Review of the Year

UNITED STATES
OTHER COUNTRIES
Civic and Political

Intergroup Relations

In 1983 BLACK-JEWISH tensions emerged as the main area of concern in the field of intergroup relations. Key elements in the developing situation were the successful mayoral campaigns of Black candidates Harold Washington in Chicago and W. Wilson Goode in Philadelphia; Mayor Edward Koch's continued battles with minority-group leaders in New York City; and the emergence of former Black civil rights leader Jesse Jackson as a presidential candidate.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

In the spring, President Ronald Reagan's decision to fire three members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and replace them with new appointees—among them, veteran civil rights leader and former American Jewish Committee president Morris B. Abram—who were closer to his own strong anti-quota and anti-busing views, came under attack from Blacks and liberals as interference with the independence of the unit. Jewish communal leadership was divided over the matter. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith took a strong stand in favor of the action, supporting all three Reagan nominees. The American Jewish Congress, while recognizing the right of the president to act, argued that the dismissal of the three commission members compromised the integrity of the civil rights unit. The American Jewish Committee sought consideration of the new nominees on their own merits. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (Reform) was the only major Jewish organization to urge rejection of all the Reagan nominees. Albert Vorspan, vice-president of the Union, declared that President Reagan's action would "retard the progress of civil rights in America." In the end, a compromise was reached whereby the presidentially appointed six-member group was replaced by a body consisting of eight members with staggered terms, appointed by the president in consultation with congressional leaders. Still, President Reagan was able to bring about a shift in the ideological direction of the Commission by naming several of his own appointees, including Abram and the chairman and staff director.
**Affirmative Action and Quotas**

The issue of job quotas continued to be a bone of contention in several court cases. In May the supreme court dismissed as moot a civil rights case involving layoffs in the Boston police and fire departments. By doing so, the court avoided the difficult question of whether judges had the authority to set aside normal “last hired, first fired” seniority provisions to protect the jobs of recently hired Black employees. The Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Congress filed opposing friend-of-the-court briefs in the case; the former sought a reversal of lower court decisions preserving 11.7 per cent minority representation on the police force, even if this required the dismissal of some senior white officers; the latter sought to have the decisions upheld. In another case involving a plan to promote Black police officers in New Orleans, the American Jewish Committee filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the affirmative action provisions of the plan, but taking exception to one provision mandating quotas.

In New York City, Mayor Koch came into conflict with Black and Hispanic leaders when he sought to appoint Deputy Mayor Robert Wagner chancellor of the public school system. Since more than 70 per cent of the students in the system were minority group members, the argument was put forward that a Black or Hispanic chancellor was needed. When Wagner failed to meet the requirements for state certification, a Hispanic educator was appointed in his place.

In September the Anti-Defamation League reported the results of a public opinion survey indicating that three out of four Americans rejected racial quotas in affirmative action programs, maintaining instead that all hiring and promotions should be based exclusively on merit. Even a majority of non-white respondents felt that companies should hire the most qualified applicants. The Anti-Defamation League survey findings appeared to be in conflict with other probings of public opinion that had been taken in recent years.

**March on Washington**

The decision of a number of Black and liberal groups to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the historic march on Washington led to a heightening of tension between Jews and Blacks. The lengthy list of sponsors and participants included not only members of the old liberal coalition, but peace activists, feminists, homosexuals, and pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian organizations as well. The “new coalition of conscience” issued a call announcing opposition to the “militarization of internal conflicts, often abetted and encouraged by massive U.S. arms exports in areas of the world such as the Middle East and Central America.” While the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, headed by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, was among the initial sponsors of the march, most Jewish groups saw the call as having an anti-Israel intent. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council
(NJCRAC), the co-ordinating body for Jewish organizations, cautioned its member agencies against "considering any involvement." At the same time, the NJCRAC opposed open opposition to the march. In the end, only the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the small New Jewish Agenda participated, with Rabbi Schindler delivering the benediction. A *New Republic* editorial stated: "[The march] is another case of manipulation and exploitation of Blacks and their organizational needs by whites with their organizational agenda." Rabbi Balfour Brickner, a leading Reform figure, argued in a letter to the New York *Times* that his movement's participation in the march "preserved what is left of the Black-Jewish relationship in this country."

**Jesse Jackson**

The most serious issue dividing Jews and Blacks came in response to the decision by Jesse Jackson, the Black former associate of Martin Luther King and head of People United to Help Save Humanity (PUSH), to enter the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. Jackson's tense relations with the Jewish community dated back at least to 1979, when he toured the Middle East and embraced PLO leader Yasir Arafat. Over the next several years, Jackson gained attention by uttering many anti-Israel and anti-Jewish statements. Since Jackson clearly enjoyed wide support among the Black masses, most Jewish organizations sought to keep a low profile with regard to his candidacy. However, a group called Jews Against Jackson, linked to the Jewish Defense League, placed a hostile advertisement in the New York *Times* on November 11. The advertisement featured a photograph of Jackson embracing Arafat, with a text accusing him of being antisemitic. It concluded by asking, "Do you believe that any Jew should support this man?" While the advertisement was quickly condemned by numerous Jewish organizations, it heightened Black-Jewish tensions. A headline in the Philadelphia *Tribune*, a Black-oriented newspaper, declared, "Jews cast dark shadow on Jackson's dream."

In a speech prepared for delivery at the biennial meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the vice-president of the organization stated that Jackson's candidacy might "help to expose the American people to the real world and the real conditions of our cities." Some 50 young Black and Jewish leaders, seeking common ground, met with Jackson at a conference sponsored by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the youth and college division of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Shortly thereafter, Jackson expressed a more conciliatory attitude toward Israel, and strongly denied that he was antisemitic.

In December the justice department, which had been looking into Jackson's dealings with the Libyan government, stated that there was no evidence that Jackson had acted on behalf of Libya in return for a $10,000 donation to Operation PUSH.
**Stony Brook**

The impact of Middle East issues on Black-Jewish relations was strongly felt on the campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where Ernest Dube, a Black professor, designed and taught a course equating Zionism with racism in the manner of the 1974 United Nations resolution. Dube was denounced by various Jewish organizations and Governor Mario Cuomo. In August the executive committee of the Stony Brook faculty senate ruled that Dube's approach to the course material was protected by guarantees of academic freedom. At year's end, the course remained in place, although it was being taught in a different manner.

As 1983 drew to a close, efforts were under way to contain Black-Jewish tensions. Summing up the hopes of many moderates, John Jacob, president of the Urban League, maintained that differences between the two groups were "transitory ... rather than sharp and permanent divisions." Jacob called for a "new alliance" between Blacks and Jews to help the United States live up to its "promises to minorities and the downtrodden."

**Urban Issues**

The growth of unemployment, combined with cutbacks in social programs by the Reagan administration, aroused deep concern in broad segments of the organized Jewish community. The NJCRAC, in its 1983–1984 joint program plan, declared that "the administration, Congress, and even the presidential candidates have failed to respond with the kinds of programs that the crisis requires." The NJCRAC called on the federal government to utilize its resources to stimulate employment, going so far as to create jobs if necessary. In March representatives of the American Jewish Congress and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations joined with Protestant and Catholic religious leaders in a public statement denouncing President Reagan's budget as "a selfish and dangerous course of social stinginess and military overkill."

Jewish organizations sought to monitor the impact of the severe recession on the Jewish community. A report released by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in May noted that 22 federations had reported symptoms of economic hardship affecting thousands of Jews. In November the American Jewish Committee published a study, *Jews on the Edge*, indicating that an estimated 13–15 per cent of the total Jewish population was economically disadvantaged. Most vulnerable were workers over 40, working women in all age brackets, and white-collar and professional people.

**Antisemitism**

The Anti-Defamation League reported that antisemitic assaults and threats declined by 41 per cent in the United States in 1983, while vandalism directed against Jews and Jewish property dropped by 19 per cent. This was the second year in a
row in which the number of incidents declined, following three years of increases. There were 670 vandalism incidents, mainly in New York, New Jersey, and California. By the end of the year 16 states had enacted legislation increasing penalties for acts of desecration against synagogues and churches, as well as damage done to educational and residential property.

The most serious antisemitic incident of the year took place in New York City. On June 22, gunmen in a passing car wounded two Yeshiva University rabbinical students and a 14-year-old high school student in a restaurant in the Washington Heights area. In September the same weapon was used to kill a woman and wound a Yeshiva University high school student. The Jewish Defense League offered to patrol the area near the university, but school officials opted for police protection. A $250,000 reward was posted for information on the shootings.

In an attempt to rectify the historical record, Jewish organizations in Atlanta, Georgia unsuccessfully sought to obtain a posthumous state parole board pardon for Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman convicted of murder and lynched by a mob in 1915 in the most notorious antisemitic incident in American history. The Jewish organizations began their campaign after new evidence became available proving Frank's innocence. In light of the parole board's failure to act, plans were being made to appeal the matter to the state legislature.

**Discrimination**

In September, New York City mayor Koch issued an executive order barring officials from conducting city business in private clubs which discriminate. At the end of the year, the New York City council was debating a bill banning discrimination in private clubs.

The American Bar Association's house of delegates voted in August to support an amendment to the 1964 federal civil rights act prohibiting discrimination against women and minorities in private clubs. A study released by the Philadelphia chapter of the American Jewish Committee in April maintained that private club discrimination in that city had dropped sharply in recent years with regard to racial or religious factors, but that the situation of women remained quite problematic.

In the fall, the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary voted to permit the ordination of women. This action, which was widely seen as a victory for the Jewish feminist movement, aligned Conservative Judaism with the Reform and Reconstructionist denominations, groups that had been ordaining women, respectively, since 1972 and 1974. Currently, there were some 60 women rabbis.

**Attitudes Toward Israel and American Jews**

Israel's incursion into Lebanon in 1982, which brought in its wake the Phalangist-conducted massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps, led to a temporary downward turn in the American public's positive view of the Jewish
state. By January 1983, however, Israel was once again being preferred over the Arab countries by margins of four or five to one. When the Gallup organization asked about which of nine groups Americans thought had too much power, Jews appeared at the bottom of the list. Still, it was disquieting that 37 per cent of the public felt that American Jews were more loyal to Israel than to the United States.

Despite the good will shown to Israel by the American public, and the continued erosion of antisemitic stereotypes in the United States, survey data released by the American Jewish Committee in the fall indicated that more than two-thirds of a national sample of American Jews agreed that "anti-Semitism in America may, in the future, become a serious problem." Only 27 per cent of the sample agreed that "virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews." These findings lent support to the position of Earl Raab, a veteran Jewish community relations official, who argued in the February issue of Midstream that it was necessary to distinguish between fact and foreboding in discussing antisemitism.

**Pro-Arab Activity**

There were indications of increased activity to influence American public opinion in a pro-Arab direction. A relatively new element was the growing importance and sophistication of the estimated two to three million Arab Americans living in large cities, especially New York, Boston, and Detroit. Such groups as the National Association of Arab Americans and the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee enlarged staff size, launched new publications, initiated lecture series, and hired leading public relations experts to develop advertising campaigns. The National Association of Arab Americans reiterated the theme "Stop U.S. military aid to Israel now" in billboard messages, newspaper advertisements, and radio announcements that were test-marketed in Albany, New York; Little Rock, Arkansas; San Mateo, California; and Topeka, Kansas. Representative Clarence Long (D., MD), a strong supporter of Israel, was targeted for attack in a specially prepared radio commercial that was aired in his congressional district.

During the year, the Anti-Defamation League and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee issued publications identifying the background and activities of various pro-Arab organizations. The Anti-Defamation League maintained that at a meeting in London $100 million had been allocated to fund a propaganda campaign aimed at undermining American support for Israel.

As part of its effort to counteract pro-Arab activities, the American Jewish Congress pressed ahead with a plan to force United States corporations to divulge to stockholders the nature and extent of their lobbying actions. In February the organization reported that nine corporations, including the Aluminum Company of America and American Airlines, had agreed to full disclosure of such activities. The American Jewish Congress also asked the supreme court to intervene in its two-year battle to compel the treasury department to reveal the extent of Arab dollar holdings in the United States.
In 1983 a number of American companies, including Bank America Corporation, Citibank, and the Bank of New York, were fined for violating federal regulations banning cooperation with the Arab boycott of Israel. In most instances, the violations were technical. Still, at year's end the International Trade Association reported that more than $1.5 million in fines had been imposed on 62 American companies during a 15-month period.

**Holocaust**

Interest in the Holocaust on the part of Jews and others continued to run high. In March the United States government announced that it would make available two large buildings in Washington for use as a major Holocaust museum. The transfer of the properties took place the following month at a ceremonial gathering of some 10,000 Holocaust survivors in nearby Landover, Maryland. Speaking at the ceremony, President Reagan told the participants, "The security of your safe havens here and in Israel will never be compromised."

During the year, a bill was signed into law authorizing honorary citizenship for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat credited with saving some 20,000 Hungarian Jews from Hitler's death camps. Wallenberg thus became the third person—following the Marquis de Lafayette and Winston Churchill—to be so honored.

The Holocaust also came before the public as the result of charges that the state department, army intelligence, and the FBI had protected Nazi war criminals in the post-World War II period, in order to use them as anti-Communist agents. This claim had been first put forward by John Loftus, a former investigator for the justice department, in a May 1982 CBS television program. Loftus' book *The Belarus Secret* described in detail the alleged use of 300 Byelorussian Nazi collaborators in American counter-intelligence efforts, after they had been smuggled into the United States. Some experts, however, attacked Loftus' claims as being exaggerated and sensational.

In August the justice department released a 218-page investigative report admitting misconduct by American officials in shielding Klaus Barbie, a former SS officer, from French prosecutors and helping him to escape to Bolivia in 1951. Allan Ryan, Jr., who was in charge of the investigation, indicated that he had found some evidence of the use of exNazis as informers, but could not point to any other case in which they had been given the type of protection afforded Barbie.

In 1983 two former Nazi collaborators, Feodor Federenko and Serge Kowalchuk, were stripped of American citizenship and ordered deported.

**Church-State Relations**

President Reagan, in his "state of the union" address and in a speech to a convention of Christian broadcasters, indicated his continued support of a series of social proposals, including tax credits for parents with children in private and
parochial schools and the restoration of classroom prayer. Legislation along these lines had been submitted to Congress in 1982, but had made little progress. In February, Supreme Court justice Lewis Powell, Jr. flatly asserted—in a three-page order banning Alabama teachers from leading prayers in public school classrooms—that efforts to "conduct prayers as part of school programs is unconstitutional under this court's decisions." However, a Gallup poll released in September made it clear that most Americans favored a constitutional amendment allowing voluntary prayer in public schools.

Public support for prayer in the schools was translated into backing for a number of legislative moves, including a constitutional amendment introduced by Senator Orrin Hatch (R., UT) authorizing silent prayer and a bill permitting religious clubs to function in public schools on an extra-curricular basis. In 22 states, laws had already been enacted permitting a moment of silence in school classrooms. Similar measures had long been opposed by most Jewish organizations, with the exception of some Orthodox groups. Thus it is not surprising that the Synagogue Council of America, representing Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox viewpoints, sent a telegram to President Reagan on May 4 expressing distress at a "possible change in the constitution of the United States which would permit prayer in the public schools." In October the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League joined with several other Jewish organizations in a legal brief supporting an American Civil Liberties Union suit challenging the constitutionality of New Jersey's "moment of silence" law. Later that month, federal district court judges in New Jersey and New Mexico upheld the American Civil Liberties Union's position; in November the supreme court refused to review the New Mexico ruling. However, at year's end the justice department asked the supreme court to review an Alabama "moment of silence" law, which the Reagan administration saw as "no threat to the values" protected by the constitution.

In a case that aroused wide interest, a federal district judge in Pennsylvania ruled in May that school prayer was permitted when it involved groups of students who had voluntarily formed religious clubs that met prior to the start of classes each day. On appeal, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League filed a joint brief in opposition. The principle, however, found a supporter in Senator Mark Hatfield (R., OR), who introduced legislation in Congress requiring public high schools to make school facilities available to voluntary prayer groups on the same basis as other student activities. Those Jewish organizations that joined with the American Civil Liberties Union in opposing Hatfield's bill found few allies in the Christian community. Indeed, the National Council of Churches supported Hatfield's move, as did the normally separationist United Presbyterian Church and various Baptist elements.

In August the National Council of Churches filed a joint brief with the American Jewish Committee seeking to have the supreme court bar the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island from using a nativity scene in a city-sponsored Christmas display. The lower federal courts had previously invoked the first amendment to uphold this
stand. The National Council of Churches-American Jewish Committee brief argued that the "sole and obvious content [of a crèche] is the depiction in adorational terms of the birth of a divinity in the form of the infant Jesus."

In a 5-4 decision, the supreme court upheld a Minnesota law permitting parents to take a state income tax deduction for expenses incurred in sending children to public or private elementary or secondary schools. Justice William Rehnquist, speaking for the majority, maintained that the tax aid was not an unconstitutional establishment of religion, despite the fact that nearly all the benefits went to parents with children in parochial schools. Following the supreme court decision, a number of state legislatures began to consider similar parochial measures.

At year's end, a number of experts in the area of church-state relations reported that the supreme court's scrutiny of state involvement in religion had "softened" somewhat. At the same time, there were indications that some strong separationists were having second thoughts about the extent of their opposition to state involvement in religion. "We really are ambivalent about religious clubs," declared Albert Menendez, leader of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Menendez emphasized that his organization was not opposed to "the principle of equal access as long as the religious club is initiated by students themselves and is not sanctioned by the school." Marc Stern, a staff member of the staunchly separationist American Jewish Congress, suggested that "blind allegiance to constitutional principles advances neither the principle of separation nor religious liberty." This view, however, remained a minority position within the American Jewish community.

The New Right

Fueling Jewish opposition to any breach of church-state separation was the continued strong support given by New Right and Christian Right organizations to the restoration of Bible reading and prayer in public schools and the banning of school library materials that were deemed offensive. The Moral Majority took a positive view of new regulations issued by the department of health and human services requiring federally supported, family-planning clinics to notify parents when minor children received prescription contraceptives. This move, however, was blocked by a federal judge early in the year; the decision was upheld by the court of appeals. A number of Jewish organizations expressed pleasure at the legal outcome of the matter. In June the Senate rejected an anti-abortion amendment, sponsored by Senator Hatch, that would have overturned the 1973 supreme court decision in Roe v. Wade.

In November, the Moral Majority held its national convention in Jerusalem. Some 630 delegates listened enthusiastically to an address by Israeli defense minister Moshe Arens, in which he declared that the Jewish state would make no concessions on the West Bank. Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell seconded this position: "There is no way that Israel can surrender such a portion of its real estate to hostile forces and expect to remain free."
Extremism

Once the largest extremist group in the United States, the Ku Klux Klan had declined in strength as a result of effective law enforcement and disenchantment among the membership. In a report released in the summer, however, the Anti-Defamation League indicated that other violent elements, including the Posse Comitatus and the Christian Defense League, had become active. These groups had a total membership of around 10,000.

In April, six Klan members and three American Nazis were indicted on conspiracy charges stemming from the 1979 killing of five members of the Communist Workers' party in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Interreligious Relations

The pattern of distance and distrust that had characterized relations between the Jewish community and the institutional structures of liberal Protestantism in recent years continued, especially in connection with Middle East issues. At the same time, the evangelical churches were strongly pro-Israel, and this led some Jewish leaders to seek closer ties with Protestant fundamentalists, particularly when the latter indicated that they would not attempt to proselytize Jews. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, argued that Jews should cease stereotyping evangelicals as mere "Bible thumpers—illiterate and bigoted people." Tanenbaum was challenged on this score by Rabbi Schindler, head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, who denounced any Jewish "flirtation with the Christian Right." Schindler asserted that segments of the American Jewish community were "willing to forgive anyone anything as long as they hear a good word about Israel."

The NJCRAC reported that attempts by various religious cults to win over Jews as members did not appear to increase in 1983, and may even have declined.

In the fall, a federal appeals court upheld the conviction of Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, on charges of conspiring to evade taxes. While Moon had few friends in the Jewish community, some concern was expressed that he might have been targeted for government investigation because of his unpopular views.

Political Developments

Early in the year there were indications of restlessness on the part of important elements of the right-wing coalition that had helped elect Ronald Reagan president. Few of the social issues that the conservatives supported were gaining ground in Congress, and conservative spokesmen such as Richard Viguerie, publisher of Conservative Digest, maintained that the administration was not being forceful enough in pushing them. When President Reagan named former secretary of state Henry
Kissinger to head a bi-partisan commission to chart long-range policy for Central America, the thunder on the right grew even louder.

Seemingly in response to such criticism, President Reagan stepped up his rhetoric on a number of social issues. In a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in March, he argued forcefully against abortion and in favor of prayer in public schools. Observing that the Soviet Union was "the focus of evil in the world," Reagan called on the evangelicals to join in opposing a nuclear freeze and in pressing for a major buildup of United States weaponry. Also in March, the president met with the leadership of Morality in Media, a coalition of Protestant and Catholic organizations strongly opposed to pornography; Reagan promised to give consideration to the appointment of an anti-pornography "coordinator."

In Chicago, the nation's third largest city, Harold Washington, a Black candidate, was elected mayor, receiving some 43 per cent of the Jewish vote, despite the fact that his opponent was Jewish; Jews voted for Washington two and a half times more than other whites. In the fall, Black candidate W. Wilson Goode was elected the mayor of Philadelphia, the nation's fifth largest city; once again, Jews provided a much higher proportion of the Black winner's vote than whites generally.

With Los Angeles also being governed by a Black mayor, attention increasingly came to center on New York City, where Mayor Koch, the most outspokenly "Jewish" politician in the country, continued to clash with Black and Hispanic leaders. A particularly sharp exchange was occasioned by a congressional subcommittee hearing in New York City, dealing with the issue of police brutality. Even before the session was held, Koch denounced it as a vehicle to enhance the political objectives of his opponents in the Black community. At the hearing, a mob-like atmosphere developed, with hundreds of Blacks pushing their way into the room to hurl insults at Koch.

In *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, Steven M. Cohen presented research findings showing that Jews were more liberal than other Americans on a variety of issues: spending for social programs; quotas for Blacks and other disadvantaged minorities; support for the equal rights amendment; tolerance for homosexuals, and governmental subsidies for abortions. Jews came closer to the American mainstream on matters directly affecting either their own security or that of the State of Israel, e.g., defense spending or the death penalty for murder. In a further elaboration, Cohen indicated that more segregated, traditionally-oriented Jews tended to exhibit lower levels of political liberalism, while highly secularized, assimilated Jews came closest to the views of Americans in general. It was the large segment of Jews situated between the two extremes who scored highest on several measures of political liberalism.

**Murray Friedman**
The United States, Israel, and the Middle East

For United States policy in the Middle East, 1983 was a year marked by disillusionment and defeat. This provided a sad contrast to the optimistic mood in official Washington in September 1982, when President Ronald Reagan announced a new Middle East peace initiative. The expectation at the time was that within months King Hussein of Jordan would finally agree to enter negotiations, Israeli and Syrian forces would be removed from Lebanon, and that war-torn country would be well on the way to recovering its independence and unity. Not only were these American policy objectives not achieved, but 1983 also brought a sharp reversal in the fortunes of some of the leading actors on the scene.

The most notable development was Syria's re-emergence as a major force following the crushing military defeat it had suffered at the hands of the Israelis in June 1982. There were three major factors behind the Syrian comeback: the Soviet Union's decision to rapidly supply Damascus with highly advanced weapons, including surface-to-air and ground-to-ground missiles; the fierce determination of President Hafez al-Assad to foil American and Israeli plans to create an independent, pro-Western Lebanon, living in peace with Israel; and the indecisiveness and inconsistency of American policy.

Syrian Intransigence Shatters U.S. Illusions

Relying on assurances from Saudi Arabia, the United States was led to believe that the declared Syrian opposition to withdrawing its forces from Lebanon was mere verbal posturing, and that once Israel had agreed to withdraw, Syria would quickly do likewise. If there was a single event that finally shattered American illusions about the true nature of Syrian intentions, it was the suicide truck bombing of the U.S. marine headquarters in Beirut on October 23. Although Damascus disclaimed official responsibility, Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlas called the bombing a "heroic" act and warned that Syrian pilots would respond to any American retaliatory attack with "kamikaze attacks on American warships." From the beginning, American officials were convinced that Syrian intelligence had been involved in the truck bombing (and the simultaneous blasting of French military headquarters), because the Iranian attackers, adherents of the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad, had come from Syrian-controlled territory. At a news conference on November 22, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger stated categorically that the United States had reliable evidence that the attack had been undertaken with "the sponsorship, knowledge and authority of the Syrian government." The 241 American servicemen killed and 70 wounded in the Beirut bombing constituted the highest number of casualties in any single incident since the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam.
The truck bomb-attack underscored the physical vulnerability of the members of the Western, multinational peace-keeping force in Beirut. It led many Americans, including prominent congressional voices, to question the wisdom and feasibility of United States policy. There was deep frustration within the U.S. defense establishment, which regarded the marine role as something of a "mission impossible." The working assumption of the Reagan administration had been that a small, neutral, international force would be sufficient to demonstrate Western support for the government of Amin Gemayel as it worked to restore Lebanese national unity and independence. But for a peace-keeping force to be successful—as was the Multinational Force and Observers, which monitored compliance with the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in the Sinai—there first needed to be agreement among the parties involved to accept it. In Lebanon, however, there were important factions, supported by powerful outside elements, who were determined to undermine the Gemayel government and undo its policies. In the absence of a Lebanese national consensus, the American and other Western troops were viewed as partisans of one side, rather than as neutral peace-keepers. The best estimate in the Pentagon was that it would require the commitment of some 50,000–100,000 fighting men to effectively aid the Gemayel government.

There was no question that the United States possessed the requisite military strength. Already on September 6, President Reagan, through his spokesman Larry Speakes, had issued a clear warning to Syria: "The Syrians should know that we have considerable firepower offshore and they should be circumspect... in instigating any violence in the area." Toward the end of the year, after the president had authorized American forces to take more active measures to defend the embattled marines and support the Lebanese government, air force jets and the battleship New Jersey pounded Syrian-controlled positions in the Shuf mountains, overlooking Beirut. But if the United States had the fire-power, the Syrians had the staying-power. In October, Congress had only reluctantly agreed to authorize the maintenance of the U.S. peace-keeping force in Lebanon for 18 months, after extracting a pledge from President Reagan that he would seek additional congressional authorization "if circumstances require any substantial expansion in the number or role of U.S. armed forces." There was virtually no support among military and civilian authorities in Washington to transform the mission of the Americans in Lebanon from a peace-keeping to a combatant role.

The inconclusive results of the Lebanese national reconciliation talks, which had taken place in Geneva, Switzerland at the end of October, underscored just how far away the warring factions in Lebanon still were from agreement on reforming the country's internal political structure and defining a foreign policy. The only decision that was reached—Syrian insistence—was to "freeze" the American-brokered, May 17 Lebanese-Israeli agreement, which would have brought about an Israeli withdrawal within the framework of a formal end of the state of war between Israel and Lebanon, bilateral security arrangements, and the beginning of steps toward normalization of relations. While American officials continued to voice support for
implementation of the Lebanese-Israeli accord, it became increasingly clear with the passage of time that neither the United States nor Israel had the political will to undertake the kind of massive military campaign that would be required to dislodge the Syrians from their positions in Lebanon and enable President Gemayel to defeat the coalition of forces arrayed against him.

As the 1984 presidential campaign approached, political advisers in the White House became increasingly concerned about the possibly disastrous consequences for President Reagan of an open-ended and manifestly unsuccessful American military involvement in the Lebanese quagmire. The signs were unmistakable that the Democrats planned to exploit the issue to the hilt. In a letter sent to Reagan on December 14, representatives Lee Hamilton (D., IN) and Les Aspin (D., WI), who had supported the original bipartisan resolution authorizing a marine role in Lebanon for 18 months, challenged the president's Lebanon policy on a variety of grounds. "We believe you have overstated our stake in Lebanon. . . . [It] is neither the key to the supply of Persian Gulf oil, nor essential to the continued existence of Israel," they argued. The two House members also maintained that Lebanon's violence was "fundamentally indigenous" and that the Reagan administration had not "pushed hard enough to achieve a political solution to the problem." While they acknowledged the destructive role of Syria, Iran, and the Soviet Union, Hamilton and Aspin contended that national reconciliation would "do more to determine the prospects for [Lebanon] than the rate at which foreign forces leave." The two men warned that any thought of a "military solution in Lebanon would be unwise and against our national interest."

On December 19 the House armed services subcommittee on investigations issued a highly critical report. It revealed that the joint chiefs of staff had opposed the marine mission as militarily unviable, and regarded security measures at Beirut airport as inadequate to protect the marine unit from all likely threats. More fundamentally, the report argued that a marine presence in Lebanon could only be justified "if the policy objectives are visible, profoundly important, and clearly attainable." A call was issued for a re-examination of American policy by the administration and Congress.

**Israel Scales Down Lebanese Involvement**

In one of many ironic shifts in American policy during 1983, the administration, which had earlier chastised Israel for the alleged excesses of its military operation in Lebanon and demanded a prompt Israeli withdrawal, was now eager to have the Jewish state employ its military and political resources to counter the Syrians and help the Gemayel government to restore peace between the warring Christian and Druze communities. However, the mood in Israel had also changed significantly. The architect of the Lebanon invasion, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, had been forced to relinquish his post following the issuance of the Kahan Commission report (February 8), which had castigated him for failing to intervene quickly to stop the
Phalangist massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. Sharon's departure was emblematic of the scaling down of Israeli geopolitical objectives in Lebanon in the face of increasing doubts as to what was achievable there given the costs and risks.

Israel faced a special dilemma when renewed Christian-Druze fighting erupted, since both groups had ties to Israel. The Israeli Druze minority, which had long been loyal to the Jewish state, wanted Israel to permit its fighting men to go to the aid of their brethren in Lebanon. On the other hand, the leaders of the Christian Lebanese Forces, the militant arm of the Phalangists, who had been secretly allied with Israel for several years, wanted Israel to aid them, or at least not to hinder them as they moved to improve their position in the Shuf mountains. The Israeli response to this situation was to forbid the Israeli Druze to enter the combat in the north, to urge President Gemayel to curb the militant Phalangists and develop a more truly representative national army, and to give notice to both the United States and Lebanese governments that Israel would soon move its forces southward to the Awali river as a security measure. The planned Israeli pullback caused consternation in Beirut and Washington. Israel several times agreed to delay its withdrawal from the Shuf mountains so as to give the Lebanese government and its Western and Saudi supporters more time to work out security arrangements. Finally, in September, with Israeli casualties mounting daily and the economic drain of the Lebanese operation becoming ever more burdensome, Israeli forces were redeployed southward.

Despite the feverish efforts of U.S. special envoy Robert McFarlane and Saudi prince Bandar bin Sultan to work out an agreement between the Gemayel government and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, intensified fighting broke out in the Shuf mountains following the Israeli pullout. McFarlane, deputy director of the national security council, had been appointed by President Reagan in July to succeed special envoys Morris Draper and Philip Habib, who resigned when the White House became dissatisfied over their inability to achieve positive results in the Lebanon negotiations.

To allay Arab fears that an Israeli pullback from the Beirut area represented a move toward the de facto partition of Lebanon, Secretary of State George Shultz had announced on July 28—at the conclusion of three days of meetings in Washington with Israeli officials—that it was "totally wrong" to believe that Israel intended to stay in Lebanon permanently. He described the planned Israeli move to secure positions in southern Lebanon as "a step in the direction of total withdrawal." On August 19, presidential spokesman Speakes reiterated the American view that Israel was "committed to the full withdrawal of its forces in Lebanon."

To the extent that there was still any consensus within Israel, it was limited literally to securing "peace for Galilee," i.e., preventing southern Lebanon from once again becoming a base for PLO terrorist attacks against civilian targets in northern Israel. While Israeli officials made it clear they would resist any Syrian attack, they had no desire to become embroiled in a major conflict with Syria, most
certainly not as a mere surrogate of the United States. This cautious Israeli attitude had an effect on American policy as well. Thus, despite tough talk by President Reagan in the wake of the bombing of the marine headquarters in Beirut that "this despicable act will not go unpunished," nothing was done. After several weeks had passed with no American action, Secretary of State Shultz expressed a desire for an end to public talk about retaliation. Even Secretary of Defense Weinberger, who had explicitly blamed the Syrians and Iranians for the truck bomb-attack, brushed off reporters' questions about reprisals, saying that President Reagan had not made "any promise of retaliation."

Arens Moves to End Israel-U.S. Friction

In Israel the flamboyant Sharon had been replaced as defense minister by Moshe Arens, Israel's ambassador to Washington. While Arens had a reputation for toughness in foreign policy, he was also known for his ability to analyze issues dispassionately and for his quiet, non-confrontational personal style. Arens was determined to do all that he could to avoid the kind of needless acrimony that had at times punctuated relations between the United States and Israel. During the first part of the year, for example, there had been several occasions when American and Israeli troops in Beirut had come close to clashing. Probably the most bizarre incident took place on February 2, when a U.S. marine captain drew his pistol, climbed aboard an Israeli tank, and ordered the Israeli officer in charge to remove three Israeli tanks from the area in which they were patrolling. The incident was the result of confusion about the line of demarcation between the different forces in Beirut; adding to the problem was the reluctance of the Pentagon to establish direct liaison between U.S. and Israeli units. A senior Israeli official blamed Secretary of Defense Weinberger for "blowing this completely out of proportion" and for suggesting that the marine captain deserved a medal for his action. To make certain that there was no repetition of the incident, American and Israeli officials agreed to use colored barrels to mark off the Israeli patrol area from that covered by the multinational force.

Defense Minister Arens, in a gesture of goodwill to the United States in March, unilaterally offered to share with Washington the intelligence information that Israel had obtained during the war in Lebanon. Conclusion of a bilateral agreement on the matter, similar to ones drawn up after the 1967 and 1973 wars, had earlier been held up by Defense Minister Sharon's insistence that the agreement contain assurances that the information would not be shared with countries potentially hostile to Israel. A Pentagon spokesman termed Arens' gesture "an encouraging development in relations."

In March, the Center for International Security, a Washington think tank, sent an open letter to President Reagan, signed by more than 100 retired U.S. generals and admirals. The officers argued that "the victory of Israeli-modified American weapons and tactics [in Lebanon] presents the free world with a tremendous opportunity to reduce the impact of Russia's extraordinary growth in tactical forces and
battlefield technology.” They therefore urged the president to “revitalize strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel.” It was not until November, however, that the Reagan administration was prepared to take any public steps in this direction. In the early months of the year the prevailing view in the White House was that it would be imprudent for Washington to cooperate with Israel in the military and strategic fields so long as Israeli troops continued to occupy parts of Lebanon.

Reagan Administration Courts King Hussein

Washington was still hopeful that King Hussein of Jordan would decide to enter Middle East peace negotiations on the basis of the Reagan plan. However, the king first wanted firm assurances that the United States would deliver on President Reagan’s reported promise to press Israel to agree to a settlement freeze if Jordan indicated its readiness to negotiate. For his part, Reagan, in a talk to 150 leaders of the World Jewish Congress in the White House on February 2, listed three conditions as necessary for progress toward peace in the Middle East. The first was that Israel “must be prepared to engage in serious negotiations over the West Bank and Gaza.” Second, Israel had to demonstrate “good faith” in the form of a settlements freeze. Finally—an “independent but related” condition—“King Hussein needed to step forward, ready to negotiate peace directly with Israel.”

President Reagan was greatly troubled by the slow pace of the Lebanese-Israeli talks, which had begun at the end of 1982 but were still bogged down over Israeli demands that the agreement include provisions for the normalization of relations, and that Israel be permitted to station 750 men at early warning stations in Lebanon even after the completion of a withdrawal. Israel, for its part, rejected Lebanese proposals for a United Nations monitoring force, noting UNIFIL’s ineffectiveness in the past to prevent PLO incursions into northern Israel. The ability of the United States to get Israel to pull its armed forces out of “the North Bank”—as some Arab observers pointedly called the area of Lebanon under Israeli occupation—was increasingly posed by the Jordanians and Egyptians as a litmus test of the viability of President Reagan’s initiative for the West Bank. As a sign of the president’s determination, administration sources leaked the news that Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who had been scheduled to come to Washington in mid-February, would not be welcome there until Israel agreed to a withdrawal. In remarks to a group of reporters on February 7, President Reagan confirmed that the Arab countries were refusing to participate in peace talks with Israel until it withdrew from Lebanon, demanding this as a “gesture of good will.” Reagan added that Israel was “unnecessarily” delaying its withdrawal, thus neglecting its “moral” obligation to depart after the Lebanese government had “asked all the foreign forces to leave.” The president said that he would be willing to consider increasing the size of the multinational peace-keeping force if that were necessary to bring about the withdrawal of all foreign forces. Reagan, at that point, was still operating under the
illusion that once Israel agreed to pull out, Syria and the PLO would do so simultaneously.

**Israel Rejects U.S. Criticism**

Acknowledging President Reagan's obvious impatience, Israeli ambassador Arens labeled as "totally unfounded" speculation in some Washington circles that Israel was purposely stalling in the talks with Lebanon so as to postpone negotiations with King Hussein. In an interview with the New York *Times* (February 20) prior to his return to Israel to be sworn in as defense minister, Arens argued that the Reagan administration failed to appreciate the "full complexity of the Middle Eastern scene," adding, "I think that people have idealized notions of how quickly things can get done and sometimes that can be destructive or counterproductive."

When asked by a reporter on March 31 whether the administration would approve the long-delayed delivery to Israel of 75 F-16 fighter planes—in view of the recent Soviet shipment of SAM-5 missiles to Syria—President Reagan said the planes would not be delivered until Israel withdrew its armed forces from Lebanon, because "we are forbidden by law to release those planes" to an occupying power. The following day, state department spokesman Alan Romberg retreated from this position, stressing to reporters that Reagan had not formally determined that Israel was in violation of the law restricting the use of American weapons to defensive purposes. The president, he indicated, was only concerned that the "spirit of the law" not be violated.

President Reagan's remark drew an angry response from Israel, as well as Israeli supporters in the United States. Foreign Minister Shamir called the president's comment "very regrettable," since the United States "knows very well that we entered Lebanon to defend ourselves from the murderous attacks of the Palestinian terrorists who were using Lebanon as their base." Former vice president Walter Mondale, a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, declared that he was "disappointed and disturbed that President Reagan apparently has broken a pledge made in 1978 to deliver F-16 airplanes to Israel." Mondale argued that with thousands of Russian troops being sent to Syria to operate highly advanced missiles, the United States "should be strengthening the bonds of strategic cooperation with our oldest and most reliable ally in the region." He pointedly observed that "for months, the administration has been insisting that it would not use an arms embargo against Israel as an instrument of foreign policy."

**Divisions Erupt Within PLO**

American efforts to court King Hussein ultimately came to nought. Although tempted by the promise in the Reagan plan that the United States would support the return of most of the West Bank to Jordanian control in a peace settlement, Hussein still wanted to assure himself of substantial Palestinian and Arab support before taking the plunge. It seemed for a time that the PLO, chastened by the loss
of its last operational base bordering Israel, might finally moderate its position. PLO leader Yasir Arafat had in fact spent the months following his forced departure from Beirut, at the end of August 1982, in direct and indirect contact with many foreign capitals, including Paris and Washington, his aim being to sound them out on whether the formula for “mutual recognition” between Israel and the PLO, which he proposed to submit for approval to the Palestine National Council, would gain support in the West. Arafat was even quoted as saying that the Reagan plan included “positive elements.” Moreover, in October 1982 he had opened negotiations with King Hussein concerning the creation of a confederation between Jordan and an eventual Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. However, when the Palestine National Council finally assembled in Algiers in mid-February 1983, Arafat felt his own position was too weak and his movement too deeply split to make a bold and unambiguous public declaration of recognition of Israel. The Algiers meeting, therefore, ended up being the “conference of the yes-no.”

The most dramatic development at the Algiers conference was the resignation from the Palestine National Council of Issam-Sartawi, one of the leading PLO advocates of recognition of Israel. The 48-year-old surgeon, who had been designated by Arafat to engage in discussions with both Israelis and Jewish groups in the West, was scheduled to deliver a speech calling for an expanded dialogue between the PLO and Israel, and for clear-cut PLO acceptance of the “two-state solution,” i.e., a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza living peacefully alongside Israel. At the last minute, however, Sartawi was denied the right to speak. At a press conference following his resignation, Sartawi declared it “inconceivable” that the Palestine National Council “would patiently listen to a two-and-a-half-hour oration defending Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi but would not allot ten minutes to hear a speech offering practical hope for the Palestinians.” Pointing to the fact that a number of bombastic speeches had trumpeted the PLO “victory” over Israel in the Lebanon war, he bitterly observed: “If Beirut was such a great victory, then all we need is a series of such victories and we will be holding our next National Council meeting in Fiji.”

At the Algiers meeting, Arafat attempted to retain his freedom of action and to win approval for the continuation of contacts with King Hussein. He reportedly also wanted the Palestine National Council to stop short of formally rejecting the Reagan plan, stating only that it did not provide a “sound basis for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict.” However, in response to pressure from radical elements within the PLO, the final resolution, adopted on February 22, did in fact dismiss the Reagan plan out of hand. The Council approved a resumption of negotiations with Hussein, but imposed two conditions: the PLO had to be accepted as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; and the Palestinians had to be able to exercise their right to self-determination, including the right to have a sovereign state.

Immediately following the conference, Arafat returned to Amman, where, after lengthy closed door talks with King Hussein, the draft of a jointly agreed protocol was prepared. According to journalist Eric Rouleau, the protocol contained at least
three major violations of Palestine National Council decisions: it did not designate the PLO as a negotiating party in eventual talks with Israel; it did not recognize the Palestinian people's right to set up their own sovereign state before linking up with Jordan; and it mentioned only the Reagan plan among the various proposals that might lead to a peace settlement. At the last moment, after King Hussein had signed the protocol, Arafat refused to countersign or even initial the document, saying that he first had to obtain the approval of the Palestinian leadership. He flew off to Kuwait, where, for the first time in recent history, he was repudiated first by the PLO executive committee and then by the whole of the central committee of Fatah, his own constituent organization. Too embarrassed to return to Amman, Arafat sent two of his deputies to King Hussein with counterproposals that restated traditional, hard-line PLO positions.

Reactions to Failure of Hussein-Arafat Talks

King Hussein convened his cabinet on April 10 to study the PLO response. After the meeting, it was announced that Jordan would not enter into negotiations on the basis of the Reagan plan because the PLO had proposed a new course of action "that differed from our agreement." "We in Jordan, having refused from the beginning to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, will neither act separately nor in lieu of anybody in any Middle East peace negotiations," the Jordanian cabinet statement said. Affirming that Jordan still respected the 1974 Arab League summit decision naming the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the cabinet statement left no doubt as to the king's annoyance with the PLO's lack of realism. Jordan, in effect, washed its hands of the Palestinian issue: "Accordingly, we leave it to the PLO and to the Palestinian people to choose the ways and means for the salvation of themselves and their land, and for the realization of their declared aims in the manner they see fit."

While President Reagan described King Hussein's refusal to enter into talks as nothing more than an "impediment" in the search for Middle East peace, others in Washington admitted that for all practical purposes the Reagan plan was dead—or at least in a state of suspended animation—until after the 1984 American presidential election. The American Jewish response to Hussein's nay-saying came in the form of a telegram sent to President Reagan by Julius Berman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Berman underscored the bankruptcy of American policy, which he summed up as "four years of unsuccessful attempts to cajole, bribe, beseech, implore, and importune King Hussein of Jordan to come to the peace table." He called on the administration to lift the ban on the sale of F-16 planes to Israel, thus "serving notice to the world that America stands by its friends and supports those who are committed to peace."

The Jordanian fiasco led to a shakeup in the State Department. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Nicholas Veliotis, who had optimistically predicted a positive change in the Jordanian and PLO positions following the war
in Lebanon, was removed from his post and sent off to Cairo as the ambassador to Egypt. Veliotis was replaced by Richard Murphy, who, as ambassador to Damascus and Riyadh, had distinguished himself by accurately assessing the policies of the Syrian and Saudi regimes. Murphy understood all too well the extent to which Arab rulers either would not or could not actively support American policies.

Shultz Questions PLO Role

The scuttling by the PLO leadership of the Arafat-Hussein talks also drew an angry public response from Secretary of State Shultz. At a press conference, he questioned the PLO’s position as official representative of the Palestinians. Shultz maintained that leadership has “to be exercised constructively,” and that the PLO had failed “to measure up to those responsibilities.” To underscore his point, Shultz added, “There’s a saying around here, ‘Use it or lose it.’ ”

The failure of the Hussein-Arafat talks was welcomed in both Jerusalem and Damascus, but for very different policy reasons. The Begin government had rejected the Reagan plan and an American call for a settlement freeze, but had indicated earlier in the year its willingness to enter into peace negotiations with Jordan, either on the basis of the Camp David accords or, if Hussein preferred, without any preconditions. Syria’s leaders were dead set against any peace negotiations between Jordan and Israel. They were fearful that if Hussein and Arafat managed to patch up their differences and agreed on a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate peace with Israel, Syria would find itself totally isolated, with no chance of ever recovering the Golan Heights.

Reagan Administration Reassures Syria

The United States tried to reassure Syria about this matter, in a letter that President Reagan sent to President Assad on April 12. “We believe that the best way to serve the future of your country and the prosperity of your people is by reaching a peaceful and just settlement to the problems of the region,” Reagan stated. He then added, “Therefore, I shall continue to work urgently for expanded negotiations on the basis of United Nations security council resolution 242, which calls for the exchange of territory for real peace and applies on the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights.” Although Reagan’s words aroused annoyance in Jerusalem, they did not impress Damascus, since protests by the United States had failed to lead the Israeli government to rescind the Knesset action, adopted in December 1981, to extend Israeli “law, jurisdiction, and administration” to the Golan Heights.

President Assad did not limit his opposition to the Reagan plan to verbal polemics. Indeed, as 1983 progressed, there was mounting evidence of the ruthless measures that the Syrian authorities were prepared to adopt in order to sabotage any PLO or Jordanian move toward peace with Israel. Thus, on April 10, Issam Sartawi was murdered while representing the PLO at a conference of the Socialist
International in Portugal. In a statement issued in Damascus, an extremist, Syrian-backed Palestinian faction headed by Abu Nidal claimed responsibility for the act. The Sartawi assassination was meant to serve as a pointed reminder to Arafat and Hussein of what could happen to those who acted against the wishes of Syria. In an interview published in the French press on April 25, Abu Nidal declared his intention to continue attacks against Arab, as well as Jewish, targets. In the following months, several Jordanian diplomats fell victim to assassination attempts. In Britain, Abu Nidal agents were convicted of the near-fatal attack on Shlomo Argov, Israel’s ambassador to London, in June 1982.

**Syria Backs Anti-Arafat PLO Rebels**

The Syrians supported a rebellion against Arafat’s leadership of the PLO that was led by several key officers in Fatah. The officers, headed by Abu Musa, opposed any modification of the PLO’s traditional position calling for armed struggle “to liberate all Palestine.” Although Damascus initially feigned surprise in May 1983 when Abu Musa and his men staged an armed uprising against Arafat in Lebanon’s Bekaa valley, it soon became clear that the Syrian authorities were actively aiding the anti-Arafat forces, who were operating within territory tightly controlled by the Syrians. On June 23 Arafat charged that Syria was blocking the transfer of supplies to his supporters in Lebanon, thus “betraying” the PLO. The following day, the Syrians declared Arafat *persona non grata* and ordered him out of the country.

**U.S. Seeks Lebanese-Israeli Agreement**

With the Reagan plan for the West Bank effectively sidetracked by the Jordanian cabinet statement of April 10, the Reagan administration now placed special emphasis on Lebanon. On April 22 President Reagan announced that he was dispatching Secretary of State Shultz on his first official visit to the Middle East, to aid the efforts of ambassadors Habib and Draper to conclude a Lebanese-Israeli agreement that would lead to the withdrawal of all foreign forces and guarantee the security of Israel’s northern border. Shultz, who was eager to produce a diplomatic victory, engaged in intensive shuttle diplomacy. During his Middle East trip, he gained the support of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan for the proposed Lebanese-Israeli accord. However, after meeting with President Assad for four hours on May 7, Shultz was forced to tell reporters that the Syrians “are hardly enthusiastic about the agreement.” That, no doubt, was the understatement of the year; a spokesman for Assad told the press that the Syrian president regarded the draft Lebanese-Israeli agreement as “an act of submission” to Israel, and thus as totally unacceptable. On May 10 Lebanese president Gemayel indicated his rejection of “Arab blackmail,” vowing to seek domestic and international support for the Lebanese-Israeli agreement. On May 14 a ranking Syrian official reiterated that
Damascus would do all that it could to "foil" the Lebanese-Israeli agreement. After the Lebanese went ahead and signed the agreement on May 17, Syrian foreign minister Abdel Halim Khaddam warned that his country would "take measures" against Lebanon. "This agreement will not survive," he threatened.

The Lebanese-Israeli agreement, which declared an end to the state of war between the two countries, and included steps intended to bring about political and economic normalization, as well as an Israeli pullout, was hailed by President Reagan as "a positive step toward peace in the Middle East." Reagan saw the agreement as providing hope for "ending the suffering of the Lebanese people," and as initiating a process "which will culminate in the withdrawal of all external forces from Lebanon and restore Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and control over its territory."

**Saudi Arabia Underestimates Syrian Opposition**

In deciding not to involve the Syrians in the early stages of the negotiations on troop withdrawals from Lebanon, the United States had been relying on assurances from Saudi Arabia that once Israel had agreed in principle to withdraw its forces, there would be no problem in securing the prompt withdrawal of the 40,000 Syrian troops that had been in Lebanon since 1975. The Gemayel government had formally asked the Arab League summit conference at Fez to terminate the mandate of the Arab deterrent force in Lebanon, which provided the legal fig-leaf to cover the Syrian occupation. But the Arab summit had shied away from any decisive action, merely calling on Lebanon and Syria to negotiate an agreement. The unwillingness of the Arab states to take active measures to help Gemayel against Assad became unmistakably clear when Saudi defense minister Sultan announced on May 11 that Saudi Arabia would not pressure Syria into accepting the Lebanese-Israeli agreement.

The Reagan administration decided to downplay the significance of Syria's opposition to the Lebanon accord. At a news conference, President Reagan expressed confidence that the Syrians would eventually agree to withdraw. The president maintained that "a number of their Arab allies are urging them to stick with their word and to leave when all forces are prepared to leave." Reagan added, "I cannot believe that the Syrians want to find themselves alone, separated from all of their Arab allies."

The Israelis had no illusions about the Syrians. As a way of forestalling future American criticism of anti-terrorist action, Israel had won U.S. approval of a confidential agreement, signed on May 17, in which the United States recognized Israel's right of self-defense under international law, allowing it to retaliate against terrorist attacks from Lebanon. The U.S.-Israeli agreement also acknowledged that Israel could delay the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon if Syria and the PLO failed to pull out their forces.
Washington was becoming increasingly concerned about the buildup of Soviet personnel and weapons in Syria. In February, Secretary of State Shultz termed Soviet military activities in that country “destabilizing,” and in May attributed the hardening of the official Syrian position on withdrawal to Syria’s “flexing its Soviet muscles.” Soviet arms shipments to Syria were accompanied by a steady escalation of Moscow’s anti-Israel rhetoric. An official Soviet policy statement on March 30 accused Israel of planning a “piratic strike” against Syria, and pledged that the “socialist countries” would come to Syria’s aid. Although Israel repeatedly denied any intention of attacking Syria, the Soviet war of nerves was escalated further on May 9 when dependents of Soviet diplomats in Beirut were suddenly evacuated. Moscow also backed Damascus in its opposition to the Lebanese-Israeli agreement, labeling it an American-Israeli plot to “enslave the Lebanese and the Palestinians.” 

Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee on May 13, Secretary of Defense Weinberger issued the administration’s strongest public response to the Soviet challenge. He asserted that the Soviet Union was “making a profound and dangerous mistake if it thinks that by resort to belligerent words and provocative actions, by the obstruction of the Lebanese peace process, it can pressure the United States into a retreat from its commitment to the security of Israel.” In response to a question about what the United States would do to prevent the Soviet Union from turning Syria into another Cuba that would seek to undermine the security of its neighbors, Weinberger stated, “I want to make it very clear to the Soviets and any proxies they may have in Syria that any aggression by them would be met by a retaliatory force that would make the aggression totally unworthy.” The week after Weinberger spoke, Representative Jack Kemp (R., NY), reflecting the sentiment of many members of Congress, suggested to Secretary of State Shultz that lifting the ban on the sale of F-16 planes to Israel would send “a strong signal to the Soviets that we will not stand by and let them act with impunity.” And indeed, on May 20—three days after the signing of the Lebanese-Israeli agreement—President Reagan formally removed the ban.

The Reagan administration was concerned about the continuing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the danger that Moscow might benefit if escalation of the Iran-Iraq war led to chaos in the Persian Gulf region. Although the United States was officially neutral in the Iran-Iraq war, it began to tilt slightly to the side of Iraq. In large part, this was due to a fear that if Ayatollah Khomeini achieved his goal of overthrowing the regime of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad, then Khomeini’s brand of militant Shi’ite fundamentalism might spread not only to Iraq but also to Saudi Arabia and other conservative, pro-Western, Arab sheikdoms. However, there was also concern about an immediate threat to shipping in the Gulf. After Iraq received French Super-Etenard fighter jets from France with Exocet missiles, Iran issued a warning that it would retaliate for any attacks on its oil facilities by closing the Straits of Hormuz. On October 17 Secretary of State Shultz stated that the United
States and other Western countries would not allow Iran to blackmail them with threats to their oil supplies. Two days later, President Reagan underscored this position. In point of fact, however, the glut of oil on the world market made the Western industrial nations far less vulnerable than during earlier periods of the Middle East conflict.

The failure of Jordan and Saudi Arabia to provide meaningful help to the United States in countering radical, Soviet-backed forces in the Middle East, resulted in a reassessment in Washington of the importance of Israel as a strategic ally. Even Secretary of Defense Weinberger, who in the past had been reluctant to have the United States work closely with Israel in the area of defense, now began to speak in glowing terms about Israel's strategic value. In his speech to the American Jewish Committee, Weinberger asserted that the United States had "an enormous stake in Israel's security. . . . Israel has a most effective military force. . . . We know that the Soviets would dearly love control over the Middle East's resources and strategic checkpoints, but Israel stands determinedly in their way."

**U.S.-Israeli Strategic Cooperation Expanded**

When President Reagan, on November 29, met at the White House with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who had succeeded the ailing Menachem Begin, and Defense Minister Arens, they agreed to a greatly expanded partnership for strategic and political cooperation. Describing a joint political-military committee that was established, President Reagan said, "This group will give priority attention to the threat to our mutual interest posed by increased Soviet influence in the Middle East." Prime Minister Shamir told the National Press Club the following day that strengthened military cooperation between Israel and the U.S. would "go a long way" toward restoring Lebanese independence by persuading Syria to give up hope of dominating Lebanon. Both American and Israeli officials went out of their way to deny that there were any plans for joint action against Syria or any other Arab country. Nonetheless, the agreement met with strong opposition throughout the Arab world, even in such ostensibly moderate and pro-American countries as Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Secretary of State Shultz encountered a barrage of criticism when he visited North Africa two weeks later. Still, Shultz did not hesitate to state publicly in Tunis: "It is important to say in an Arab capital that the United States has had, does have, and will continue to have a strong relationship with Israel, and I think everyone . . . should understand that."

The agreement on expanded American-Israeli cooperation covered three main areas. A joint political-military group was established to deal with combined planning, joint exercises, and the prepositioning of U.S. military equipment in Israel. There was also agreement on strategic coordination in Lebanon, involving, on the one hand, efforts to counter the Soviet arms buildup in Syria, and, on the other, steps to bolster the Gemayel government and encourage it to broaden its political base and work more closely with Israel. In the economic sphere, there was a plan to
complete negotiations within a year on the establishment of an Israeli-U.S. free trade area. Other economic measures included permission for Israeli manufacturers to bid on U.S. defense department contracts, and agreement to facilitate the funding of development and production of Israel's Lavi fighter plane.

The U.S. Congress demonstrated its support by exceeding the administration's aid request for Israel for fiscal 1984, which began in October 1983. Congress approved a total of $2.6 billion in military and economic assistance, consisting of $1.7 billion in military aid (half in grant form) and $910 million in grant economic aid. Congress also codified a 1982 congressional resolution expressing support for Israel at the United Nations. This took the form of a provision inserted into the state department authorization act requiring the United States to withhold payment or suspend participation if the UN expelled Israel or denied the Jewish state its right to participate in the general assembly or any other UN agency.

Despite the talk about American-Israeli cooperation, it soon became clear that the two countries were still far apart on some matters. Thus, in December the United States put pressure on Israel not to interfere with the evacuation of PLO chief Arafat and his beleaguered men from Tripoli. Moreover, when Arafat, whose ship was passing through the Suez Canal, was received by Egyptian president Mubarak, the Reagan administration called the meeting "an encouraging development," while Prime Minister Shamir denounced it. Shamir sent a cable to President Reagan asserting that the United States was making a grave mistake in thinking that the Mubarak-Arafat meeting would advance the peace process. On the contrary, Shamir argued, American support for an Egyptian-PLO rapprochement would only serve to dissuade moderate Palestinians from coming to the negotiating table. American Jewish leaders were also quick to criticize the Reagan administration on this score. Howard Friedman, president of the American Jewish Committee, asserted that Mubarak's "embrace of Arafat, while presumably intended to induce the PLO to join the peace process, puts the cart before the horse. Logic and human decency require that Arafat first unequivocally renounce terrorism and agree to peaceful coexistence with Israel." Friedman added that it was particularly distressing to have Mubarak give public support to the PLO leader, when, at the same time, Egypt refused to return its ambassador to Israel.

The Reagan administration's Middle East policy was certain to receive increasingly sharp scrutiny as the 1984 election year got under way. From his partisan vantage point, Walter Mondale argued that "we need a steady policy for peace in the Middle East, not an ad hoc policy resting on illusion. After three years under Ronald Reagan, the Middle East is much further away from peace, and our interests throughout the region have been jeopardized." Whether or not this negative judgment by the Democratic presidential contender was fully justified, it was clear that 1983 marked a time of at least temporary setback for the U.S. in the Middle East.

George E. Gruen