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Source: *Publius*, Vol. 21, No. 3, The State of American Federalism, 1990-1991 (Summer, 1991), pp. 191-209

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3330522>

Accessed: 03/02/2010 08:00

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Israeli Leadership and Public Attitudes Toward Federal Solutions for the Arab-Israeli Conflict Before and After Desert Storm

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This first empirical investigation of support for federative solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict among the Jewish political leadership and general public of Israel suggests that, despite the Palestinian Intifada and the Gulf War, there is a potential basis within Israel for federal approaches to intercommunal and interstate conflict resolution. Both leaders and the public are dissatisfied with the status quo. Political leaders are more supportive than the public of federative arrangements, while the public is somewhat more supportive of an autonomy arrangement for the Palestinians than it was before the Gulf crisis. While the Intifada appears to have produced a slightly more dovish trend among leaders and among voters, the Gulf War appears not to have produced any basic changes in the views of political leaders or general citizens.

Interstate enmity and intercommunal hatred are basic to the “compound conflict” between Israelis and Arabs,¹ a conflict having deep territorial, religious, national, economic, and cultural roots. The intercommunal dimension, involving the Palestinians, seems to be more intractable, and its salience varies over time. Great sensitivity to the Palestinian problem corresponds to dovishness, while emphasis on the interstate dimension characterizes hawkishness in Israeli politics. Following several years of Intifada, the Palestinian issue gained prominence, reaching an apex in the spring of 1990. Subsequently, however, Iraqi aggression against Kuwait focused attention on interstate tensions. Furthermore, the PLO’s pro-Iraqi position during the Gulf War ended, at least temporarily, a period characterized by great salience of the Palestinian issue. The long-range repercus-

AUTHORS’ NOTE: This research was supported by the Center for International Communication and Policy, Bar Ilan University; the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University; and by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

¹For this term and an analysis of the two dimensions, see Shmuel Sandler, “The Protracted Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Temporal-Spatial Analysis,” *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 10 (1988): 54-78.

sions for the Palestinian cause among Israelis is yet to be assessed. Following the events in the Persian Gulf, the need for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in both its dimensions is again on the international agenda.

Since the 1919 Weizman-Feisal talks, two years after the Balfour Declaration (November 1917), there have been many attempts to end the conflict between Arabs and Jews in the land of Israel. The only significant successes were the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979. While the Yom Kippur War (1973) gave prominence to the interstate dimension of the conflict, the Palestinian uprising (the Intifada) in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip has emphasized its intercommunal dimension. The intercommunal aspect will probably not fade, despite the upsurge of the interstate dimension resulting from the Gulf War.

Israel's willingness and ability to respond to or initiate a peace proposal are greatly contingent upon the attitudes of its political leaders as well as the general public. Various studies have illuminated the degrees of general public support for plans for conflict resolution.² These studies have reviewed general trends regarding attitudes about political options, as those options were defined by common-day political language and were presented on the public political agenda. The leadership, however, has not been subjected to a similar investigation. This study is the first to focus on the leadership's preferences for solutions to the conflict; consequently, it is the first to compare the general public and the political leadership's support for federalist solutions.

Most of the public opinion studies preceded the outbreak of the Intifada, but this study was conducted in May 1990, two and a half years after the heightening of the intercommunal conflict, yet before the Gulf crisis, which may constitute a point of departure in Israeli attitudes toward the conflict. This study also capitalizes on the results of a poll conducted in June 1991, after the Gulf War, and on reactions of the leadership to the war. The comparison of findings before and after the Gulf War allow us, therefore, to gauge how Israeli Jews and their representatives in the Knesset perceive the utility of federal solutions at the beginning of a new decade.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL SETTING

Federal solutions to intercommunal conflict are based on principles of self-rule and on mechanisms for shared rule among individuals, groups, and states. It has been suggested that the context of Middle East federalism will have some common features. First, there are likely to be contractual linkages for power-sharing. These linkages will presumably be of a permanent character. Second, these linkages will not eliminate or ignore sovereignty but rather bypass it. Third, any federal solution will not replace or diminish prior organic ties of Jews or Arabs.³

²See Asher Arian, Ilan Talmud, and Tamar Herman, *National Security and Public Opinion in Israel* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1988); Gad Barzilai, "National Security Crises and Voting Behavior: The Intifada and the 1988 Elections," *Elections in Israel—1988*, eds. Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1990).

³Daniel J. Elazar, ed., *Self-Rule/Shared Rule: Federal Solutions to the Middle East Conflict* (Lanham, Md. and Jerusalem: University Press of America and the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1984), p. 3.

The Jewish political tradition contains a strong federal outlook.⁴ However, in the Jewish state, this aspect of the tradition has had limited impact. The Zionist ethos of unitary *etatism*, stressing full Jewish sovereignty, was dominant in the construction of Israeli political structures.

Federal ideas were considered by the Israeli body politic primarily in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵ Indeed, federal approaches have been forwarded by various political leaders in their quest for a solution to the difficult question of what to do with the territories under Israeli rule since 1967. Specifically, Judea and Samaria, and later also the Gaza Strip became the subject of proposals for federative arrangements. The prescribed future of the territories has been a point of severe contention in Israeli politics.

The extreme hawkish position favors annexation of all the territories; the extreme dovish position advocates a total withdrawal. The Arab parties and the Citizens' Rights Movement fall into the second category, while Tzomet, Techiya, and Moledet are included in the first category. There are two in-between positions. The first, closer to the dovish extreme, is based on the principle of partition. Its advocates, found in Labor, Mapam, and Shinui, use the formula "territorial compromise" and envision a partial withdrawal, the magnitude of which varies according to the group's position on the dovish-hawkish continuum. The second, closer to the hawkish extreme, is labeled "functional compromise." According to this approach, Israel would retain military control of the territories in dispute, while other government powers would be granted to the Arabs living there. This is actually a shared rule approach, presently supported by the Likud.⁶

The original proponent of "functional compromise," immediately after the 1967 war, was Moshe Dayan. He served as defense minister (1967-1974) in the Labor-led governments and was in charge of the territories. Dayan's motivation in designing a shared rule solution was strategic. The areas considered indispensable from a security perspective were densely populated by Arabs, which made them unsuitable for annexation. However, his ideas for a permanent solution were not accepted by his party.

Another version of the federative concept that had little attraction in Labor-dominated Israel was the combination of territorial compromise with the creation of a shared-rule apparatus between Jordan and a Palestinian entity within the territories to be relinquished by Israel. A Palestinian-Jordanian federation, an idea aired by King Hussein in 1972, was rejected by the Labor-led government. Only in the late 1980s did Labor leaders begin to consider a Palestinian-Jordanian federation.⁷ The main motivation was to address the issue of growing Palestinian

⁴Daniel J. Elazar, *The Covenant Idea in Politics*, CJCS Working Paper No. 22 (Jerusalem: 1983); Daniel J. Elazar, "Covenant as the Basis of the Jewish Political Tradition," *Kinship and Consent*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Ramat Gan: Turtledove, 1981), pp. 21-56.

⁵For a historic review of territorial versus federal solutions in the Arab-Israel context, see Shmuel Sandler, "Partition Versus Sharing in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *Governing Peoples and Territories*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982), pp. 221-247.

⁶On the multidimensional dovish-hawkish continuum and the positions of Labor and Likud, see Efraim Inbar and Giora Goldberg, "Is Israel's Political Elite Becoming More Hawkish?," *International Journal* 45 (Summer 1990): 631-660.

⁷See Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics: Labor Party Positions on National Security*,

nationalism while preventing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The "functional approach" became part of Israel's official policy after 1977, in the newly elected Likud-led government. Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Dayan, who crossed political lines to serve as the minister of foreign affairs in the Likud government, devised an autonomy plan for the Palestinians in the territories.⁸ This plan, which was incorporated into the 1978 Camp David Accords, was also the result of ideological motivation. Begin wanted to continue to hold all parts of the land of Israel under Israel's control. Yet, at Camp David, Begin agreed even to a Jordanian role in governing the territories. Initially, the autonomy plan was regarded by the Likud as a suitable interim arrangement, so that, at a later stage, annexation would be possible. Gradually, the Likud has reconciled itself to a permanent shared-rule agreement. The autonomy plan has obviously been a right-wing attempt, *inter alia*, to forestall the establishment of a Palestinian state.

During the negotiations with Egypt over the peace treaty and the linkage to an acceptable political arrangement in the Israeli ruled territories, there was considerable support for the autonomy plan among the general public as well as among the political leadership.⁹ As the autonomy talks dragged on after the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was concluded in 1979 and finally ended in failure, implementation of the autonomy plan was put into question.

"Functional compromise" was placed high on the Israeli political agenda again in the mid-1980s. Although Labor and Likud differ in their prescriptions for a permanent agreement, both parties have agreed on a shared rule approach for an interim agreement. This consensus was the main factor enabling the two parties to cohabit uncomfortably in the National Unity Governments of 1984-1990. The reluctance of both parties to grant the Palestinians self-determination (i.e., a state in the territories) also led them to advocate federal solutions. The inability of the National Unity Governments to end the Intifada was an additional impetus for Israeli political leaders to suggest some form of power-sharing. Indeed, the Likud-Labor government's proposal of May 1989 included an important element of self-rule, namely, free elections in the territories to allow the creation of a Palestinian delegation to negotiate the autonomy plan.

In the 1980s, the autonomy plan also gradually received the support of more extreme doves within Labor and outside it. They saw this interim solution as the embryo for a future Palestinian state. Thus, federative schemes were acceptable to many, for different reasons.

Studies in International Politics, the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1991), Ch. 3.

⁸The idea of autonomy was mentioned in the Likud platform for the 1977 elections. See Inbar and Goldberg, "Is Israel's Political Elite Becoming More Hawkish?," 644.

⁹In January 1978, 58 percent of the Jewish general public supported autonomy in the territories or only in the large Arab cities. See Louis Guttman, *The Israeli Public, Peace and Territory: The Impact of the Sadat Initiative* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Federal Studies, 1978); on the leadership's support, see Avraham Diskin and Yitzhak Galnoor, "Political Distances and Parliamentary Government: Debates over the Peace Agreements with Egypt," *Medina Umimshal Veyachasim Beinlumim* 18 (1981): 5-26.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

In the 1980s, two versions of a federal solution were placed on the political agenda: Palestinian autonomy in the territories (under Israeli or Israeli-Jordanian rule) and a Palestinian-Jordanian federation. These two options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, there are supporters of autonomy as an interim solution who advocate the second option as a permanent solution. Such patterns can be found among leaders and the general public.

Another option that may be regarded as federative is preservation of the status quo. In practical terms, the status quo includes some very limited elements of shared rule and self-rule in the areas of municipal services, religious activities, education, and agriculture. However, this is not an agreed upon alternative; it is an enforced situation. Therefore, it will not be treated as one of the federative solutions.

The first two options mentioned above are not the only federal solutions available to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, but these are the most prominent options on Israel's political agenda. Among the alternatives advocated by the political parties, only these two are based on clearly federal techniques. The idea of an Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation was mentioned only very rarely by Israeli politicians, though it was more often voiced after the Gulf War.

Daniel J. Elazar once observed, regarding Jews and Arabs: "Federative solutions may or may not help them, given the complex of factors involved in the Israel-Arab conflict. But we think they are worth exploring."¹⁰ Although this study does not discuss the merits of federative arrangements, nor their chances of being implemented, it fills an important lacunae in the literature. Our study primarily investigates support by the leadership and the general public for the two most mentioned federal arrangements: the autonomy plan and a Palestinian-Jordanian state.

Methodology

Our data are based on two public opinion surveys conducted during May 1990 and June 1991.¹¹ As noted, May 1990 was the high point of the political salience of the Palestinian issue. The timing of the poll was appropriate for examining the impact of the intercommunal and interstate dimensions of the conflict. In that month, there were no unusual Intifada activities. A moderate decline in Intifada violence and in the number of casualties had already started in the beginning of 1990. As well, no large-scale terrorist acts, which could have hardened Israeli public opinion, occurred before the poll was taken. The interviewing was conducted two months prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (2 August 1990), which eventually led to Scud missile attacks on Israel, although threats had been issued by Iraq against Israel in the spring of 1990.

June 1991 was also a relatively quiet month. The few months that passed after

¹⁰Elazar, *Self-Rule/Shared Rule*, p. 3.

¹¹The polls investigated public opinion on a variety of national security issues and on its interactions with the political leadership on those issues.

the war allowed the more superficial reactions to evaporate, while still leaving fresh memories.¹²

The same questionnaire was used to interview members of the general public and to personally interview fifty-four Jewish members of the Israeli parliament (MKs) during May-July 1990.¹³ We did not interview the eighteen MKs who served as cabinet members. Their ministerial rank makes them inaccessible to this type of in-depth interviewing. In addition, we did not solicit the views of the six Arab MKs who represent the Arab sector. Therefore, the fifty-four MKs from all Jewish parties are a majority of the MK population, and they constitute a reasonably representative sample of the Israeli legislature and of the Israeli political leadership.

The fact that the same questionnaire was used for the public at large and political leaders during the same period enables us to compare the two sectors of the Israeli body politic. In order to assess opinion after the Gulf War, we followed the statements of the MKs interviewed throughout the Gulf crisis and through the period until June 1991. Our evaluation of the leadership's preferences after the war is based on their recorded statements in the Knesset and to the media as well as additional interviews with several MKs.

THE LEADERSHIP AND FEDERAL SOLUTIONS

In 1990, the MKs were asked: "What, in your opinion, is the desirable solution to the question of the territories and to the Palestinian problem?" Each respondent was asked to indicate the best choice with regard to an interim solution and a permanent solution.

Knesset members have generally tended to reject the status quo. The overall inclination has been to oppose the continuation of Israeli military rule against the will and aspirations of the Arab inhabitants. All members of the political leadership advocated modifications in the status quo. Only three members, two from the Likud and one from Tzomet (6 percent), considered the status quo as a desirable interim solution until the territories are annexed in the framework of a permanent arrangement. In other words, most of the leaders preferred alterations in the structure of the relations between Israel and the territories. The low support for the status quo is a significant change, which can be related to the outbreak of the Intifada. In the shadow of the Palestinian uprising, the status quo is, for many leaders, no longer viable.

Federative options were clearly preferred. Most of the MKs interviewed (70 percent) maintained that autonomy was the best interim solution. A majority of the interviewees explained that a self-rule/shared-rule arrangement would be the best

¹²The first sample of May 1990 included 1,126 adult Jewish respondents; the second sample of June 1991 included 1,000. Both were a national representative sample of the adult Jewish population in Israel. As a rule in such polls, only the Jewish residents of the territories and of the kibbutzim were not included in the sample. All the interviews were personal and were conducted by the Modi'in Ezrachi Research Institute. The authors designed the questionnaire and analyzed the data. In 1991, two additional options for settlement were added: Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation and autonomy under Israeli-Jordanian rule.

¹³We thank Gabi Asor and David Benyamin for their assistance in conducting the interviews.

way to test the willingness of the Palestinians to establish peaceful relations with Israel. Consequently, the trend among political leaders was to rule out, at an early stage, the second federal solution presented—a Palestinian-Jordanian state. This solution is usually associated with some kind of withdrawal from the territories, which is seen as being quite risky in the context of an interim agreement. Therefore, autonomy has been bolstered as the most popular interim solution. The fact that this solution preserves, to some extent, Israeli control of the territories has made it a preferable alternative.

TABLE 1
MKs' Preferences on Federal, Dovish, and Hawkish
Interim and Permanent Solutions
(percent)

	Interim solutions	Permanent solutions
Federal solutions	70 (38)	41 (22)
Autonomy under Israel's rule	70 (38)	24 (13)
Territorial compromise and forming a Palestinian-Jordanian state	0 (0)	17 (9)
Status quo	6 (3)	0 (0)
Dovish solutions	17 (9)	37 (20)
Palestinian state in all territories	6 (3)	13 (7)
Palestinian state in Gaza Strip only	0 (0)	0 (0)
Territorial compromise with Jordan	11 (6)	24 (13)
Hawkish solutions	0 (0)	15 (8)
Annexation with granting citizen rights	0 (0)	6 (3)
Annexation without granting citizen rights	0 (0)	6 (3)
Annexation and transfer of Arab population (by force or agreement)	0 (0)	3 (2)
No solution	0 (0)	0 (0)
Don't know	7 (4)	7 (4)
Total	100 (54)	100 (54)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses are absolute numbers.

However, only about a third (34 percent) of the MKs supporting the autonomy plan as an interim solution (13 out of 38) have regarded the autonomy option as the ultimate way to resolve the conflict. Two-thirds (25 out of 38) preferred a gradual approach to solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. They distinguished between short-run and long-run solutions, but advocated permanent solutions of a different type. Among those, eighteen MKs regarded autonomy as a stage toward dovish permanent solutions: three MKs supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, seven MKs advocated territorial compromise and the formation of a Palestinian-Jordanian state, and eight MKs endorsed territorial compromise with Jordan. In contrast,

five MKs who defined autonomy as the best interim solution demanded hawkish permanent solutions: three MKs hoped for annexation, and two MKs hoped that a transfer of the Arab population would end the conflict. Only two of the twenty-five MKs who distinguished between interim and permanent solutions did not express support for a particular permanent solution. This position obviously did not exclude autonomy as an appropriate long-term solution.

Indeed, federative solutions have attracted the largest following, although lower support is found for their use as permanent solutions. As for permanent solutions, only 41 percent of the Knesset members favored explicit federal alternatives: 24 percent supported autonomy, and 17 percent supported a Palestinian-Jordanian state. The first figure represents the hawkish attitude, while the second figure reflects the moderate hawks and doves found primarily in Labor. The lower support for permanent federal solutions can perhaps be explained by the ability of politicians to hold more radical ideas, dovish or hawkish, about the distant future, while responding in a more practical way to immediate problems.

Nevertheless, the data indicate that the overall tendency of Israeli political leaders was to support the moderate alternatives. Support for the radical dovish and hawkish solutions was rather minimal. Notably, the most frequent inclination has been to support federative options. The large support for such solutions was also investigated by controlling for party affiliation so as to improve our ability to study the likely effects of trends in the legislature on policymaking.

TABLE 2
MKs' Preferences by Party Affiliation
(percent)

	Interim solutions			Permanent solutions		
	Likud	Labor	Religious	Likud	Labor	Religious
Federal solutions	85 (11)	53 (9)	92 (11)	46 (6)	44 (7)	41 (5)
Autonomy	85 (11)	53 (9)	92 (11)	46 (6)	0 (0)	33 (4)
Palestinian-Jordanian state	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	44 (7)	8 (1)
Status quo	15 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Dovish solutions	0 (0)	41 (7)	0 (0)	8 (1)	56 (9)	17 (2)
Hawkish solutions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	31 (4)	0 (0)	17 (2)
Don't know	0 (0)	6 (1)	8 (1)	15 (2)	0 (0)	25 (3)
Total	100 (13)	100 (17)	100 (12)	100 (13)	100 (16)	100 (12)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses are absolute numbers.

Three main political blocs make up Israeli politics—Labor, Likud, and the religious camp. The correlation between party affiliation and policy advocacy is very weak (around zero) and insignificant. Indeed, regardless of political party, the general propensity is clear; the MKs of the three main camps preferred federal

solutions, especially as a short-term political arrangement. This is true even if we consider the positions of the radical left and the radical right in the Knesset. Their support for autonomy as an interim agreement is 57 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

The Intifada seems to have generated a trend of dovishness.¹⁴ Consequently, a decisive majority of MKs within the religious bloc and the Likud seemed to be ready for some concessions granting the Palestinians more authority to rule themselves as long as Israel would be given sufficient security guarantees. Moreover, among a majority of the Likud and religious MKs, the principles underlining the autonomy plan have been understood as allowing Israel's control of western Palestine and even sovereignty. Therefore, an apparatus for power-sharing was considered to provide a way to preserve the option of implementing right-wing ideas without exacerbating the conflict for the time being, by somewhat accommodating Palestinian nationalism. Indeed, when preference for permanent solutions was analyzed, the tendency to support federative solutions became weaker. Nevertheless, it has been the dominant propensity.

There is a difference between the Likud and the religious camp, and Labor. All Labor MKs who supported federative arrangements as an interim solution favored more dovish permanent solutions. For Labor, the purpose of interim federal alternatives has been rather obvious: to pave the way for a withdrawal from some of the territories, though a federative arrangement could be installed afterwards. All of the Labor representatives in the Knesset believed that the permanent settlement should be either federal or dovish. In contrast, 15 percent of the Likud MKs and 25 percent of the religious party MKs declared that they had not yet decided on their prescription for a permanent solution.

Beyond words and declarations, beyond the commitments of politicians to various conceptions of the future, is the belief that federalism could constitute a bridge not only between Palestinians and Israelis but also, and not less important, between Israelis themselves. Among the MKs interviewed, a Gush Emunim leader and a Peace Now activist shared the view that a federative arrangement—autonomy—is the best practical way to break the political impasse on an interim basis.

After the Gulf War, this assessment is still valid. The American peace initiative, whose chances for success are still not known, does not neglect the Palestinian issue and envisions an interim agreement along the lines of the Camp David Accords. This approach is basically still accepted by a decisive majority of the Israeli political leadership. Notably, the platform of the right-wing coalition adheres to the implementation of an autonomy plan according to the Camp David Accords.

The groups most adversely affected by the Gulf crisis were the radical left and the dovish wing of Labor, which were taken aback by Palestinian support for Iraq. Representative of this propensity was MK Yossi Sarid, who denounced his Palestinian interlocutors.¹⁵ Many dovish politicians, who once preferred the

¹⁴See Giora Goldberg, Gad Barzilai, and Efraim Inbar, *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion*, Policy Paper No. 43 (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1991).

¹⁵See his "Let Them Find Me!," *Haaretz*, 17 August 1990, p. B1.

establishment of a Palestinian state in the near future, seemed more intent after the crisis on insisting on interim arrangements.¹⁶ Support for interim agreements was channeled in two directions. First, autonomy became a more appealing interim option than before. An even more attractive interim settlement emerged, called "Gaza First," namely, establishment of an independent Palestinian region as a first step toward establishment of a Palestinian state in all the territories to be relinquished by Israel in the future.¹⁷ During the Gulf War, the territories were closed off by the Israeli army, reviving for a short while the "green line" (the pre-1967 borders). This encouraged the doves to return to the "territorial approach" that they basically have always preferred, rather than federal schemes. This dovish proposal actually has appeal even among hawkish political leaders, because there is considerable slippage in the desire to hold onto Gaza.¹⁸

Interestingly, the Iraqi missiles that landed on Israel did not change the fundamentally differing evaluations of the leadership about the strategic importance of the territories. Actually, each side viewed this development as strengthening its own arguments. Because the Gulf War did not serve as an arbiter in the dispute on the territorial issue, federative schemes remained the vehicle for fostering consensus, at least for short-range solutions. As far as permanent solutions are concerned, the Gulf crisis has not basically changed the leadership's preferences, particularly among the radical left and right.

ISRAELI PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD FEDERAL SOLUTIONS IN 1990

The nature of relations between political leaders and the general public is an enigmatic subject.¹⁹ Yet, any analysis of political attitudes should take this relationship into account. Political leaders may manipulate the general public or respond to it. However, future arrangements regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict will depend on public attitudes. Therefore, we investigated the Israeli public's preferences for the future of the territories. The results of the 1990 poll are analyzed first.

Table 3 shows that in 1990 the Israeli public was more hesitant than the political leadership about preferable solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, 23 percent of the respondents declined to point out a desirable interim solution. In contrast, no MK maintained that there was no desirable interim arrangement. This difference may be attributed to the leaders' higher ability to distinguish between interim and permanent solutions. Leaders are usually better educated and have a better grasp of the intricacies of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Therefore, they prefer a gradual

¹⁶For this emphasis, see the official position of Mapam in *Haaretz*, 22 February 1991, p. B1.

¹⁷For the support for a withdrawal from Gaza of the Civil Rights Movement, Shinui, and dovish Laborites, see *Maariv*, 2 January 1991, p. A4; *Haaretz*, 2 January 1991, p. A3. See also the decision of the Laborite Mashov dovish circle in *Haaretz*, 24 June 1991, p. A5.

¹⁸See Inbar and Goldberg, "Is Israel's Political Elite Becoming More Hawkish?," 646. For support among the radical right Tzomet, see *Kol Hair*, 6 February 1991.

¹⁹See Bruce Russett and Thomas W. Graham, "Public Opinion and National Security Policy: Relationships and Impacts," *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

dissimilarities between the general public and the leaders were smaller with regard to permanent solutions. Thus, 6.4 percent of the respondents believed that there is no permanent solution available to end the conflict, while no MK held such a view. It seems that the leadership is projecting more optimism than the electorate, although a pessimistic view could be regarded as the more sophisticated and realistic evaluation. Notably, despite the expectation of higher ignorance among voters, the percentage of “don’t knows” among the public at large is not higher than among the MKs.

TABLE 3
Attitudes of the Public and MKs Toward
Federal, Dovish, and Hawkish Interim and Permanent Solutions
(percent)

	Interim solutions		Permanent solutions	
	Public	MKs	Public	MKs
Federal solutions	30.9	70.0	31.1	41.0
Autonomy under Israel’s rule	23.2	70.0	18.5	24.0
Territorial compromise and forming a Palestinian-Jordanian state	7.7	0.0	12.6	17.0
Status quo	5.0	6.0	2.4	0.0
Dovish solutions	24.6	17.0	37.6	37.0
Palestinian state in all territories	5.2	6.0	9.1	13.0
Palestinian state in Gaza Strip only	6.8	0.0	8.9	0.0
Territorial compromise with Jordan	12.6	11.0	19.6	24.0
Hawkish solutions	10.9	0.0	15.4	15.0
Annexation with granting citizen rights	2.5	0.0	3.4	6.0
Annexation without granting citizen rights	1.1	0.0	1.7	6.0
Annexation and transfer of Arab population (by force or agreement)	7.3	0.0	10.3	3.0
No solution	23.0	0.0	6.4	0.0
Don’t know/Other	5.6	7.0	7.1	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Like their leaders, most of the public rejected the status quo as a viable option. Only 5 percent of the respondents supported the present situation as an interim agreement, and only 2.4 percent believed it should continue indefinitely. Our contention that support for the status quo is very limited is strengthened by the rather small number of respondents who maintained that there is no solution available in the short run and in the long run (the figures are 5.6 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively). The great majority believed that an alternative to the status quo is available. Significantly, in January 1986, almost half of the general public (47.1 percent) preferred the status quo rather than giving up the territories (30.2 percent) or annexing them (22.8 percent).²⁰ The longitudinal surveys of Modi'in Ezrachi also show a steady decline in support for the status quo.²¹

The interim solution that attracted the largest public support (around 23 percent) was autonomy, which was considered the best interim solution. When asked about a permanent solution, autonomy was the second most popular solution (18.5 percent), scoring almost as high as the most popular alternative, territorial compromise with Jordan (19.6 percent). Although, like the leadership, the public trusted federative arrangements, it tended to be more dovish than its leaders. While the leadership supported autonomy as the only federative interim solution, the public also gave preference to another federal option—the Palestinian-Jordanian state (7.7 percent). The MKs were probably more sensitive to the complexity of the conflict and to the obstacles in establishing a Palestinian-Jordanian state at an interim stage.

In comparing support among the public for federal interim solutions to their support for nonfederal interim alternatives, the picture became clearer. The largest support exists for federal arrangements (30.9 percent). Support for autonomy is three times larger (23.2 percent) than for a Palestinian-Jordanian state (7.7 percent). Support for dovish solutions trails with 24.6 percent. Hawkish preferences were detected only among 10.9 percent of the respondents.

During the Intifada, the public has gradually come to accept more dovish positions, though a smaller trend toward hawkishness was also detected.²² This trend was expressed in greater support for the most dovish permanent solution—the establishment of a Palestinian state (a total of 18 percent comprised of 9.1 percent supporting a Palestinian state in all territories and 8.9 percent supporting a Palestinian state in Gaza only). Before the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, public support for the establishment of a Palestinian state constituted only 3 percent, compared to 9.1 percent in May 1990. Probably, as a result of the Intifada, the idea of autonomy as a permanent solution lost much of its attraction among the general public. As noted, in 1978, 58 percent of the public favored some sort of autonomy in the territories. Even before the Intifada, this support diminished by 50 percent, and in May 1990, we measured an additional 68 percent decrease. The idea of autonomy represents the political center, while the public, more than the political leadership, has been inclined to polarization.

²⁰Arian, Talmud, and Herman, *National Security and Public Opinion in Israel*, p. 89.

²¹We are grateful to Rachel Israeli of Modi'in Ezrachi for providing us the data.

²²For an elaborate analysis, see Goldberg, Barzilai, and Inbar, *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion*.

We now turn to differences between the supporters of the various political blocs. As for interim solutions, the federative alternatives were the most popular among Likud voters and voters for the religious parties. Only Labor's voters preferred more dovish options, but not by a significant margin. In any case, federative solutions have been perceived by most voters as the best way to promote conflict resolution. Although federal ideas were clearly the most acceptable among the

TABLE 4
Attitudes of the Public (P) and MKs (M)
by Party Affiliation
(percent)

	Interim solutions					
	Likud		Labor		Religious	
	P	M	P	M	P	M
Federal solutions	26.8	85.0	31.8	53.0	25.0	92.0
Autonomy	23.1	85.0	23.5	53.0	23.3	92.0
Palestinian-Jordanian state	3.7	0.0	8.3	0.0	1.7	0.0
Status quo	7.5	15.0	2.8	0.0	11.7	0.0
Dovish solutions	22.0	0.0	35.0	41.0	11.7	0.0
Hawkish solutions	18.7	0.0	2.75	0.0	11.7	0.0
Don't know/Other	25.0	0.0	27.65	6.0	39.9	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Permanent solutions					
	Likud		Labor		Religious	
	P	M	P	M	P	M
Federal solutions	29.5	46.0	40.5	44.0	22.4	41.0
Autonomy	22.2	46.0	21.9	0.0	20.7	33.0
Palestinian-Jordanian state	7.3	0.0	18.6	44.0	1.7	8.0
Status quo	3.1	0.0	2.3	0.0	5.2	0.0
Dovish solutions	33.4	8.0	46.9	56.0	22.4	17.0
Hawkish solutions	25.2	31.0	5.6	0.0	20.7	17.0
Don't know/Other	8.8	15.0	4.7	0.02	9.3	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Likud MKs, some of their voters (approximately 33 percent) were much more dovish. This reflects the increased dovishness of the public at large, which is most

permanent dovish solutions (33.4 percent) is slightly higher than for permanent federative arrangements, especially autonomy (29.5 percent), and even higher than for hawkish permanent solutions (25.2 percent). In general, support for dovish interim or permanent proposals is less prominent among the voters for the religious bloc, while hawkish alternatives are largely unacceptable for Labor voters in both the short run and the long run.

THE AFTERMATH OF DESERT STORM

Now we analyze the findings of the 1991 poll and compare them to the previous survey. As the figures in Table 5 show, the general picture of public opinion in June

TABLE 5
Attitudes of the Public Toward Federal, Dovish, and
Hawkish Interim and Permanent Solutions
(percent)

	Interim solutions		Permanent solutions	
	1990	1991	1990	1991
Federal solutions	30.9	37.8	31.1	42.0
Autonomy under Israel's rule	23.2	16.5	18.5	16.7
Autonomy under Israeli-Jordanian rule	----	6.6	----	5.2
Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation	----	5.2	----	6.0
Palestinian-Jordanian state	7.7	9.5	2.6	14.1
Status quo	5.0	4.7	2.4	2.1
Dovish solutions	24.6	27.3	37.6	28.5
Palestinian state in all territories	5.2	6.5	9.1	9.8
Palestinian state in Gaza Strip only	6.8	9.2	8.9	7.5
Territorial compromise with Jordan	12.6	11.6	19.6	11.2
Hawkish solutions	10.9	10.5	15.4	15.6
Annexation with granting citizen rights	2.5	1.7	3.4	2.6
Annexation without granting citizen rights	1.1	2.0	1.7	1.8
Annexation and transfer of Arab population (by force or agreement)	7.3	6.8	10.3	11.2
No solution	23.0	15.4	6.4	5.5
Don't know/Other	5.6	5.3	7.1	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

1991 was quite similar to that of the previous year. Some observers might be surprised that the Gulf War had no radical impact on Israeli views about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The data clearly indicate only marginal change in support for hawkish options and only modest changes with regard to the other options.

The lack of radical change can be attributed to the ability of Israeli society to adapt to security threats and to develop social mechanisms to routinize the conflict.²³ Indeed, it is possible that the public realized, in retrospect, that the missile attacks constituted only a limited threat to the integrity of the state. Yet, the massive disruption of Israeli public life probably indicated to many Israelis the potential dangers involved in an escalation due to the introduction of weapons of mass destruction. This led to some limited opinion changes to be discussed below.

The first noteworthy result is the decline in the number of respondents who believe no solution is available or choose to answer "don't know" for both short-term and long-term solutions. The crisis probably pushed people to find a solution.

Although there was no significant change in support for a Palestinian state in the territories as a permanent solution, we see an increase (of 35 percent) in the willingness of Israeli public opinion to support withdrawal from Gaza in the framework of an interim arrangement.

Significantly, a pure territorial approach to a permanent agreement, such as a territorial compromise with Jordan, received only 11.2 percent support (43 percent less support than in 1990). One probable reason for this change is the introduction of a new question in 1991 about the Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation (6 percent support). In addition, the lower figure represents a recognition of the diminishing Jordanian role in the territories, as well as displeasure with Jordan's pro-Iraqi behavior during the Gulf crisis.

In 1991, only the federal arrangements increased their popularity: interim (by 22 percent) and permanent (by 35 percent). If we do not take into account support for an Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation (not asked in 1990), there is no change in the level of support for federal interim solutions, while permanent federalist solutions received 18 percent more support. Autonomy as a permanent solution (in both versions) increased its appeal more than any other option (by 18 percent). Second in its increase in appeal was also an option of a federative nature—territorial compromise with a Palestinian-Jordanian state (by 12 percent). Possibly, the federal schemes provided the Israeli public with the greatest margins of security following the crisis.

A clearer increase in the support for federal arrangements is detected in Table 6, which presents the positions of voters of the three main political blocs in Israeli politics. The greatest increase for federal interim agreements was among adherents to the religious parties by 42 percent, among Laborites by 40 percent, but for Likud adherents only by 29 percent. Similar increases are found for permanent settlements among the religious by 90 percent, Likud by 26 percent, and Labor by 9 percent. A comparison of the preferences of the electorate shows that the increase in support for federative schemes in 1991 was usually at the expense of 1990 hawkishness.

²³Baruch Kimmerling, *The Interrupted System* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1985).

TABLE 6
Attitudes of the Public by Party Affiliation
(percent)

	Interim solutions					
	Likud		Labor		Religious	
	1990	1991	1990	1991	1990	1991
Federal solutions	26.8	34.6	31.8	44.5	25.0	35.5
Autonomy	23.1	27.9	23.5	19.1	23.3	33.3
Confederation	----	2.7	----	8.7	----	0.0
Palestinian-Jordanian state	3.7	4.0	8.3	16.7	1.7	2.2
Status quo	7.5	5.3	2.8	1.2	11.7	13.3
Dovish solutions	2.0	28.7	35.0	33.0	11.7	22.2
Hawkish solutions	18.7	14.6	2.8	3.4	11.7	13.3
Don't know/Other	25.0	16.8	27.6	17.9	39.9	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Permanent solutions					
	Likud		Labor		Religious	
	1990	1991	1990	1991	1991	1991
Federal solutions	29.5	37.3	40.5	44.0	22.4	42.6
Autonomy	22.2	29.4	21.9	18.1	20.7	34.0
Confederation	----	3.1	----	7.5	----	4.3
Palestinian-Jordanian state	7.3	4.8	18.6	18.4	1.7	4.3
Status quo	3.1	2.6	2.3	0.7	5.2	6.4
Dovish solutions	33.4	26.7	46.9	39.8	22.4	17.0
Hawkish solutions	25.2	22.8	5.6	5.2	20.7	17.0
Don't know/Other	8.8	10.6	4.7	10.3	29.3	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The findings for 1990 and particularly for 1991 show that federal alternatives are still the best course of action to engender consensus among the public. As noted, the public wants changes in the status quo and is more dovish and fragmented. The Gulf War has neither strengthened the dovish trend present until 1990, nor reinforced hawkishness. Possibly, its main impact has been in freezing this trend. Despite the dovish distribution of public opinion, federative solutions, which are perceived as belonging to the political center, may gain broad support. Before final conclusions are drawn, we will discuss some differences between the leadership and the electorate.

LEADERS AND THE PUBLIC

The findings of May 1990 clearly demonstrate that the public was less inclined to adopt federative solutions than its political representatives in the Knesset. Actually, there is a significant difference between the political leadership and the general public, as seen in Table 3. While 7.7 percent of the public preferred the formation of a Palestinian-Jordanian state, no MK favored this alternative as an interim solution. The leadership's support for autonomy as an interim and a permanent solution is higher than that of the public. The difference is especially great with regard to autonomy as an interim solution: 70 percent within the leadership but only 23.2 percent within the general public. Similarly, the establishment of a Palestinian-Jordanian state as a permanent solution attracted higher support among leaders than voters, 17 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively. In general, considering the two federal solutions, 30.9 percent of the public expressed a preference for implementing federal solutions in the interim phase. The support of the leadership is 39.1 percentage points higher. When permanent solutions are considered, the difference is smaller, by 9.9 percentage points. This may be attributed primarily to the leadership's tendency to view the federative solution of autonomy primarily as an interim step. The lower public support for the policies advocated by the political leaders indicates the possibility of public dissent.

When bloc affiliation is taken into account the observed trend is maintained. Thus, the gap between the partial support of the Likud voters and the almost full support of the Likud MKs for interim federalist arrangements was 58 percentage points. Similar differences were found in the Labor camp (21 percentage points more support by the leadership), and in the religious bloc (67 percentage points more support by the leadership). Differences between the levels of support by the leadership and the general public were characteristic also with regard to permanent solutions. Yet, the gap on this issue was narrower, again because the political leaders considered federal alternatives more as interim solutions. Thus, the differences between leadership and public support for permanent federative solutions were 16.5 percentage points in the Likud, 3.5 percentage points in Labor, and 18.6 percentage points in the religious camp.

The figures for 1991 seem to indicate that the gap observed in 1990 is becoming smaller. The narrowing of the gap is primarily because of the greater support found among voters for federal arrangements. The mainstream of the Israeli political leadership in 1991 is still committed to autonomy as an interim settlement, while only 23.1 percent of the public favors this option. In terms of permanent solutions, the leadership has changed little. Therefore, the 1990 figures on leadership positions could serve as a point of reference. The gap between the levels of support for autonomy and other solutions between the leadership and the public is smaller in 1991.

Explaining the differences between leadership and public support for federative arrangements requires a reminder of the nature of federal mechanisms. Federative schemes are rather complex and multidimensional because they are based on several elements and on many political actors. Consequently, it is to be expected that political leaders are better able than the general public to grasp them and are

more inclined to adopt them. This is one of the reasons why the distribution of the public's attitudes is fragmented while the distribution of leadership's attitudes is more homogeneous, with less variance in respect to all types of solutions and to federal alternatives in particular. The similar levels of public support in many categories for interim and permanent solutions may indicate that the electorate has difficulty making such distinctions.

A vast majority of the respondents in the 1990 and 1991 polls declared that they trust their representatives on national security matters and that they get much of their information from the Knesset members and from the government. Nevertheless, the public only partially accepts leadership policy regarding federative alternatives. This is another indication that the public may have difficulty fully grasping the meaning of federal solutions.

In contrast, the interviews conducted with members of the Israeli parliament in 1990 indicate that subscribing to federative arrangements is not the result of an ideological adherence to federalism. Yet, most of the MKs appreciated the political utility of establishing mechanisms of power-sharing. Furthermore, all the MKs interviewed clearly understood the idea of autonomy and the alternative solutions on the political agenda. It was often pointed out that federative arrangements could deal with both aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict: the interstate and the intercommunal. Some MKs were candid in viewing such arrangements as preventing the creation of a Palestinian state or the infrastructure for it.

Observing the leaders in 1991 leads us to conclude that the Gulf War had a limited impact on their positions, similar to what was observed for public opinion. "Gaza First" has become a more attractive interim option for politicians, particularly on the left, which parallels the greater reluctance among the public to stay in Gaza. This option, aired in Israeli political circles even before the war, has been adopted by leftist politicians after relinquishing the demand for an immediate establishment of a Palestinian state. The greater insistence in dovish circles on a gradual process also enhances support for the autonomy plan as an interim arrangement.

The support of the leadership for federative arrangements is related to internal politics as well. Political leaders also shape their proposals for conflict resolution in accordance with the benefits that they expect to gain internally. Party platforms tend to be geared to the political center to draw more votes.²⁴ Autonomy is perceived as a centrist idea and has been accepted by almost all Israeli parties. Endorsing autonomy is particularly useful for the Likud, once considered to constitute the extreme right. It is a means to attract votes from the center of the political spectrum without being considered too hawkish and also to draw votes from right-wing voters without being considered too dovish. Prescribing autonomy also does not estrange voters with dovish inclinations. If autonomy is regarded as the first step toward a territorial compromise, as the Labor party sees it, endorsing it may help Labor to attract votes from potential Likud supporters without having to adopt more hawkish positions. It has a positive function even in the religious political bloc. Accepting the autonomy plan allows the religious parties to participate in a Labor-led, as well

²⁴See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

as in a Likud-led, coalition, thus preserving their pivotal position in Israeli politics.

The Likud, the ruling party, probably sees in autonomy another advantage, namely, a fending off of external pressures, especially from the United States, to withdraw from the territories. It also facilitates the delay in discussing the final status of the territories. This obviously fits a general pattern of politicians to delay decisions as long as possible. Moreover, autonomy has many similarities with the present status quo; hence, it may be of use to political leaders for demonstrating progress toward peace without taking too many risks by deviating from a problematic but controllable situation.

CONCLUSION

This study is the first to investigate support for federative solutions for the Arab-Israeli conflict among both the general public and the political leadership of Israel. The findings suggest that federalism may serve as a means for building a consensus among Israeli Jews on how to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The political leadership, in particular, is inclined to advocate federative schemes, such as the autonomy plan and a Palestinian-Jordanian state, as the best means to resolve the conflict from Israel's perspective and to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. There is much support for a gradual approach to conflict resolution, and autonomy was perceived as the preferable interim solution by most of the Israeli political leaders. The gradualist approach seems to have been strengthened by the Gulf War. Regarding a permanent solution, the Likud and the radical right showed a preference for autonomy, while Labor endorsed the option of a Palestinian-Jordanian state. In conclusion, federalist arrangements are seen as useful by the political leadership, especially in the short run as an interim arrangement.

There is no corresponding support for federative schemes by the electorate, particularly as an interim arrangement. The gap has become smaller after the Gulf War. Consequently, a political leadership pursuing federal solutions has to make some effort to persuade public opinion to support its position. The differences in support for federal solutions also indicate the potential for political dissent. Yet, in the past, the public has rallied around the leadership, even when critical decisions were initially unpopular.

Whatever long-term changes will take place in the Israeli body politic in the aftermath of the Gulf War, the findings of this study are helpful in ascertaining the impact of future events on Israeli thinking. From the vantage point of June 1991, the differences between the leadership and the public concerning solutions to the conflict have been narrowed. Furthermore, the centrifugal tendencies in Israeli politics seem to have been curbed, while the consensus behind federal solutions has been broadened. Our analysis provides, therefore, a point of departure for understanding Israeli attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 1990s.