milieu, the algerianization of the Arab-Israeli conflict produced divisions.[939]

This type of division was not limited to France's Jews, however. From 1967-70, a near-identical situation developed between the Movement Against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples (Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, MRAP) and the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme, LICA).[940] While MRAP affirmed its support for both Israel's existence and Palestinian national aspirations, LICA activists like François Herscovici critiqued it for being too "pro-Arab," arguing that, in light of Arab exterminationist rhetoric, "those who are not openly and frankly for Israel are against it . . . . I am still anti-racist, but above all, *Israélite*."[941] At the same time, activists further to the Left were critiquing MRAP for not more energetically condemning Israel as a colonial state. Criticized by Zionists and anti-Zionists alike, groups like MRAP and the UEJF found the middle ground they were standing upon falling away beneath their feet.

Another consequence of the integration of the Arab-Israeli conflict into the radical politics of the '68-70 period was an upswing of physical violence and confrontation within France, a phenomenon that has since become known in French political discourse

[938] *Ibid.*

[939] Like the rest of the '68 student movement, however, much of this pro-Israel activism was relatively short lived. Most Jewish student associations had disappeared by 1972-73, and those that remained lost significant membership. By 1973, for example, the UEJF was struggling to muster the quorum necessary to elect its own leadership. "Les étudiants . . .", *Tribune juive* no. 234, January 12-18, 1973.

[940] The group's acronym became LICRA in 1979.

[941] A curious choice of terms, in that *Israélite* heretofore connoted a strictly civic French confessional identity. Yvan Gastaut, "La Guerre des Six Jours et la question du racisme en France," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 71 (2005), 20-21.

as the "importation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."[942] Sometimes confrontation was peaceful, if energetic. In February 1970, Zionist students gained access to a GUPS-sponsored meeting in support of Palestine, prompting a heated, if cordial, debate.[943] Yet by the early 1970s French high schools had become sites of "frequent low-level confrontations," as fist-fights and verbal abuse accompanied demonstrations for and against Israel. At times, left-wing students also sought to impose a ban on all Zionist activity, often with the support of teachers.[944] Yet, more violent confrontations also took place. In December 1969, activists belonging to the revisionist Zionist Betar group interrupted a UNEF showing of the film *Palestine vaincra* ['Palestine Will Win'], causing a brief brawl in which four were injured.[945] Soon after, on January 19, 1970, Maoist university students attacked activists distributing Zionist leaflets with metal bars.[946]

At times, such violence seemed to evince specifically Jewish-Muslim tensions rooted, in part, in the politics of the Middle East. The most infamous such incident took place on June 2, 1968 in the Parisian suburb of Belleville, when a dispute over a card game spiraled into an hours-long street riot between Jewish and Muslim neighbors. Given its close proximity to the one-year anniversary of the Six-Day War, French media outlets quickly hailed the riot as "the six-hour war," mapping the Arab-Israeli conflict onto this

[942] As recently as July 2014, for example, then French Prime Minister Manuel Valls warned that "France will never tolerate an attempt to import the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," following pro-Palestinian demonstrations that resulted in clashes after marching on two Parisian synagogues. French President François Hollande echoed the sentiment, announcing in a television broadcast that "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be imported." "Valls ne laissera pas «le conflit israélo-palestinien s'importer en France»", *Le monde*, July 7, 2014; "La France s'inquiète d'un «importation» du conflit israélo-palestinien," *Le monde*, July 14, 2014.
[943] R. Zard to Kauffman, Letter, February 14, 1970, MDI 217, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[944] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 74 (1973), Philadelphia, JPS, 1973, 398.
[945] Alain Matherson, quoted in "Extrait: L'Aurore' 11 Décembre 1969," MDI 27, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[946] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 72 (1971), Philadelphia, JPS, 1971, 343; René Alevi, "A l'Université: Non au terrorisme antisioniste," *Tribune juive* no. 85, February 13-19 1970.

local incident.[947] Yet Ethan Katz and Maud Mandel suggest that the riot was grounded more concretely in local factors than the Middle East.[948] It was the mass civil unrest unleashed by the May Events of 1968, Katz and Mandel argue, that accounted most for the boiling over of tensions in Belleville, despite media reports to the contrary.[949] This conclusion gives us cause to question the notion that such confrontations reflected a deeper Muslim-Jewish binary.

In their studies of Muslim-Jewish relations in France, Katz and Mandel conclude that the politics of the 1968-70 period, and the media coverage it generated, concretized and disseminated previously inchoate notions of Muslim-Jewish polarization.[950] According to Mandel, whatever its pre-existing reality, "the period's radicalism brought the story of Muslim-Jewish polarization into France's national conversation. While earlier developments had introduced a discourse of polarization in particular circles, 1968 and its aftermath made that story mainstream" in an enduring way. "Ethnic tensions around the Middle East," Mandel concludes, "were henceforth presumed," and by 1970, Jews and Muslims increasingly began "to see each other as competitors in the French public square."[951] While Mandel observes that radical politics also created new left-wing alliances between Jews and Muslims within the '68 and pro-Palestinian movements, the

[947] Gilbert Cohen-Tanugi and Raphael Valensi, "Belleville après la Guerre des 6 heures," *L'arche* no. 136-137, June-July special edition, 1968.
[948] On the riot, see especially Katz, 260-70; and Maud Mandel (2012).
[949] When Belleville experienced a second wave of riots in June 1970, however, the Middle East appears to have played a greater role. By this time activists from Fatah, the FEJ, and Algerian workers' organizations had more closely tied local social tensions to the politics of the Middle East. Rioters reportedly chanted "Fatah will win!" and "Israel will win!" at one another. Katz, 269-74; "Les incidents de Belleville," *Tribune juive* no. 103, July 3-9, 1970.
[950] Katz, 272-74; Maud Mandel, 124. For analyses of media representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period, see the next chapter, as well as Coulon, 211-26; and Jerome Bourdon, "L'esprit du temps: Les intellectuels, la télévision et Israël," in Dennis Charbit, ed., *Les intellectuels français et Israël* (Paris: Eclat, 2009).
[951] *Ibid.*

growing narratives of Jewish-Muslim confrontation that had been mapped onto the Arab-Israeli conflict largely overshadowed these partnerships.[952]

A related development was the growth of Muslim identity politics in France, stimulated, in part, by the integration of the Arab-Israeli conflict into radical local politics.[953] Though neither as initially successful or as widespread as the Jewish political mobilization of 1967, French Muslims, and particularly North African immigrants, now also began to organize and act politically in the name of a particularist identity. Like the Jewish case, this was not an overnight development: opposition to Zionism had brought French Muslims into the streets as early as 1944.[954] Maud Mandel concludes, however, that Muslim anti-Zionism in France was directed inward as much as outward, and served as a vehicle for critiquing the inequalities of French domestic and colonial policies.[955] As in the French Jewish community, French Muslim politicization experienced a marked upswing in the weeks surrounding the 1967 Six-Day War, driven, in part, by official Algerian efforts to mobilize Algerian expatriates and promote their identification with the Palestinian cause.[956] Among some activists, anti-racism now became increasingly coupled to a pan-Arab confrontation with Israel, as Zionists were blamed for the uptick in anti-Arab sentiment that France experienced in 1967. The mass political mobilization of 1968-70 spurred this process further. As Katz writes, the Palestine committees now "created a powerful link in the minds of many workers between the claims of Palestinian

[952] *Ibid.*
[953] The authoritative texts on this subject are Maud Mandel (2012), Katz, (2015), and Hecker (2012). While I do not seek to replicate their work here, this brief overview demonstrates that the question of Israel was not simply a 'Jewish issue' in French politics.
[954] Katz, 151-53.
[955] Maud Mandel, 15, 24.
[956] Katz, 249-50.

Arabs to their homeland and those of North African workers to equal rights in France."[957] As a result, the Palestinian cause assumed growing symbolic importance for some French Muslims, and became a vehicle for promoting workers' rights and anti-racism in France.

A final consequence of the meeting of French radical politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict was the growth of antisemitic activity in France, a phenomenon that has had lasting repercussions for French society and debate about Israel. Growth took place, in an interrelated fashion, on both the French Left and Right. Antisemitic themes, and particularly those concerning Jewish world power and finance, had long found purchase within some elements of the French Communist Party, and were occasionally rolled into anti-Zionist critiques. The expansion of French anti-Zionism that accompanied the '68 movement, and the concretizing of Jewish-Muslim binaries, expanded this pattern between 1968-70. With both French Jews and Muslims mobilizing to claim aspects of the Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts as their own, it may not be surprising that partisans of the conflicts began to perceive their neighbors as antagonists within this larger confrontation. For some, "Zionism" now became a cultural code for "Jews," as longstanding antisemitic tropes were couched in anti-Zionist terms.[958] In January 1969, the Communist-affiliated CGT accordingly affirmed that a "Zionist campaign" controlled the French media, a claim echoed that month by de Gaulle's own press spokesman, Joel Le Theule.[959] At the same time, antisemitism began to appear as an undercurrent within the pro-Palestinian movement. During a May 1971 Week of Palestinian Solidarity in

[957] Katz, 285-89.
[958] This is not to suggest that all anti-Zionist critique is antisemitic; rather, anti-Zionism at times functioned as a vehicle for the expression of antisemitic views.
[959] Association France Presse bulletin 193, "Conference de presse Seguy au Caire," January 31, 1969; Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 2, 1959-1991* (Paris: l'Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1993), 84.

France, for example, copies of the infamously antisemitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were distributed to attendees.[960] A conference of the France-Arab States Association (Association France-Pays arabes), which convened later that year, similarly became a venue for Holocaust denial and the assertion that Jewish banking power was responsible for European sympathy for Israel.[961]

French right-wing antisemitism was changing as well, though in somewhat unexpected ways. Richard Viven argues that right-wing antisemitism during 1968-70 experienced less of an uptick than many have assumed. The most well-known instance of right-wing antisemitism during this time, the chant of "Cohn-Bendit to Dachau," was, Viven notes, a relatively isolated incident; many on the French extreme right remained sympathetic to Israel due to the confluence of their interests in the Algerian War.[962] Some elements on the French far-right, however, watched with interest as left-wing discourse infused anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Hostile to notions of a powerful Israel, and perhaps conscious that anti-Zionism presented a vehicle in which antisemitic attitudes could be publicly expressed, several extremist right-wing groups now integrated anti-Zionism into their own discourse. By 1971, groups like the fascist French Mission (Œuvre Française) had consequently launched a campaign against "international pan-Zionism," while antisemitic students on the extreme right demonstrated an increasing

[960] "Le semaine palestinienne," *Tribune juive* no. 150, May 14-20, 1971.
[961] L'anonyme, "M. Vincent Monteil, défenseur des juifs," *Tribune juive* no. 188, February 4-10, 1972. Monteil was a repeat offender in this regard; see for example Givet, 42-43.
[962] Richard C. Viven, "The end of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," in *The Historical Journal* 37:2 (June, 1994), 383-84. Viven's interpretation is supported by Arnold Mandel's annual AJY report; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 69 (1968), Philadelphia, JPS, 1968, 449.

interest in critiquing Israel under the mantle of "anti-fascism."[963] Ultimately, however, these right-wing currents had little impact.

The algerianization of the Arab-Israeli conflict was thus a source of significant division within France. Spurred by the domestic upheavals of 1968, groups and individuals who had once worked side by side to combat colonialism and imperialism now found themselves divided over the question of Israel. These divisions hardened inter-communal binaries among France's Jews and Muslims, and helped transform Israel from a source of French unity into a source of partisanship and political mobilization. These developments were, however, largely confined to the French New Left and, as we shall see, were not echoed by the French mainstream for some time. Nonetheless, the fragmentation of left-wing perceptions of Israel between 1968-70 definitively altered the contours of French debate on the Middle East, and the discursive and organizational patterns established during these years would shape the erosion of pro-Israel sentiment in France in the decades to follow.

Conclusions

Between 1968 and 1970, French consensus on Israel underwent a significant fragmentation with lasting political and discursive consequences. This fragmentation was driven primarily by the social and political upheavals taking place within French domestic politics, which created opportunities to re-imagine Israel through the lenses of revolution, anti-colonialism, and identity politics. As a result, significant numbers of students, workers, and the viewing and reading public encountered alternative ways of understanding and framing the Arab-Israeli conflict that challenged previously hegemonic narratives of Israel and its place in the world. The Arab-Israeli conflict was

[963] *Ibid.;* Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 72 (1971), Philadelphia, JPS, 1971, 343.

subsequently mapped onto both local and wider international causes, stimulating alternate ways of viewing and identifying with the politics of the Middle East. In some sectors of the French New Left, Israel now began to function as a cultural code helping to define and delimit political identity. While this created new patterns of belonging, helping to forge alliances between North African workers and left-wing activists, others found themselves alienated by a social revolution that left little room for pro-Israel sentiment. As we noted, however, significant personalities on the Left refused to accept the binary polarization of Israeli and Palestinian camps, and instead professed themselves torn between two legitimate causes. Accordingly, while the years between 1968 and 70 constitute an important acceleration in the gradual decline of French popular sympathy for Israel, French opinion on Israel ultimately remained divided. Additionally, the changes we have described took place primarily within the activist milieu of the French New Left; for significant sectors of the French public, Israel remained 'David,' rather than 'Goliath.'

In fact, as we shall discuss in the next chapter, sympathetic images of Israel by and large weathered the storm of the late 1960s, and emerged into the 1970s intact. Polls taken in May-June 1971 showed that less than a third of French students were consistently hostile to Israel.[964] Only 28 percent viewed Israel as a colonialist state, and just 7 percent insisted upon a total Israeli withdrawal to its June 5, 1967 frontiers. 51 percent of students, meanwhile, affirmed that they felt closer to Israel than its Arab

[964] Those who were hostile, the IFOP poll indicated, most often belonged to the PCF or the Unified Socialist Party. See Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s Sondage de l'IFOP," October 12, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE; and F. Raphaél, "Les étudiants français et Israël," *Tribune juive* no. 172, October 15-21, 1971.

neighbors (20 percent).[965] These findings were due, in part, to the gradual dissipation of French radical politics by 1970. As Maud Mandel notes, government bans on the GP (1970) and the Communist League (1973), together with economic crisis and Egypt and Syria's surprise attack on Israel in late 1973, curbed the fervor of anti-Zionist activism in the early 1970s.[966] A similar dissipation took place within France's Jewish student population, where ardor over Israel bled off with the energy of the '68 movement.[967] 1968-70 must consequently be understood as a relatively brief period of activity and rethinking about Israel, whose energy had largely evaporated by 1970. Nevertheless, this period remains important, in that its discursive and political transformations impelled the deterioration of French popular sympathy for Israel, and indicated the direction this breakdown would take. As we shall see, however, events in the winter of 1969-70 would bring Israel roaring back into the forefront of the mainstream French imagination, reenergizing longstanding sympathetic images of Israel in unexpected ways.

[965] *Ibid.* 20 percent expressed sympathy for neither.
[966] Maud Mandel, 100-1, 123-24.
[967] Jacques Tarnov, "Un mai morose," *L'arche* no. 182, April 26 - May 25, 1972.

Chapter Six

The "James Bond" of Cherbourg: Imagining Israel in Pompidou's France[*]

Introduction

On Christmas Eve, 1969, five embargoed missile boats were spirited out of the French port of Cherbourg under the cover of darkness and a Norwegian shell company. By New Year's Day, ending intense speculation, they were in Haifa, to the delight of Israelis and their friends in France. "Better than James Bond!" responded the French newspaper *Paris-jour*. "The odyssey of the five boats . . . exceeds the imagination. No screenwriter could have imagined a more fantastic story. Everything is here: theatricality, suspense, panic in embassies and presidential palaces; the only thing missing is a beautiful woman. But perhaps a naiad will, at the last hour, become the heroine of this unbelievable yet true story."[968] While the hoped-for naiad never appeared, French public discourse nonetheless remained riveted on the spy thriller that had come to life in their own back yards.

The Cherbourg affair, as the escape became known, had its roots in Charles de Gaulle's unpopular embargo of June 2, 1967, which had impeded arms deliveries to Israel on the eve of the Six-Day War.[969] In late 1968 de Gaulle expanded the embargo's

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[*] A portion of this chapter has been previously published in *French Historical Studies* 40:4 as "The 'James Bond' of Cherbourg: Imagining Israel in Pompidou's France." It is reproduced here with the permission of Duke University Press.

[968] "Les huit mystères de ce super James Bond," *Paris-jour*, December 29, 1969.

[969] De Gaulle's embargo on the sale of "offensive weaponry" to "battlefield countries" in the Arab-Israeli conflict applied to several Arab states as well. Israel, however, was the only significant customer of the French arms industry in the region, and the embargo was aimed at it. By 1970, approximately 50 percent of the Israeli air force and 70 percent of the Israeli navy used French materiel. Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale (SGDN), Note d'Information, "Les Influences Étrangères en Afrique du Nord et au Moyen-Orient," August 6, 1970, GR 9 Q1 51, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France.

scope in a move calculated to restore France's Mediterranean role as a self-defined "Muslim power" and punish Israel for a reprisal raid on the Beirut International Airport. When de Gaulle resigned under pressure from the May Events of 1968 and a popular referendum in April 1969, French and Israeli observers were hopeful that the embargo would be lifted. They were disappointed, however, when de Gaulle's successor, Georges Pompidou, decided to maintain his mentor's policy.[970] Like de Gaulle, Pompidou sought to disentangle French-Israeli relations from sentiment, while officials including Defense Minister Michel Debré were pressuring the new president to maintain Gaulle's Middle East policy.[971] Pompidou's decision generated a heated debate on the embargo's rationale, and raised considerable public protest despite the government's many attempts to explain the embargo's pragmatic bases. As a result, mainstream interest in Israel was buoyed outside the activist milieu of French universities, where the question of Israel was assuming new, yet still marginal political and ideological dimensions.

The Cherbourg affair of Christmas 1969 reignited this debate, and thrust Israel into the forefront of the French public imagination.[972] While the Pompidou government expressed outrage, French media and political discourse was largely approving, praising Israeli audacity at the expense of the French government. At a moment when French public opinion might well have turned against Israel for its embarrassment of the

[970] On Pompidou's relationship to de Gaulle's policies, see John Gaffney, *Political Leadership in France: From Charles de Gaulle to Nicolas Sarkozy* (London: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2010), 103.
[971] "Texte Integral de la Conference de Presse Tenue cet Apres-Midi a l'Élysée par M. Georges Pompidou, Président de la République," Association France-Presse (AFP) bulletin 122, July 10, 1969; U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 7108, May 15, 1969, file POL 1 FR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (USNA).
[972] In the days that followed virtually every national French newspaper, and many provincial outlets, ran multiple stories on the affair.

Pompidou government, it did the opposite, rejuvenating calls to lift the embargo against Israel.

This well-known but little-analyzed episode importantly illustrates that two years after the official French-Israeli rupture in 1967, French public opinion on Israel remained fundamentally at odds with official policy. While government policy had abruptly turned, the French public showed itself slow to abandon two decades of French-Israeli friendship and an ally whose vulnerability was a cornerstone of mainstream discourse on the Middle East.[973] The impact of this sentiment was tangible: with only 17 percent support for his Middle East policy, Pompidou's punitive options were severely limited.[974] The unpopular embargo had also been difficult to enforce, especially among defense establishment officials who maintained good relations with their Israeli colleagues. As a result, a small but steady trickle of arms had continued to flow from France to Israel, despite official directives.[975] Indeed, the Cherbourg affair itself had only been made possible by the complicit acquiescence of such officials, who allowed state policy to be undermined. Their willingness to look the other way illustrates that, even within the French bureaucracy, Gaullist narratives of an aggrandizing Israel were not yet dominant.

This disjuncture between the popular and the official was rooted in an enduring perception of an embattled Israel, still threatened by its enemies and still in need of

[973] Jean Ferniot, "Les français Israël et les arabes," *France-soir,* January 21, 1970; Jean Ferniot, "Expliquer n'est pas toujours convaincre," *France-soir,* January 10, 1969. Laurence Coulon has reached similar conclusions. See Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 9-13, 216.
[974] "L'opinion publique et l'embargo," *Tribune juive,* February 13-19, 1970.
[975] According to *Le nouvel observateur*'s editor Jean Daniel, De Gaulle reportedly possessed an "extensive dossier on the 'disobedience' of his armed forces." Quoted in Robin Smyth, "Army 'sold Israel arms,'" *Daily mail*, January 1, 1969; Quai officials were likewise aware of ongoing smuggling. See Sous-Direction du Levant, Note "A/s - Entretien de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël avec le Secrétaire Général, le 6 février 1970," February 7, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France.

French benevolence. This image was grounded in a living memory of the Holocaust, as well as ideological sympathy between fellow socialists, and memories of French-Israeli cooperation during the Algerian and Suez Wars. The 1967 Six-Day War had a complicated effect on this image. For some, including de Gaulle, Israel's preemptive war and rapid victory were alienating, undermining notions of a vulnerable Israel. Israel's occupation of conquered territory was also a source of some concern. Outside the far Left, however, this was not a dominant issue; many expected it to be resolved as part of a comprehensive peace settlement. It was only after the early 1970s, as peace prospects stagnated and Israel's occupations took on a more permanent aspect, that a negative image of Israel-as-occupier began to take root.[976] Others, however, continued to see Israel as a beleaguered state, viewing it as an audacious underdog with a burgeoning reputation for daring in the face of long odds. This was the majority view, and its enduring salience united otherwise disparate voices across the French political spectrum in a common critique of the Gaullist embargo. The Cherbourg affair reinforced perceptions of a capable but beleaguered Israel and demonstrated that, far from disappearing in the wake of the Six-Day War, the French image of "brave little Israel" continued to shape discourse and action.

The French popular response to the Cherbourg affair critically challenges the suggestion that the Six-Day War produced an overnight recasting of Israel's image in

[976] Early reactions to Israel's occupations were mixed. De Gaulle had been critical of these occupasions as early as June 1967, evoking the occupation of France during the Second World War, and blaming them for stalled peace efforts. His position was echoed by fellow Gaullists like Pierre Messmer. French military attachés serving in Israel, by contrast, produced sympathetic reports on Israeli occupation policies into the early 1970s, but monitored them closely for signs of collective punishment, which were negatively associated with the French experience of the Second World War. Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages vol. 4: Vers le terme, 1966-1969* (Paris: Plon, 1970-1971), 184, 234; Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itineraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 2, 1958-1991* (Paris, Institut des études palestiniennes, 1993), 133; Lt.-Colonel Rohé, Monthly Reports of September 28 1971, March 28 1972, and May 2 1972, box 14 S 340, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

France.[977] As we noted in Chapter Four, this claim, explicit or implicit, has become something of a truism for those seeking to retrospectively explain declining sympathy for Israel in the 1970s and 1980s.[978] Assuming a rapid transformation in Israel's image is, however, problematically one-dimensional in its teleological implications and disregard of the demographic, political, and cultural changes taking place within France itself.[979] The splintering of attitudes toward Israel on the Left and among student activists must also be set against the backdrop of a wider public opinion that demonstrated far more continuity than change in its thinking about Israel into the early 1970s. Though the divergent positions of these groups would eventually rise to mainstream prominence, by 1970 their impact remained largely circumscribed within the universities and Maoist and Trotskyite circles. While the Six-Day War was an important turning point, the discursive impact of June 1967 needs to be understood as a process, and not solely as a paradigm-

[977] A claim made, to a greater or lesser extent, by a number of historians writing on this and other periods, including Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 10-13; June Edmunds, *The Left and Israel: Party-Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 85; Michel Winock, *La France et les juifs: De 1979 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), 307, 319; and Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715-1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 257-58. See also Elie Barnavi and Luc Rosenzweig, *La France et Israël: Une affaire passionnelle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 31, 168-69; Michel Abitbol, "Introduction," in Michel Abitbol, ed., *France and the Middle East: Past, Present, and Future* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes Press, 2004), xiv; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, "France and the June 1967 War," in Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis, eds., *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247.

[978] This assumption is most common and most understandable among those assessing the impact of June '67 through its Jewish angle, where the Six-Day War had its most immediate and transformative effect. Works where this assumption is present include Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1, 19, 26; Doris Bensimon, *Les juifs de France et leurs relations avec Israël 1945-1988* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), 163-65; Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le CRIF. De la Résistance juive a la tentation du lobby* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 2011), 48-49, 56; Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, and Freddy Raphael, *Jewish Citizenship in France; the Temptation of Being among One's Own,* trans. Catherine Temerson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 2-3; and Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: An Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 112.

[979] Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 155.

shattering moment. The Cherbourg affair provides a key window into this process as it played out in France, and demonstrates that the erosion of French public and political support for Israel was slow and uneven.

Despite being relatively well-known, the Cherbourg affair has rarely been the subject of detailed study, and has never been critically analyzed as a reflection of post-1967 French attitudes toward Israel. Abraham Rabinovich has produced the only major work on the affair, though he presents it merely as an exciting overture to a reevaluation of the role of missile boats in naval warfare.[980] To marginalize this episode, however, would be to paper over the split between public and policy over Israel, what it meant for Israel's international reception, and how it shaped politics within France itself. Indeed, Samy Cohen argues that Cherbourg played an important role in solidifying a growing split within the Gaullist left wing, the former Democratic Union of Labor (UDT), leaving Pompidou's Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR) fractured in its response to the affair.[981] These divisions were on full display as the story broke, with some of the embargo's loudest critics coming from within Pompidou's own party. Israel played an important role in sharpening these divisions, as the apparent binary between honoring France's commitments to Israel and maintaining friendship with the Arab world raised questions about how best to serve France and its interests. Why did the Cherbourg affair strike such a resonant chord in the French political world, and what led so many to challenge their government's policy on the Middle East at this moment?

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[980] Abraham Rabinovich, *The Boats of Cherbourg: The Navy that Stole its Own Boats and Revolutionized Naval Warfare* (New York: Seaver Books, 1988), 11-12.

[981] Gaullist support for Israel unified politicians who had otherwise serious political differences, such as Jacques Soustelle, Leo Hamon, Pierre-Charles Krieg, Claude Marcus, Jacques Duhamel, and Jacques Mercier. By 1970, however, leaders on the Gaullist left like Louis Terrenoire and Jacques Debû-Bridel were pulling that wing of the movement away from Israel. Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 294-99.

The Cherbourg Affair

The story of the Cherbourg Affair began in 1962 as Israel searched for a way to counter deliveries of Soviet *Komar* missile boats to Egypt. After an unsuccessful bid in Germany, Israel commissioned a dozen fast missile boats from Les Constructions Méchaniques de Normandie, the French shipyard of Félix Amiot. Construction began in 1965, by which time Israel and France had already enjoyed over a decade of close military, scientific, and intelligence cooperation.

This cooperation came to an abrupt end, however, when President Charles de Gaulle embargoed the delivery of offensive weaponry to the Middle East on the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War. As we saw in Chapter Three, this was a move calculated to curry favor with the Soviet and Arab governments, and launch four-power talks in which de Gaulle envisioned a key French role. Seeking to distance himself from American regional goals, de Gaulle hoped to present France as an even-handed negotiating partner who could bridge the gaps between the two superpowers from outside the rival camps of the Cold War. In principle, this embargo applied to all "battlefield" countries. In practice, however, only Israel was affected as Soviet, American, British, and at times, French arms flowed to its Arab neighbors. Most critically, fifty Mirage aircraft, already purchased by Israel, were denied export permits. The embargo drew significant public critique despite Israel's subsequent victory in the Six-Day War.[982] De Gaulle, however, remained aloof, even as the Soviets displayed little interest in French-brokered talks. When the president doubled-down on his break with Israel during his press conference of November, 1967, reconciliation with Israel seemed increasingly unlikely. The boats being built in

[982] The French public was split at 37 percent approval and disapproval for the embargo on Israel by October 1967, and support for Israel reached 58 percent. Most favored a blanket embargo of the Middle East that would be less prejudicial to Israel. Cohen, 186-90.

Cherbourg, however, were nominally excluded from the embargo. By late 1968, five had sailed for Israel.

On December 28, 1968, however, the situation deteriorated. Gunmen from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine attacked an Israeli civilian jetliner in Athens. Israel responded by launching a reprisal raid against the Beirut International Airport.[983] De Gaulle was furious, and viewed the raid as an insult to France's "special relationship" with Lebanon.[984] His embarrassment was compounded by Israel's use of French-built helicopters to destroy partially French-owned aircraft on Beirut's runways. Without consulting his cabinet, he now ordered a total embargo on all arms to Israel, including the missile boats.[985]

News of de Gaulle's embargo was late in reaching the port of Cherbourg, however. Anticipating de Gaulle's reaction, the two most recently completed boats, *Saar 6* and *7*, had slipped out of port days before with their Israeli crews, ostensibly for further sea trials. It had been only half in jest that the port's French foreman had asked whether the boats would be back the next morning. Israeli supply lieutenant Haim Shachak had been dispatched to reassure the foreman and the local customs officer. Shachak pointed out the still-unfinished interior of *Saar 7*, and won the sympathy of the customs officer's wife with an exchange of biblical quotations.[986] The wife was the daughter of a minister, and responded enthusiastically to Shachak's references to the Book of Jonah. She

[983] The Israeli raid took place outside the airport's operating hours and produced no casualties, but it did cause significant material damage. Twelve empty passenger aircraft and two cargo planes were destroyed.
[984] Jean d'Escrienne, *Le Général m'a dit, 1966-1970* (Paris: Plon, 1973), 155-58.
[985] Both the Defense and Foreign Ministries raised objections, but were overruled. U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 286, January 8, 1969, file DEF 12 ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[986] Rabinovich, 13-20.

persuaded her husband to acquiesce, and the boats were allowed to depart; once clear, they steamed for Haifa.

The French public was again split by de Gaulle's Israel policy. Only the French Communist Party voiced unanimous approval for the embargo.[987] Many feared that a unilateral embargo on Israel would exacerbate rather than calm regional tensions, feeding a growing arms disparity. The French military attaché in Egypt, Lt.-Colonel Niclausse, issued an ominous warning: if Soviet arms flowed unabated into Egypt and Syria without being offset by comparable sales to Israel, a renewal of Arab-Israeli fighting was likely.[988]

When de Gaulle resigned in mid-1969 he was succeeded by Georges Pompidou in a landslide victory. Many observers hoped France would now return to a "selective embargo," or overturn it altogether, as Pompidou had implied in his electoral campaign. But Pompidou had been non-committal. By leaving his embargo policy ambiguous, Pompidou likely sought to allay the concerns of Jewish voters, who had frequently asked candidates to clarify their positions on Israel during the 1968 legislative election.[989] Pompidou's efforts to do so may have stemmed from an overestimation of Jewish electoral power, common in some ranks of the Gaullist party. Some, including state minister Edmond Michelet, French ambassador Léon Noël, and de Gaulle himself, felt that Jews, though only 1 percent of the French electorate, held disproportionate control over the media and had mobilized public support against de Gaulle's 1969 constitutional

[987] In January 1969 French disapproval for the policy of total embargo overtook approval, at 45 and 37 percent respectively. "Un sondage: 45% des français désapprouvent «l'embargo»," *Paris presse,* January 24, 1969; Jean Ferniot, "Expliquer n'est pas toujours convaincre," *France-soir,* January 10, 1969.
[988] The United States was beginning to replace France as Israel's chief military supplier, however Niclausse must have felt these sales were insufficient. Lt.-Colonel Niclausse, Monthly Report of December 22 1967, box 14 S 310, sub-series S, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[989] Cohen, 205-6.

referendum.[990] More pragmatically, Pompidou also showed himself sensitive to the domestic repercussions of a long-term embargo on Israel. Mindful that cancelling Israeli orders would throw hundreds out of work and weaken the French arms industry, Pompidou allowed production on the five remaining *Saar* boats to continue.[991] Doing so left a return to "selective embargo" a real possibility, and created space for a potential *quid pro quo* with the Israelis.

However, when news broke in mid-December 1969 that France was selling 400 million dollars in tanks and Mirage-III fighter-bombers to Libya, despite its avowed readiness to employ them against Israel, the embargo lost its last veneer of evenhandedness.[992] Muammar Gaddafi's September 1969 coup had strong Nasserist overtones, and was viewed suspiciously within the French Ministry of Defense, where concerns were raised that French-built Mirages might find their way onto Egyptian airstrips. Few were comforted by the insistence of Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann and Presidential Chief of Staff Michel Jobert that if France did not sell to Libya, the Soviets would — Israel least of all.[993] With the embargo showing no signs of easing, and faced with a severe naval arms disparity, Israel decided to act.[994]

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[990] *Ibid*., 209-10. On de Gaulle's attitudes toward supposed Jewish power in the media, see Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 84

[991] Félix Amiot, whose firm was building the boats, and Jacques Herbert, the mayor of Cherbourg, both lobbied that production be allowed to continue on these grounds. Rabinovich, 88.

[992] The French were under no illusions about Gaddafi's desire to become an "active" participant in "the battle against Zionism." But the Foreign Ministry reasoned that it would be several years before Libya could integrate its new French arms. *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (*DDF*), *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 35, 1969 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1969, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 234, October 15, 1969; *DDF*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 36, 1969 Tome II, 1er juillet - 31 décembre 1969, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 293, November 4, 1969.

[993] *DDF*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 37, 1970 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1970, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 37, January 21, 1970; Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir* (Paris: Grasset, 1974), 167.

[994] Hecker, 30; Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s Le Moyen-Orient et l'embargo française sur les armes," January 5, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

Historians are divided as to the origins of "Operation Noah's Ark," the Israeli plan to recover the five remaining *Saar* boats. Gordon Thomas contends that Israel's Mossad, under the direction of Meir Amit, was the key architect of the affair. Running the operation on the ground was Admiral (ret.) Mordechai 'Moka' Limon, the head of the Israeli Defense Ministry's purchasing mission in Paris. Rabinovich, by contrast, claims that "the Mossad was not involved in the operation. It was Limon who conceived it and the navy that organized it."[995] What is clear either way, is that Limon was the most important Israeli actor, overseeing the operation from start to finish.

Tall, blockish, and balding, the forty-five year old Limon cut an imposing if not dashing figure. He had been stationed in Paris since 1962, and by 1969 had developed extensive ties with the French arms industry; it was Limon who had first negotiated the Cherbourg contract in 1965. He was also no stranger to the clandestine. As a young man Limon had served in the *Palyam*, Israel's pre-state navy, captaining several ships illegally transporting Jewish refugees to Palestine. A combat officer during the Israeli War of Independence, Limon became the fourth commander of the Israeli navy in 1950, the youngest to ever hold the rank. Daring, connected, and ready to look outside the box, Limon was just the man for the job.

The Israelis decided that the boats could only be recovered under a legal pretext. Accordingly, in November 1969, Israel's largest shipping company, Maritime Fruit, discreetly registered a new firm, Starboat, with a Panamanian registration and a Norwegian mailing address. Limon, meanwhile, secured the backing of shipyard owner

[995] A Mossad role is not unthinkable, but the primacy of personal relations in such undertakings, encapsulated by Limon, fit the pattern of French-Israeli relations established over the previous two decades. Gordon Thomas, *Gideon's Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad* 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 286-88; Rabinovich, 125.

Félix Amiot, Norwegian shipping magnate Ole Martin Siem, and Mila Brenner, a director of Maritime Fruit who became Starboat's principal shareholder.[996] On November 11th, Limon and Siem played out a scripted exchange in back-to-back conversations with French General Louis Bonte, the director of international affairs to the Interministerial Commission for the Study of Arms Exports (Commission interministérielle pour l'étude des exportations de matériel de guerre, CIEEMG). As Limon announced Israel's willingness to void its contract in exchange for reimbursement, Siem offered to purchase the boats for Starboat, which would use them in the secretive field of oil prospecting, at a 5 percent profit to France. Bonte accepted; the deal seemed to solve two problems at once, offloading the troublesome boats while maneuvering France out of an embarrassing breach of contract.[997] He passed on the deal to the CIEEMG, where it was hurriedly approved by its director, General Bernard Cazelles, the Secretary General of National Defense.

Authorization went forward despite an absence of printed details or any direct mention of the Starboat company. Even Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann lauded the deal, praising it as a model transaction. A number of middle-tier officials did become suspicious of the proposed sale, however. Unofficial questions were being asked about the otherwise unknown Starboat company and its readiness to overpay for disarmed missile boats. The notion that they would be used for running supplies to Norwegian oil platforms struck several officials as far-fetched.[998] But no red flags were raised. Those who suspected Israeli involvement opted to look the other way; they either sympathized

[996] Brenner's role is contested by historians; Thomas argues Amit brought him in, while Rabinovich contends that Brenner inserted himself to help cover his friend Siem from criticism.
[997] Thomas, 286-89; Rabinovich, 90-1.
[998] *Ibid.*

with Israel's position, or felt the proposed deal tidily handled the awkward problem of the boats.[999] Others, disenchanted by Gaullist reconciliation with the Arab and Soviet worlds, saw the scheme as a way of getting back at de Gaulle's successors, Debré and Pompidou.[1000] Ultimately, some thirty mid-level officials deduced the boats' true destination, and the matter was even discussed in a secret meeting within one of the ministries involved.[1001] Uniformly, however, these men turned a blind eye, and the sale was allowed to go forward. Lacking even the full cooperation of the bureaucracy, Pompidou's unpopular embargo was poised for failure. The acquiescence of key officials was a critical precondition for the success of the Cherbourg operation, and it illustrates that the disparity between policy and opinion extended into the lower-levels of government.

One such official was Jacques Marti, the head of the customs division on naval exports. Marti had the power to override the CIEEMG's approval of the Starboat sale if he suspected something amiss. In a meeting with an Amiot lawyer, Marti had seen through the Israeli ruse, but decided not to act. Rabinovich recounts the encounter: "'Norway, eh?'" Marti had queried. "'These boats are headed for Israel, aren't they?' The lawyer saw no point in trying to brazen it out. 'Yes,' he admitted. 'In that case,' said Marti, lifting a pen, 'I'll sign.' He objected to the embargo, liked Israel, and felt that it

[999] Rabinovich recounts a telling episode: in late 1969, the chairman of the National Defense Committee of the French National Assembly, Alexandre Sanguinetti, had asked Amiot "Why don't the Israelis just get on their boats and go?" To make sure Moka Limon got the message loud and clear, Sanguinetti dispatched a journalist, Claude Servan-Schreiber, to repeat it to Limon personally at his home. Rabinovich, 82.
[1000] *Ibid*., 91. Richard Viven has noted that the French Far Right had shifted into an opposition role after the pull-out from Algeria in 1962. Support for Israel became one vehicle for articulating their opposition to the Gaullist policy of *grandeur* and their defense of an ideological and racial "West" that included Israel. Richard C. Viven, "The End of an Ideology? Right-Wing Antisemitism in France, 1944-1970," in *The Historical Journal* 37:2 (June, 1994), 377-79; see also Gaffney, 37-38, 72-87.
[1001] Rabinovich, 91.

should get the goods it had ordered and paid for."[1002] Marti passed the deal forward, and on December 23 Limon, Amiot, and Siem met in private to sign a lease-purchase contract between Starboat and the Israelis.[1003]

Marti was not an isolated case. In January 1969, Limon had convinced a French official to route de Gaulle's internal embargo notice through a district customs office in Normandy, buying time for *Saar 6* and *7* to escape. Félix Amiot also proved to be an enthusiastic partner. He well remembered hiding Jewish children during the Holocaust, and would weep with relief to see the last of the Starboats escape later that December. Amiot's shipyard executive, André Corbinais, was also intimately involved. He would dismiss suspicious harbor guards on Christmas Eve, join the Israeli captains for a final check, and likewise weep at their departure.[1004] Locals in the Cherbourg community were also in on the scheme, at least partially. The president of Cherbourg's small Jewish community, a dentist named Michel, had foreknowledge of the boats' departure, and had agreed to help look after the families of Israeli sailors who would soon be departing. Marc Justiniani, the editor of the local *La presse de la manche*, had meanwhile agreed to a request from Amiot to avoid publishing any article that might draw premature attention to the boats. He kept his word, even when it resulted in his paper getting scooped.[1005] In acting as they did, these men became participants in a decades-old tradition of unofficial support for Israel from within the French public and defense bureaucracy. The Gaullist rupture of 1967-68 had yet to dissolve these critical ties.

[1002] Rabinovich reconstructed this episode from interviews conducted with the participants. Rabinovich, 92.
[1003] *Ibid*., 90-91, 99.
[1004] *Ibid.,* 20, 64, 88, 130-35.
[1005] *Ibid.,* 142-43.

While Limon was firming up the legal end in late 1969, Israeli sailors had quietly trickled into Cherbourg, supplementing the Israeli crews who were already there to supervise construction and sea trials.[1006] On Christmas Eve, while Cherbourg was busy celebrating, the five boats slipped out of the harbor, neglecting only a customs formality. They raced south through a force-9 gale — not for Norwegian oil fields, but the Strait of Gibraltar. When the story broke on December 27, the French public was variably bemused and appalled. They watched with mounting excitement, and increasing ridicule for their government, as the boats dashed into the Mediterranean, re-fueled at sea, were tracked by NATO observation posts, and eluded the Egyptian navy. By New Year's Day the boats were in Israel — legally, but only dubiously so.

Defense Minister Michel Debré and Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann were furious.[1007] Debré toyed with the idea of sending the French navy after the boats, while a Foreign Ministry missive likened the Israelis to pirates.[1008] Pompidou, however, mandated a muted response. Bonte and Cazelles were indefinitely suspended, and Limon expelled, but no further action was forthcoming.[1009] In fact, outside its public embarrassment, the situation had concluded rather tidily for Pompidou's government: Israel had the boats it had paid for, France could protest its innocence to the Arab states, and the timing of the affair appeared to balance out the unpopular sale of arms to Libya.

[1006] Thomas, 289.

[1007] This did not stop Pompidou's Chief of Staff, Michel Jobert, from terming the Cherbourg operation "an exploit worthy of Robin Hood." *DDF*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 37, 1970 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1970, Document 4, January 2, 1970; Jobert, 167.

[1008] Foreign Ministry Telegram to French embassies in Rome, Malta, Athens, Nicosia, and Ankara, December 28, 1969, 10 T 817, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[1009] A British journalist reported that at least three other high ranking civil servants were quietly retired, and Foreign Ministry documents alluded generally that Limon's collaborators "will no longer have relations with the services of the Ministry of Defense," but I have found no concrete references to specific punitive measures. John Ellison, "Now France's top men are caught in the wake of those gunboats," *Daily express*, January 7, 1970; Secrétariat Général à tous postes diplomatiques des zones Afrique du Nord et Levant, Circulaire no. 2, January 2, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

The Israeli government, if not its public, was similarly mum, in an effort to reduce the tensions produced by the affair. Meanwhile, many in France speculated that Pompidou's government was directly complicit, or at least pleased to see the problem of the boats gone.[1010] The overwhelming majority, however, were happy to see their government duped, and applauded the Israelis with cries of "well done!" and "well played!"[1011]

Public Discourse and the Embargo of January 1969

To explain the French public's reaction to the Cherbourg affair we must first situate it in the context of existing commentary on the January 1969 Gaullist embargo, which reveals important currents of change and continuity in the French perception of Israel since the Six-Day War. For those faithful to de Gaulle's narrative of an aggrandizing Israel, Israel's image had undergone an inversion; it was the Arab states which were now vulnerable before an aggressive Israel.[1012] These changes were most visible among a subset of the Gaullist movement's left wing, and among the embargo's defenders in government. Debré, writing to justify the January 1969 embargo, insisted that "for a long time Israel was threatened by its neighbors. Today, it is these neighboring [Arab] states whose future is threatened."[1013] Gaullist deputy Pierre Messmer echoed this sentiment, arguing that Israeli expertise negated Arab numbers: "Israel has an army and

[1010] Rabinovich has shown that the French internal police, the Renseignements Generaux, had foreknowledge of the impending Israeli departure from Cherbourg, but that their report failed to reach Paris before the Christmas holiday departures. Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey claim that Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Debré, and Minister of the Economy Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had been informed but chose not to act. However, in light of Debré's well-documented fury in the last days of December 1969, this scenario seems unlikely. Rabinovich, 120; Avi Primor, *Le triangle des passions: Paris - Berlin - Jérusalem* (Paris: Bayard, 2000), 207; Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 110; Jean-Yves Dumoulin, Bureau Correspondance et Discipline Générales, Fiche, "Affair 'vedettes de Cherbourg, Général Cazelles," February 20, 1985, 3 R 237, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1011] "L'affaire des vedettes de Cherbourg," *Le monde,* December 30, 1969.
[1012] Henry Weinberg, *The Myth of the Jew in France, 1967-1982* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1987), 31-36.
[1013] Michel Debré, "Les réactions dans les milieux politiques français," *La nation*, quoted in *Le figaro*, January 11, 1969.

an air force," he wrote. "The Arab states [merely] have tanks and planes."[1014] Others, such as UDR Secretary General Robert Poujade, defended the embargo on pragmatic grounds, explaining that "personal sympathies" had to be left aside in pursuit of French interests.[1015] The practical gains were indeed clear: France rapidly made up lost revenue from the Israelis with sales to Arab states, which had responded enthusiastically to the embargo.[1016] The Gaullist line was not all pragmatism, however: in a moment of excess, de Gaulle ordered his press spokesman, Joel Le Theule, to attribute critique of the embargo to Israeli "influence" in the media. Le Theule's remarks, apparently watered down from the original, were seen as antisemitic, and universally condemned.[1017]

The Gaullist press was more vociferous, and left-wing UDR deputy Louis Terrenoire was its most energetic voice. Blasting "Israel's acts of aggression," he framed his critique as part of a larger anti-colonial, anti-American, and anti-racist movement.[1018] He also likened Israel to Nazi Germany, and accused Israel's Jewish supporters of double-loyalty. An outspoken advocate of Palestinian rights and the leader of a parliamentary group for French-Arab friendship, Terrenoire aimed to capitalize on pro-Palestinian and Third-Worldist currents buoyed by the May Events of 1968. The rise of the New Left had seen the Palestinian struggle appropriated and amalgamated into a

[1014] Quoted in Uri Dan, *L'embargo* (Paris: Éditions et Publications Premières Paris, 1970), 89. Jacques de Montalais, the editor in chief of the monarchist *La nation*, expressed similar views. Jacques de Montalais, "Israël! Israël!" *Le monde*, January 15, 1969.
[1015] "Embargo," *L'aurore,* January 11, 1969.
[1016] Howard Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1999)*,* 188; SGDN, Note d'Information, "Les Influences Étrangères en Afrique du Nord et au Moyen-Orient," August 6, 1970, GR 9 Q1 51, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1017] Nonetheless, the argument became a minor trope within the government, and was repeated on later occasions by Debré and others. U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 808, January 20, 1969, file DEF 12 ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA; Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Yearbook* (*AJY*) Vol. 71 (1970), Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1970, 417.
[1018] Cohen, 276; Jean Schwoebel, "La crise israélo-arabe," *Le monde,* January 19, 1969; Henri Marque, "De Gaulle veut obliger l'O.N.U. à agir," *Paris presse,* January 10, 1969.

range of local and international causes, where it retained a symbolic currency for immigrants, Maoists, and Arab nationalists.[1019] But arguments like Terrenoire's were relatively isolated in the debate over the embargo. Outside of the far Left and nascent circles of pro-Palestinian activism, they had yet to develop mainstream salience.

The Communist Left, by contrast, was largely mum on the subject of the embargo. The French Communist Party (PCF) and its press organ, *L'humanité,* had been critical but not condemnatory of Israel since the early 1950s, in diligent adherence to the Soviet line. With the Six-Day War, however, their attitude had soured considerably, in tandem with the Soviet position. Now, instead of a hapless pawn and fellow victim of American imperialism, Israel figured as an aggressive imperialist in its own right, ranked alongside South Vietnam.[1020] The PCF was accordingly pleased with the Gaullist embargo, and *L'humanité* scrupulously avoided critiquing it. As other papers were quick to note, however, *L'humanité* was virtually alone in doing so.[1021]

A majority of French observers saw things otherwise, and for many the pre-1967 image of an endangered Israel remained powerful, unshaken by Israel's battlefield performance. Voices on the Left and Right demonstrated a striking degree of harmony in this regard. Despite their stark political differences, the left-wing *Combat* and opposition center-right *L'aurore* were the most outspoken critics of the embargo policy within the French press. The two papers had been at sharp odds over France's actions during the

[1019] See Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May '68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool: The Merlin Press, 2012), 108-22; Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 249-74; Maud Mandel, 100-124.
[1020] Thomas Buchanan, "Thomas Buchanan," *L'humanité,* June 8, 1967; Yves Moureau, "A qui la faute?" *L'humanité,* June 9, 1967.
[1021] Pierre Viansson-Ponte, "La décision sur l'embargo," *Le monde,* January 10, 1969. *L'humanité*'s only critique was that the embargo might serve as an excuse for the closure of factories, to the detriment of French workers.

Algerian war, and *L'aurore* retained an anti-Arab animus. Yet the papers were united by their enduring perception of Israel's vulnerability, and their critiques of the embargo bore considerable overlap. When *L'aurore*'s André Guérin asked how any "could believe that the enormous Arab world, armed and over-armed by Moscow, has reason to tremble before Israel," he found a surprising echo in *Combat*'s Pierre Paraf. The pacifist and antiracist writer put things in near-identical terms, asking how, in light of "massive" Soviet arms sales, France could "treat as the aggressor [this] tiny encircled state which makes claims only to its life and security??"[1022] The harmonization of these voices indicates that the question of Israel remained salient on both sides of the political spectrum, and had not yet taken on partisan overtones in mainstream discourse.

Meanwhile, though Israel's recent victories were not being ignored, pre-1967 images of a vulnerable Israel continued to pervade. "Despite its military success," Noël Copin wrote in the Catholic center-left *La croix*, "[. . .] Israel has always figured as the sheep among the wolves, the David threatened by the Goliath. The sensibilities of the Right and Left are unified on this matter."[1023] Polling data gave weight to this claim. Only 6 percent of French respondents felt Israel had been the aggressor in 1967, and while 59 percent disapproved of the Beirut airport raid, a corresponding 55 percent saw it as an act of "reprisal," as opposed to an act of "aggression" (26 percent). By January 1969, disapproval over the embargo had overtaken support in the French capital, at 45 and 37 percent respectively. Outside Paris, opinion was more decisive: a regional poll published in the Bordeaux-based *Sud-ouest* claimed that 93 percent of its readers opposed

[1022] André Guérin, "Israël agonissé par la politique du général," *L'aurore,* January 14, 1969; Pierre Paraf, "La France et le Proche-Orient," *Combat,* January 11, 1969.
[1023] Noël Copin, "Le général, Israël et l'opinion française," *La croix,* January 10, 1969.

the embargo.[1024] Few shared de Gaulle's view that it was a just punishment for Israeli aggression.

The memory of the Holocaust loomed particularly heavily over the embargo debate, and accounts for some of its contours. As we observed in Chapter Four, fears for Israel's survival during the Six-Day War had re-energized French public discourse about the Holocaust. The press had been replete with concern that the massacre of European Jewry might be revisited upon a beleaguered Israel. Rather than undermine this anxiety, Israel's rapid victory convinced many that superior arms, like the French-built Mirage-III, were the key to Israel's continued survival. In this light, the Gaullist embargo appeared complicit in a potential future genocide.

Challenging the embargo thus became a moral imperative. In January 1969, protestors against the embargo co-opted the sites of Holocaust memorialization, and staged a rally at the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation. Affirming that the Jewish State did not need to justify its right to self-defense in the wake of the Holocaust, their protest banners proclaimed "We prefer to be condemned than to receive condolences."[1025] In their view, Israel's survival was predicated on strength, no matter how unpopular. Ranking politicians in the Committee for Solidarity with Israel saw things in equally stark terms. General Pierre Kœnig, president of the Alliance France-Israël, proclaimed that "For Israel, it is victory or genocide," while Independent Republican Michel Poniatowski insisted that "one cannot abandon a friend threatened with death."[1026] *L'aurore* meanwhile warned that the embargo contained within it "the seeds of a new

[1024] Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël,* 187-89; "Un sondage: '45% des français désapprouvent l'embargo,'" *Paris presse,* January 24, 1969; "Important discourse de M. Eshkol aujourd'hui au parlement israélien," *Sud-ouest,* quoted in *L'aurore,* January 14, 1969.
[1025] "Deux mille personnes à la manifestation de solidarité avec Israël," *Le figaro,* January 16, 1969.
[1026] "Le Général Koenig lance un manifeste pour la levée de l'embargo," *L'aurore,* January 11-12, 1969.

martyrdom."[1027] The reading public expressed similar anxieties. Letters submitted to the conservative *Le figaro, L'aurore*, and the Catholic *La croix* called on France to "remember the abominable exterminations of Jews by the Nazis," and warned that the embargo "could lead to a genocide."[1028] For these individuals, energetic voices in French public discourse, neither Israel's victories nor the Gaullist narrative had assuaged their anxiety over Israel's future.

These attitudes are particularly striking in the context of the 1967-1970 War of Attrition between Israel and its neighbors, during which fierce border fighting and Israeli deep penetration raids might well have reinforced perceptions of a powerful Israel.[1029] Defense Ministry officials, for example, noted that, with Israeli raids almost reaching Cairo itself, "the Israelis are the absolute masters of the game."[1030] Yet though this fighting received consistent coverage in the press, it appears to have had little impact on popular French attitudes toward Israel. Rather, the fighting served primarily to remind Israel's supporters of its ongoing need for French arms. Calls to the repeal the embargo subsequently echoed across the political spectrum, from *Le figaro* and *L'aurore* on the Right to *Le monde* and *Combat* on the Center-Left.[1031] "De Gaulle has practically

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[1027] Roland Faure "Suite de l'éditorial de Roland Faure," *L'aurore,* January 11-12, 1969. Catholic spokesman R.P. Riquet echoed these remarks, condemning the embargo: "For my part, I refuse to share responsibility for a [policy] which could, sooner or later, lead to the . . . 'final solution' imagined by Hitler." Quoted in Dan, 139.

[1028] *Le figaro* claimed that 80 percent of the letters it received were critical of the embargo policy. "Nos lecteurs ont la parole," *Le figaro,* January 23, 1969; see also "L'embargo jugé par nos lecteurs," *L'aurore*, January 31, 1969; and "Boite au Lettres," *La croix,* January 16, 1969.

[1029] The Arab-Israeli War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Palestinian militant groups was launched by Gamal Abdel Nasser in an effort to compel Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai in the absence of a diplomatic settlement. It reached its peak in 1969-1970, as heavy Egyptian shelling along the Suez was met with high-profile Israeli raids and aerial bombardment. The war ended in an inconclusive ceasefire in August 1970.

[1030] Report no. 28/RAU/AFA/CD, January, 1970, 10 T 777, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[1031] Philippe Bernert, "Le mauvais procès," *L'aurore,* January 10, 1969; Claude Chevallier-Appert, "Réflexions sur un embargo," *Combat,* January 16, 1969; Dan, 120-22.

disarmed a tiny state of less than 3 million inhabitants, whose only preoccupation is to survive," wrote *L'aurore* in protest.[1032] "Can you imagine what would happen to a disarmed Israel?" echoed *Combat*'s Philippe Tesson. "And why the double standards . . . ? [The] political error is nothing compared to the moral fault."[1033] Tesson rejected Gaullist *realpolitik,* and insisted Israel receive the arms it needed for its defense.

French Jews were especially critical of the embargo, and their outspokenness can be attributed to a number of factors. As we observed in Chapter Four, French Jewish activism over Israel had increased substantially in June 1967 amidst fears that Nasser would carry out his promise to "wipe Israel off the map." The influx of a large and assertive community of North African Jewish émigrés over the course of the 1960s had also contributed, nearly doubling the Jewish population. Finally, the events of May '68 and the Gaullist rupture with Israel provided a political context in which speaking up for "Jewish" interests appeared increasingly legitimate and necessary. The embargo policy had accordingly been an important issue for the Jewish electorate during the 1968 legislative elections, as well as the 1969 presidential contest.

French Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan gave voice to the sentiments of his community when he announced that the embargo produced "a profound sadness" amongst French Jews: "The resurrection of the State of Israel, after the monstrous Nazi genocide, has had such an impact on the Jewish soul that whatever threatens the survival and existence of Israel reaches us in the depths of our spiritual being."[1034] The embargo, he asserted, was one such threat. Kaplan had been an outspoken critic of Gaullist policy since the Six-Day

[1032] Philippe Bernert, "Le mauvais procès que de Gaulle veut faire aux persécutés millénaires," *L'aurore,* January 10, 1969.
[1033] Quoted in Dan, 120-22.
[1034] Quoted in Cohen, 139.

War and an advocate of French-Israeli friendship well prior. He and individuals like him felt a moral responsibility for Israel's safety rooted in their memories of the Holocaust, a sense of shared Jewish destiny, and an enduring perception of Israeli vulnerability. In 1969, this sense of obligation remained powerful enough to influence journalists and politicians alike.

The pro-Israel movement also drew support from a surprising quarter: the French Far Right. At odds with the Gaullist movement since de Gaulle's commitment to Algerian independence in 1959, some elements on the Far Right saw Israel as an ally in a shared struggle against pan-Arabism and the Communist bloc. Now in an opposition role, these elements did not hesitate to attack France's Israel policy as part of their broader critique of the Gaullist program. In 1969, the extreme-right *Rivarol* accordingly affirmed that it had been "a grave error" to abandon Israel, whose struggle against Arab Socialism had provided "a true lesson in determination and courage."[1035] Anti-Arab racism also contributed to mobilizing Far Right sympathy for Israel. Enflamed by the 1954-1962 Algerian War, such currents retained much of their salience. This was particularly true for many displaced European colonists (*Pieds Noirs)*, over 800,000 of whom had emigrated to France in the early 1960s. French anti-Arab sentiment accordingly remained high in the late 1960s, and had spiked during the Six-Day War. In October 1967, some 44 percent of those polled had affirmed that they were "more strongly anti-Arab than anti-Jewish."[1036] The endurance of these attitudes and their integration into French debate on

[1035] Viven, 377-79. On the subordination of right-wing antisemitism to anti-Gaullism, see Yvan Gastaut, "La Guerre des Six Jours et la question du racisme en France," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 71 (2005): 15-29.
[1036] Viven, 376-80; Gastaut, 16-18. See also the extensive treatments of Jewish and Muslim figuring in postwar France in Katz, (2015), and Mandel,(2014).

Israel suggests that public critique of the embargo may have been, for some, more a matter of being anti-Arab than pro-Israel.

A more popular critique of the embargo was prevalent among those whose support for Israel was less unconditional. Calling rather for an expansion of the embargo to encompass the entire Middle East, this argument insisted that Gaullist policy was hypocritical, cynical, and dangerous, likely to exacerbate an arms disparity in favor of the Arab states and thereby heighten regional tensions. These critiques stemmed from a belief that a unilateral embargo was simply wrong-headed, an embarrassment to France in light of its sales to Arab states, and an affront to the French sense of fair play.[1037] Even the center-left *Le monde,* which typically limited itself to unemotional and even-handed analysis, spoke out as its director, Hubert Beuve-Mery, criticized the embargo as "excessive . . . an abuse of monocracy."[1038] Subsequent op-eds warned that de Gaulle's policy courted war and would compel Israel into a pre-emptive strike.[1039] The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre went further, arguing that anything less than counter-balancing shipments to Israel would sooner or later kick off a new round of fighting. "You still have . . . eighty million men against two million," Sartre argued. Trying "to reach a negotiated peace by [denying] arms to everyone . . . would result in giving Israel into the hands of the Arabs."[1040] Sartre and *Le monde* warned that de Gaulle was playing a dangerous game, risking the very war he sought to avoid.

[1037] French Jurist and Nobel laureate René Cassin, for example, lamented that "For once, France identifies itself with injustice," and warned that the embargo's consequences were "more moral than material." Quoted in Maurice Moch, "La presse contre l'embargo," *L'arche* no. 143, January 26 - February 25 1969; and Dan, 136.
[1038] Hubert Beuve-Mery, *Le monde,* January 10, 1969, quoted in *ibid*, 121.
[1039] Pierre Uri, *Le monde,* January 16, 1969, quoted in *ibid*., 122.
[1040] Quoted in *ibid*., 136-38.

Prominent Gaullists also failed to rally behind their party leaders, and UDR deputies were some of the embargo's most vocal critics, despite being threatened with expulsion from the party.[1041] Pierre-Charles Krieg and Claude Marcus predicted an aggravation of tensions; Jacques Mercier and Leo Hamon protested the embargo's unilateral character, while Jacques Hébert, the Gaullist mayor of Cherbourg, asked whether French arms had been sold to Israel merely as show pieces.[1042] Additional critiques came from the bureau of the Radical Socialist Party and the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICA). Gaston Defferre, the Socialist mayor of Marseilles, likewise seized on the embargo to critique his Gaullist rivals, and argued that a general embargo was the only road to peace.[1043] Even in the National Assembly Commission for National Defense and the Senate Commission on Foreign Affairs, Israel continued to be seen as the vulnerable party. Both called on the government to overturn the embargo for imperiling "the existence of the state of Israel."[1044]

With critiques coming from across the political and journalistic spectrum, it was clear that the French commitment to their erstwhile ally was still poignantly felt two years on from the Gaullist break with Israel. The irony of the moment was that, by hardening his embargo, de Gaulle had inadvertently reenergized narratives of a beleaguered Israel; as *L'arche* journalist Georges Suffert quipped in February 1969,

[1041] U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 808, January 20, 1969, file DEF 12 ISR, 1967-1969 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, USNA.
[1042] *Ibid.*, 129-31.
[1043] "La France et le Moyen-Orient," *L'arche,* June 26 - July 25, 1969. Defferre was a leader in the French pro-Israel movement, and had served as the president of the national Israel Unified Support Committee (Comité Unifié de Soutien à Israël) during the Six-Day War.
[1044] "Nouvelles prises de position après la décision française sur le Moyen-Orient," *Le figaro,* January 16, 1969; "La Commission des Affaires étrangères réclame la levée de l'embargo," *L'aurore*, January 16, 1969.

"Thanks to de Gaulle, Israel has once more become the victim."[1045] These discourses would resurface with renewed vigor as the Cherbourg affair broke twelve months later.

The Spy Next Door: Public Reactions to the Cherbourg Affair

Whereas the January 1969 embargo demonstrated the enduring image of 'embattled Israel,' the December 1969 Cherbourg affair cemented newer discourses of Israeli daring that had been energized by the Six-Day War. As the story broke and headlines were replete with mentions of James Bond, a majority of French newspapers assumed that Israel had spirited the boats away, well before their final destination was certain. The phenomenon was telling: prevailing images of Israeli vulnerability did not conflict with Israel's growing reputation for sensational exploits.[1046] *Le monde* thus mused that the departure of the boats "appears similar enough to the sorts of coups we are used to seeing from the Israelis."[1047] It and other papers well recalled Israel's 1960 abduction of Adolf Eichmann, the 1966 capture of an Iraqi MiG-21, and the December 26, 1969 capture of an Egyptian P-12 radar system just days earlier. Such episodes had created a aura of intrigue around Israel and, as one journalist observed, one could count on the publication of some twenty trashy spy novels with Jewish or Israeli themes each year.[1048] Thus, when Israel's name first appeared in connection with the boats, few assumed the story would have a mundane conclusion.

This readiness to assume the extraordinary was bolstered from an unexpected angle: on December 18, French moviegoers had flocked to see James Bond's latest espionage thriller, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. One week later the French were

[1045] Georges Suffert, "Israël désarme?" *L'arche* no. 142, January 26 - February 25, 1969.
[1046] French provincial newspapers fixated upon Israel far faster than their national counterparts, suggesting that images of Israeli audacity were well ensconced in the French countryside.
[1047] *Le monde*, December 28, 1969.
[1048] D.J., "Clins d'œil de Tel Aviv," *L'arche* no. 171, May 26 - June 25, 1971.

living their own, and references to an Israeli "James Bond" soon abounded in the French press.[1049] "Is this an episode of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*?" asked an incredulous *Figaro*. "One thing is certain. The departure of the boats for Israel has been minutely, painstakingly, and very carefully planned by men for whom the word 'secret' still has a very precise meaning."[1050] Frequent mention was made of Israel's notoriously daring spies. The Israeli secret service was, according to journalist Yves Cuau,

> Without doubt the best in the world. It benefits from all the resources of Jewish intelligence, all the ingenuity of . . . Tel Aviv, all the rage of the survivors who escaped the death camps . . . . this is the old tale of David confronting the Philistine giant with his sling. The triumph of mobility and technique over size and strength.[1051]

For Cuau, it was the history of Jewish suffering that made the Israelis so capable; they were strong because they could not afford to be otherwise. This image of an audacious and cunning Israel had both positive and negative implications, however: *La croix* warned that Israeli spy exploits risked exposing French Jews to charges of complicity.[1052] The presence of such themes indicates that the French image of Israel was far from static, having been molded by the evident efficacy of Israel's military and intelligence services. For many, however, this newfound admiration did little to undermine existing images of Israeli vulnerability; the two themes were, rather, married, creating an image of a capable but beleaguered Israel in whose search for peace and security France retained an important role.

Thus, when Pompidou insisted that Israel's existence was not immediately threatened, few outside the government and far Left took notice. Discourse on the

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[1049] *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* rapidly became one of the most popular movies showing in France, with just under two million in admissions.
[1050] "Sur les vedettes de Cherbourg: Elles foncent vers Israël," *Le figaro,* December 29, 1969.
[1051] Yves Cuau, "Les 'couchous' de Tel-Aviv," *Le figaro litteraire,* January 5, 1970.
[1052] F.R., "«Jeu» dangeureux," *La croix,* December 30, 1969.

Cherbourg affair in late 1969 and 1970 fixated on two themes: renewed calls to modify the embargo, and ridicule of the French government. From opposite ends of the political spectrum *L'aurore* and *Combat* again evoked the specter of the Holocaust, warning of "the plight of a tiny encircled state" engaged in a "struggle for its life."[1053] *Combat* added that even with the stolen boats, Israel still faced a significant naval arms deficit.[1054] Breaking the embargo had thus made Israel appear desperate, its need seem greater, not less. A Parisian protest against the embargo drew ten thousand participants on January 21 1970, and by the end of the month protest campaigns were underway in thirty-six additional cities.[1055] Polls now showed only 20 percent support for the embargo; even among Pompidou's UDR, approval and disapproval were tied at 34 percent.[1056] Forty-one percent of those polled felt their government had failed to act with impartiality, leaving Israel at a dangerous disadvantage. An even-handed blanket embargo accordingly polled as the most popular alternative. Only 6 percent of respondents expressed support for a policy that favored the Arab states.[1057]

Meanwhile, a large segment of French discourse on the affair resumed the refrain that France had embarrassed itself by adopting a unilateral embargo. This was a critical moment, in which a significant number of French commentators blamed their own

[1053] André Guérin, "Les capitaines courageux," *L'aurore,* December 29, 1969; Georges Andersen, "Un episode de la lutte d'Israël pour la vie," *Combat,* December 30, 1969.
[1054] Georges Andersen, "La RAU conserve la suprématie naval face a Israël," *Combat,* January 1, 1970.
[1055] Simmy Epstein, "Des milliers de parisiens contre l'embargo a sens unique," *Tribune juive* no. 85, February 13-19, 1970; Reports, "Actions des Comités Locaux du Comité de Coordination," January 21, 24, and 30, 1970, MDI 212, archives du CRIF (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France], Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris. These cities included Aix-en-Provence, Amiens, Annemasse, Bayonne, Besançon, Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Cherbourg, Colmar, Creil, Dijon, Épernay, Laon, Lille, Le Havre, Limoges, Lyon, Marseilles, Nancy, Neuilly, Nice, Nimes, Pau, Périgueux, Poitiers, La Rochelle, Reims, Rouen, Sarcelles, Saint-Étienne, Strasbourg, Toulouse, Tours, Valence, Villeneuve-le-Garenne, and Vitry-le-François.
[1056] *L'express,* February 23, 1970.
[1057] Cohen, 191.

government for the international humiliation of the Cherbourg affair, rather than the Israelis who had duped them. That they did so at this moment, when Israel had never done more to potentially offend the honor of France, speaks to the endurance of the French-Israeli friendship outside the Élysée. Voices on the Right and Left united in a rejection the government's narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict. *Combat* and *L'aurore* alike criticized the "intolerable ambiguities" of a policy that allowed French arms to be sold to Libya, Iraq, and Egypt, but not Israel, and asked why the USSR could send all it wished, "while France [struggled] to justify honoring its own contracts."[1058] For *Combat*, the unilateral embargo also threatened to harden nationalist and annexationist currents in an isolated Israel, further jeopardizing regional peace.[1059] Each called on the government to modify the embargo.

Similar appeals came from representatives in the French Senate and National Assembly, UDR and otherwise. The Center-Democratic senator Jean Lecanuet termed the embargo "at once indecent and deceitful," and joined the UDR's Pierre Charles Krieg in calling on the government to "rethink its attitude" in favor of a general embargo ensuring "that Israel has the military capabilities essential for its defense."[1060] Local politicians mirrored these critiques, as did the General Council of Haute-Garonne, the regional government of the Toulouse area, which demanded the repeal of the embargo by a vote of 28 to 1.[1061] Jewish voices, too, had their say, and Chief Rabbi Kaplan again spoke out for

[1058] France had recently sold a number of half-tracks to Egypt. The sale was allowed, despite Egypt being undeniably a "battleground country," on the grounds that the half-tracks were a "defensive weapon." J.P.C., "Les 'vedettes de Cherbourg' embarrassent le gouvernement," *Combat,* December 29, 1969; "La farce de Cherbourg," *Combat,* December 29, 1969; Philippe Chassaing, "Les livraisons d'armes et l'embargo," *L'aurore,* January 20, 1970.
[1059] Pierre Paraf, "Les cinq vedettes de Cherbourg," *Combat,* January 3, 1970.
[1060] Pierre Limagne, "Des vedettes de Cherbourg," *Le monde,* December 31, 1969.
[1061] "Le Conseil Général de la Haute-Garonne," *Le monde,* January 15, 1970.

his constituency. For Kaplan, the issue remained the embargo, not the boats, and he linked Israel's situation to the long history of Jewish vulnerability. He did so by raising the subject at an event commemorating the 25th anniversary of the evacuation of Auschwitz, where he explained to an audience of French notables and politicians that,

> Israel is always in danger. Only its military superiority . . . prevents a new war from erupting. How long will this last when Mirages are sold to Libya, [and] tons of explosives are sold to Iraq . . . while the maintenance of the embargo against Israel is being publicly proclaimed? Israel maintains the memory of what France has done for it, but it cannot accept the application of a selective embargo made at [its] expense.[1062]

For Kaplan and many of his fellow critics, Cherbourg was a paradox: this latest display of Israeli audacity served primarily to recall the dangers facing the Jewish State, even as it cemented growing perceptions of an enterprising and capable Israel.

As in January 1969, however, there were some voices supporting government policy. Their discourses speak to the ways in which the French image of Israel was beginning to undergo important shifts, even if they had yet to become mainstream. *Le monde*, in an effort to appear even-handed, and the monarchist *La nation*, in an effort to defend Gaullist policy, were often venues for these voices.[1063] The loudest of these again belonged to Louis Terrenoire and his allies on the Gaullist left-wing. For him, Cherbourg was "an affront," and for the Communist *L'humanité,* "a scandal," although this referred as much to the government's possible complicity as it did the Israeli operation. Student groups on the Gaullist left-wing, such as the Young Progressives Front, the Union of Youth for Progress, and the Action Gaulliste also vocally criticized the "warlike and

[1062] It is telling that Kaplan appears to be speaking in the name of Israel as much as the French Jewish community. Quoted in "Le Grand Rabbin Kaplan dénonce l'embargo sélectif," *L'aurore,* January 19, 1970.
[1063] See for example La Nation, "Israël est-il infaillible?" *La nation*, January 21, 1970; The centrist *France-soir* also at times defended the Gaullist position. See Henri Marque, "Ni les mêmes poids ni les mêmes mesures," *France-soir*, January 29, 1970.

premeditated Israeli action" as "a humiliation" and "an outrage."[1064] Such voices were among the few to provide consistent attention to Palestinian issues, although mainstream French discourse continued to conceive Israel's conflict as being with its external neighbors. These narratives, still on the margins, attest to the generational shift that was beginning to take place in the French perception of Israel. Israel would take on new connotations as young leftists who experienced the Holocaust and Israel's early struggles as history, not memory, came to political maturity amidst the May Events of 1968 and its discourses of anti-colonialism, anti-Americanism, and anti-racism. Their early critiques would expand with time, particularly with the growth of pro-Palestinian activism in the mid-1970s.

More radical voices were also present. The Maurrassian *Aspects de la France* (associated with the Far Right Action Française) and left-Catholic *Témoignage chrétien* both pointed to the threat of conspiratorial Jewish or Israeli power in France, and their articles were laden with antisemitic undertones.[1065] In their frustration, the editors of *La nation* at times slipped into these patterns as well. Falling back on the critique de Gaulle had infamously laid out in November 1967, the paper accused French Jews who supported Israel of double-loyalty. Their "sympathy takes on an excessiveness," *La nation* editorialized, when it "drive[s] one to a sort of double allegiance . . . . It sometimes seems that Israel possesses, in all important states where Jewish communities exist,

[1064] "Début de l'enquete sur l'affaire des vedettes de Cherbourg," *L'humanité,* February 5, 1970; "Un long Conseil des ministres accouche d'une souris," *L'humanité,* January 1, 1970; "Des vedettes de Cherbourg," *Le monde*, December 30, 1969; "L'Affaire," *Le monde,* January 1, 1970; André Schemama, "La politique française d'embargo irrite les Israéliens," *Le monde,* January 7, 1970.
[1065] Pierre Pujo, "Seul compte l'interet français," *Aspects de la France,* January 1, 1970; Georges Montaron, "Cherbourg, Rabat et les palestiniens," *Témoignage chrétien,* January 8, 1970; Hecker, 46-49.

unconditional allies ready to pressure their government to support [Israel]."[1066] These voices, however, were truly fringe, and were largely drowned out — first and foremost, by laughter. "The public always loves those spectacles in which the policeman is trounced," wrote the provincial paper *Paris-Normandie.* "In this case, the policeman is the French government."[1067] Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's *L'express* echoed the sentiment with a colorful metaphor, noting "French opinion prefers Guignol to the gendarme — especially when Guignol pays cash."[1068]

In the end, few faulted Israel for acting as it did. "Can we blame [Israel] for having taken delivery the only way it could?" asked *Combat.*[1069] The paper argued that Pompidou would never risk his relations with the Arab world by easing the embargo. *Combat*'s assessment was incisive, and reflected government thinking. For months the French military attaché in Cairo had noted the considerable friendship France had won among the Arab states through its embargo policy. This "capital of sympathy . . . would immediately disappear," the attaché warned, if the embargo were eased.[1070] But *La croix'*s Pierre Limagne remained sanguine about the Israeli coup: "I should prefer to one day learn that . . . that we have been duped and were not the dupers," he asserted. "To be fooled by Israel is not so serious. Lacking strength in numbers, this small state, whose neighbors wish to destroy it, is supplied of great intelligence and cunning."[1071] For Limagne, this was not a contradiction: for all its "cunning," Israel remained a

[1066] La Nation, "Israël est-il infaillible?" *La nation,* January 21, 1970; see also Georges Montaron, "Cherbourg, Rabat et les palestiniens," *Témoignage chrétien*, January 1, 1970.
[1067] P.R. Wolf, "Cocu ou complice?" *Paris-Normandie,* December 29, 1969.
[1068] Guignol is the clever and witty hero of a satirical puppet show in France; to be compared to him here was a compliment to the Israelis. *L'express,* "L'Affaire des vedettes," January 11, 1970.
[1069] *Combat,* December 31, 1969.
[1070] Lt.-Colonel Niclausse, monthly reports of January 30, 1969 and July 10, 1969, box 10 T 777, sub-series T, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1071] Pierre Limagne, "Les exportations d'armes et leurs conséquences," *La croix,* December 30, 1969.

beleaguered David cornered by an Arab Goliath. It seemed only natural that the Israelis should become clever. This very analogy appeared repeatedly across the political spectrum, in sources as diverse as *Le figaro litteraire*, *Combat*, and *La croix*.[1072] In January 1969 the satirical *Canard enchaîné* had even characterized the embargo as "the revenge of Gaulliath against David," likening de Gaulle himself to the biblical brute.[1073] Israel's continued image of vulnerability lent it moral authority in the embargo debate; cooperation with "Goliath" consequently felt like bad faith. Thus, *Combat* asserted, "As long as [the embargo continues,] operations like that of the boats of Cherbourg will not be perceived as an injury to national pride."[1074] In *Combat*'s view, an underhanded policy had simply invited an underhanded solution.

For his own part, Admiral Limon became an overnight sensation, a spy-next-door suddenly thrust into the spotlight. Multiple articles ran giving the detailed service history of "the Israeli James Bond," in which Limon figured as nothing less than "heroic." Tellingly, many of these articles misreported that Limon had actually been the captain of the ship *Exodus 1947*, which had dramatically failed to run the British blockade of Mandatory Palestine with a cargo of illegal Jewish immigrants in 1947.[1075] In doing so, these articles powerfully evoked the memory of an episode that had done much to galvanize French support for the Zionist project. For these writers, the naval exploits of

[1072] Yves Cuau, "Les «couchous» de Tel-Aviv," *Le figaro litteraire,* January 5, 1970; Jean Savard, "Le sacrifice d'Abraham," *Combat,* January 18, 1969; Noël Copin, "Le général, Israël et l'opinion française," *La croix,* January 10, 1969.
[1073] Quoted in Robin Smyth, "De Gaulle's arms ban upsets his party," *Daily Mail,* January 9, 1969.
[1074] J.P.C., *Combat*, December 29, 1969.
[1075] The *Exodus*'s actual commanders were Ike Aronowicz and Yossi Harel. "Le héros de l'« Exodus » expulsé," *Paris-jour,* January 2, 1970; "Mordechaï Limon le commandement de l'« Exodus »", *La croix*, January 3, 1970; Jean-Paul Aymon, "Mordechaï Limon: Forceur de blocus et amiral d'Israël à 26 ans," *France-soir,* January 3, 1970; "Vedettes en Vedette," *Noir et blanc,* January 8, 1970.

1947 and 1969 were part of the same defiant narrative, bridged, if fancifully, by the same Israeli officer.[1076]

Conclusions

Such was the nature of French discourse on Israel in 1969 and 1970, and it had a threefold impact. Israeli attitudes toward the French government had plummeted under de Gaulle, and in October 1969, de Gaulle and Gamal Abdel Nasser had tellingly polled nearly evenly as "the most hated men in Israel," at 24 and 25 percent respectively.[1077] The chorus of French political and public critiques for the embargo had not gone unremarked, however, and Israeli sympathy for the French people remained high. Accordingly, the Cherbourg affair demonstrated to Israeli observers that they still had warm friends in France, and fed hopes that the embargo might yet be overturned. Second, the Cherbourg affair illustrated that, by 1970, Israel's victory in the Six-Day War had done little to dissipate French-Israeli friendship outside the Élysée. With Soviet arms still flowing readily into the Middle East, narratives of Israeli vulnerability endured everywhere outside the political extremities and the Gaullist movement. These narratives were, rather, complemented by new images of an audacious and capable Israel, willing to act, even against friends, if it felt its interests endangered. Laudable to some, this provoked anxiety among others, who feared that a continued embargo would compel an Israeli annexationist policy toward the territories it occupied, or further enflame regional tensions. In either view, the current embargo did more harm than good.

The most immediate impact of these discourses, however, was in facilitating the Cherbourg affair itself, which could not have been executed without the assistance of

[1076] Limon had, in fact, been a captain in the Haganah's *Aliyah Bet* program of clandestine Jewish immigration. He had just commanded a different ship.
[1077] *The Jewish Chronicle,* quoted in *Le monde*, October 19, 1969.

those who continued to view Israel an embattled ally facing existential threat. Was there complicity on the French side? Without doubt. Whether this extended to the highest levels of government is uncertain, and any documents attesting to that possibility have yet to be made public. At the least, the slow and muted response of the Pompidou government speaks to the limited extent of its discomfiture and, in the end, France was freed of the thorny problem of the embargoed boats. In the case of Bonte and Cazelles, Rabinovich, Thomas, and the French press agreed that the question was one of complacency, not complicity.[1078] Others had not been so blameless.

Middle-tier French functionaries and businessmen had played a critical role in the escape of the Starboats in both January and December 1969. Men like Félix Amiot and Jacques Marti had acted with full knowledge of the boats' true destination, and filed fraudulent paperwork on Israel's behalf. Dozens more simply looked the other way, guided variably by a sense of moral obligation and a belief that French and Israeli interests continued to coincide.[1079] Without the goodwill of such men the Cherbourg operation would simply have been impossible.

"Brave little Israel" thus remained a compelling image in Pompidou's France. The Six-Day War had done little to weaken the French sense of obligation to regional peace and Israel's continued security, although increasing emphasis was being placed on the former. The discursive themes of Israeli vulnerability and cleverness paradoxically fused

[1078] French military leaders were reportedly very upset at what they viewed as the scapegoating of these two officers; in 1985, Cazelles would threaten to sue Debré for defamation. Rabinovich, 90-91, 162-65; Thomas, 228; *Combat*, January 1, 1970; Henri Marque, "De nouvelles sanctions seront prises contre Cazelles et Bonte," *Paris-presse*, January 8, 1970; Don Cook, "Puzzle of the Gunboats: A Report on a Missing Piece," *International Herald Tribune*, January 16, 1970; Jean-Yves Dumoulin, Bureau Correspondance et Discipline Générales, Fiche, "Affair 'vedettes de Cherbourg, Général Cazelles," February 20, 1985, 3 R 237, sub-series R, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1079] Rabinovich, 91.

off the coast of Cherbourg, enabling the affair and justifying it *ex post facto* with approval and jocularity. Even the diplomats could not help but laugh at their own expense. At a 1969 New Year's Day reception at the Élysée, Israeli Ambassador Walter Eytan worried nervously, having just been informed of Limon's expulsion. But when Eytan showed French Deputy Foreign Minister Jean de Lipkowski his car-check stub — numbered 007 — de Lipkowski burst into laughter and passed on the doorman's joke to other diplomats.[1080]

These attitudes would endure beyond the Cherbourg affair as well. Half a year later, the now-retired Limon, who had been Israel's public face during the affair, hesitated to return to France on business. Though not *non grata,* he could still be turned away, and was anxious as he reentered the country. At the airport, the officer to whom he handed his passport scrutinized it carefully before asking Limon to confirm his identity. Limon did. "The officer rose, and reached over the glass partition to shake his hand. 'Congratulations,' said the Frenchman."[1081] What more could be said to the man hailed in the French press as the Israeli "James Bond?" More time would have to pass for French public discourse on Israel to catch up with the Gaullist narrative. Until then, Limon and Israelis like him would continue to find friends in France.

Nevertheless, the Cherbourg affair did testify to a critical shift in the dynamic of the French-Israeli friendship. For all its volume, popular and political support for Israel had only a limited effect on policy. Official policy could still be undermined, but no longer ignored. De Gaulle's vision of a centralized and pragmatic foreign policy had survived his fall and was finally coming to fruition. Pompidou's government would

[1080] *Ibid*., 169.
[1081] This and the above episode were recounted to Rabinovich in interviews with Eytan and Limon. *Ibid*., 172.

remain stoically aloof from popular criticism of its Israel policy, and the affair itself left the possibility of return to a selective embargo a dead letter for some time.[1082] A political changing of the guard had broken the pattern of informality upon which French-Israeli cooperation was based. Pompidou, Debré, and Schumann each approached Israel from the perspective of the Quai d'Orsay, whose policy of rapprochement with the Arab world had been in ascendancy since de Gaulle's first moves to distance France from Israel in the mid-1960s. They were well aware of the sympathy the embargo policy had won France in the Arab world, and they could not ignore how rapidly lost Israeli arms sales were replaced by Arab clients.[1083] While ideology and sentiment continued to generate sympathy for Israel within the French legislature and among middle-tier bureaucrats, France's ministries were now held by men over whom such factors held little sway.

The days of Shimon Peres's "golden age" were decidedly past, even if their ideational foundations lingered on.

[1082] Secrétariat Général à tous postes diplomatiques des zones Afrique du Nord et Levant, Circulaire no. 2, January 2, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

[1083] Sachar, 188; *DDF*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 33, 1968 Tome I, 1er janvier - 29 juin, 1968, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 79, January 31, 1968. Debré and his colleagues were also aware that the embargo was viewed as a measure of France's commitment to friendship with the Arab world. *DDF*, *Série depuis 1954* Vol. 3, 1969 Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin 1969, ed. Pr Maurice Vaïsse (Paris: Imprimerie nationale), Document 210, March 10, 1969.

Chapter Seven

Echoes: The French-Israeli *Differend*, 1971-1974

Introduction

By 1969, a generational change had taken place in the character of French-Israeli relations, and Israeli ambassador Asher Ben-Natan knew it. In his opening remarks to the 1969 annual meeting of the Association France-Israel, Ben-Natan acknowledged this transformation sardonically, welcoming "former ministers, friends of Israel; and ministers, former friends of Israel."[1084] It was not all jest. As France's own ambassador to Israel, Francis Huré, explained in early 1969, "The charm which existed between us for so long is gone . . . . Israel no longer hears what we say to it. Affirming that we seek a just and durable settlement signifies [to Israel] that we are asking it to sacrifice itself to obtain that which seems such to us."[1085] Huré was right. Throughout Georges Pompidou's 1969-1974 presidency the remaining bonds of the French-Israeli friendship, and the lines of communication upon which they relied, continued to deteriorate. In the wake of the 1969-70 Cherbourg affair it became clear that French-Israeli relations were unlikely to resume their cordial tenor. Israel's leaders felt abandoned, while France's were frustrated and scandalized. For both, the trust was gone.

As a result, between 1971 and 1974 French and Israeli representatives increasingly found themselves speaking at, rather than with, one another — when they spoke at all. Each country subsequently instituted an unofficial diplomatic embargo

[1084] Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 22.

[1085] Francis Huré à Michel Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram no. 28/AL, "A/s: Les jugements d'Israël sur la position française," February 6, 1969, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, Archives Diplomatiques (MAE), La Courneuve, France.

against the other: French representatives repeatedly snubbed Israeli diplomats and events, while Israeli leaders rejected virtually all French proposals out of hand. An atmosphere of mutual unintelligibility was settling between the former allies, rendering each increasingly deaf toward the other's concerns. French and Israeli leaders had once hoped that close relations might survive the divergence of their interests. By the mid 1970s, leaders in both countries had resolved that separation was, perhaps, for the best.

The years of the later Pompidou presidency demonstrate that the patterns which had characterized French-Israeli relations since the mid-1960s had produced lasting changes at the official and popular levels, and confirmed that the cooling of French Israeli relations was not a passing anomaly. Though Pompidou would diverge from de Gaulle's policies in important ways — ameliorating, for example, France's relationship with the United States — his Middle East policy was characterized by continuity. Pompidou would continue his predecessor's efforts to protect French political and economic interests in the Arab world, and subordinate relations with Israel to this larger goal. As a result, France's arms embargo on Israel would remain in force, even as shipments of military hardware were delivered to Egypt, Libya, Iraq, and Lebanon.[1086] Israeli representatives were similarly held at arm's length, while dignitaries from Arab countries were feted openly. Israeli diplomats could not help but notice the disparity.[1087]

These factors, together with the abrupt rupture of 1967, cast a long shadow over French-Israeli relations, particularly for Israel's new Prime Minister, Golda Meir, who came to office in 1969. Unwilling to trust France as a mediator and unable to obtain from

[1086] Le Premier Ministre à Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères et al., Reports no. 020/DN.AE; no. 0079/DN.AE; no. 0332/DN.AE; and no. 0518/DN.AE, January 10 - June 24, 1969, GR 8 Q 286, sub-series Q, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, la Service Historique de la Défense (SHD), Vincennes, France.
[1087] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s Audience de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël," July 30, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

it the arms Israel needed, Meir, who had never been enamored with close French-Israeli ties, seems to have reached the conclusion that such a relationship was neither salvageable nor desirable. French diplomatic overtures to Israel were accordingly stonewalled, and in late 1969, Meir gave the go-ahead to the Cherbourg operation, surely aware that her actions would only deepen the French-Israeli divide. Thus, predictably, while the operation succeeded in extracting Israel's embargoed missile boats, the Cherbourg affair left future arms sales a dead letter. Even afterwards, when French diplomats proposed terms under which a reconciliation might be possible, their appeals were met by deaf ears; Israel had already found a new patron in the United States.

The 1971-74 period also cemented recent developments in the tone and manifestation of popular French feeling toward Israel. The Yom Kippur War, which saw Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack on Israel in October 1973, catalyzed this process, reenergizing the patterns of public discourse and political activism that had developed around Israel between 1967 and 1970. The mass political activism produced by the Six-Day War and the 1968 May Events had constructed a new organizational and ideological framework for Jewish identity politics in France. The Yom Kippur War remobilized this framework and cemented its legitimacy. French Jews would once again take to the streets in an effort to defend not only Israel, but their relationship to it, and their right to mobilize politically in the defense of "Jewish" interests. French Arabs would act similarly, albeit with an opposing political message. In each case, the events of the Middle East once again provided a catalyst for the politicization of minority groups in France.

Mainstream French discourse on Israel also continued along the trajectory that had been plotted out in 1967 and 1968's heated debates over Israel and Palestinian nationalism. Significant currents of sympathy for Israel endured within the press and French legislature, where politicians and journalists continued to characterize Israel as a small state whose vulnerability was bound up with its Jewishness and memories of the Holocaust. But with the Gaullist Right and New Left both voicing criticism of Israel, these themes increasingly became the purview of France's centrist voices. The broad homogeneity that had once characterized French popular sentiment toward Israel thus continued to crumble.

At the same time, while the Yom Kippur War generated significant popular sympathy for Israel, poll data taken during the war confirmed that an important shift in French attitudes was underway. In keeping with longstanding patterns, the outbreak of war in the Middle East produced a significant spike in reported French sympathy for Israel. Support for Israel had polled between 56 and 68 percent in the weeks surrounding the 1967 Six-Day War. By 1969, however, the simmering Arab-Israeli War of Attrition and stagnating peace prospects had seen this proportion drop back down to 35 percent.[1088] When the Yom Kippur War broke out, this number swelled back to 45 percent, as fighting in the Middle East recaptured the attention of the French public and reenergized discourses of a brave but beleaguered Israel.[1089]

More noteworthy, however, was the proportion of respondents who polled in support of Egypt and Syria during the 1973 war. Prior to 1969, the proportion of French

[1088] Gadi Heimann, "From 'Irresponsible' to 'Immoral': The Shifts in de Gaulle's Perception of Israel and the Jews," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 46, No. 4 (2011), 913; Laurence Coulon, *L'opinion française, Israël et le conflit israélo-arabe, 1947-1987* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 2009), 190.
[1089] J.G., "Si Monsieur Pompidou songe au referendum il consultera les sondages sur Israël. . ." *Tribune juive* no. 277-278, October 26 - November 1, 1973.

citizens expressing partiality for the Arab states had remained at a steady 2 percent. In 1969, this number grew to 6 percent, but by November 1973 it had reached 16 percent.[1090] While this proportion was still ultimately small, it was a significant increase over earlier figures that had been remarkably steady for the past twenty years. Growing French understanding for Palestinian national aspirations, stagnating peace negotiations, and Israel's ongoing occupations partly explain this growth. Some respondents, however, may have simply felt that, for the first time, Arab war aims against Israel were justified. As French Foreign Minister Michel Jobert asked on October 8, 1973, two days after the outbreak of war, "Does someone trying to set foot into their own home necessarily constitute an [act of] unforeseen aggression?"[1091] For Jobert and those who shared his views, the Yom Kippur War was a war of justified territorial liberation aimed at pushing Israel out of the areas it had conquered in 1967. As Jewish writer and intellectual Jacques Givet bitterly noted, Jobert's remarks were a far cry from Charles de Gaulle's ultimatum of June 2, 1967, which had warned that whichever state "first employs arms, whoever it is, will have neither our approbation nor our support."[1092]

Pragmatic factors were also at play, and they shed considerable light on the attitudes adopted by the French government and some sectors of the French public. By late 1973, it was impossible to ignore the question of oil. The Yom Kippur War saw Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) launch an oil embargo of unprecedented proportions, quadrupling the price of oil and progressively cutting production in an effort to compel political concessions from Israel and the wider

[1090] *Ibid.;* Coulon, 190.
[1091] Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir* (Paris: Grasset, 1974), 260.
[1092] J.G., "Avec Israël," *Tribune juive* no. 275-276, October 11-19, 1973.

international community.[1093] With the price of oil skyrocketing, France's leaders warned that their country, which relied on Middle East and North African states for 78-85 percent of their oil needs, could not risk losing its status as an OPEC-"friendly" state.[1094] Israel would subsequently be kept at arm's length, and ministers like Jobert expressed understanding for, rather than condemnation of Egypt and Syria's surprise attack.

The years between 1971 and 1974 accordingly constitute a period of consolidation in the history of French-Israeli relations, in which the political and cultural patterns that began to develop in the late 1960s were reinforced and found renewed expression in policy. French policy-makers would continue to view Israel through the dispassionate lens of national interest, and remain largely aloof from popular criticism of France's Middle East policy. Israeli leaders, similarly, found French priorities increasingly at odds with their own, and eventually resolved that France could have no role in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the end of Pompidou's presidency in 1974, one could thus no longer speak of a French-Israeli dialogue. The countries' once-warm ties had been replaced with mutual recrimination and frustrated silence. Popular perceptions of Israel also continued along the trajectory laid down in the late 1960s. Political activism both for and against Israel continued to grow in this period, as lobbies and solidarity organizations refined their techniques and became increasingly confident in

[1093] Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "Oil Embargo, 1973-1974," https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo, accessed September 9, 2016.
[1094] U.S. Department of State, "Memorandum: Measures Against Arab Oil Embargo," October 5, 1973, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, The National Security Archive (NSA), Washington, D.C.; Paul Balta and Claudine Rulleau, *La politique arabe de la France: De Gaulle à Pompidou* (Paris: Sinbad, 1973), 91; Simon Schwarzfuchs, "L'Apres-Guerre de Kippour," *Tribune Juive* no. 280, November 9-15, 1973; U.S. Department of State, "French Government Reaction to the Middle East Crisis," 1973, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA. In 1970, then-Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann had affirmed that French oil interests in the Arab world were so important that, in Jacques Givet's words, "there could be no question of risking them by changing French policy toward the Middle East." J.G., "La France absente?" *Tribune juive* no. 109, August 1-27, 1970.

the legitimacy of their activities. At the same time, popular images of Israel continued to fracture, as the fighting of late 1973 renewed debates about who was aggressor, and who aggressee.

The 1971-74 period also marked the end of an era. Stonewalled by Israeli mistrust, France would have little effect on the course of the Yom Kippur War or the negotiations that emerged from it. No longer able to exert significant influence on Israel, France's leaders would subsequently look for other ways to expand their footprint in the Middle East. Among the beneficiaries of this shift was the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which soon found France to be an enthusiastic international partner. Yet in losing its credibility with Israel, France forfeited the mediating role Charles de Gaulle had been so determined to achieve. Hereafter, France's role as a broker of Middle East peace and power would be limited, eclipsed in the shadow of the Soviet and American super powers.

The Breakdown of Communication

In March 1969, Israel's then-ambassador to France, Walter Eytan, travelled to the foreign ministry offices of the Quai d'Orsay to protest what he characterized as France's "systematically hostile" attitude toward Israel. He was received by the Quai's political director, Jacques de Beaumarchais, and their meeting reflected the key dynamics of French-Israeli relations in the early 1970s. Beaumarchais made it clear that, in his view, Israel had misunderstood the bases of French policy. If France could simply explain itself better, Beaumarchais reasoned, if Israel would merely listen, then progress could be made toward regional peace, and French-Israeli relations ameliorated. Thus, when Eytan came to voice his government's concerns, Beaumarchais responded by rearticulating the

French platform on the Middle East: "We believe that Israeli diplomacy has committed an error by adopting an . . . inflexible attitude," Beaumarchais announced.[1095] Israel should instead comply with the French translation of UN Resolution 242, which called in November 1967 for Israel's full withdrawal from the territories it had occupied in 1967.[1096] France, meanwhile, had to protect its interests: preserving France's political and economic future in the Arab world (particularly Egypt, Libya, and Lebanon); satisfactorily solving the Palestinian refugee crisis; and preventing the Mediterranean from becoming a playground for the ambitions of the superpowers. "Just because we have a different conception [of peace] doesn't mean that it is our desire to hasten a peace contrary to Israel's fundamental objectives," Beaumarchais reassured Eytan. "On the contrary. We are in favor of sure and recognized frontiers . . . . the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal . . . . the security of Israel and the security of the Arab states alike . . . . and the calming of passions. This is the position of France, and it seems to me that Israel must pay better attention."[1097]

Eytan, however, was not prepared to passively relay this message home without voicing Israel's own concerns. He responded by articulating Israel's frustration with the course of French policy since 1967. Beaumarchais cut him off. "The object of this interview is not a confrontation of our points of view on the past," Beaumarchais announced. "Nor is the object of this interview to say that the French position must be

[1095] J. de Beaumarchais, Audience de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël le 24 mars 1969 à 18 heures 30, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

[1096] The translation of UN Resolution 242 has been a matter of heated debate since its creation. The English text calls for Israel's withdrawal "from territories occupied in the recent [1967] conflict," while the French text includes the definite article to read "des territtoires occupées lors du récent conflit." While the English text might be read as allowing for a partial Israeli withdrawal, the French text appears to imply a full withdrawal. The meaning of the text remains in dispute.

[1097] J. de Beaumarchais, Audience de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël le 24 mars 1969 à 18 heures 30, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

other than what it is. I repeat: the object of this interview was to note my regret at the adoption of certain positions that seem to reveal [Israeli] ignorance of the root bases of French policy and ignorance of its goals."[1098] The meeting ended as Beaumarchais urged Israel to "master its victory," the better to foment conditions for peace.

The Eytan - Beaumarchais encounter was typical of French-Israeli diplomatic contact over the next three years. Despite the efforts of France's ambassador in Israel, Francis Huré, to explain Israeli anxieties, policy makers in the French cabinet and Quai d'Orsay had difficulty seeing the Middle East from their interlocutors' point of view. This was, in part, because key French policy makers felt that Israel's "existence," and by extension the final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, permanently "engage[d] the honor of France."[1099] As Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann explained to the French Senate on June 1, 1971, Israel was "different" from other states, in that other countries "were not created by the United Nations, and their births did not therefore commit the moral responsibility of its permanent representatives, [and] France in particular."[1100] This was a curious departure from recent official discourse: in 1967, de Gaulle had disavowed France's involvement in Israel's creation as a way of distancing France from Israel and its 1967 victory. Now France's top diplomats reclaimed their "responsibility" for Israel's existence, and used it as a basis to justify pursuing their own vision of an equitable peace.

[1098] *Ibid.*

[1099] These were the words of Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann. Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s Audience de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël," July 30, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE. Quai d'Orsay Secretary General Hervé Alphand employed a similar logic in a February 1970 meeting with Ambassador Eytan. See Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s/ - Entretien de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël avec le Secrétaire Général, le 6 février 1970," February 7, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.

[1100] J.G., "Maurice Schumann ou l'analyse spectrale d'une politique," *Tribune juive* no. 157, July 2-8, 1971.

As Israel's 'midwife,' Schumann appeared to imply, France knew what was best for Israel, and was responsible for carrying it out.

Thus, rather than modifying the content or tone of their diplomatic position to make it more palatable, French officials set about re-explaining themselves to Israelis whom they felt simply did not understand the bases of French policy. Israel, similarly, was largely deaf to French policy concerns. Mistrustful after the realignment of 1967, Israeli representatives appear to have felt that France's improving relations with Libya, Egypt, and Iraq, and the understanding it demonstrated for Palestinian national aims, were incompatible with a mediating role. They also voiced frustration that Israeli representatives were being deliberately snubbed; in March, 1969, American diplomats in Paris reported that Ambassador Eytan was "smarting from what he regards as a deliberate slight by Debré."[1101] Consequently, both French and Israeli representatives called upon their interlocutors to change their policies, without expressing any readiness to modify their own. The result was a situation in which both parties spoke past, rather than with one another, and the diplomatic gap between the two countries accordingly continued to widen.

By mid-1971, French disagreement with Israel over the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict revolved around a few key points. As a French internal report noted in June 1971, France expected Israel to comply with UN Resolution 242 and withdrawal from all the territories it had occupied during the Six-Day War.[1102] This withdrawal,

[1101] Francis Huré à Michel Debré, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, Telegram no. 28/AL, "A/s: Les jugements d'Israël sur la position française," February 6, 1969, 2038INVA 1772 Afrique-Levant, Israël 1966-1970, MAE; U.S. Embassy London to Secretary of State, "Israeli/French Relations," Telegram 2373, March 26, 1969, file POL 27-14 ARAB-ISR, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.

[1102] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Position de la France et d'Israël dans le règlement du conflit.," June 26, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann noted in a July 1971 interview, could not be separated from the question of peace, as American diplomats had recently suggested; rather, peace guarantees and withdrawal were to be a full-package deal.[1103] Israel, by contrast, hoped that peace guarantees would precede a partial withdrawal, and that modifications would be made to the June 4, 1967 frontiers. French insistence on this point reflected longstanding French interest in mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict through a multi-power international framework, instead of allowing the United States and USSR to monopolize the diplomatic process.[1104] Following Israeli withdrawal, the French report continued, Jordanian sovereignty in East Jerusalem had to be re-established, in spite of Israel's annexation of those neighborhoods and its insistence that Jerusalem would remain the indivisible capital of Israel.[1105]

France also insisted that displaced Palestinians be given the choice of monetary compensation or return to their homes, in keeping with UN Resolution 194 of 1948. Israel, for its part, was prepared to offer compensation, but not facilitate repatriation. Additionally, though it was not yet part of France's official policy, by late 1972 Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann was envisioning the creation of a Palestinian national entity — "an entity, a homeland, a State — whatever the term utilized," in some of the

[1103] Interview given to the Office of French Radio-Television Broadcasting (ORTF) by Maurice Schumann, July 31, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

[1104] Reports in early 1973, for example, warned that the lack of peace in the Middle East provided a pretext for the USSR to meddle in the region, and urged the French government to capitalize on the sympathy it had earned in the Arab world before France was boxed out by the superpowers. See Lt.-Colonel Villanova, "Compre Rendu d'une mission au Proche-Orient effectuée par le Lieutenant-Colonel Villanova, du SGDN/CER du 19 Mars au 12 Avril 1972," April, 1973, GR 9 Q1 59, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[1105] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Position de la France et d'Israël dans le règlement du conflit.," June 26, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

territories Israel was to evacuate.[1106] Meanwhile, France was to have free reign to pursue relations with the Arab world. Israel was consequently asked to restrain its criticism of French regional policy, particularly as it pertained to Muammar Ghaddafi's Libya, to which France had just sold over 100 Mirage fighter-bombers.[1107]

Israel was unwilling to accede on these points, and in a series of reports between mid-1969 and mid-1971, French Ambassador Huré tried to explain why. "In Jerusalem we are not considered independent interlocutors," the Ambassador reported in July 1969.[1108] By keeping Israel at arm's length since mid-1967, while growing progressively closer to the Soviet Union and Israel's Arab rivals, France had lost its credibility as a neutral mediator. Huré consequently urged his superiors to grant Israel's request that Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban be invited to Paris, and to use the occasion to foster a sense of "dialogue," which he promised would have "important psychological effects" in Jerusalem.[1109] A public relations campaign with the Israeli public was also called for.

Israeli anxieties, Huré explained in June 1971, had to be assuaged due to the particular characteristics of Israeli society. "We find ourselves faced with a people with a long memory," Huré advised his superiors,

> one deeply scored [by] vicissitudes and trials whose elements . . . for the most part fled the unhappy ghettoes [of Europe] . . . . Traumatized and inspired by a millennial destiny, they are naturally suspicious of others (one sees this in [their skepticism] of guarantees), [they] possess a rare ability for obstinacy (one sees this in their resistance to even friendly solicitations), [and they] cling to what they have (one sees this in their refusal to cede even conquered lands) . . . . The Sabra

[1106] Sous-Direction du Levant, Bordereau d'envoi No. 87/ANL, "A/s - Audience de M. Ben Natan chez le Ministre (8 Novembre)," November 15, 1972, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.
[1107] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Entretien de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël avec le Secrétaire Général, le 6 février 1970," February 7, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1108] Francis Huré, Note, "A/s - Problèmes franco-israéliens," July 16, 1969, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1109] *Ibid.*

> [native Israeli] . . . [seems] to have developed a 'pied noir' mentality. His vision of the world . . . is manichaean.[1110]

Israel's recent experience with France, Huré noted in other reports, had cemented Israel's mistrust of international guarantees by demonstrating that even its closest allies could not be counted upon. As Huré explained, "By refusing to Israel the most important means for its defense we lead it to consider . . . that its security rests on the conservation of the territory it has conquered."[1111] France's embargo thus made Israel less, rather than more likely to negotiate a withdrawal. Huré concluded that France needed to rebuild Israeli trust before its advice would be acted upon. Trust-building measures would have to be adopted quickly; as the Ambassador cautioned in early 1970, "it would be imprudent to conclude that Jerusalem is determined to preserve its relations with us, no matter the cost."[1112]

Huré was right to worry. In January 1970, shortly after the Cherbourg affair, Abba Eban informed French reporters that "A government which adopted a policy of embargo cannot play the role of a mediator."[1113] Other Israeli diplomats framed the current state of French-Israeli relations in starker terms: when Israel's ambassador in the United States, Yitzhak Rabin, was asked by US Secretary of State William Rogers what was "to be gained . . . by treating France as an enemy?" Rabin replied that "France is Israel's enemy."[1114] In March 1971, meanwhile, Eban characterized French policy as

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[1110] Francis Huré, quoted in Note, June 1971, 2040INVA 1933, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.
[1111] Francis Huré, Notes de M. Huré sur les Relations Franco-Israéliennes," June, 1969, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1112] Francis Huré, Communiqué 3/DA-AL, "Politique israélienne envers la France," January 8, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1113] Services d'Information et de Presse, Sous-Direction de la Documentation, "Interviews accordées au 'Figaro' et au 'Monde' par M. Abba Eban, Ministre israélien des Affaires Étrangères (22/1/70)," *Documents Officiels* no. 5-6, January 19 - February 11, 1970, 2038INVA 1764, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1114] *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*), 1969-1976, vol. XXII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1969-1972, ed. Steven Galpern, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2015), Document 13.

"systematically anti-Israel," while in June 1971, a Quai report warned that French efforts to rally its western European partners to its vision of Arab-Israeli peace was further antagonizing Israeli leaders.[1115] In March, the Quai reported that neither Eban nor Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir seemed committed to normalization with France.[1116] In a 1972 interview, Meir would later affirm that improving relations "depends on France"; Israel, she implied, was not prepared to modify its position. "For my part," the Prime Minister concluded, "I tell you that I only hope for a change."[1117]

Despite these warning signs, Huré's advice was not ultimately adopted by his government. Thus, as a result of both French and Israeli inflexibility, the remaining links between the two countries continued to weaken. In June 1969, Ambassador Huré warned that all remaining areas of French-Israeli cooperation "will soon dry up."[1118] At the diplomatic level, mutual boycott was the order of the day. Every request by Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban for an audience with Charles de Gaulle had been refused since mid-1967, and with one exception, no ministerial-level meetings had taken place. Nor, Huré observed, had any senior French official visited Tel Aviv; even those who were laid over in Israel during travel now made a point of staying within the airport.[1119] At the same time, classes for Israeli pilots in France, which had taken place in 1967 and '68, were discontinued in 1969, and a project providing Israeli assistance in a French petrochemical school was also cancelled.[1120] In the wake of the Cherbourg affair,

[1115] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Relations franco-israéliennes," June 24, 1971, 2040 INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE; Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Relations franco-israéliennes," March 17, 1971, 2040 INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.
[1116] *Ibid.*
[1117] Rabbi J. Grunewald, "Golda Méir interview," *Tribune juive* no. 228, November 10-16, 1972.
[1118] Notes de M. Huré sur les Relations Franco-Israeliennes," June, 1969, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1119] *Ibid.*
[1120] *Ibid.*

meanwhile, historian Gordon Thomas concludes that Israeli operatives were "as closely watched as any terrorist by the French security service. Worse, pro-Arab officers in the French External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service (Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espoinnage, SDECE) often tipped off the PLO that Mossad was about to launch a counterstrike."[1121]

Israeli leaders, bristling at these slights and antagonized by France's efforts at rapprochement with the Soviet Union, retaliated in kind. Huré reported that, "having lost . . . hope of modifying our attitude," the Israeli government now rejected any French diplomatic proposals out of hand, and accused France of being "on the side of the enemies of Israel."[1122] Elements within the Israeli public consequently launched a boycott of several French companies, most notably Air France. Israeli newspapers across the political spectrum, including the left-leaning *Haaretz* and the centrist *Maariv*, respectively critiqued "the moral decline of the French leaders" and France's "anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli" policies.[1123] French cultural and language studies also suffered, and from 1967 to 1970, the total number of students studying in French institutions in Israel dropped by approximately 40 percent.[1124] In June 1971, an alarmed Huré accordingly warned that Israel's sense of alienation from France was producing "a progressive disinterest in the French culture and its forms of expression."[1125] If France failed to address the situation, Huré prophesied, Israel would soon become irretrievably

[1121] Gordon Thomas, *Gideon's Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad* 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), 290.
[1122] *Ibid.*
[1123] Francis Huré à Maurice Schumann, Telegram 47/AL, "A/s: Israël et 'l'antisemitisme française,'" March 17, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1124] Francis Huré à Maurice Schumann, Nr. 161/AL, "A/S: relations franco-israéliennes en fin 1970," December 9, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1125] Francis Huré à Maurice Schumann, Telegram no. 77/AL, "A/s: Rapports franco-israéliens,: prospectives," June 2, 1971, 2040 INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

beholden to the United States. In some ways, it was already too late: as Huré had noted in June 1969, the Israeli military was already pivoting toward the United States as its new source of military hardware, despite the significant financial and logistical cost of doing so.[1126]

French-Israeli ties were weakening at the economic level as well, making it easier for both sides to explore alternate international partnerships. Here, French Foreign Ministry records reported, the Arab League's economic boycott of companies that did business with Israel was taking its toll, discouraging French investment in Israel.[1127] Accordingly, between 1968 and 1970, the value of total French exports to Israel dropped by 15 percent. During the same period, the value of French exports to Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, and Iraq had collectively increased by 47 percent.[1128] Imports were similarly disparate, as the value of French imports from the Arab world outstripped those from Israel fifty-six times over.[1129] As historian Howard Sachar concludes, by the early 1970s France's industrial economy had become significantly dependent on Arab goodwill, and this, in turn, helped further override the ideological and sentimental considerations that had once informed French-Israeli relations.[1130]

Yet despite this progressive breakdown of relations, by 1971 Maurice Schumann's Foreign Ministry realized that a French-sponsored peace initiative could

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[1126] Huré notes that the American F-4 Phantom II fighter-bombers that Israel aimed to adopt were almost five times more expensive than French-built Mirage-IVs, required two pilots instead of one, and would complicate Israel's military logistics by breaking the homogeneity of its air flotilla. "Notes de M. Huré sur les Relations Franco-Israeliennes," June, 1969, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1127] Francis Huré à Maurice Schumann, 181/AL, "a/s: boycott arabe.-," March 11, 1971, 2040INVA 1936, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.
[1128] *Ibid.*
[1129] As Paul Balta and Claudine Rulleau note, oil was a key factor in this stark disparity, and represented some 45 percent of French total imports from Arab countries. Paul Balta and Claudine Rulleau, *La politique arabe de la France: De Gaulle à Pompidou* (Paris: Sinbad, 1973), 65-68, 87-89.
[1130] Howard Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998), 283, 291.

only be implemented with Israeli cooperation. Accordingly, worried that it might be further sidelined from the diplomatic process in the Middle East, Schumann offered Israel terms for a partial reconciliation in Summer 1971.[1131] There were two key conditions: first, Israel was to accept monetary reimbursement for the 50 embargoed Mirage-IV fighters that had been sitting in legal limbo on France's runways since 1966.[1132] Second, as Schumann explained to Israeli Ambassador Ben-Natan in July 1971, Israel was to respect a "semantic truce" with regard to French policy in the Arab world, and Libya in particular.[1133] As we noted in Chapter Six, France's sale of military hardware to Libya was deeply unpopular with the French public in 1970 and '71. Israel's repeated condemnation of Franco-Libyan ties had exacerbated the government's difficulties by mobilizing France's pro-Israel activists. Israel's silence on the matter was therefore valuable. Schumann accordingly offered to receive Foreign Minister Eban if he came to Paris, but only "If the Israeli government adopts a different tone." Were that to happen, Schumann suggested, "the Cherbourg affair will be forgotten," and it might be possible to ease France's embargo on replacement parts for Israel's French-built air force.[1134] This was a significant gesture by France, but Ben-Natan was not satisfied. The ambassador declared that "the only capital of the Common Market where Mr. Eban has not visited is Paris [through lack of an invitation], where by contrast a veritable Arab 'festival' is taking place. The French government must therefore officially invite the Minister to

[1131] This move came in the context of the 1970 Treaty of Moscow, which was an important step toward West German normalization with East Germany and the Soviet Union. Paris viewed this as a setback for its program of a French-led Europe. Schumann's overture to Israel can accordingly be seen as an attempt to reassert French importance on the international level. U.S. Embassy Paris to Secretary of State, Telegram 12482, September 16, 1970, file POL 27-14 [?], Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.
[1132] Le Directeur Adjoint des Affaires Politiques, "Note pour le Secrétaire Général," November 25, 1970, 2038INVA 1772, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1966-1970, MAE.
[1133] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s Audience de l'Ambassadeur d'Israël," July 30, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.
[1134] *Ibid.*

come and not [simply] receive him opportunistically as he passes through Paris."[1135] This, apparently, was asking too much; Schumann refused, stating that while he would be happy "to receive" Eban, an invitation was impossible.

In the end, Israel backed down and agreed to the French terms. By December 1971, the Quai's Levant desk noted with satisfaction that Israel was respecting a "semantic truce," even if "the same disagreement remains" on the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[1136] Two months later, in February 1972, a deal was signed providing 137 million dollars in reimbursement and interest for the embargoed Mirages.[1137] The French government subsequently launched a press campaign aimed at reassuring the French public that French-Israeli relations were improving, in an effort to quiet domestic critique of its Middle East policy.[1138] Yet reconciliation was partial at best. France's diplomatic embargo of Israel remained largely in force throughout 1972, and the diplomatic snubs continued. In a March 1972 interview, Schumann affirmed that a ministerial visit to Israel would have no "logic [or] utility" until Israel abided by the principles of UN Resolution 242.[1139] The same month, despite strident Israeli protests, France was the only western power to vote in favor of a UN Human Rights Commission resolution condemning Israel for violating the Geneva Convention in the territories it occupied.[1140] In April, meanwhile, the Quai intervened to block the participation of Teddy Kolek, the Israeli

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[1135] *Ibid.*

[1136] Sous-Direction du Levant, Note, "A/s - Etat des relations franco-israéliennes," December 31, 1971, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

[1137] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "France, Israel Sign Mirage Agreement Total Reimbursement About $137 Million," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 16, 1972.

[1138] J.G., "L'affaire Kolek n'est qu'un symptôme de la dégredation des rapports entre la France et Israël," *Tribune juive* no. 197-198, April 14-20, 1972.

[1139] *Ibid.*

[1140] *Ibid.* Schumann noted afterward that "We do not believe that Israel is a war criminal," and the French representative at the UN had in fact abstained from the condemnatory paragraph, despite approving the final text.

mayor of Jerusalem, in the inauguration ceremony of a French cultural institution in that city.[1141] Israeli diplomats also protested that French opposition was impeding Israeli efforts to receive preferential status with the European Common Market.[1142]

The French public was not passive in the face of deteriorating French-Israeli relations, however, and French policy toward the Middle East continued to draw criticism from voters and politicians alike. The September 1971 announcement that Libya, Egypt, and Syria were forming a Federation of Arab Republics, and subsequent reports that French-built Mirages were being transferred from Libya to Egypt, re-energized public criticism of French Middle East policy. As Jewish journalist and writer Jacques Givet protested in June 1972, this federation rendered France's "distinction between a state on the front lines and states, like Libya, that are not, [a] hypocrisy worthy of contempt."[1143] French Senatorial President Alain Poher, meanwhile, remained confident that the French people remained committed to friendship with Israel. "We have here 290 senators," Poher explained in a May 1972 interview. "If we took a vote on the situation in Israel, there would be 220 to 230 senators who would be favorable to the return to good relations between France and Israel . . . . For me, it is perfectly clear: the people of France have not changed their position with regard to Israel."[1144]

[1141] *Ibid.*

[1142] France had used Israel's interest in the European Economic Community to exert pressure on Israel since the late 1960s, and had acceded to Arab requests to block the signing of a preferential agreement between Israel and the EEC until 1969. In July of that year, however, Schumann withdrew French objections on the condition that Mediterranean Arab states be offered preferential treatment on the same basis. Francis Huré, Telegram 346/51, "Entretien de M. Joxe avec M. Allon," April 26, 1972, 2040INVA 1935, Afrique-Levant - Israël 1971-1972, MAE.

[1143] J.G., "Paris continuera à livrer les Mirage par lesquels le Colonel Khadafi peut détruire Israël," *Tribune juive* no. 207, June 16-22, 1972. By July 1973, experts within the French Defense Ministry agreed, recommending Libya be classified as being on the "front lines." "Bulletin Particulier de Renseignement No. 10.891, La Fusion Egypto-Libyenne," July 18, 1973, GR 9 Q1 59, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[1144] Quoted in "Pour les Israéliens, le dialogue est rompu entre Paris et Jérusalem," *Tribune juive* no. 202, May 12-18, 1972.

Other senators were more vociferous. "It is not about politics, but about morality, and I cannot compromise," Socialist senator Pierre Giraud informed the Senate during a May debate protesting France's recent condemnation of Israel at the UN. Giraud was one of a number of outspoken politicians for whom Israel remained very clearly defined by images of Jewish vulnerability. As Giraud explained, accusing Israel of war crimes seemed particularly hard to swallow, because

> The Israelis know perfectly well what [war crimes] are about. When one visits the Yad Vashem memorial in the memory of the six million Jews that disappeared in the 'final solution,' . . . when one re-reads . . . the accounts of the Nuremberg proceedings . . . how can [one] not understand the reaction of the Israelis . . . in the face of these counter-truths . . . that France has voted [for]. The survivors of the Warsaw ghetto, the escapees of the prisons of Maidanek and Treblinka, those who escaped the cremation furnaces of Auschwitz cannot tolerate such an insult . . . . Let those who remember the occupation [of France . . . take heed] of the difference between your accusation and that which we witnessed during the terrible years![1145]

Senatorial records indicate that Giraud's remarks drew applause from the Socialists, centrists, and many on the right, indicating that, even as late as 1972, memories of Jewish suffering rooted in the Second World War continued to shape political thought on Israel.

The question of Israel continued to mobilize political activism within the French public as well, and this was reflected in the 1973 voting patterns of France's Jews. Public interest in Israel between 1972-73 was sustained by a spate of bloody terror attacks against Israel targets, including the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. This attack, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported, as well as attacks against Israeli civilians in Maalot, Kiryat Shmona, and Lod, "provoked strong reactions in

[1145] Pierre Giraud, quoted in "Senate - Séance du 9 Mai 1972; Vote de la France a l'O.N.U. sur l'Affaire des Territoires Administés par Israël," extract of the *Officiel de la République Française* (*JORF*), *Débats Parlementaires, Sénat*, Année 1972, May 9, 1972, 324-25, MDXVII Israël - Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris.

Paris."[1146] Ongoing disappointment with France's Middle East policy was also at play, and for some voters it was an important issue as France went to the ballot box for legislative elections in March 1973. "French-Israeli relations will . . . [be] one of the most important elements of our decision," reported Jacques Lazarus's *Information juive*, a monthly Jewish journal catering to North African expatriates.[1147] Several centrist and Gaullist legislative candidates seem to have thought so as well, and, as Jewish political observer Arnold Mandel reported, they "sent Jewish voters . . . appeals couched in terms of the defense of Israel."[1148] Buoyed by the self-affirming identity politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jewish lobbyists also worked to make Israel an important electoral issue. One lobbyist effort, organized in early 1973 by François Bernard, dispatched questionnaires on Israel to candidates in hotly contested races, and urged French Jews to vote against individuals like Maurice Couve de Murville, who were associated with the Gaullist break with Israel.[1149] The openness with which Bernard pursued an electoral result was illustrative of changing French attitudes toward identity politics; as a national poll reported in March 1973, fully 62 percent of respondents now felt that a French Jew could "support Israel and be a good French citizen at the same time."[1150]

Despite lobbying efforts, Couve de Murville won his election — but Foreign Minister Maurice Schumann did not. The role of French-Israeli relations in Schumann's

[1146] Quoted in "Attentats en Israël; aeroport de Lod - Dec 72," MDXVII Israël-Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC; Emile Touati, "Retour à Munich," *Information juive*, September, 1972.
[1147] Jacques Lazarus, "Les prochaines élections," *Information juive* 227, January, 1973.
[1148] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *American Jewish Yearbook* (*AJY*) Vol. 75 (1974-1975), Philadelphia, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), 1974, 424.
[1149] François Bernard, "Judaisme - Perspective Mars 1973," March, 1973, MDI 167, archives du CRIF (Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France), CDJC.
[1150] Among people aged 21 to 34, what one might call the '68 generation, the proportion was even higher, at 73 percent. Only 15 percent nationally answered "no." Henri Smolarski, "Sondage SOFRES: Les français et Israël," *Tribune juive* 245, 9-15 March, 1973.

defeat is hard to pin down, though Jewish journalist Henri Smolarski suggested that it was "a policy," and not merely Schumann, which was at the ballot box that March.[1151] The pro-Israel lobby's victory was short lived, however: Schumann was forced to step down, only to be replaced as foreign minister by Michel Jobert, a Pompidou confidant and a proponent of French rapprochement with the Arab world. Meanwhile, a new crisis was brewing in the Middle East: within seven months, Israel would be at war, struggling to weather a Syrio-Egyptian surprise attack. French official responses to the war would demonstrate that the French-Israeli friendship was well and truly over, even as popular activism surrounding Israel continued to expand and refine its methods.

The Yom Kippur War

Following the end of the 1967-1970 Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition, which had produced fierce border fighting and raiding along the Suez Canal and its environs, the diplomatic situation in the Middle East had remained deadlocked. Egypt's new president, however, Anwar Sadat, was determined to return the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian sovereignty and reopen the Suez Canal, across which garrisoned Egyptian and Israeli troops warily eyed one another.[1152] Yet by 1970, both Egypt and Israel had become entangled in the rivalry of the Cold War superpowers. The USSR and the United States shipped significant quantities of arms to their respective clients, and it was American Secretary of State William Rogers who proposed the framework under which the War of Attrition ended. Diplomatic efforts to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute subsequently increasingly revolved around the superpowers. Between February 1971 and February 1973, Sadat accordingly approached the Americans with a number of proposals aiming to

[1151] *Ibid.*

[1152] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1969-1976; The 1973 Arab-Israeli War." https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/arab-israeli-war-1973. Accessed September 20, 2016.

kick-start negotiations for an end to hostilities (if not normalization), in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai.[1153] Israel, however, was reticent about the prospect of an interim settlement that traded strategically important land for anything less than full peace. Concerned that Egyptian-Israeli disagreement might cast a shadow over the superpowers' efforts at détente, US President Richard Nixon likewise decided to hold off on more determined peace efforts — at least until American and Israeli elections had run their course in mid-1972 and late 1973.[1154] Having tried diplomacy, and failed, Sadat now began to consider other ways of liberating the Sinai.

Stonewalled by Israel's refusal to treat them as an even-handed mediator, France had little effect on the course of these negotiations, and its proposals for a four-power peace framework gained little traction. French military intelligence did remain interested in the region, however, and their 1970-73 reports indicate that French assessments of the Middle Eastern balance of power were changing. Through the end of 1969, French military observers remained confident that the aerial superiority Israel had established in 1967 would suffice to check any Egyptian attempt at a mass crossing of the Suez Canal.[1155] By May 1970, however, the situation had changed. During the final months of the War of Attrition, Soviet military aid had introduced SA-3 Goa surface-to-air missile batteries into the Suez Canal zone. A significant technical improvement over Egypt's existing SA-2s, the new SA-3s dramatically curtailed Israel's ability to dominate Egypt's skies; from March to July 1970 alone, nine Israeli aircraft were shot down. French

[1153] *Ibid.* In July 1972, Sadat expelled Soviet military advisors from his country, partly in an effort to reassure the United States that Egypt was not a Soviet proxy, and partly in protest of the USSR's lack of support for a military option against Israel.
[1154] *Ibid.*
[1155] Bulletin Particulier de Renseignement No. 11,150, "Moyen-Orient Possibilités offensives de l'Armée Egyptienne," December 2, 1969, GR 9 Q1 53, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

military analysts were quick to note this change in the strategic landscape. "The strategic balance of forces" had been "reversed" by the introduction of the SA-3s, France's military attaché in Jerusalem reported in May 1970, while a March 1972 report called the missiles "the most important turn in the Arab-Israeli conflict since June '67."[1156] By late 1973, an even more advanced generation of Soviet-built surface-to-air missiles — the mobile SA-6 — was reaching the Syrian and Egyptian frontlines. In the war to come, they would prove devastating to Israeli air power.

The strategic balance of power was changing in other ways as well. In late 1971 French military observers noted that, thanks to Soviet aid, Egyptian and Syrian armies "are now stronger and better equipped than they were in 1967."[1157] Between them, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan were reported to possess a 3:1 advantage in terrestrial forces, and a 2:1 advantage in military aviation; meanwhile, military reforms had strengthened the command and morale of the Arab militaries.[1158] A July 1971 analysis synthesized these developments: "One can conclude that Israel retains an undeniable military superiority thanks to its offensive capabilities," the report affirmed. "But it seems that it will be increasingly difficult to succeed in other 'blitzkriegs' [in light of] the defensive reinforcement of its adversaries."[1159] Henceforth, the rapid offensive operations and aerial superiority upon which had Israel relied in 1956 and 1967 would no longer be possible. The report issued a final warning: "The coordination of two offensives in the north and

[1156] Lt.-Colonel Niclausse, Report no/144/RAU/AFA/CD, May 31, 1970, GR 10 T 777, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD; Report no/72/RAU/AFA/CD, March 25, 1970, GR 10 T 777, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1157] Bulletin Particulier de Renseignement No. 11,246, "La Tension au Proche-Orient," December 3, 1971, GR 9 Q1 56, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.
[1158] *Ibid.* These figures compared the Arab militaries to an Israel that was fully mobilized. The Yom Kippur War of 1973, which would catch Israel in a largely demobilized state, would feature a significantly starker ratio of forces.
[1159] Note d'Information, "La Valeur Operational des Armées d'Afrique du Nord et Du Moyen-Orient," July 28, 1971, GR 9 Q1 56, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

south [of Israel], supported by abundant ground materiel and well-equipped [anti-]aerial platforms, could sooner or later lead to the final defeat of the Hebrew State."[1160]

It was almost prophesy. On October 6, 1973, Israeli intelligence services were caught off-guard by a coordinated Egyptian/Syrian surprise attack on Israel's northern and southern frontiers.[1161] It was Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. Under the cover of their new surface-to-air missiles, Egyptian and Syrian forces successfully pushed through Israel's front lines, advancing into the Sinai and the Golan Heights, respectively. At the same time, OPEC launched a devastating oil embargo, paralyzing western economies in an effort to prevent military and diplomatic assistance to Israel. Though Israel was hard pressed to prevent its initial losses from becoming a rout, American and Soviet observers began to worry that, once it fully mobilized, Israel would quickly roll back the Arab gains. Both the United States and USSR hoped to avoid a scenario in which either Israel or its rivals gained too much of an advantage, which might compel one or another superpower to intervene.[1162] Correspondingly, by October 9 the United States was pushing for an early ceasefire satisfying Egyptian and Syrian territorial demands, while the Soviet Union began resupplying the Egyptian and Syrian militaries, bolstering them against a potential Israeli counter-attack. Concerned that Israel might be defeated, President Nixon in turn authorized an emergency shipment of arms to Israel,

[1160] *Ibid.*
[1161] On the extent of Israel's surprise, and the course of the war in general, see Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004).
[1162] U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1969-1976; The 1973 Arab-Israeli War." https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/arab-israeli-war-1973. Accessed September 20, 2016.

which began to arrive on October 14.[1163] France joined the bulk of Europe's nations in refusing landing rights to the American airlift.[1164]

Israel's military situation now began to stabilize. Syrian forces were turned back to the frontiers on October 10 following four days of heavy fighting, while a failed Egyptian assault on October 14 created room for an Israeli counter-attack. The Israeli air force now turned the bulk of its attention to the southern front and, despite losses, was able to coordinate with Israeli tank divisions to secure a significant bridgehead across the Suez Canal on October 15-17. Over the next week, as Israeli forces maneuvered to encircle Egypt's Second and Third Armies, Sadat began to express interest in a ceasefire.[1165] The superpowers now became alarmed, worried that the destruction in detail of Egypt's armies would further humiliate the Arab states, and possibly presage a Soviet intervention. On October 22, Soviet and American negotiations produced UN Resolution 338, which called for an immediate ceasefire. A short-lived truce quickly broke down, as Israel and Egypt maneuvered to improve their position while accusing one another of violating the ceasefire. A UN Security Council resolution on October 23 also failed to stop the fighting, and by October 25, American nuclear forces were put on alert following Soviet threats to "implement" the ceasefire themselves.[1166] Later that day, Israel finally accepted UN provisions for a ceasefire, though fighting continued sporadically until October 28, as Egyptian commanders tried to break their encirclement and improve Egypt's hand at the negotiating table.

[1163] *Ibid.*
[1164] Ultimately, only Portugal agreed to participate in "Operation Nickel Grass," the airlift of materiel to Israel.
[1165] *Ibid.*
[1166] *Ibid.*

In the following weeks and months US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger led an intense diplomatic effort to defuse the situation, shuttling between the Arab and Israeli capitals. On January 18, 1974, Egypt and Israel signed their first disengagement agreement, which saw Israeli troops withdrawal from the west bank of the Suez, and created a twenty kilometer UN buffer zone around the Canal. A similar agreement was signed between Israel and Syria on May 31. The agreements set the stage for future phased Israeli withdrawals under the framework of "land for peace," which would ultimately come to fruition in the 1978 Camp David Accords. In the meantime, the war had reenergized French interest in Israel, and stirred up a heated debate on the role of ethics, activism, and national interest as they pertained to French policy in the Middle East.

Official French Responses to the Yom Kippur War

Like Israel, the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War caught the French government by surprise.[1167] Accordingly, the US Department of State reported, "lacking an independent assessment of the cause of hostilities and of Soviet resupply efforts, and of the nature and extent of our conversations with the Soviet Union," the French government was "psychologically unprepared for the rapid deterioration of the situation. They are frightened by the prospect of an oil embargo and worried about an emerging US-USSR confrontation about which they have only schematic knowledge."[1168] By October 9, however, French leaders were beginning to formulate a response to the war.

[1167] Pompidou confessed as much in an October 9, 1973 meeting with Michel Debré. American reports also noted that France lacked up-to-date intelligence on Egypt and Syria's military build-up. Michel Debré, *Entretiens avec Georges Pompidou*, *1971-1974* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), 178; U.S. Department of State, "French Government Reaction to the Middle East Crisis," 1973, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.
[1168] U.S. Department of State, "French Government Reaction to the Middle East Crisis," 1973, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.

The official French response was dictated by two guiding factors. First, French policy leaders — and Foreign Minister Michel Jobert in particular — were alarmed and annoyed at the speed with which the Middle East was becoming a site of binary superpower negotiations, and possibly, confrontation. The US Department of State accordingly reported that France had resolved to rally the European Economic Community (EEC) in support of an early ceasefire "which recognizes Arab gains."[1169] This served to protect the French economy from the full force of the Arab oil embargo, preserving France's position as an "OPEC-friendly" country, while also demonstrating "that Britain and France can mobilize substantial diplomatic resources."[1170] When the United States and USSR negotiated the adoption of UN Resolution 338 on October 22, Jobert was accordingly "personally piqued"; France expressed its frustration by torpedoing the EEC's endorsement of the resolution, arguing that Europe "must not stoop to rubber-stamping the work of the two super-powers."[1171] Since the adoption of the October 25 ceasefire, the State Department continued,

> the French have used every device imaginable for strengthening their position with the Arabs and [are] attempting to create leverage to get themselves included in the peace talks in some way . . . . The French are particularly apprehensive at the prospect of having little or no control over future events in an area vital to their interests. This appears to be the major current driving force in French actions concerning the Middle East.[1172]

Unsurprisingly, this produced tension between France and the United States. Kissinger was reportedly upset by French efforts to derail bilateral Soviet-American talks, and rejected French claims that France had been deliberately excluded from negotiations. "You have excluded yourselves," Kissinger informed the French Ambassador in

[1169] *Ibid.*
[1170] *Ibid.*
[1171] *Ibid.* These were the State Department's words, not Jobert's.
[1172] *Ibid.*

Washington in early December. "The Israelis do not want your participation because you have so explicitly supported the Arabs. But secondly, we are aware of French approaches in Arab capitals and our reports suggest that your position has been critical of the United States. I see no reason under these conditions for a cooperative relationship."[1173]

The "explicit support" Kissinger was referring to, notwithstanding France's long-term efforts to improve its position in the Arab world, had appeared in public comments by French ministers and spokesmen on October 8 and 17. These remarks reflected the second principle informing French policy: a perception that Arab war aims against Israel were fundamentally legitimate in light both of UN Resolution 242 and 'common sense.' Foreign Minister Jobert made this view clear in remarks to the press on October 8: "Does someone trying to set foot into their own home necessarily constitute an [act of] unforeseen aggression?" Jobert inquired, implying that the Syrio-Egyptian invasion could not be classified as "aggression."[1174] Jobert reiterated this sentiment in a meeting of the French National Assembly on October 17, asking whether, seeing as the Sinai and Golan Heights were occupied, "the Arab invasion [should have been] unforeseen?"[1175] Jobert subsequently declined to condemn the Syrio-Egyptian surprise attack. On October 17, French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer went further, implicitly blaming Israel for the outbreak of hostilities. In a private meeting with Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan and CRIF President Ady Steg, who had come to protest French policy toward Israel, Messmer defended Jobert's characterization of the situation. The Israelis, Messmer noted, "have done nothing during the last several years to [reach] a deal with the Arabs . . . . I will say

[1173] Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, "The Middle East and the Year of Europe," December 3, 1973, file XR POL EUR-US, Eliahu Mizrachi Donation, NSA.
[1174] Jobert, 260.
[1175] Samy Cohen, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et Israël* (Paris: Moreau, 1974), 177.

to you what I won't say in public, I think that the Israeli government has committed an error in causing this situation [to develop]" by not withdrawing from the disputed territories.[1176]

Many who sympathized with Israel were surprised by Jobert's remarks, and on October 9, some ten thousand demonstrators rallied in Paris to cries of "Jobert, assassin!"[1177] They were struck by the departure Jobert's words represented from Charles de Gaulle's declaration of June 2, 1967 on the eve of the Six-Day War, which had warned that, "The state which [is] the first to employ arms will have neither the approbation nor support of France."[1178] Later, on October 17, Gaullist former minister Michel Debré delivered a television interview to *Europe 1*'s Etienne Mougeotte, clarifying the government's position. As Debré explained, the Syrio-Egyptian invasion was best understood as a war of liberation, rather than a war of conquest or extermination: "The territories that have come to be the object of the Egyptian and Syrian invasion are territories that one would call occupied territories, that is to say territories which are, legally, Egyptian and Syrian territories. Under these conditions, one cannot consider that the word 'aggression' has the same sense today as in 1967."[1179] Though Debré added that he in no way "excuse[d] this reopening of hostilities," and affirmed that "the existence and the security of Israel is for us a necessary and indispensible thing," it was clear that, for Debré and Jobert alike, the Arab invasion of Israel was understandable and

[1176] Accounts of this meeting can be found in "Entrevue avec Monsieur Messmer," October 17, 1973, MDXVII Israël-Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC; and "Compte rendu de l'entrevue du Mercredi 17 Octobre au matin entre le Grand Rabbin Kaplan et le Professeur Steg, President du C.R.I.F. avec le Premier Ministre, Monsieur Messmer," October, 1973, MDI 215, archives du CRIF, CDJC.
[1177] Hecker, 30.
[1178] De Gaulle, *Discours et messages* Vol. 4: *Vers le terme* (Paris: Plon, 1970-71), 181.
[1179] Debré, 178-79.

legitimate.[1180] Debré later counseled President Pompidou that the Arab belligerents aimed not to destroy Israel, but rather sought to consolidate internal order by redeeming the defeat of 1967, and to take back enough territory to compel Israel to the negotiating table.[1181] Significant sectors of the French public were less sanguine about the Syrio-Egyptian invasion, however, as once again, war in the Middle East produced an upsurge in public activism and discourse on Israel and its relations with France.

The French Press and the Yom Kippur War

With the outbreak of a Middle Eastern war in which French built AMX tanks and Mirage aircraft battled on *both* sides, observers in the French press and legislature found renewed cause to interrogate their government's policies of embargo and official neutrality. Like the French government, public debate centered on the question of Egyptian and Syrian war aims which, by extension, determined the nature of the conflict: was this a war of territorial revanchism, or extermination? Either way, was standing French policy justified?

France's mainstream press and political parties split along the broad fault lines that had developed over the last six years as they strove to answer these questions. France's centrist parties and newspapers broadly sympathized with Israel, while politicians and journalists affiliated with the Gaullist Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR), the French Communist Party (PCF), and groups on the radical Left typically expressed understanding for Egypt and Syria. Laurence Coulon writes that, as in 1967, the war "produced a reflexive sympathy for Israel," but also "confirmed the

[1180] *Ibid.*

[1181] *Ibid.*, 179. This is also the consensus view within much recent scholarship on the Yom Kippur War. See for example Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, (2004).

[French public's recent] tendency to neutrality."[1182] This should not be misunderstood as an affirmation of official policy, however: polls published on October 15 and 18 noted that while some 60 percent favored a "neutral" French policy in the Middle East, only 30 percent felt that the government had adequately implemented its professed neutrality.[1183] The Pompidou government's ongoing distinction between states that were "battlefield countries" and those that were not — the premise for its embargo of Israel — was especially unpopular, with 71 percent disapproving. Meanwhile, 47 percent reported that they felt French government policy directly favored the Arab states.[1184]

Popular calls for neutrality must accordingly be viewed as a two-fold development. On one hand, appeals for neutrality should be seen as an attempt to modify government policy in a direction ultimately favorable to Israel, subjecting Egypt, Libya, Iraq, and other countries to the same restrictions Israel currently experienced. On the other hand, this push for neutrality reflected a mounting desire to genuinely disengage from partisanship in the Middle East, be it for Israel *or* its neighbors. Thus, as they had during the Cherbourg affair of 1970, those who sought to modify French policy most often called for the *expansion* of France's arms embargo, rather than its *retraction* from Israel. Meanwhile, partisan sympathy over the Arab-Israeli conflict dropped by approximately 9 percent between 1967 and 1973.[1185] We can accordingly conclude that a growing segment of the French public embraced the Pompidou government's commitment to neutrality, if not its implementation of it.

[1182] Coulon, 269.
[1183] Sociètè française d'enquêtes par sondages (SOFRES), quoted in *Le figaro*, October 15, 1973; Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Tome 2, 1959-1991* (Paris, l'Institut des Études Palestiniennes, 1993), 156; Coulon, 271-72.
[1184] *Ibid.*
[1185] From 68 percent pro-Israel and 2 percent pro-Arab in fall 1967, to 45 percent pro-Israel and 16 percent pro-Arab in October 1973. Cohen, 188-89; SOFRES, quoted in *Le figaro*, October 15, 1973.

Even as overall French engagement with the Arab-Israeli conflict edged toward neutrality, however, familiar patterns began to appear in the French press. As it had in 1967, the diplomatically-oriented *Le monde* embraced the government's position, and served as a mouthpiece for the Quai d'Orsay as it strove to provide even-handed editorial coverage to partisans on both sides of the emerging conflict. Pro-Israel and pro-Arab voices were consistently juxtaposed side by side, building narratives of equivalency and binary polarization. Unlike 1967, however, the weight of *Le monde*'s editorial coverage in 1973 favored those legitimating the Syrio-Egyptian invasion. Editorials printed by the paper, such as an October 9 piece by Middle East analyst Pierre Rondont, accordingly argued that Israel's failure to withdraw from conquered territories had made war understandable, and even inevitable.[1186] *Le monde*'s sister paper, the monthly *Le monde diplomatique*, did likewise, and in its November 1973 edition its new director, Claude Julien, praised Egypt and Syria's war aims as rooted in "justice and law: [the] recovery of the territories that belong to them."[1187]

Le monde also retained the revisionist streak it had developed in response to the Six-Day War. Editorialists like jurist Raymond de Pradelle accordingly urged that Israel be replaced with a federal state embracing the full repatriation of displaced Palestinians, while suppressing Israel's own Law of Return.[1188] Other *Le monde* editorials echoed these conclusions: Palestinian lawyer Henri Cattan wrote calling for "a radical

[1186] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Lundi 8 Octobre 1973" and "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mardi 9 Octobre," Centre de Documentation Israël et Moyen-Orient (CDIM), MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Coulon, 269.
[1187] Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, *Le monde diplomatique et Israël, 1954-2005* (Paris: Editions Le Manuscrit, 2006), 47.
[1188] The Law of Return provided a legal framework for Jews or those of Jewish decent to immigrate to Israel. Raymond de Pradelle, quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mardi 23 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

transformation of the theocratic and racist structures of the State of Israel," while Jacques Barque affirmed that the "problem of the Middle East won't be solved except by the erection of a bi-ethnic Palestinian state."[1189] *Le monde*'s editorial section thus reflected a narrative in which the root of the problem was Israel — either its refusal to withdrawal, or the existence, in its current form, of the state itself.

Similar patterns appeared on France's major television news channels, particularly ORTF (Office de Radiodiffiusion Télévision Française) Channel 1 and ORTF Channel 2. As government-controlled stations, both adhered closely to the Quai's narrative of the conflict while defending the prudence of French neutrality. On one occasion, Israeli Ambassador Ben-Natan was scheduled to give an interview on Channel 2, where he doubtless would have taken issue with the degree of understanding French representatives had expressed for the Syrio-Egyptian invasion. Rather than allow the interview to go forward, however, the Quai intervened, and nixed the broadcast.[1190]

Instead, the Quai seems to have directed France's national television networks to focus on the pragmatic logic of French foreign policy. A major editorial theme was thus oil, as radical-leaning journalist Maurice Clavel angrily noted in *Le nouvel observateur*: "Oil on all the channels," Clavel lamented. "They mobilized a lot of gentlemen to speak to us about oil. Some sweating scared, others contended," each, Clavel argued, warning against incurring the wrath of OPEC.[1191] For Clavel, this was appeasement: "We signed at Munich, in 1938, and saved the peace," he sarcastically noted. "We had a lot of

[1189] Quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant les Problemes d'application du Cessez-le-Feu, Samedi 27 et lundi 29 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1190] "Les bons conte ne font pas toujours les bons amis," *Tribune juive* no. 277-278, October 26 - November 1, 1973.
[1191] Maurice Clavel, quoted in "La guerre à la télévision," *L'arche* no. 201, 26 November - 25 December, 1973.

[collaborators who] . . . tried to guess the thoughts of the Germans in order to rush to satisfy them . . . . Today our [collaborators] guess the Arab will and satisfy it. On all fours."[1192]

A striking percentage of the French public appears to have shared Clavel's disdain for the tactics of the OPEC oil embargo. Though France remained an "OPEC-friendly" nation thanks to the efforts of the Pompidou government, and was thus not severely affected by the embargo, neighboring Holland was, and it provided a ready example of the fate awaiting those who incurred OPEC's wrath. Nonetheless, an October 15 poll reported that fully 52 percent (against 25 percent) were unwilling to make policy concessions in the face of the oil embargo.[1193] This was not a fleeting impulse: three weeks later a national poll confirmed the results. Asked what the French government should do if "the Arab states threaten to halt deliveries of petrol to states which don't break their relations with Israel," 63 percent (against 18 percent) affirmed their readiness to "refuse to break [relations], even [if it means we] will stop receiving oil."[1194] Thus, if economic interest played a significant role in shaping official French responses to the Yom Kippur War, the same cannot be said of the French people, a majority of whom expressed their readiness to preserve relations with Israel, even if it meant personal financial hardship.

Meanwhile, press organs on the far Left shared *Le monde*'s view that Arab war aims were legitimate, while also tending to view developing events through the lenses of anti-imperialism and anti-racism. Here, Israel was uniformly seen as responsible for the

[1192] *Ibid.*
[1193] SOFRES, quoted in *Le figaro*, October 15, 1973.
[1194] "L'opinion publique française et la politique au proche-orient, extraits de quelques sondages effectues par la SOFRES," poll taken November 7-8, 1973, MDXVII Israël-Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.

outbreak of war. Ironically, Laurence Coulon observes, this was due in part to the efforts of pro-Israel lobbyists in France, particularly the Association France-Israel and the Alliance France-Israel, which had presented Israeli public opinion as being monolithically opposed to any territorial concessions.[1195] "Israel and the imperialist [bloc] are responsible for the current situation," the communist *L'humanité* accordingly affirmed.[1196] On November 7, *L'humanité* added that "Israel appears today more and more clearly not as a victim, but as an expansionist state, refusing with insolence to obey the invitations of the UN to restitute the territories it has conquered."[1197] These remarks were in keeping with *L'humanité*'s 1967 vision of Israel as a partner in American imperialism, a view seemingly confirmed by the arrival of American military aid in Israel. The Trotskyite *Rouge* expressed a similar view, writing on October 12 that "it is the very existence of the State of Israel that is the source of the conflict that ravages the Middle East. So long as the Zionist state exists, [with] its racist laws and expansionist vices, no peace is possible."[1198] Jean-Paul Sartre's *Libération* also credited Israel with the conflict, writing on October 9 that "beyond the shadow of a doubt" it was Israel who was at fault for the outbreak of hostilities, noting that "the Arab armies are fighting in Arab territories occupied for more than six years by the enemy."[1199]

As in 1968-70, however, there was division within the French Left on the subject of Israel. On October 29, Sartre himself opened the daily issue of *Libération* by checking

[1195] Coulon, 293, 295-96.
[1196] Quoted in "Le coeur est-il à gauche?" *Tribune juive* no. 276, October 19-25, 1973
[1197] Quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Press Parisienne Quotidienne Devant le 'Munich' du Petrole, Semaine du 5 au 10 Novembre 1973," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1198] *Rouge*, October 12, quoted in Meir Waintrater, "revue de Presse," *L'arche* no. 200, October 26-Novembre 25, 1973.
[1199] Quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mardi 9 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

the paper's heretofore consistent criticism of Israel, hailing "the admirable work completed . . . [by] the Israeli nation . . . which sufficed . . . to justify the presence of the Jews on this land which no one before them had made flower."[1200] In his daily reviews of the Parisian press, CRIF media analyst Kurt Neidermaier observed that *Libération* was not alone in being divided over Israel: the center-left *Combat*, right-wing *Le figaro*, Catholic *La croix*, and *Le monde* each also at times vacillated in their editorial lines.[1201] Just as Sartre had sought to hear both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967-69, so too did these media outlets find it increasingly difficult to embrace a single narrative, finding legitimate grievances on both sides of the frontline.

A similar degree of division could be found within several of France's leading political parties. François Mitterrand's Union of the Left, which had formed an electoral alliance between the Socialist Party, the communist PCF, and the Radical Left Party in 1972, was particularly divided. While Mitterrand himself affirmed that "the French socialists have always recognized a first principle: Israel's right to exist with frontiers that protect against foreign aggression," he was critiqued by members of the Socialist Party's left wing, CERES (the Center for Studies, Research, and Socialist Education), as being too pro-Israel and insufficiently sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.[1202] This divide reflected a generational transformation within the French Socialist Party, as a younger generation of politicians in tune with the politics of 1968-70 began vying for control of their party's foreign policy platform.

[1200] Jean Paul Sartre, *Libération*, October 29, quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant les Problemes d'application du Cessez-le-Feu, Samedi 27 et lundi 29 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1201] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Jeudi 11 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1202] Coulon, 265-66.

Pragmatic factors were also at play. As Jewish writer and political analyst Arnold Mandel reported to the *American Jewish Yearbook* in 1974, the Socialists' alliance with the PCF made it "necessary to avoid endangering unity of action; therefore the Socialists imposed on themselves a sort of self-censorship."[1203] The Gaullist UDR was similarly divided, despite Pompidou's efforts to rally his party. UDR legislators like Claude-Gérard Marcus, Joel Le Tac, and Pierre de Bénouville protested French policy toward Israel in the National Assembly, while an October 17 poll reported that 57 percent of UDR voters sympathized most with Israel's position in the Middle East. By contrast, only 7 percent espoused sympathy for the Syrio-Egyptian invasion, with 35 percent expressing neutrality.[1204]

Despite these divisions, significant public support for Israel endured, demonstrating that even by the close of 1973, longstanding images of a beleaguered Israel retained much of their salience. Within the French press, the opposition center-right *L'aurore*, left-wing *Combat*, and right-wing *Le figaro* provided the most sympathetic coverage of Israel. Unlike many of its contemporaries, *L'aurore* argued that the "real objective" of the Arab invasion was "the extermination of the Jewish state."[1205] *Le figaro* voiced similar concerns, and in an October 11 editorial the Jesuit anti-racist activist Michel Riquet evoked the powerful memory of the Holocaust by warning that a potential Israeli defeat "would be its death, and the shame of all those who once stood against the

[1203] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 75 (1974-1975), JPS, 1974, 429.
[1204] SOFRES, quoted by Claude-Gérard Marcus in Claude-Gérard Marcus, "Intervention dans le Debat sur la Situation au Proche-Orient, Assemblée Nationale - Seance du 17 Octobre 1973," October 17, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1205] *L'aurore*, quoted in Meir Waintrater, "Revue de presse," *L'arche* no. 200, October 26-Novembre 25, 1973.

'final solution' adopted by Hitler."[1206] Though it would eventually conclude that Egypt and Syria were motivated by revanchism, not genocide, *Combat* too felt the war reflected a desperate imbalance. "Which [party] is more numerous?" a *Combat* editorial asked rhetorically on October 13:

> Which possesses an inexhaustible supply of men? Which doesn't know the disadvantages of cramped frontiers? Which benefits from the . . . support of the socialist states . . . ? Which is strong thanks to the explicit and massive support of one of the super powers? Which, finally, [has oil] . . . an instrument of decisive pressure on the allies of its adversary?[1207]

For these newspapers, Israel remained a vulnerable enclave, unfairly and dangerously outmatched by its more numerous, Soviet-backed neighbors.

In some instances, however, Israel's propaganda efforts, reputation for cleverness, and successes during the Six-Day War produced an inflated assessment of its military capabilities, fostering assumptions that Israel would be able to rout Egypt and Syria with little difficulty.[1208] Political analyst Raymond Aron would report in his memoirs that several of his colleagues at *Le figaro* were "intoxicated" by Israeli propaganda, and one, Roger Massip, suggested that the Egyptians had been baited "into a trap laid by the crafty Israelis."[1209] As Egyptian armies brushed past Israeli defenses along the Suez Canal and the actual state of affairs became clear, Massip quickly modified his position. On October 16 he called upon France and the United States to "restore military balance between Israel and the Arabs."[1210]

[1206] Michel Riquet, *Le figaro*, October 12, 1973, quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Jeudi 11 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1207] *Combat*, quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Vendredi 12 Octobre 1973," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1208] Coulon, 264.
[1209] Raymond Aron, *Memoires: 50 ans de réflexion politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 244.
[1210] Roger Massip, quoted in Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mercredi 16 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

Massip was not alone in doing so, and by October 14-18, French press discourse on the Yom Kippur War began shifting in favor of Israel. Henceforth, France's provincial press, together with *Figaro* and *Combat*, would produce more consistently pro-Israel coverage. Several factors were at play. As the United States and USSR's competing efforts to produce a favorable cease-fire moved to center stage, media outlets sympathetic to both sides of the conflict began lamenting that the Middle East war had become another battleground for the Cold War superpowers. On October 14, threats of direct Soviet military and diplomatic intervention aroused, in Kurt Neidermaier's words, "nearly unanimous indignation" outside *Le monde* and the far Left.[1211] Even *Libération* warned that the involvement of the Soviet Union diverted the Arab-Israeli war from one of revolution and liberation into one serving the interests of the great powers.[1212] On October 23, as cease-fire negotiations began to bear fruit, *Libération* reiterated its critique with an oblique reference to the 1938 Munich settlement: "The peace of the Great Powers is anti-popular. The Palestinians, like the Jews of yesterday, are destined to pay the price of this peace in blood and oppression."[1213]

Reports from the frontlines also exposed new shortcomings in France's policy of embargo against "battlefield" nations. On October 16, Israeli forces reported shooting down two Libyan Mirages over the Sinai — French-built aircraft that Pompidou's government had promised would never find their way to the front lines.[1214] When the

[1211] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Samedi 13 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1212] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Jeudi 18 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1213] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mardi 23 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1214] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Mardi 15 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC. Defense Ministry reports and Michel Debré's memoirs indicate that the French government was aware that Libyan Mirages had been rebased to Egypt between April and October

reports were confirmed, many of Israel's French sympathizers were scandalized; within days, the CRIF issued a declaration affirming that "the France of the Resistance must not tolerate the crime of allowing French arms to massacre the survivors of the Nazi camps and the survivors of persecution."[1215] For *Le monde*, too, this was going too far, and an October 18 editorial by its diplomatic columnist, Maurice Delarue, criticized the government for selling arms to Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, which currently had troops conducting defensive operations on behalf of Syria.[1216] Finally, Kurt Neidermaier observes, the October 15 publication of a SOFRES poll reporting 45 percent public sympathy for Israel, with only 17 percent blaming Israel for the conflict, saw much of the Parisian press adopt greater "sensibility with regard to the opinion of their readers."[1217] Hereafter, manifestly pro-Arab narratives would only appear consistently within the journals of the far Left.

French Activism and the Yom Kippur War

As the SOFRES poll of October 15 suggests, public interest in the Yom Kippur War was not limited to the press alone, and throughout October and November 1973 France witnessed significant displays of public solidarity with Israel. In contrast to 1967, however, an institutional apparatus already existed to mobilize popular support for Israel, especially among France's Jews. Popular activism for Israel in 1973 was subsequently mobilized faster and more efficiently than it had been in 1967.

1973. Debré, 178-80; Division du Renseignement, Fiche no. 10,980SGDN/REN/CER/S/CD, "Les 'Mirage' Libyens," August 9, 1973, GR 9 Q1 59, Fonds de l'armée de Terre, SHD.

[1215] Declaration du Conseil Representatif des Institutions Juives de France, quoted in J.G., "Les Mirage de la Honte," *Tribune juive* no. 276, October 19-25, 1973.

[1216] Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Jeudi 18 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

[1217] By contrast, 41 percent blamed the war on the Arab states, 35 percent on the USSR, and 29 percent on the United States. SOFRES, quoted in *Le figaro*, October 15, 1973; Kurt Neidermaier, "La Presse Française Devant la Guerre de Yom Kippour Jeudi 18 Octobre," CDIM, MDI 220-222, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

Street demonstrates once again figured as a popular means of expressing sympathy for Israel, and the largest took place in Paris. On October 10, between 20,000 and 30,000 demonstrated at the Palace de la République in downtown Paris under the banner "ISRAEL, JEWISH PEOPLE, SAME FIGHT."[1218] Elsewhere in the city, at the Mutualité and the Hotel de Ville, an additional 12,000 to 13,000 demonstrated to condemn French policy and boo the name of the Foreign Minister.[1219] Throughout the three week war, major demonstrations or collections took place in at least forty-nine additional cities.[1220] In Marseille, Socialist mayor Gaston Defferre led a 5,000 strong march to chants of "Israel will live." Over the next nine days, activists in the city occupied shipping offices and blocked roads — three times — in an effort to protest ongoing French arms sales to Libya.[1221] In Lyon, a rally in a synagogue attracted 3,000 - 5,000 protestors; in Avignon, 1,500 marched for Israel. On October 7, a protest march in Nice, led by Gaullist deputy mayor Jacques Médecin, stretched over a kilometer; 5,000 more demonstrated between Toulouse and Tarbes.[1222] Additional protests took place in Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Lille, and Metz, while the Quai d'Orsay was "inundated with letters of protest."[1223]

While tens of thousands of French citizens marked their solidarity for Israel by participating in these demonstrations, high-profile personalities found additional ways to express their support. By October 12, twenty-six leading French intellectuals, writers,

[1218] Ariel Danan, *Les juifs de France et l'état d'Israël (1948-1982)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), 110.
[1219] *Ibid.*, 119-20.
[1220] *Ibid.,* 110.
[1221] *Ibid.,* 110-11; Kassir and Mardam-Bey, 118-19.
[1222] Danan*,* 111; Henri Smolarski, "La guerre: réactions en France," *Tribune juive* no.275-276, October 11 - 19, 1973.
[1223] Noteworthy demonstrations also appeared in Angers, Bayonne, Besançon, Clermont-Ferrand, Dijon, Libourne, Roanne, Rosny-sous-Bois and Châlons-sur-Marne. Kassir and Mardam-Bey*,* 110.

journalists, and lawyers had affixed their signatures to a petition expressing their "indignation at the irresponsible and hypocritical policy of the French government with regard to Israel in [this] dramatic period," an Israel "once more threatened in its existence by a coalition that is infinitely superior in number and armament." "This war," the petition continued, calling into question anti-imperialist interpretations of the war, "is not progressive, because it acts not [as] a war of liberation but in fact as an enterprise for the destruction of a people."[1224] Signatories included Alfred Kastler, Vladimir Jankélévitch, Clara Malraux, Albert Memmi, Robert Misrahi, Henri Bulawko, Serge Klarsfeld, Simone de Beauvoir, Eugène Ionesco, Jacques Derrida, and Léon Poliakov.

Legislators also spoke out in support of Israel and in criticism of French policy. On October 11, 120 members of the French-Israel Friendship Group of the National Assembly, representing deputies from every French political party, organized under its Gaullist president Pierre de Bénouville to protest the war. In a formal declaration, the group laid "responsibility for the war . . . entirely on Egypt and Syria . . . . In attacking Israel by surprise on a day of national and religious contemplation, the aggressors have given proof that the Israeli presence in the contested territories constitutes the best guarantee of security for the Hebrew State."[1225] The group subsequently challenged French policy by calling for greater even-handedness, a general arms embargo on the Middle East, and direct negotiations between the combatants. Within days, the group and its senatorial counterpart, led by Socialist Pierre Giraud, joined together to call for immediate French action at the UN to demand an Arab withdrawal.[1226]

[1224] "Appel," October 12, 1973, MDI 146B, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1225] Group d'Amitie France - Israel de l'Assemblée Nationale, "Seance du Jeudi 11 Octobre 1973," October 11, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1226] Henri Smolarski, "La guerre: réactions en France," *Tribune juive* no. 275-276, October 11 -19, 1973.

Legislators also took action individually to protest the war and France's official response, and centrist politicians were often the most outspoken, reflecting the gradual shift of the Gaullist Right and far Left away from Israel. Center-Democrat President Jean Lecanuet was among those who critiqued the nonchalance with which Jobert had justified the Syrio-Egyptian invasion, as were Social Democratic Reformers Paul Stehlin and National Assembly Foreign Affairs Commission Vice President Jean Seitlinger, who affirmed "his active solidarity for the State of Israel" and promised to act to ensure an early peace.[1227] Socialist Party Secretary and deputy mayor of Lille Pierre Mauroy did likewise, and his critique of official French neutrality demonstrates that powerful semantic associations linking Israeli vulnerability with the memory of the Holocaust remained salient as late as 1973: "It is not possible," Mauroy affirmed, "and it should not be admissible that we keep quiet at the moment when three million Jewish survivors, parents or descendants of the victims of the most terrible genocide in history, find themselves faced with five hundred million Arabs, [forced] to conquer or die."[1228] In Mauroy's view, all Israelis were, by definition, "Jewish survivors," and this rendered France's commitment to them uniquely powerful.

Mauroy was not alone in viewing Israel through the lens of an explicitly Jewish vulnerability, and in a heated October 18 debate, similar arguments were voiced by a range of politicians on the floor of the French National Assembly as Foreign Minister Jobert visited to defend the government's policy. There, outspoken deputies framed the war as one in which Israel's survival was, once again, at stake. "The Arab armies dispose of a crushing superiority of men and materiel," Social Democratic Reformer Gabriel

[1227] *Ibid.*
[1228] *Ibid.*

Péronnet informed his colleagues, opening the debate. "Are we going to assist — in the short or long term — in the eradication of the State of Israel? Are we going to accept with fatality that Israel is one day naturally destined for destruction?"[1229] Péronnet's remarks were echoed in more dramatic terms by Jacques Soustelle, Israel's longtime friend and former partisan of French Algeria. Soustelle had returned to France from political exile in 1968, and now informed the assembly that, for Israel,

> It is . . . a question of life or death . . . . This time Israel didn't shoot first. It is evident that the aggression has come from Egypt and Syria. But it seems that French doctrine has changed [since 1967], it now demands only that one 'wish to step into his own home,' a definition that is rather difficult to clarify. In sum, if I understand it correctly, Israel is always wrong, and the Arabs are always right . . . . The fact — [let me] say it clearly — is that we found ourselves [faced with] a new attempt at genocide.[1230]

Though Soustelle was at the time politically unaligned, his remarks drew applause from the Centrist Union, the Gaullist UDR, the Social Democratic Reformers, and some Independent Republicans, indicating that Soustelle's view of the developing conflict struck a chord across a wide political spectrum.

Taking the floor, Foreign Minister Jobert was quick to refute Soustelle's remarks. "Israel will not disappear," Jobert retorted; "Israel isn't threatened by France with a crime of genocide, Mr. Soustelle!"[1231] Jobert proceeded to defend the bases of French neutrality, grounding it in "the realities of the international [relations] between countries" with reference to France's economic and political interests in the Mediterranean and Arab worlds. Israel, he added, had produced the current crisis itself by unwisely opting for war in 1967, against France's wishes, and by refusing to withdrawal from the territories it had

[1229] *JORF*, *Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, Année 1973-1974, No.74 A.N., October 18, 1973, 4475-76.
[1230] *Ibid.,* 4484-85.
[1231] *Ibid.,* 4485-86.

occupied in accordance with UN Resolution 242. If Israel would simply withdrawal, Jobert argued, negotiations could be settled.[1232] While UDR deputies applauded, Jobert's critics heckled him from the benches with cries of "Munich!"[1233] Jobert responded by accusing these hecklers of "judg[ing] with your passions and not with the facts," to which Socialist deputy Raoul Bayou retorted "the two judgments are compatible!"[1234] Once more, the question of Israel was causing France's politicians to debate the relationship between ethics, interest, and policy.

Jobert, however, had his supporters; his defense of government policy drew applause from the UDR and some Independent Republicans, and was echoed by Gaullist veterans like Maurice Couve de Murville. Communist deputies like Louis Baillot also rallied to the government, affirming that "It is no longer a question of the fight of David against Goliath, but of the will of the Israeli leaders to impose a policy of force and domination over the heart of the Middle East."[1235] Eventually, however, the debate climaxed in a back-and-forth exchange between Jobert and Center-Democratic President Jean Lecanuet, who launched a blistering critique of Jobert's defense of French policy. Jobert, Lecanuet insisted, had not outlined all the factors influencing French policy, and had given only "a solicitation of the facts to justify your condemnation of the State of Israel . . . . You have drawn [up] an indictment that poorly hides your passions."[1236] Lecanuet was particularly troubled by Jobert's October 8 justification of the Syrio-Egyptian invasion as an act of "returning to their homes." "Have not the Jews, dispersed by violence and thrown alive in their millions into the crematories, the right to return to

[1232] *Ibid.*
[1233] *Ibid*.
[1234] *Ibid.*
[1235] *Ibid.,* 4476, 4493-94.
[1236] *Ibid.,*4490-92.

their home, to construct a homeland on the land where they lived for two thousand years before Jesus Christ? I ask you the question," Lecanuet challenged: "who is entering whose home?"[1237] Terming the Foreign Minister "Israel's accuser," Lecanuet blasted Jobert's words as "singularly pro-Arab and anti-Israel"; only by adopting a policy that was neither pro-Arab nor pro-Israel could France make a genuine contribution to regional peace. His remarks drew a standing ovation from the Social Democratic Reformers.[1238]

The debate stretched on into a second session. There, even UDR and Independent Republican deputies applauded an appeal that government policy be brought in line with recent polling data that suggested that a 60 percent majority of French citizens wanted their government to pursue a more even-handed policy in the Middle East.[1239] French legislators would continue to interrogate the bases of French Middle East policy in the coming months, contesting both the logic and ethics of a policy that, in practice, favored one side of the Middle East conflict over the other. The most explicit rejection of the government's policy, however, appeared among French Jewry, a community that had, even in 1967, remained deeply uncomfortable with its own activism.

Organized French Jewry Responds to the Yom Kippur War

By late 1973, this discomfort was slipping away, if it had not disappeared completely. As a result, organized French Jewry's response to the Yom Kippur War increasingly resembled that of an organized lobby that took for granted its right to act politically in the name of minority interests. In contrast to 1967, in 1973 a tried and tested activist infrastructure already existed within the Jewish community, and in March 1972 the Coordinating Committee of French Jewish Organizations had been subsumed by the

[1237] *Ibid.*
[1238] *Ibid.*
[1239] *Ibid.,* 4504.

CRIF.[1240] Additionally, between the Six-Day War and the student protests of 1968, many Jewish young people had either observed, or themselves participated in public activism. As a result, when war broke out on October 6, 1973, organized protest and volunteer efforts came together quickly and efficiently.

The CRIF responded to news of the war with a sweeping call to action. Within days, instructions were dispatched calling for fundraising, local demonstrations, and coordination between Jewish organizations, especially those catering to Jewish youth activists. Innovating on its 1967 methods, however, the CRIF now made a concerted effort to control the flow of narratives and information about the emerging conflict. Informational materials were prepared and distributed with the assistance of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the newly-formed Israel and Middle East Documentation Center, while spokesmen were dispatched to the French press with instructions to emphasize the key themes of "French arms to the Arab states, the notion of the aggressor, [and] the partial attitude of the French government."[1241] A CRIF youth service, meanwhile, distributed instructions on "how to read the press [and] listen to the radio" to Jewish youth activists, in cooperation with the Unified Jewish Welfare Fund (Fonds juif social unifié, FSJU).[1242]

Other Jewish organizations followed the CRIF's example, and worked to support its efforts. On October 12, Siona, the Zionist Movement of North African Natives, called on its adherents "to immediately and telegraphically alert all their elected officials: mayors, general councilors, senators, and deputies, such that they intervene with the

[1240] Comite de coordination des organisations juives de France, "Assemblee Generale Extraordinaire du 1er Mars 1972," March 1, 1972, MDI 216, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1241] "Bulletin d'information et de liaison 12 Octobre 1973," October 12, 1973, MDI 146B, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1242] Le Service de la Jeunesse en Cooperation avec les Services Culturels et de L'enseignement du FSJU, "Lettre aux jeunes 1," October, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

French government in [favor of a] . . . general embargo on all the countries of the Middle East . . . [and] a neutral and impartial policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict."[1243] The French sections of the B'nai B'rith and the World Jewish Congress issued similar appeals, calling on their members to participate in CRIF efforts while "deploring the partial policy of the French government."[1244]

As they had been in the past, Jewish veterans and survivors associations were also outspoken, viewing Israel explicitly through the lenses of the Holocaust and the Second World War. "In the name of our dead," the Federation of Associations of Former Combatants and Jewish Volunteers in the French Army announced on October 15, "in the name of our survivors . . . the Federation demands that the government revise its over-partial position . . . [and conform] to the imperishable ideals of France."[1245] The Independent Association of Jewish Former Deportees and Internees issued a similar statement, drawing on the imagery of the Holocaust to make sense of the present. "The Arab countries," its president announced, "have begun the sinister enterprise for the destruction of the State of Israel, [the] country where the survivors of the concentration camps and Nazi crematory fires, our brothers and sisters, have taken refuge. Will the civilized world rest indifferent today, as it did when the henchmen of Hitler exterminated six million of our own?"[1246] With pro-Israel activists unequivocally proclaiming

[1243] Siona, "Communique de presse," October 12, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1244] "Conseil National extraordinare de la Section française du Congres juif mondial," November 1, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Gabriel Vadnai, Letter, October 3, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1245] Fédération des Associations d'Anciens Combattants et Volontaires Juifs dans l'Armée Française, Statement, October 15, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1246] J. Weinberg, Letter, October 17, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

"INDIFFERENCE IS A CRIME," Israel and the Holocaust once again became mirrors for reflecting upon the French state, its history, and the role of ethics in policy.[1247]

The rapid mobilization of organized French Jewry was also partly a question of timing. Because it began on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year, news of the war reached many Jews in their synagogues. The climactic liturgical poem *Unetanneh Tokef*, which looked uncertainly to the Jewish new year by asking "who [will perish] by fire . . . who by the sword," now took on very real and immediate significance.[1248] In some cases, worshippers responded immediately. In the Grand Synagogue of Paris, Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan interrupted the service to announce the war and issue special prayers for Israel; similar interruptions took place in synagogues in Aix-en-Provence, Reims, and Montauban.[1249] In another Parisian synagogue (La synagogue de la rue de Montevideo), Israeli ambassador Asher Ben-Natan organized an emergency collection for Israel.[1250]

Throughout the war, synagogues became key sites for Jewish activism, and religious and communal representatives often assumed leadership in pro-Israel activities. That they did demonstrates that the hesitancy of French Jewry's elected officials to act politically in the name of their communities had in large part bled off in the face of crisis and standing foreign policy. Subsequently, CRIF President Ady Steg and Chief Rabbi Kaplan went personally to lobby Prime Minister Pierre Messmer on October 17, and joined the leaders of the Jewish consistory to publish a declaration assuring "the people

[1247] Communauté Juive de Boulogne, Advertisement, "AUSCHWITZ PLUS JAMAIS!", October, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1248] Over the following weeks, this refrain from the *Unetanneh Tokef* piyyut would figure prominently in the French Jewish press. See for example Eliezer Shavit, "Par le feu ou par le fer . . . ," *Tribune juive* no. 276, October 19 -25, 1973.
[1249] Danan, 106-7.
[1250] *Ibid.*

of Israel of their unwavering attachment and support."[1251] In the following weeks, the Central Consistory and the Consistory of Paris held religious services for Israel and its soldiers, though, as Kaplan noted on October 10, "We have not only prayed for Israel, we [must] also offer it our support, our total support. Let us do it in all areas where we can, as widely and generously as possible. It is for each of us an infinitely sacred duty."[1252]

Many French Jews answered Kaplan's call. In addition to the demonstrations detailed in the previous section, which included significant Jewish participation, fundraising was the second major expression of French Jewish solidarity with Israel. The Unified Jewish Appeal of France (AUJF), under the direction of the CRIF, quickly mobilized a collection campaign with garnered the participation of some 65,000 - 70,000 donors and 7,000 volunteers.[1253] By the end of the war, the AUJF had raised a total of approximately 140 million francs, almost three times that collected over the two month period between June and July 1967.[1254] As they had in 1967, fundraising efforts drew the participation of a broad societal cross-section, from a Moselle retiree who mailed in 150 francs from their pension, to a real estate agent to gave a check for 20,000 francs.[1255]

Other French Jews, and particularly local rabbis and consistorial leaders, answered Kaplan's call with their pens, writing letters of protests to their elected

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[1251] "Compte rendu de l'entrevue du Mercredi 17 Octobre au matin entre le Grand Rabbin Kaplan et le Professeur Steg, President du C.R.I.F. avec le Premier Ministre, Monsieur Messmer," October 17, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Henri Smolarski, "La guerre: réactions en France," *Tribune juive* no. 275-276, October 11 - 19, 1973.

[1252] Pierre Kauffman, Secretary General of the CRIF, Letter, November 19, 1973, MDI 219, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Untitled Document, October 10, 1973, MDXVII Israël - Sionisme (box 2), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.

[1253] Roger Ascot, "Après la guerre," *L'arche* no. 201, November 26 - December 25, 1973. The AUJF noted this was not a decrease in the number of donors from 1967, as their infrastructure was now better able to sort out multiple donations from the same person.

[1254] This was the equivalent of about 28 million contemporary USD. Danan estimates that the total amount collected for Israel in 1973 reached 157 million francs. Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 75 (1974-1975), JPS, 1974, 431-32; Danan, 358-65.

[1255] "Le combat de la solidarité," *Tribune juive* no. 276, October 19 - 25, 1973.

representatives in the name of their communities. CRIF president Ady Steg was at the forefront of this effort. On October 15 Steg published an impassioned plea to France's senators and deputies, calling for a genuine neutrality in keeping with French ideals of justice and equality. "Today," Steg wrote,

> France is broken into two camps: those who are ready to sacrifice all to *raison d'état*, and those for whom a France in which morality would be flouted in the name of this *raison d'état* would no longer be France . . . . Some think that Israel must live, [this] Israel threatened on all sides by hostile neighbors . . . democratic and free Israel, true site of the resurrection of the survivors of the Hitlerian massacre and all the anti-Jewish persecutions. For all these [people], aiding in the salvation of Israel appears as a moral obligation. Others invoke legitimate economic or political considerations (oil supply, French influence in the Mediterranean, relations with the USSR) and take these arguments to justify . . . the true complicity of France with the Arab states. We don't ask that France take up Israel's side . . . [but] it seems indispensable to us that France exhibit a greater understanding of the imperatives of Israel's security, and less complacency toward the governments that have never hidden their desire to destroy the young state. Only a balanced attitude will permit our country to effectively work for peace.[1256]

Steg's appeal seems to have resonated; CRIF records contain the replies of at least forty-five legislators, many of whom expressed "complete agreement" or "total moral support" for Steg's proposal.[1257] Several legislators noted they had already protested to the government, while others stated they would have, had not Jean Lecanuet and Jacques Soustelle already done so on floor of the National Assembly. The November 9 reply of Justin Hausherr, the Center Democratic Deputy of Haut-Rhin, captures the sentiments that inflected many of these responses. "It seems inadmissible to me," Hausherr wrote to Steg,

> to accept, in the name of so-called *raison d'état*, or even legitimate economic interests, that a small, courageous, and proud people continues to be exposed to racial hatred. Too many crimes have been committed against the Jewish people,

[1256] Ady Steg, Form Letter, October 15, 1973, MDI 146B, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Ady Steg, "Lettre au Deputes," *Tribune juive* no. 276, October 19 - 25, 1973.
[1257] These responses, too numerous to cite individually, may be found in MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

> for too long. It is not possible for forget the Nazi exactions, the millions of Jews murdered in the culmination of a savagery which could break out only thanks to long centuries of mistrust and hatred, or simple culpable passivity . . . . As a Christian, I am not proud of that. Please believe that to the extent of my meager means I have not ceased to struggle for my country to conserve or recover its dignity.[1258]

Hausherr and those who shared his views continued to view Israel through the powerful lenses of Jewishness and the Second World War, which left French Middle East policy an ethical as much as political question. These lenses retained their salience even in 1973, demonstrating that foundational images of a vulnerable and explicitly Jewish Israel had survived the political upheavals of the late 1960s, and endured into the 1970s.

Some things, however, had changed. The politicization of French youth culture in the late 1960s had created new possibilities for pro-Israel young people to express their politics, and during the Yom Kippur War, youth activists played an important role as volunteer workers. This "youth without complexes," as journalist Roger Ascot termed the post-'68 Jewish activists, manned telephone lines, fundraised door-to-door, wrote and distributed tracts and news bulletins, and volunteered at the Israeli embassy.[1259] This was especially significant because it was harder for Jewish young people to mobilize in 1973 than it had been in 1967: the 1967 Six-Day War had fallen during the summer recess from school. Taking time out from classes in October 1973 thus represented a personal sacrifice for many young activists. Nonetheless, as one twenty-year-old woman reported, "Many of my friends are already there [in Israel] . . . . each had to overcome particular

[1258] Justin Hausherr to Ady Steg, Letter, November 9, 1973, MDI 215, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1259] Roger Ascot, "Pour Israël," *L'arche* no. 200, October 26 - November 25, 1973; Anne-Elisabeth Moutet, "Paris a l'heure du combat," ," *L'arche* no. 200, October 26 - November 25, 1973.

problems . . . . I think I'll eventually go too. Israel needs us. I feel silly, being [here] in college."[1260]

Another factor impelling Jewish mobilization was the increasing modernization of information networks: television and radio broadcasts, together with the telephone, helped anxious activists engage with the conflict in a visceral and often personal way. The expansion of French Jewish emigration to Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War similarly created new bonds between the Jewish communities of France and Israel, as friends and family members relocated to the other side of the Mediterranean. The remarks of one nineteen-year-old student activist captured both developments: on the night of October 6, the student telephoned his cousins in Israel, only to learn that they were already at the front. "Only then," the student recollected, "did I realize that this was horrible. I hung up, tears in my eyes."[1261] For those with friends and family already in Israel, the Yom Kippur War made the protest slogan "Israel, Jewish People, Same Fight" a poignant reality.[1262]

Jews were not the only ones politically mobilizing over the Yom Kippur War, however. Building on the Arab North African workers and expatriate organizations that had grown out of the late 1960s, elements within France's Arab population mobilized as well, with greater speed and organization than they had in the late 1960s.[1263] Much of this activism was explicitly organized around the question of Palestine. On October 8, 1973, left-Gaullist Louis Terrenoire and pro-Arab activist Lucien Bitterlin coordinated with the Syrian and Algerian ambassadors and local representatives of the Arab League to form

[1260] Michel Gurfinkiel, "Le téléphone et les tabernacles," *L'arche* no.201, November 26 - December 25, 1973.
[1261] *Ibid.*
[1262] Danan, 110-11.
[1263] Hecker, 44.

the Committee for the Support of the Arab Countries for the Liberation of the Occupied Territories. This umbrella organization united the efforts of the Appeal for Palestine, the Association of Algerians in Europe, the Association of Muslim Students in France, the Federation of *Témoignage chrétien* Groups, the International Committee of Christians for Palestine, the National Collective for Palestine, the International Movement of the Anti-Racist Struggle, and Louis Terrenoire's Association of Franco-Arab Solidarity (ASFA).[1264] Local factors also impelled this mobilization: Daniel Gordon notes that the Yom Kippur War, and the OPEC oil embargo in particular, energized a considerable wave of anti-Arab racism in France. In the south of France in particular, efforts to confront this racism became symbolically linked with efforts to improve the condition of North African workers, as well as the anti-imperialist politics of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine.[1265]

ASFA was at the forefront of this movement, and it affirmed unequivocally that "It is Israeli militarism that is the origin of this conflict, because it opposed all peaceful solutions . . . . The French people, who have known enemy occupation, must feel solidarity with the liberation struggle of the Arab people."[1266] Between October 9 and 16, the Committee for the Support of the Arab Countries launched a number of programs, paralleling, on a smaller scale, those taking place within the French Jewish community. On October 10, 1,000 protestors rallied in front of the Egyptian embassy. Blood drives took place at the Syrian embassy on October 12, and on the 16th, the ASFA dispatched a fifty-page report on "Israeli settlements in the occupied territories" to France's senators

[1264] Coulon, 275.
[1265] Daniel Gordon, *Immigrants and Intellectuals: May '68 and the Rise of Anti-Racism in France* (Pontypool: The Merlin Press, 2012), 145-48.
[1266] Hecker, 44-45.

and parliamentarians.[1267] By the end of the war, ASFA had raised approximately 200,000 francs for the purchase of medical supplies, which it handed over to the Egyptian and Syrian embassies.[1268] Yet while these efforts were an organizationally significant step up from the activist politics of the late 1960s, they were nevertheless marginal at the national level, and remained significantly dependent on the guidance and support of foreign states.[1269] Between them, however, the efforts of the French Arab and Jewish communities to mobilize themselves attests to the increasing legitimacy of identity politics in France. As a result, when another series of French elections loomed in May1974, the issue of the Middle East would continue to figure prominently.

French Jewry, the Israel Lobby, and the Presidential Election of 1974

Jewish political activism on the question of Israel did not dissipate with the end of the Yom Kippur War in late October 1973, and in some ways, it grew. The Pompidou government's steadfastness in the face of public protest convinced some Jewish activists that their lobbying needed to take on a more concrete, even electoral dimension — something the government would have greater difficulty ignoring. On December 16, 1973, a group under the name of Outlook Judaism (Judaism perspectives) approached the CRIF with an explicit appeal for Jewish electoral lobbying. "The Jews of France can and must politically express themselves as Jews, in two directions: ISRAEL, [and] the [Jewish] Community in France," the group announced.[1270] It called for unified political action and direction, informational campaigns, boycott efforts, and "active participation in coming legislative and presidential electoral campaigns" in order to become "a true

[1267] The Syrian Health Minister ordered the blood drive halted on October 14. *Ibid*.
[1268] *Ibid.*
[1269] Coulon, 275.
[1270] Judaisme perspectives, "Pour l'unite vers l'action," December 16, 1973, MDI 146B, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

lobby." "Tomorrow," the group concluded, "the Jewish vote must be a reality upon which everyone can count."[1271]

Equally dismayed with French foreign policy, the CRIF took this call seriously, and by March 1974 the organization was engaged in a heated debate over the future of Jewish political activism in France. Speaking before the CRIF plenary assembly on March 6, CRIF President Ady Steg argued that, though it might group French Jews "in the ranks of troublemakers" and risk accusations of being "bad Frenchmen," the French Jewish community could not hesitate to defend its interests, including its attachment to Israel:

> We must not stand for any attack on our dignity as Jews . . . . Our duty is to defend our Community, to defend the Jews wherever they are found and, of course, to defend Israel. And let no one try to intimidate us by [claiming we have] a double allegiance. We will treat these people as required!!! The second [major field of action for the CRIF] is the absolute necessity to defend Israel more than ever, to make a common front alongside Israel until the moment negotiations are established.[1272]

Raymond Lindon, the vice president of the French Jewish National Fund, shared this outlook, and pushed further to call for direct political action: "We must take action different from that of the past," Lindon told the assembled delegates. "We must try to explain to the public powers that we can, if necessary, be an electoral force."[1273] Immediate objections were raised by communal leaders and future CRIF vice presidents Emile Touati and Henri Bulawko, who warned that electoral lobbying would feed antisemitic conspiracy theories. Even then, however, Bulawko agreed that the CRIF

[1271] *Ibid.*
[1272] It was Steg's final plenary as CRIF President; after stepping down for personal reasons, he would be replaced by Jean Rosenthal. Compte - Rendu de l'Assemblee Pleniere du 6 Mars 1974," March 6, 1974, MDI 146B, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1273] *Ibid.*

needed to take immediate action to begin shaping perceptions of Israel within the mass media.[1274]

In the end, though divisions remained, the CRIF moved to take a more active role in Jewish electoral politics. It soon had the opportunity. On April 2, 1974, President Pompidou died in office. New elections were slated for mid-May, and a heated presidential race was soon underway between Socialist Party candidate François Mitterrand and Independent Republican Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Throughout the short but intense presidential campaign, the CRIF and other pro-Israel organizations, like the Alliance France-Israel, issued a series of questionnaires to the candidates, interrogating their positions on Israel and peace in the Middle East. While the CRIF affirmed that French Jews should decide for themselves how to vote, it did act in the name of organized French Jewry to query the candidates, and inform them of the CRIF's platform on Israel.[1275] Attributing the "constant refusal of the extremist Arab governments to recognize Israel's right to exist" in part to the French government's "policy of un-nuanced hostility toward Israel," the CRIF announced that "The Jews of France, like the majority of their co-citizens, hope to see [French Middle East] policy incline toward a more just equilibrium . . . favoring the advent of a durable peace, guaranteed by sure and recognized frontiers for all the peoples of the region."[1276] Candidates were asked if they would modify French embargo policy, support direct Arab-Israeli negotiations, adhere to prior commitments to Israel, how they interpreted UN Resolution 242, and what they

[1274] *Ibid.*
[1275] CRIF, Untitled Document, May 15, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1276] "Declaration du C.R.I.F.," May 9, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

thought of Charles de Gaulle and Michel Jobert's well-known critiques of Israel.[1277] In each case, the candidates or their close political allies responded at length, implying greater flexibility with regard to Israel in the case of electoral victory. That they did suggests that neither front-runner felt that the CRIF and its concerns could be completely ignored.[1278]

Ultimately, the French pro-Israel community found itself split by the 1974 election. Throughout April and May 1974, past and present leaders of the pro-Israel movement worked to rally support for each candidate by appealing to French Jews' sympathy for Israel. A "Support Committee of the Friends of Israel for François Mitterrand" reached out to voters with the support of long-time Israel allies like Christian Pineau and Vincent Auriol, Socialist deputy Pierre Giraud, and LICA President Pierre Bloch.[1279] A corresponding "Appeal to the Friends of Israel in favor of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing" did the same with the backing of former ambassador P.E. Gilbert, the widow of Association France-Israel president Pierre Kœnig, and the personal endorsement of the CRIF's new president, Jean Rosenthal.[1280] Both groups promised that their candidate would be better for France, better for Israel, and better for peace.[1281]

[1277] "Projet de questionnaire aux candidates," 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Salomon Friedrich, "Questions posées aux candidates pour la Présidence de la République," 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1278] These responses were forthcoming despite the reported "annoyance" and "disorientation" produced by "the multiplicity of petitions, supplications, or questionnaires that have been addressed to them by Jewish organizations." "Memorandum de Gerard Israel à Madame et Messieurs les Membres de la Commission Permanent du CRIF," May 9, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1279] "Comité de Soutien des Amis d'Israël à François Mitterrand," Advertisement, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1280] "Appel aux Amis d'Israël en faveur de Valéry Giscard d'Estaing," Advertisement, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Guy Rozancwicz to P. Kauffman, Letter, May 24, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.
[1281] For examples of the candidates' replies, see François Mitterrand to CRIF Director Pierre Kauffman, Letter, May 15, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Bulletin Quotidien d'Informations Supplement no. 835, "François Mitterrand Repond aux Questions de l'Agence Télégraphique Juive," May 16, 1974, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC; and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to Jean Rosenthal, Letter, May, 1971, MDI 196, Fonds CRIF, CDJC.

In the end, a majority of Jewish voters favored Mitterrand, though it is hard to be certain why.[1282] Mitterrand had demonstrated the greatest readiness to modify standing French policy toward Israel in his replies to the CRIF's questionnaires, and the CRIF plenary debate of March 1974 suggests that Israel was becoming an important electoral issue for some French Jews. In light of these considerations, it would be fair to suggest that French policy toward Israel did have some effect on the 1974 election, even if it is impossible to determine how much. Any impact would have been significant, however, given the closeness of the final result: Giscard d'Estaing won the election by a narrow margin of just 1.6 percent. Now, for the first time since 1958, France found itself without a Gaullist president. The possibility for a shift in foreign policy seemed real: just days before, Giscard d'Estaing had told *Tribune juive* that "in the Near East, as elsewhere, morality, particularly in the matter of arms sales, must in particular cases prevail over economic and diplomatic considerations."[1283] Those who hoped for a modification in France's Middle East policy thus watched expectantly to see what the new president would do.

They were in for a disappointment. Though a detailed analysis of Giscard d'Estaing's Middle East policy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it was clear by mid-1974 that the recent elections would not produce a reversal in French policy toward the Middle East. As president, Giscard d'Estaing would launch a concerted effort to cultivate close French ties with the Arab world. At the crux of this project was French support for the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, and the diplomatic

[1282] Arnold Mandel, "Western Europe: France," *AJY* Vol. 76 (1976), JPS, 1976, 303-4.
[1283] Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, "Declaration de Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (A Tribune Juive du 17 mai 1974)," in "Judaisme et Action Politique," Supplément à T.J. Hebdo No. 307 du 17 mai 1974, May 19, 1974, MDXVII, Fonds Kaplan, Israël - Sionisme (box 1), CDJC.

legitimization of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as their official representative. Israeli leaders were less than pleased, as the PLO had not expressed its readiness to live in peace alongside the Jewish State. Nonetheless, on May 31, just two weeks after Giscard d'Estaing's election, France's representative at the UN announced French support for "legitimate Palestinian aspirations" to statehood.[1284] The same day, the French Foreign Ministry published a declaration affirming that "any peace settlement must, in order to be just and durable, give an equitable part to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians."[1285] By October, France would vote in favor of PLO observer status at the UN; Giscard d'Estaing would call for a Palestinian "homeland"; and France's new French Foreign Minister, Jean Sauvagnargues, would formally receive PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Paris.[1286] As Universal Israélite Alliance leader René Cassin noted, many French Jewish and Israeli observers were dismayed that these steps had been taken without pressuring the PLO to moderate its position on Israel.[1287] Thus, though Sauvagnargues would end France's diplomatic embargo of Israel by visiting in late 1974, he was received coolly, and French-Israeli relations showed little signs of warming.[1288]

In late August, meanwhile, France had ended its unpopular embargo of the Middle East's "battlefield" countries. Rather than adopt a general embargo, however, this move was calculated to protect French military contracts in Egypt and Libya. Days prior, the Egyptian Foreign Minister had confirmed that Libya's French-built Mirages has

[1284] Coulon, 281.
[1285] "La Politique Française et la Question Palestinienne," 1974, MDXVII Israël - Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.
[1286] *Ibid.*
[1287] *Ibid.*
[1288] Coulon, 281.

fought for Egypt during the Yom Kippur War.[1289] This constituted a violation of France's contract with Libya, which had explicitly prohibited such use. Rather than void the contract — and subsidiary agreements for the supply of replacement parts and pilot training — France voided its embargo. Henceforth, French arms would flow unimpeded to its customers in the Middle East. It was not exactly the policy of even-handed neutrality the embargo's critics had hoped for.

The 1973 Yom Kippur War and 1974 Presidential election thus represented significant opportunities for France to shift its policy toward Israel and the Middle East. Public sympathy for Israel was at its highest and most visible levels since 1967, and the use of Libyan Mirages in combat gave France legal grounds on which to widen its embargo policy. A decision had to be made, either way. Ultimately, France's new cabinet opted for continuity, while Israel showed little sign of moderating its own position. As a result, French-Israeli relations would remain tense throughout the remainder of Giscard d'Estaing's seven year presidency, and never again achieve the mutual understanding and trust characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s. In their absence, though Franco-Arab ties would continue to deepen, France would be unable to fulfill the mediating role that Charles de Gaulle had envisioned for his country a decade prior.

Conclusions

The years of the later Pompidou presidency demonstrated that the French-Israeli rupture of 1967-70 was not simply a bad dream from which the two nations would one day awake, but was, in fact, a new reality. Between 1971 and 1974, French-Israeli relations settled into an uncomfortable *differend* in which both French and Israeli leaders

[1289] *Ibid.;* "La Politique Française et la Question Palestinienne," 1974, MDXVII Israël - Sionisme (box 1), Fonds Kaplan, CDJC.

became increasingly deaf to the concerns of the other. Once-close lines of communication deteriorated into a mutual diplomatic embargo, and when French-Israeli dialogue took place at all, it was characterized by mutual recrimination and frustration. As French-Israeli relations consolidated into a pattern of confrontation over cooperation, both countries worked to cultivate relationships with alternate international partners. For Israel, this meant increasing reliance on the United States for military and diplomatic support, while France gravitated toward deeper political and economic partnership with Libya, Egypt, and other Arab states. The outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in late 1973 cemented these tendencies. To the surprise and dismay of many of Israel's friends in France, members of the French government expressed sympathy and understanding for the Syrio-Egyptian invasion of Israel, and blamed Israeli intransigence for the resumption of war in the Middle East. While doing so helped France avoid the worst of the OPEC oil embargo, it confirmed Israeli suspicions that France was no longer a viable international partner.

Elements within the French press also demonstrated considerable sympathy for Arab war aims in late 1973, attesting to the ongoing fragmentation of French public discourse on Israel. While longstanding images of Jewish vulnerability continued to inform perceptions of Israel, Israel's ongoing territorial occupations — and the growing legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism in France — energized both right and left-wing critiques of the Jewish State. Pro-Israel politics in France also consolidated during this period as activists became increasingly confident in the legitimacy of Jewish identity politics, and increasingly uncomfortable with the direction of French foreign policy. By mid-1974, the CRIF was thus an explicitly pro-Israel lobby, and taking steps to become

an electoral force; it was a significant departure from the *israélite* civic politics of the 1940s and 1950s.

In the end, however, most French observers simply wanted their government to practice the neutrality it preached. While the French public had never fully embraced the Gaullist pivot toward the Arab Middle East, the broad bipartisan sympathy Israel had once aroused had largely dissipated. It had been blown apart by domestic politics, generational shift, new international realities, and changing perceptions of the Jewish state. In its absence, the once-intimate French-Israeli relationship would gradually fade into an echo of the past.

Conclusion

The French-Israeli Friendship: Mirage or Something More?

By 1974, the once-close French-Israeli friendship had all but faded away — but had it been illusory all along? Was France's clandestine and unofficial support for Zionism in the 1940s, or its close military and scientific cooperation with Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, an accident of history, an anomalous break with longstanding French ties in the Arab world, driven primarily by a calculation of pragmatic interest? Throughout this dissertation I have argued "No." The French-Israeli relationship of the mid-twentieth century was rather the outgrowth of competing perceptions of the French state and its interests, and was informed by sentiment, ideology, and memory, as much as *realpolitik*. Though pragmatic interest occupies a central place in this history, it does not sufficiently account for the tremendous political breadth, personal depth, or longevity of the French-Israeli friendship, which both pre- and post-dated a 1954-62 Algerian War whose primacy in this history is too-often assumed. By assessing the weight of political interest alongside an examination of the ideas, institutions, and personalities that shaped French foreign policy, we are better able to account for the rise and fall of a diplomatic partnership that facilitated the transfer of over 4.4 billion francs in military hardware, tens of thousands of immigrants, and one nuclear reactor from France to Israel.[1290]

Through this study, I have sought to change the way we think about the rise and decline of French-Israeli relations by arguing that we must look beyond the level of the pragmatic to assess the broad range of factors shaping policy and public opinion. By not presupposing the primacy of the Algerian War — or the events of the Middle East in

[1290] Monetary values are given in post-1960 new francs.

general — I have worked to demonstrate that the roots of the French-Israeli alliance were as much local as international. By approaching this diplomatic relationship through the lens of internal French political, institutional, and cultural change, I have shown that the French-Israeli alliance was the product of moral, ideological, and political imperatives grounded in the particularity of postwar France and its recent past. In this sense, such a relationship could only have developed between Israel and France — a France burdened with fresh memories of occupation and resistance, one struggling to assert its great power status, and one endowed with the largest Jewish population in Europe.

I have argued that the origins of the French-Israeli alliance date not to the 1950s, but the 1940s, where the intersection of great power politics, individual and institutional agency, and powerful images of Jewish vulnerability came together to form the defining patterns of the French-Israeli partnership. In charting the course of this relationship, I have also argued for the enduring power of social imaginaries in policy formation, demonstrating how French perceptions of their wartime past, colonial present, and post-colonial future worked together to shape the course of international relations. Yet this relationship was not one-way. Thinking about Israel stimulated energetic debates within the French public and political spheres, helping to both clarify and confuse what it meant to be French after the Second World War. These debates created a longstanding contest over the formation and execution of policy toward the Middle East, and ultimately impelled the politicization of France's Jewish and Arab minority populations as international affairs were mapped onto local politics. In this sense, the story of the French-Israeli relationship is one that is local, international, and transnational, all at the same time.

A constructivist approach to international relations facilitated our examination of the ways in which foreign policy reflects the culturally constituted ideas and memories of the local, as much as international geopolitics. Jonathan Judaken and Ronald Schechter's recent studies of the figuration of Jewishness in French political and intellectual thought also informed my analysis. Extrapolating from their interrogation of perceived Jewishness, I demonstrated how Israel, as a powerful symbol of Jewishness, served as a prism helping to clarify and articulate French thinking about politics, community, ethics, and the Republic. In so doing, my study revealed how Israel became a cultural code facilitating and reflecting a larger mid-century debate about the French state, its policies, and its history.

Research for this project drew extensively on the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the heretofore underutilized records of the French Ministry of Defense.[1291] The recent declassification of Defense Ministry records is key to exposing France's inter-ministerial contest over the direction of French-Israeli relations, and sheds new light on French perceptions of Israel's military capabilities, needs, and occupations in years following 1967. This research was supplemented by legislative records, memoir and interview testimony, and the records of the US Department of State, whose valuable observations on the French-Israeli relationship have, until now, been overlooked.

Yet the French-Israeli relationship was not only a history of governments. By making extensive use of previously understudied sources in the French press, particularly for the post-1967 period, I have been able to expose the harmonization, and at times significant divergence, of popular and official perceptions of Israel. Doing so has

[1291] Frédérique Schillo has also exhaustively made use of these archives, though her work terminates in 1959.

revealed that policy-makers who allowed sentiment and memory to shape the development of French-Israeli relations were not anomalous, but rather reflected widely-shared perceptions of Jewish and Israeli vulnerability in the wake of the Holocaust. Finally, examining the records of the organized French Jewish community and the voices of the Jewish press allowed me to illuminate the gradual politicization of French Jewry, and the central role of France's pro-Israel movement therein. By examining how thinking about Israel helped French Jews frame and articulate their own place within the Republic, we are able to better understand the interplay of the local and the international as they intersect with the development of French identity politics.

Throughout this work, I have sought to challenge narratives that bracket the French-Israeli friendship between the 1954-62 Algerian War and the 1967 Six-Day War. These reference points subordinate the health of French-Israeli relations to French tensions with the Arab world. This conventional dating suggests that when those tensions began to dissipate following Algeria's independence in 1962, the French-Israeli friendship crumbled rapidly, collapsing definitively in the wake of Israel's 1967 territorial conquests. Yet a close reading of the sources reveals that, at most times, French policy makers did not view amicable relations with Israel and the Arab world as mutually exclusive. Rather, French leaders, and especially Gaullists, were often convinced that good relations with both Arabs and Israelis were necessary to serve French interests and promote peace in the Middle East. In this light, casting aside a potentially profitable French-Israeli relationship in 1962 appears needlessly wasteful — so long as Israel cooperated. My work thus looks beyond the narrow 1954-67 framework to uncover a

more complex reality, wherein key factors shaping the French-Israeli relationship can be found within France itself, and not only the wars of the Near East.

Casting our chronological framework backward revealed that the defining characteristics of the French-Israeli alliance — individual agency, ministerial competition, and the fusion of pragmatic and sentimental concerns — were already in place by the end of 1953. These factors were rooted in the French experience of the Second World War and the images, institutional structures, and foreign policy priorities that emerged from it. As we observed in Chapter One, powerful ministries and potent memories of wartime cooperation, occupation, and Jewish victimhood created a climate of personal agency in which support for Jewish statehood mobilized organically, rather than as the product of a consistent policy. French responses to the project of Jewish statehood between 1944 and 1953 were thus the vacillating and disjointed result of competing foreign policy visions.

In Chapter Two, we saw this inconsistency solidify into a coherent policy of French-Israeli alliance during the heady years of 1954-58. While the rise of this alliance was grounded in the anti-Nasserist and colonialist politics of French North Africa, it was also deeply rooted in an array of sentimental and ideological factors. These included an explicit rejection of the legacy of Munich, enduring perceptions of Jewish vulnerability, and a renewed commitment to principled interventionism. Here we saw how French policy toward Israel was often couched in terms of Munich, the Republic, and the Holocaust, as Jewishness became a critical lens for understanding Israel, and Israel a vehicle for grappling with the recent French past. Exposing this semantic relationship also shed new light Henry Rousso's work on postwar French silence over the Holocaust,

revealing the centrality of the Holocaust as a lens for understanding Israel and France's responsibilities to it. French-Israeli ties also remained dependent on the institutional structures of the French Fourth Republic. An inter-ministerial division of foreign policy powers allowed powerful ministers like Guy Mollet, Christian Pineau, and Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, and key bureaucrats like Shimon Peres, Abel Thomas, and P.E. Gilbert, to pursue a French-Israeli relationship of unprecedented breadth and depth, resulting in something far more than an alliance of convenience.

Over the next decade, however, the foundational pillars of the French-Israeli friendship gradually began to weaken, leading to a concomitant shift in French foreign policy, if not public opinion. Chapter Three charted the political dimensions of this transformation as they began to unfold between 1959 and 1967 under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle and the weight of institutional, ideational, and political change. The constitutional settlement of 1958 and the end of the Algerian War in 1962 brought an end to the ministerial independence within which French-Israeli relations had thrived, while a ministerial changing of the guard in both France and Israel gradually phased out the advocates of the French-Israeli alliance. At the same time, France's new Gaullist leaders were reimagining their relationship with Israel and the Arab Mediterranean. In keeping with his vision of French *grandeur*, Charles de Gaulle now reconceived French-Israeli relations at those of patron and client, subordinating them to French efforts to rebuild ties with the Arab world, and increasingly conditioning them on Israeli deference. Israel's unwillingness to abide by these terms impelled a further reevaluation by de Gaulle, who increasingly perceived Israel as an aggressor, rather than a past or potential victim. The dramatic French-Israeli rupture of June 2, 1967, and France's subsequent embargo of

Israel, were thus the products of a gradual transformation that had largely played out by the start of the Six-Day War.

As Chapter Four revealed, however, this transformation was not reflected across much of French public opinion in 1967. In an effort to challenge the often-presumed centrality of the 1967 Six-Day War in the deterioration of Israel's international image, I demonstrated that French public discourse on Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War transformed less profoundly and less rapidly than has been typically recognized. A careful review of French political activism and public discourse reveals that while the French government broke with Israel on the eve of the war, majority sectors of the French public proved slower to follow suit, as pre-war images of Israeli vulnerability largely retained their salience. While the Six-Day War did catalyze new unsympathetic representations of Israel, these remained marginal throughout 1967, and paled next to the significant expansion of French Jewish and pro-Israel activism produced by the short war. The French-Israeli rupture of 1967 was thus not a clean break, but a contested parting of ways that saw the French government and significant sectors of the French public diverge in their perceptions of Israel. As a result, we must view the impact of the Six-Day War as a process playing out gradually over time, rather than a moment of rapid transformation.

Whereas Chapter Three examined the deterioration of the political bases of French-Israeli cooperation, Chapter Five's study of French domestic politics between 1968 and 1970 shed light on the fragmentation of French popular perceptions of Israel. The social and political upheavals brought on in France by the mass politics of May 1968 created new opportunities to re-imagine Israel through the lenses of revolution, anti-

colonialism, and identity politics. Previously hegemonic narratives of a brave but vulnerable Israel, which had been on display in 1967, subsequently began to fracture as significant numbers of students, workers, and the reading public encountered alternative ways of understanding and identifying with the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Within a predominantly Left-wing milieu, these conflicts were now increasingly mapped onto an array of local and international causes, including past and present wars in Algeria and Vietnam, and the anti-racist struggle within France itself. Israel subsequently began to function as a cultural code helping to define and delimit political identity, while impelling the politicization of France's Jewish and Arab minorities. Offering a critical examination of French public discourse on Israel after 1967, this chapter indicates that French perceptions of Israel were, in important ways, more responsive to domestic politics than changes in the landscape of the Middle East.

Chapter Six reminded us, however, that the fragmentation of popular attitudes toward Israel between1968 and 1970 was ultimately limited in scope. Mirroring Chapter Four's effort to contextualize the Gaullist break with Israel in light of popular sympathy for the Jewish state, Chapter Six's analysis of the 1969-70 Cherbourg affair demonstrated that mainstream French discourse on Israel remained significantly beholden to longstanding images of Israeli Jewishness and vulnerability. By the start of the 1970s, neither the Gaullist rupture of 1967 nor the radical politics of 1968-70 had deflated these images, or their ability to mobilize French officials to take extraordinary steps to augment Israel's security. The clandestine assistance and broad popular sympathy provided to Israel's theft of five embargoed missile boats attests to the enduring power of "brave little Israel" as a socially-constructed image shaping French discourse and action.

Chapter Seven returned our attention to French-Israeli relations at the official level to assess the long-term transformation of the French-Israeli friendship, and its effect on French political life. There, we saw how, by 1973-74, a return to the close cooperation of earlier decades was neither possible nor desirable for French or Israeli leaders. Years of military and diplomatic embargo had soured relations between the two states, undermining mutual trust and rendering French and Israeli representatives increasingly deaf to one another's concerns. French-Israeli tensions during the 1973 Yom Kippur War confirmed that there was no way back, as French ministers expressed understanding for the objectives of Israel's battlefield adversaries, and credited Israel with the resumption of hostilities. At the same time, French public discourse on the war reflected the ongoing fragmentation of French perceptions of Israel. By 1974, following years of gradual transformation, a once-pervasive sympathy for Israel had fractured into partisanship and an energetic Jewish lobby. This lobby, and the politicization of French Jewry that it reflected, would ultimately prove the most enduring legacy of the French-Israeli friendship. Born out of a reflexive French-Jewish identification with Israel in moments of crisis, and galvanized by the French government's ongoing tension with Israel after 1967, the gradual politicization of the French Jewish community was in large part an outgrowth of the deterioration of the French-Israeli relationship. The CRIF's ongoing effort to promote the interests of French Jewry and, at times, Israel, thus attests to Israel's lasting imprint on French domestic politics.

Certain limitation have restricted our ability to fully illuminate the history of French-Israeli relations and their social impact in France, however. Many pertinent documents held by the French Ministry of Defense and the French National Archives

remain classified. As a result, key areas of the French-Israeli relationship remain obscure, particularly those pertaining to French-Israeli nuclear cooperation. This lacuna compels historians to rely on memoirs and investigative journalism to fill in the gaps, despite their at times conflicting and self-interested accounts. The semi-clandestine nature of French-Israeli military relations further obscures the historical record, as key meetings and agreements, not least of all the Sèvres conference of 1956, took place 'off the books.' Finally, while polling data, official reports, legislative records, and memoirs give some indication of the extent and political impact of public discourse, it has been difficult, within the scope of this project, to assess the role of these factors with greater certainty. While a statistical analysis of French discourse on Israel would present a valuable avenue for future research, greater clarity on the development of French-Israeli relations themselves must await further declassifications.

The conclusions and methodologies explored in this project suggest other avenues of fruitful research as well. While popular French images of Israel were beginning to diversify in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these images would develop in an increasingly unsympathetic direction over the next two decades. An analysis of French policy and public discourse between 1975 and the early 1990s would do much to illuminate how, why, and when French popular and official perceptions of Israel re-harmonized. Building on my findings about the limited scope of French anti-Zionism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such a study could shed valuable light on the growth of European anti-Zionism, the ongoing blurring of the Jewish and the Israeli, and its relationship to rising incidences of antisemitism in France. My efforts to analyze the place of the Middle East in French domestic politics and the growth of minority activism

could also be fruitfully reproduced, in a more comprehensive fashion, for France's Arab communities. The recent studies of Maud Mandel, Marc Hecker, and Ethan Katz provide useful models for how such work might proceed, and further research would shed additional light on the intersection of local and international politics in France.[1292] Finally, having demonstrated that the 1967 Six-Day War had a less immediate and less pronounced impact on French perceptions of Israel than has been previously assumed, it would be logical to question the centrality of 1967 in other national contexts as well. By doing so we can determine whether the gradual decline of French popular sympathy for Israel after 1967 was an anomaly, or reflective of a wider, as yet unrecognized pattern.

Additionally, this work has important implications for the study of both foreign policy and contemporary international politics. Readers may well be familiar with the close American-Israeli relationship that has existed since the late 1960s. Despite the protestations of American and Israeli politicians alike that the United States has always been Israel's greatest ally and that their "special relationship" will never falter, the history of the French-Israeli relationship should compel us to reexamine each of these propositions. Prior to 1967, France was indisputably Israel's most important international partner, providing it with military equipment, technical knowledge, diplomatic support, and battlefield comradeship. The American-Israeli partnership was, in key respects, a direct outgrowth of the deterioration of the French-Israeli friendship, as the loss of French military and diplomatic support rendered Israel increasingly reliant on the United States. In the same token, those confident in the long-term future of the American-Israeli alliance

[1292] See Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France: History of a Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Marc Hecker, *Intifada française? De l'importation du conflit israélo-palestinien* (Paris: Ellipses, 2012); and Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

would do well to remember Charles de Gaulle's 1964 characterization of Israel as a "friend and ally," and the relatively rapid deterioration of relations in the years that followed. While the geopolitics, demographic factors, and domestic politics which surround the American-Israeli relationship are profoundly different, the history of the French-Israeli friendship demonstrates that even the most intimate of alliances have the potential for remarkable transformation.

At a methodological level, meanwhile, this history has argued that the study of international relations cannot be separated from cultural history or the ideas and images upon which policy is predicated. The history of the French-Israeli friendship would be woefully incomplete without assessments of Guy Mollet's obsession with Munich, Charles de Gaulle's skepticism of Jewish "exaggeration," or the French public's longstanding readiness to imagine Israel through the lens of the Holocaust. The "emotional register" cautioned against by Frédérique Schillo, though unbecoming of the historian, was central to the growth of French-Israeli relations.[1293] At the same time, integrating the cultural and the ideational into our analyses embraces the personhood of policy-makers, who were products of their time as much as rational actors. Cultural history must therefore be a component of foreign policy analysis, if policy makers and polities are to be situated within their ideational and discursive contexts.

Finally, my work has made a case for the role of the "middle-man" in the history of international relations by examining the ideas and actions of those who informed and executed policy alongside those who dictated it. More than any others, the story of the French-Israeli friendship is perhaps that of P.E. Gilbert, Abel Thomas, and most of all,

[1293] Frédérique Schillo, *La politique française a l'égard d'Israël (1946-1959)* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012), 9.

the late Shimon Peres. It therefore seems fitting that we allow Peres the final word on the history he did so much to create. As Peres recalled in 2015,

> Our two countries met at the most demanding time of our histories and embraced each other in a formidable stream of togetherness and trust. When needed, our relations were transparent and when required, they became ambiguous . . . . The French people let us escape the pains of loneliness . . . . [and] supplied us with the necessary arms to defend our lives and protect our land. We faced common dangers and cooperated in the development of modern technologies.[1294]

Far from an illusion, the French-Israeli friendship was real and tangible, a relationship which helped reshape the face of the modern Middle East. French-Israeli cooperation launched the Suez War of 1956, provided Israel with the arms it used to win the 1967 Six-Day War, and helped Israel develop the nuclear capability that remains a staple of its national defense to this day. Imaging Israel shaped France in turn, facilitating a confrontation with the legacies of the Second World War, impelling the politicization of French minorities, and helping to clarify the boundaries of politics and identity. It was a relationship grounded first and foremost in people, something Peres himself knew well: "What matters in truth," Peres informed a French interviewer in summer 1971, "beyond the relationship between governments, is the closeness of [our] relationship and the constant friendship between the two peoples. As for the rest, we are content to hope for better days."[1295]

[1294] Shimon Peres, e-mail message to the author, June 7, 2015.
[1295] Claude Hemmendinger, "Chimon Peress [sic]: Interview," *Tribune juive* no. 152, May 28 - June 10, 1971.

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