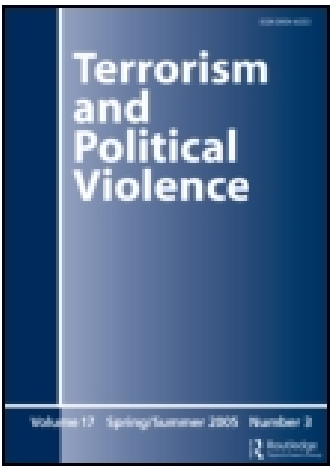

Terrorism and Political Violence

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Extremism and violence in Israeli democracy

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Extremism and Violence in Israeli Democracy

EHUD SPRINZAK

This article was written under the impact of the two most violent acts in Israeli recent memory, the February 1994 massacre of 29 praying Palestinians by Dr Baruch Goldstein in Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs, and the November 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The article explores the role of extremism and violence in Israeli politics since the 1948 foundation of the Jewish state, and tries to resolve the seeming contradiction between Israeli's success to establish the only viable democracy in the Middle East, and the unexpected rise of Jewish violence. Like other writers in this volume, I conclude that democracy does sometimes produce violence, and oddly that violence may on some occasion strengthen the foundations of civic politics and democracy.

The Middle East recently has been associated with a dramatic rise in religious radicalism and extremist fundamentalism. Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran; the assassination of President Sadat in Egypt and the ferocious fundamentalist effort to bring down the Mubarak regime by terrorism; the violent eruption of Shiite terrorism in Lebanon; the rise to power of Sunni fundamentalists in Sudan; the bloody struggle of Islamic radicals in Algeria; and, most recently, the dramatic rise of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorism among the Palestinians, have all contributed to the identification of the region with religious violence and fanatical terrorism.

For years, however, there was one exception to this turbulent image: the state of Israel. The Jewish state was perceived as an island of democracy, secularism, pragmatism and non-violence. But events of the late 1980s and early 1990s raised the question of whether, within its borders, Israel was in fact isolated from the atmosphere of political violence that prevailed in most of its neighbouring countries. Thousands of young yeshiva (Jewish orthodox seminary) students took

to the streets during this period to fight the establishment of a Mormon university in Jerusalem, to stop archaeological digs all over the country, to burn bus stations where 'obscene' commercial advertisements had been posted, and to stop the screening of movies on Friday nights in Jerusalem. Such incidents were somewhat reminiscent of fanatical street demonstrations in Tehran or Beirut. The vigilante violence of the young messianic settlers of Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful) in the West Bank, culminating in the 1980 assassination attempts on three West Bank Arab mayors and the 1983 terror attack on the Muslim college in Hebron, approximated the type of religious terrorism that has been highly visible in the Middle East. The 1984 election to Israel's Knesset of Rabbi Meir Kahane, a preacher and teacher of Jewish holy violence, was another indication of the changing character and direction of Israel's political culture.

During 1994 and 1995 the violence of Israel's religious right reached unprecedented heights. On 28 February 1994, a Jewish physician in the military reserve, Baruch Goldstein, broke into Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs, a shrine sacred for both Jews and Muslims, and sprayed the people praying there with live bullets. In less than three minutes, the doctor unloaded four magazines containing 111 bullets. Twenty-nine Muslims were killed instantly, and over 100 were wounded. A series of confrontations between protesting Palestinians and Israeli soldiers all over the West Bank and Gaza, which followed the massacre, ended up with an additional nine dead Palestinians and nearly 200 wounded.

All hopes for Israel's ability to insulate itself from the external violence practised between Jews and Arabs in the occupied territories were brutally shattered on 4 November 1995, in Tel Aviv's Kings of Israel Square. A huge peace rally in support of the government of Israel was concluded by the fatal shooting of Yitzhak Rabin, the ninth prime minister of the state of Israel. Rabin, who had just concluded the rally with a big hug of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and with a small chat with the organizers of the rally, was shot at the door of his armoured car. At 11:10 pm, he was officially pronounced dead.

The purpose of this article is to place the recent rise in Israeli extremism and violence in a broader political and cultural perspective. The question the article addresses is not just why and how a Jewish physician could become a political mass murderer and a Jewish law student the prime minister's killer, but what the political and cultural

conditions are within which a significant number of Israeli Jews, for years proud of their success to establish 'the only democracy in the Middle-East', have increasingly come to consider violence and assassination legitimate political means.

This article shares the conclusion of most contributors that the democratic process may, under certain circumstances, enhance violence. The article shows, however, that the major reason for the great intensification of extremism and violence in Israeli politics has not been an endemic flaw in the nation's democracy, but the unexpected and unplanned conquest of vast Arab territories in 1967. The Jewish 'return' to ancient Greater Land of Israel, with all its mystical, religious and messianic connotations, has forced upon the newly created democracy an enormous burden, a heavy load of primordial and undemocratic drives it could not properly handle. It led to the rise since 1967 of militant messianic religiosity which, given the intensification of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, was bound to produce extremism and violence regardless of Israel's restraining democratic mechanisms.

The article also shows, however, that in other areas of Israeli domestic conflict, potential violent consequences were anticipated by Israeli leaders, acted upon early on and contained. The article suggests, consequently, that democratic cultures, which reject violence in principle, are open to anti-violence learning processes which can reduce significantly the likelihood of bloodshed.

The background: *past Israeli extremism and violence*

Though largely peaceful and formally democratic, Israeli politics have never been devoid of extremism and violence. The intensity of the Zionist revolution – always focused more on Jewish national revival than on liberal-constitutional principles –, the non-democratic Eastern European origins of the early pioneers, and the critical issues involved in nation building before the establishment of the state produced over-heated ideological debates even among mainstream political parties. Three areas of conflict with intense potential of militancy and violence have either preceded the institutionalization of Israel's democracy or evolved in conjunction with this process:

- the conflict between ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews;
- the conflict between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews; and

- the conflict between the Israeli left and right over the borders of the state of Israel and its relations with the Arabs.

The oldest area of Israeli militancy involves the haredim, ultra-Orthodox Jews who live in Israel but reject the idea of the Zionist state on religious grounds. The most extreme Haredi factions have always been involved in occasional confrontations with the secular authorities over issues such as traffic on the Sabbath, sex shops, pathology doctors facilitating human organ transplants, archaeological digs in ancient Jewish cemeteries, and the commercial exhibition in public of so-called 'obscene' posters. Their intense denunciation of the Jewish state and its secular mores, however, has never led the haredim to practice extreme violence or take up arms against it. Never reaching the level of a national crisis, Haredi violence has mostly been expressed in street demonstrations, rock throwing and occasional physical clashes with the police.[1]

An area of significant tension in Israeli society since the 1950s has involved the relationships between Sephardim (Jews born in the Middle East and North Africa) and Ashkenazim (Jews of European origins). The Zionist venture in Palestine, started in 1882, was, until the establishment of the state, a project of ideologically motivated and highly educated Ashkenazim. But the vast majority of the immigrants who came to Israel after its 1948 independence neither originated in Europe nor were inspired by Zionism: they were penniless immigrants forced out of the Muslim world by the after-shocks of the 1948 war.

Poor, unskilled, devoid of Western education and Zionist background, and incapable of expressing themselves in Hebrew, the Sephardi immigrants had a rough absorption. In spite of their instant naturalization and formal admission to Israeli society, they experienced enormous difficulties in settling down, integrating into Israel's pioneering ethos and competing in the job market. The social tension born out of the Sephardi–Ashkenazi rift has been expressed since the 1950s in various militant ways. But it reached crisis proportion in two particular series of events: the 1959 Wadi Salib demonstrations and the 1971–72 Black Panthers' riots. Both series involved a high level of street violence, confrontation with the police and a large number of wounded people. However, the constructive response of Israel's establishment, which from 1971 recognized the existence of the problem, allocated significant resources to Sephardi communities and started to recruit young Sephardim to political leadership positions, had

greatly reduced the acuteness of the problem. Since the mid-1970s, Sephardi disenchantment has hardly been expressed in violence.[2]

The political conflict with the heaviest volume of militancy and violence in Israeli history was the ideological rift between the nation's secular right and left and the historical debate over the borders of the Jewish state. Starting in the mid-1920s, that conflict produced years of animosity, misunderstanding, intolerance and communication failures. From its inception, the Revisionist Movement of Vladimir Jabotinsky represented a challenge to the Labor Movement, the dominant force in Palestine's Zionist politics. At stake were deep policy disagreements over the relations with the British, the Mandatory power in control of Palestine, and strategies of Israeli nation building. Since both ideological camps had their roots originated in the non-democratic Eastern Europe of the early twentieth century and their leaders were deeply influenced by the extreme left and right of their countries of origins, the confrontation was hardly held in an atmosphere of civility and mutual recognition. Both movements believed themselves to own a monopoly on the truth and all but ignored the convictions of the other side.[3] The intensification of the conflict in Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs greatly radicalized the internal Zionist debate.

While focused on substantial issues of national borders, the formation of a new society and the desired structure of its government, the debate also involved the question of violence. Against the better judgement of the Zionist left (who believed in incremental social and political nation building), the right had increasingly been enchanted by violence, terrorism and a military liberation struggle. Indiscriminate Palestinian terrorism in the 1930s and an increasing pro-Palestinian British position led to the formation of the Irgun and Lehi, right-wing organizations that resorted to terrorism and guerrilla warfare against the Arabs and the British. Fighting leaders such as David Raziel, Abraham Stern, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir became right-wing heroes. Fighting a 'war of national liberation', they were responsible for the formation of a culture of violence which remained in the background of Israeli society long after the establishment of the state.[4] They also became the reason why the powerful Labor Party, under the aggressive leadership of David Ben Gurion, was increasingly eager to demonstrate, by force if needed, its uncontested hegemony over national politics.

The left–right confrontation in the critical years of the establishment of the state produced the bloody events surrounding the Altalena, an

arms ship brought over in 1948 by Menachem Begin's Irgun underground and sunk under the orders of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. The armed struggle between the army of the newly created state and the Irgun was the closest the nation ever came to civil war.[5] Another dramatic event of that era was the assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator in the 1948 war, by members of Lehi under the command of Yitzhak Shamir.[6]

The right–left conflict produced in the early 1950s two small anti-government undergrounds, which conspired to topple the Labor government and were responsible for a few sabotage acts.[7] It was also expressed in the 1952 aggressive assault on the Knesset, following a fierce debate over the Holocaust reparations from Germany.[8] Election campaigns were also marked by aggressive confrontations between the left and right, and by occasional violent exchanges.[9] The 1957 political assassination of Dr Israel Kastner, a leader of Hungarian Jews charged by the extreme right as a former collaborator with the Nazies, was also a product of the old rift.[10]

Right-wing violence in the 1950s was, however, a declining phenomenon. On the eve of 1967, Israeli politics were marked by a significant operative consensus, strong democratic and parliamentary politics and almost no violence.[11] It is highly likely that a natural continuation of the pre-1967 political process would have led the Jewish state into greater democratization, political stability and less political violence.

The Six-Day War and the birth of messianic politics

The Six-Day War transformed the map of Israeli political consciousness. The unexpectedly short war, which ended with the complete defeat of three Arab armies and the occupation of territories three times larger than the state of Israel, dramatically changed the nation's political landscape. Only a small fraction of this change involved an immediate extremist challenge to the government, but it was bound to have significant effects on the entire political system. The most meaningful feature of Israel's new agenda was the division of the nation into two nearly equal political and ideological camps, the maximalists and the minimalists. The maximalist camp organized itself around the ideas of the greater Land of Israel, the conviction that the Arabs were mentally incapable of making peace with Israel, and the

belief that security is solely a function of territory. The minimalist camp supported territorial compromise with the Arabs, strongly believed that the war created realistic chances for peace, and was convinced that peaceful settlement, not territories, would guarantee Israel's security.[12]

The major difference between the old and the new maximalists (i.e. members of the right), which challenged the pragmatism and minimalism of the ruling Labor government, was the prominent role of religious and messianic ideas in shaping the new-politics. While the traditional followers of the right were excited about the new Land of Israel maximalism, the radical leadership of the new camp was assumed by young orthodox Jews. Two Israeli religious elements had become particularly relevant to the emerging maximalist extremism: *Gush Emunim* (the Bloc of the Faithful) and Kach (Thus! followers of Rabbi Meir Kahane).

Gush Emunim, officially established in 1974, is an energetic and modern religious messianic movement. Unlike the haredim, Gush Emunim views Zionism positively and considers the state of Israel and its secular institutions as an essential, though nascent, stage in the process of Jewish redemption and the expected establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. The movement, which follows the ideo-theology of the Rabbis Kook, the father and the son, had slowly emerged as a unique orthodox school since the beginning of the 1950s, involving strict observance of *Halakha* (Orthodox Jewish law), open-mindedness toward modernity, and a desire to fully participate in the building of modern Israel. The school was boosted enormously by the 1967 Six-Day War. Convinced that the miraculous victory meant that God had finally decided to redeem the people of Israel, the founding fathers of Gush Emunim started the settlement movement in the West Bank and have become the political spearhead of the entire 130,000 large settler community. Though never organized as a political party, Gush Emunim has come to wield considerable political influence. The powerful Israeli right, which constitutes about 35–40 per cent of the nation's voters, considers Gush Emunim settlers great pioneers and Israeli patriots.[13] During the 1977–92 right-wing control of Israel's government, Gush Emunim settlements enjoyed full political support and received very generous state allocations.

Kach was established in 1971 by Rabbi Meir Kahane (later assassinated in New York in 1990), following the rabbi's immigration to Israel. It was the Israeli branch of Kahane's Jewish Defense League,

born in 1968 in the US as a Jewish self-defence organization. Theologically, Rabbi Kahane can be located between the haredim and Gush Emunim. While in his life he displayed a Haredi-like hostility to the secular leadership of Israel, because of their Gentile-like sinful behaviour, he, like Gush Emunim, recognized the hand of God in the creation of the state of Israel. Kahane was also thrilled by the Six-Day War and, like Gush Emunim, believed that the great victory signified the beginning of the messianic era. Since its establishment, however, Kach has been a negative organization mostly engaged in protest, conflict, and street hooliganism. Unlike the haredim, who created in Israel a large ultra-Orthodox subculture involving secluded communal life for hundreds of thousands of Jews, or Gush Emunim, which established in the occupied territories over 100 settlements, Kach was never engaged in any constructive project. The movement failed to establish even a single settlement and never recruited more than several hundred activists.[14]

Jewish messianism, democracy and the idea of violence

The original Gush Emunim theology did not call for violence. The movement's founding fathers truly believed in the aftermath of the 1967 victory that the Arab enemies of the state of Israel no longer posed a real threat. Gush leaders were consequently ready to allow a Palestinian presence in the occupied territories, and some of them even considered the Palestinian villages an essential part of this Biblical landscape, similar, perhaps, to Israeli Arabs who did not leave the country in 1948, and became full citizens. The Palestinians were expected, of course, to fully accept Jewish sovereignty and dominance over the entire biblical Land of Israel, but following the devastating Arab defeat, this did not seem a major problem.

Although committed to the theocratic vision of the Kingdom of Israel, Gush Emunim did also not challenge Israeli democracy. Full of optimism about the imminent coming of the Messiah, who would open everybody's eyes for the great light, the Gush concentrated on its educational mission of explaining the great meaning of redemption. Israeli democracy, which among other things produced the great victory, was not perceived as a menace. Fully certain of their exclusive understanding of the true meaning of the great days, Gush youngsters approached everybody within the political system with love and

compassion. It was, after all, just a short time before the great transformation and the democratic game was disturbing nobody.

Anti-Arab violence gradually crept into the Gush milieu following the growing friction between Jewish settlers and Palestinian villagers in the West Bank and the unexpected refusal of the Palestinians to recognize and respect the great Jewish redemption process. Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs, which in 1994 became the site of Goldstein's massacre, has always been the most explosive place because both Jews and Muslims struggled over prayer rights in the same shrine. Gush Emunim's anti-Arab violence has, thus, developed out of settler *vigilantism* and a feeling that the Israeli army was unable to provide them with full protection against Palestinian aggression. It has been legitimized by biblical concepts used to justify the Jewish conquest of Canaan.[15]

Gush Emunim's growing disappointment with the slow realization of the messianic process, as well as its intensifying militancy, had also brought it to a growing conflict with Israeli democracy. The young members of the movement were increasingly bitter about the government's refusal to allow free settlement in the occupied territories. The fact that the duly elected government of Israel had a full authority to decide settlement policy, including prohibiting settlement in densely populated Palestinian areas, was not acceptable to them. The issue, according to the movement's ideologues, was not legality but legitimacy. Admitting that government policies were legal and democratic, the movement launched a massive campaign of illicit settlement based on the argument that they were bound by a higher law, the law of Zionism and Judaism, which made settlement of Jewish areas superior to everything else.

The most extreme form of Gush Emunim violence erupted in the early 1980s. It involved an organized conspiracy to blow up Islam's Dome of the Rock on Jerusalem's Temple Mount and several terrorist attacks on Palestinian targets. The discovery of the Gush Emunim underground and the arrest and trial of its members dealt a major blow to the movement. Several of its revered rabbis were very critical of the terrorism of the group and warned their followers to never again consider it.[16] However, the 1987 outbreak of the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, and the inability of the Israeli army to provide the settlers with full protection against Arab attacks forced Gush adherents to resume their intense self-defence. Gush Emunim vigilante violence with a limited rabbinical approval became routine.

The Jewish rule of 'He who comes to kill you, you kill him first' was used as a justification.

Kach, though much smaller than Gush Emunim, has been, by far, the most violent of all Israeli religious schools and the most anti-democratic. The desirability of a physical struggle against the Gentiles had been a major Kahane *motif* since the 1968 establishment of the Jewish Defense League. Over the years, however, he developed this revenge instinct into a fully fledged philosophy of violence. According to Kahane, the essence of 2,000 years of Jewish exile is their persecution, vilification, humiliation and killing. Gentiles did this because they wanted to desecrate the name of the God of the Jews and to prove that He did not exist. The essence of Jewish revival and the establishment of the state of Israel is, according to this logic, to prove the might of God by reversing this history of humiliation, by fighting back, and by showing to the world that Jews can humiliate the Gentiles by the use of physical force. Rabbi Kahane never considered the use of violence as a necessary evil, a practice Jews must resort to for self-defence or because of the lack of a better alternative. Rather, Jewish violence was sanctified and glorified for its own sake. The new Kahane Jew was encouraged to resort to violence against the enemies of the people and to feel good about it. This glorification of violence, which was developed by Kahane before his immigration to Israel, reached its peak in his treatment of the Arabs. The Arabs, who had been determined, according to the rabbi, to wipe out the Jewish state, had been collectively depicted as a legitimate and desirable target for Jewish violence'.[17]

While he never instructed his followers to actually kill innocent Palestinians, Rabbi Kahane welcomed and praised every individual who committed such crimes. Several cases of non-Kach Israelis who conducted murderous anti-Arab revenge attacks are noteworthy. Once Kahane heard of such cases he immediately glorified the perpetrators as modern-day *Maccabees* (the Maccabees were ancient Jewish heroes). They were made honorary members of Kach and were offered financial support for their legal defence.[18] Baruch Goldstein may have gone through a personal crisis, that led him to cross the river between word and action, but he was educated and socialized into the idea of legitimate killing by years of intense Kahane teaching. A close disciple of Rabbi Kahane, he immigrated to Israel from the US in order to carry out Zionist pioneering in a Kahane spirit.[19] All indications suggest that

until his last moment, Goldstein believed he was glorifying the name of God in the way recommended by the late rabbi.

Early 1980s ultra-nationalism and violence and Kahane's election to the Knesset

Had Meir Kahane been a more balanced and moderate politician, he might well have been elected to the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in 1981, along with other radical right leaders. His analysis of the Arab situation was, from the angle of the radical right, realistic. His forecasts were correct. His solution of evicting the Arabs was far more consistent than the suggestions of many of his competitors. But the Kahane of the streets was an altogether different person from the analytic Kahane of the books – a bundle of unrestrained emotions, violent eruptions and an insatiable thirst for publicity. Apparently, those who might have voted for him needed, in addition to good analysis, a credible and legitimate communicator. The leader of Kach did not project this image in 1981, and most of his potential supporters voted for Menachem Begin. By 1984 the situation had changed a great deal. Begin was gone. Kahane was still an outsider, but the rhetoric of the Likud and the growing radicalism of the radical Tehiya party and Gush Emunim made many of his opinions and beliefs acceptable. Two events in particular, not of his creation, helped the spread of 'Kahanism' and played to the hands of its creator: the Likud electoral campaign of 1981, and the intense conflict between the government and Peace Now during the Lebanon War.

The Likud, Begin's party, entered the 1981 election campaign with a serious drawback. The ailing Menachem Begin had for months been hardly functional and his inner cabinet projected intense personal rivalries. Inflation skyrocketed and the polls indicated a large, almost unbridgeable gap between Labor and Likud. Likud leaders, who just four years earlier took over the government after 30 years of opposition, experienced enormous anxiety. The spectre of a premature return to the Knesset's backbenches loomed large in their minds.[20] Nervous and bitter, they were ready to do anything to stay in power. Against this background it was decided to replace Yigal Horowitz, the unpopular finance minister, with Yoram Aridor, soon to become popular by cutting sale taxes on imported goods and appliances. The fear of electoral collapse must have also been the reason for the miraculous recovery of Menachem Begin who not only returned to his 1978 vigorous self, but

appeared able to relive his bellicose 1950s. Begin radicalized his rhetoric against the Syrians and the PLO in Lebanon, would soon order the air attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor, and was uncharacteristically ready to confront the American administration.

The most significant dimension of Begin's comeback, which filled his old Herut comrades with great jubilation, was his vitriolic attack on the Labor party. Going almost 30 years back, Begin lashed out at Labor and its subsidiary Kibbutzim. But unlike his unrestrained campaign against the German reparations and David Ben-Gurion, conducted from a *total political isolation*, Begin was now the Prime Minister of Israel, a leader of stature and prestige. Stressing Labor corruption and paternalistic attitudes to the Sephardim (Jews of Middle Eastern or North African origins), mostly exemplified by the Kibbutzim's reluctance to share their wealth with the Sephardim of the development towns, Begin helped get the ethnic genie 'out of the bottle'. Likud's large Sephardi constituency was reminded repeatedly that the people responsible for the rough and paternalistic immigration absorption it experienced in the 1950s – the Ashkenazi (Jews born in Europe) Labor party – were trying to return to power in order to reinstate the same discriminatory policies.[21]

It is not clear whether the scrupulous Likud leader really wished the campaign to become violent, but this is exactly what happened. Incited Likud strongmen started to ravage Labor offices and physically attack its activists. They were particularly rude to Labor leader Shimon Peres, who in 1981 was the subject of an unprecedented character assassination. There were Likud hecklers everywhere Peres went, and he could only move in the countryside with dozens of bodyguards. The violence reached its peak when Likud operatives ransacked the Petah Tikva offices of the Labor party and pushed burning trash barrels to a Peres election meeting.[22]

The brutality of the 1981 campaign was exacerbated by two exceptional events that gained massive media coverage: the uncalculated attack on Likud activists by former chief of staff, Lieutenant General (res.) Mota Gur, and the slip of tongue by comedian Dudu Topaz. Trying to silence Likud hecklers at a Labor election rally, Mota Gur screamed, 'We f--ked the Arabs and will f--k you the same way'. Dudu Topaz told, on the contrary, a captive audience in a Labor stronghold that he was glad he was surrounded by real Israelis and not by Likud *chach-chahim* (vulgar, lower-class oriental Jews). Betraying a

supremacist and paternalistic attitude of the Ashkenazi elite toward the oriental 'newcomers', long suspected by the Sephardim of having remained under the Israeli rhetorical egalitarian veneer, the two incidents turned the elections into an ugly and physical Sephardi–Ashkenazi conflict. Labor charges of negative campaigning and election violence, mistakenly believed to be an advantage that would alienate the Israeli middle class, produced additional tension and violence. It may have been appealing to a number of Ashkenazi Jews, but simultaneously drove almost the entire Sephardi public to the bosom of the Likud. Menachem Begin, the indefatigable street fighter, never heard before the expression chach-chahim, but knew how to use it. In a huge Likud rally in Tel Aviv, on the eve of the elections, he asked the cheering crowd, 'have you heard what he called you?' and then, in his unmatched theatrical manner which nobody else has ever succeeded in duplicating, Begin reached into his pocket and slowly took out a slip of paper, '*Cha..ch.. cha.him.* Are you *chach-chahim*?' Begin asked the excited crowed. 'No!' was the loud and angry answer. Fully aware of the explosive effect of the moment, Begin ordered his enthusiastic supporters to instantly go home to their telephones, call all their relatives and friends, and tell them what the Labor party was thinking of them and what should they consequently do in the voting booths.[23]

Likud's marginal victory over Labor, 48 Knesset seats against 47, which made it possible for Menachem Begin to form a narrow coalition government, helped to add legitimacy to the use of electoral violence. None of their brutal activists were ever brought to trial and life went on with business as usual. Shortly after the formation of the government, the Israeli public was mesmerized by a television series which documented the elections. The award-winning series, produced by Chaim Yavin, the nation's Mr Television, showed the violence with great accuracy. Most viewers did not seem to care a great deal about the unsavoury scenes. They concluded, instead, that in the 1981 elections violence and rhetorical violence were the winning cards.

The post-1981 era was marked by a growing ideological rift between the Israeli right and left. Begin's new government greatly differed from the previous administration. The relatively pragmatic policy team of Menachem Begin, Yigal Yadin, Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizmann, responsible for the spirit of Camp David, was replaced by a very hawkish axis: Menachem Begin, Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir. Begin was still committed to the full implementation of peace with

Egypt, including the painful evacuation of Yamit and the neighbouring moshavim, but he was equally determined to kill the Autonomy Talks, aimed at producing a compromise in Judea and Samaria. His Camp David strategy had come now to full light, a return of the entire Sinai to the Egyptians in exchange for peace on the southern front and the facilitation of massive Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria. The November 1981 assassination of Egypt's President Sadat, the Iran–Iraq war and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union diverted regional and international attention from the occupied territories and created positive conditions for a massive Jewish drive into the West Bank.[24] No one was better suited for overseeing this venture than Ariel Sharon, Israel's new minister of defence.

The new government's policy resulted in a dramatic escalation of violence in the occupied territories. It also shook up Peace Now, hardly heard from since the signing of the Camp David Accords. Radical Palestinians recruited high school students for demonstrations and rock throwing. Lacking experience in dealing with rioting civilians, let alone high school students, the army used excessive force, leading to the killing of 16 young Palestinians in three months. In the end of November 1981, the IDF responded to rock and molotov cocktail throwing by blowing up three houses in Beit Sahur, a village adjacent to Bethlehem. Alarmed by the new situation, a group of Peace Now activists went out to Beit Sahur to protest the brutal measures. Unknowingly, they started a new chapter in the history of the movement. Since there was little doubt about the architect of the new policy, Peace Now started to talk about 'Arik's Spring'. It did not take long before the situation evolved into a bitter conflict between Peace Now and Ariel (Arik) Sharon.[25]

The confrontation between Israel's aggressive defence minister and the peace movement reached new heights during the Lebanon War. Sharon's desire to find a proper excuse for invading Lebanon, in order to deal the PLO mini-state there a crushing blow, was no secret. The only pending questions involved the conditions and justifications for the invasion. Already a year before the war, a rally of 3,000 Peace Now activists protested against staging military activity. The immediate fear in 1981 was that the excuse to go to war would be the Syrian anti-aircraft missile batteries stationed in Lebanon's Beka. The final countdown for the war started in April 1982 and only Begin's strong denials that war was imminent averted Peace Now demonstrations.[26]

The first anti-war protest took place a few weeks after the outbreak of the war, when Peace Now reservists on active duty received a few days' break. The 120,000 demonstrators in Tel Aviv made history: never before had any Israeli movement dared to protest a war involving most of the Israeli army. The Likud felt betrayed. Labor governments engaged in wars never faced such opposition and could always count on the automatic support of the opposing camp. But now, upon starting what he considered an unavoidable war against PLO terrorism, Menachem Begin, the biggest peace-maker in the history of the nation, could not count on the opposition's loyalty. Most activists of the right did not consider Peace Now anti-war activities either acceptable or legitimate. Praises to Peace Now by the besieged Yassir Arafat in Beirut further exacerbated the situation. In the eyes of the right, the peace activists were simply traitors, Israeli Quislings. Developing the theme of treason, supporters of the government maintained that Peace Now was engaged in 'stabbing the nation in the back'. While losing his battle with the IDF in Lebanon, Arafat was going to win the war in the streets of Tel Aviv, courtesy of Peace Now.[27]

While the Lebanon situation triggered the rise of extremist and ideological anti-war movements such as Yesh Gvul (There is a Limit), and Chayalim Neged Shtika (Soldiers Against Silence) – with almost no relation to the large but relatively moderate peace movement, Peace Now was increasingly singled out as the real 'enemy from within'. Leading activists of the movement started receiving telephone threats and hate letters. Accusations flew regarding the involvement of foreign interests, including secret Saudi financial support. Protesting the war had become a risky endeavour since aggressive supporters of Menachem Begin, Ariel Sharon and Meir Kahane began to resort to violence. The huge rally sponsored by Peace Now in September 1982, against the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, brought the conflict between the left and the right to unprecedented intensity: Nearly 400,000 Israelis protested the killing in Lebanon of several hundred Palestinian refugees and demanded that a state investigation committee study the Israeli involvement in the atrocity. The demand to investigate a massacre, clearly executed by the Christian militias, stunned the Israeli right. Most of their activists could not understand why a massacre of Muslim Arabs by Christian Arabs was of any concern to Jews. Why had so many Israelis attended the rally? Something was wrong with these 'self-hating' Jews.

A tragic day in the history of Israel was 10 February 1983. Emile Greentzweig, a Hebrew University graduate student, was killed in Jerusalem during a Peace Now demonstration demanding the resignation of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon. Found by the Kahan Commission partially responsible for the Sabra and Shatila massacre, by not taking pre-emptive measures against the predictable event, Ariel Sharon was expected to resign. His reluctance to do so and Prime Minister Begin's hesitation to fire him led Peace Now, already deeply involved in the anti-war struggle, to launch a large anti-Sharon rally. Just as they reached the prime minister's office in Jerusalem, the rally's leading column was broken up by a single hand grenade. The explosion that occurred four seconds later killed Greentzweig instantly and wounded a score of others. Greentzweig became Israel's first martyr for peace. Author Shulamit Har-even, a member of Peace Now, gave a graphic description of the march and the last moments before Greentzweig's murder.

> Already at the start, marching from Zion Square up Ben Yehuda Street, the demonstrators noticed that this was neither the ordinary clash of opinions nor the usual level of marginal violence. A group of violent people and strongmen had been waiting for the demonstrators even before they gathered; they repeatedly broke into the marchers' lines with a powerful and strong wedge. Screaming, yelling, beating, plenty of beating, crushing in. The police are not prepared for this kind of violence. Here and there you see a policeman struggling against a group of thugs. To my right I see a lovely policeman, looking more like a father of a large family on his way to pick up the kids from the matinee and bring them home. He is trying to stop the deluge with his body, but fails. – The march goes on. Non-stop beating. Spitting. Rocks. A burning cigarette is thrown at Amiram's face. Anat is hard hit. A thug later tries to extinguish a cigarette on Taliah Ziv's face, an artist from the Israel Museum. These are not the ordinary marginal hecklers; somebody must have organized them. – The marching people are holding themselves in check, they do not strike back. There is a strong feeling that the street is on the verge of civil war which must be stopped by all means. I see Yarom, and Zohar, and Alon, Emile, Amos and Shaul, all (reserve) paratroopers, holding tight each other's hands and staying put, a

thin row facing the violent intruders so that the demonstration may go on ...[28]

The unruly eruption of Sephardi–Ashkenazi animosities in the 1981 elections and its great intensification during the Lebanon War played to the hands of Rabbi Meir Kahane. The evolution of ultra-nationalist and ethnic violence was, in fact, more than what 'he bargained for'. While most of the people involved in the attacks – on Ashkenazi Laborites in 1981 or on Ashkenazi Peace Now activists in 1983 – were bitter Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon devotees, not Kahane's, they looked increasingly like classical Kahanists. Hating the PLO, pro-PLO Israeli Arabs and Israeli '*Ashafistim*' (PLO-ers) and their 'treason' during the Lebanon War, and still suffering from deep-seated ethnic anxieties, they came to consider street violence as legitimate behaviour. When two additional conditions were created in the Israeli public arena, the 1983 collapse of Menachem Begin and the apparent failure of the Lebanon War, a large number of these individuals were ready mentally for the aggressive rabbi. Thus in 1984, frustrated settlers, angry residents of developing towns, young soldiers and insecure people all over the country – 25,906 of them in all – joined forces to lift a 10-year-old ban from the head of Kach and install Meir Kahane safely in the Knesset.

'When prophecy fails': the crisis of militant messianism

A most intriguing aspect concerning religious messianism is its response to major theological crises, that is to setbacks in the evolution of the faithful that either contradict the imminent coming of the Messiah or are clearly opposed to God's will. The realities of the peace process have since 1992 created for Gush Emunim and Kach a devastating predicament. Both movements had believed since their establishment that redemption, which is currently imminent, could only take place within the biblical boundaries of the Land of Israel, which include the occupied territories. They also have come to believe that redemption is irreversible.

Trouble in the post-1967 messianic reading of modern Israeli history started as early as the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The expectation of linear progress toward redemption has been challenged occasionally by unforeseen political moves by the government and potential disconfirmations. The most dramatic of these came in 1918 when Israel's prime minister, Menachem Begin, returned the Sinai to the

Egyptians in exchange for full peace. Begin also made a commitment regarding future Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. There were plenty of explanatory excuses, however. Begin maintained, for example, that he returned the Sinai (a relatively unimportant southern region) in order to make peace with Israel's most dangerous enemy, thereby saving Judea and Samaria (which compose the West Bank), the heartland of the Land of Israel. The disconfirmation of the redemption process, implied in the Camp David accords, was further moderated by the intense efforts of all Likud governments to settle Jews in Judea and Samaria. The relative success of the settlement process was seen by many true believers as a reconfirmation of the 1967 messianic promise.

Conditions for the recent and most unequivocal disconfirmation of the hope for redemption were first created in 1992. Israel's Labor Party, committed to a large territorial compromise in the West Bank, won the national elections. This was followed by a government freeze on settlement in the occupied territories and completed by the 'shocking' Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The determination of an Israeli government to recognize the PLO, implement Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza, evacuate eventually most of the territories and facilitate the creation of a Palestinian entity constituted unquestionably the worst thing that could ever happen to Zionist messianism in Israel. Not only was it a complete falsification of the messianic predictions, but it also contradicted everything their movements had been telling their followers and the rest of the world for over two decades.

Students of religious extremism have long been interested in the response of messianic movements to undeniable disconfirmation of their predicted salvation. In his classic study, 'When Prophecy Fails', Leon Festinger argued that disconfirmation does not produce movement collapse but instead leads to reinvigorated activity, intensified proselytization and reinterpretation of salvation. Festinger showed that while isolated and weak messianic individuals become desperate and abandon their beliefs, messianic collectivities survive. Hyperactive religiosity and group support help members overcome the painful cognitive dissonance of discrimination.[29] Studying the relationships between messianism and terrorism, David C. Rapoport argued that a conviction regarding an imminent salvation and a danger of its disconfirmation may push true believers to undertake a catastrophic

terrorist endeavour. Out of their extraordinary messianic frenzy, they may either try, by suicide, to blackmail God into keeping His original salvation plan or prove to Him through such an act that His most dedicated servants do not deserve to be deserted.[30]

Following Festinger and Rapoport, it appears that three courses of potential action are theoretically available for messianic believers who face unequivocal disconfirmation: rejecting the belief and individually dropping out of the movement; finding a biblical excuse for the setback, accepting the inevitable, and slowly turning away from activism to passivism; or turning to hyper-religious activity, including terror and suicide. All three options have been observed recently in Israeli messianism, and all three are bound to have considerable consequences for the future of the nation and the peace process.

The February 1994 massacre in Hebron and the November 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin were, in my judgement, clear expressions of messianism in an acute crisis. They also signalled the potential movement of a number of messianic types to the violent option.

From the information held today about Baruch Goldstein, it is clear that, like other Kach's members, he suffered a severe crisis in the months before the Hebron massacre. Not only was the future of Judea and Samaria put in great doubt, but the neighbouring Palestinians became increasingly aggressive and violent. As the community's emergency physician, and the doctor responsible for first aid to Jewish victims of terrorism, Goldstein was exposed to the consequences of these circumstances more, perhaps, than anybody else. Several victims of the intensifying religious Palestinian terrorism died in his hands. There are a number of indications that Goldstein slowly came to the conclusion that unless stopped by a most dramatic act, an act that would shake the foundations of Earth and please God, the peace process could disconfirm the dream of redemption.[31]

Goldstein, it should also be remembered, was a personal student of Kahane and a very methodical individual. Like his rabbi, he believed that redemption was inevitable but that it could come in two ways, an easy and smooth one or a difficult and catastrophic one. In several of his essays, Rabbi Kahane wrote that the gates of heaven were opened wide in 1967 and that God was ready to redeem the people of Israel instantly. If only they followed the right path, returned to the faith and kicked the Arabs out of the Land of Israel, the Jews could walk straight into the Kingdom of Israel. If they did not, however, Kahane warned,

redemption would come the hard way, through trials and tribulations, bloodshed and enormous suffering.[32] There are numerous indications that following the 1990 assassination of the rabbi, whom Goldstein loved dearly, and the consecutive disasters after the 1992 elections, especially the Oslo accords, Goldstein started slowly to move into a desperate messianic defiance: he felt that only a catastrophic act of supreme Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of the name of God) could change, perhaps, the course of history and put it back on the messianic track. A responsible person who never was trigger happy, he had to carry out this exemplary mission.[33]

Unlike Baruch Goldstein, Yigal Amir, Rabin's assassin, was not a member of an organized messianic movement. But Amir was a product of the same cultural and theological milieu of Gush Emunim and Kach. He studied in the Gush Emunim-oriented Yeshivat Kerem De-Yavneh' and, as a student in Bar Ilan University, devoted much of his time to religious studies in the Kollel Institute of High Halakhic Learning. The Oslo accords, signed on 13 September 1993, galvanized Amir. Associating the agreement with a government treason of the first order, Amir became active within the settler milieu, with a special attachment to the Kach people. Goldstein's massacre in Hebron was perceived by Amir as an act of Kiddush Hashem and a model to follow.[34] Amir increasingly was struck by the fact that, in spite of his good intentions, Goldstein failed to create the catastrophe necessary to move God to stop the peace process. He had slowly reached the conclusion that the prime minister of Israel, not a score of innocent Palestinians, had to be killed for the peace process to stop.

It is doubtful that the disconfirmation of the messianic expectation alone would have been sufficient to drive true believers like Goldstein and Amir to commit their atrocious acts. Neither of the two had been identified as a pathological murderer and both were products of a long Jewish tradition of non-violence. The conditions for both atrocities were created by an additional element: the devastating impact of Palestinian terrorism.

Responding to the Oslo accords but especially to the unprecedented series of Hamas and Islamic Jihad suicide bombings inside Israel, which took the lives of 87 Israeli civilians, wounded 202, and traumatized the entire nation, several prominent rabbis from Judea and Samaria began in the winter of 1995 to explore the possibility of putting Rabin and Peres on trial according to *Din Rode* (the Halakhic ruling

about a pursuer) and *Din Moser* (the ruling about a Jew who surrenders Jews to Gentile authorities).[35]

A *Moser* and a *Rodef*, according to the Halakha (Orthodox Jewish Law), are among the worst kind of Jews. They betray the community through acts that may result in the loss of innocent Jewish life. A *Moser* is a Jew suspected of providing the Gentiles with information about Jews or of illegally giving them Jewish property. Since the Halakha refers to the Land of Israel as a sacred property of the Jewish people, Jews are obliged to kill the *Moser*. A *Rodef* is a person about to commit, or facilitate the commitment of, murder. The purpose of his immediate execution is to save innocent Jewish life. This rule does not apply to a killer caught after the murder, who has to go on trial. *Din Rodef* is the only case in which the *Halakha* allows a Jew to be killed without trial. While there is no indication that any rabbi or rabbinical court ever ruled that Yitzhak Rabin was *Rodef* or *Moser*, studying the two rulings had become increasingly popular in radical yeshivas and closed extremist circles. The rhetorical demonization of the government in right-wing demonstrations and the depersonalization of its leaders had gradually created the mental readiness among hot-headed yeshiva students to commit murder if and when a clear order was given.

Yigal Amir almost certainly had no specific rabbinical sanction to kill Rabin. The assassin told his investigators that he had discussed the issue of *Din Rodef* and *Din Moser* with several rabbis, with the intention of executing the prime minister, yet none of the rabbis was ready to give him a green light.[36] But this young and self-driven radical – who felt increasingly humiliated and betrayed by the government and by Rabin personally – found his way, nevertheless, through the ancient Jewish doctrine of zealotry. This doctrine maintains that under the most extreme circumstances and if disaster for the nation is evident, a God-loving Jew can kill the person responsible for the trouble without asking permission. The tradition goes back to Pinchas, son of Elazar, who killed, during the Exodus, another Jew. That person, Zimri, the son of Salue, was among many Israelites who made love in the desert to Midianite women publicly within the boundaries of the community, thereby violating a sacred space. In killing Zimri, Pinchas committed an unauthorized murder of a fellow Jew. Nevertheless, not only was his act forgiven by God, 'for he was zealous for my sake among them' (Numbers 25), but a plague that had already killed 20,000 Jews was instantly terminated by God. Pinchas' entire line of descendants were made priests of Israel.

Yigal Amir convinced himself that, in killing Rabin, he was acting in the best tradition of Jewish zealotry. In order to save the land and the nation, Rabin had to be assassinated. He was certain that this was God's will, which other believers recognized but were hesitant to carry out. Amir told his investigators that on at least two previous occasions, he was armed and ready to kill Rabin, but that on both occasions he had a 'sign from Heaven' not to act. On one such occasion, Rabin did not show up; on another, Rabin was heavily protected by security. On the night of 4 November 1995, Amir received the signal to go ahead. He easily negotiated the Kings of Israel VIP parking lot and waited patiently for 40 minutes. According to Amir's testimony, God made it clear that He wanted Rabin dead.[37]

Democracy and violence: some conclusions from the Israeli case

The complex relationships between democracy and violence cannot be exhausted by a single and unrepresentative case study such as Israeli society. The essays in this volume provide a rich sample of this complexity. This study seems to support several of the observations made by other writers in this volume, and to also highlight a few additional dimensions.

Democracy, competition and violence

It goes almost without saying that Israel's case lends support to Rapoport and Weinberg's general proposition that democracy and violence are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive.[38] It shows, in fact, that Israel's free electoral process has not led to the containment of violence, as might have been expected from classical democratic theory, and that in the 1950s as well as in the 1980s it elicited several waves of violence. This is especially true of Israel's post-1992 politics. In spite of the democratic fair play which brought Labor back to power, the Israeli right had resorted increasingly to militancy and violence in order to stop the Oslo accords, the election results notwithstanding. And the interplay between Israeli politics and violence was not, as shown by Adrian Guelke, a one-sided process. Following the intensification of Palestinian terrorism, the Israeli voters, though stunned by the Rabin assassination, switched loyalties and moved to the right. It is almost certain that without the cycle of Palestinian–Jewish terrorism in 1995 and 1996, the Likud and Mr Netanyahu would have never been elected.[39]

This article is, however, more specific in identifying the sources of strain and violence in Israel's democratic society, and provides additional examples to Anna Simons' discussion of divisible identities.[40] Examined through the prism of violence, Israel's case suggests that most democratic societies contain within their boundaries small or large sociocultural enclaves whose commitment to democratic values and procedures is partial at best. These identity enclaves, to use Simons' terms, usually include religious schools and cults, authoritarian social movements, chauvinist minority groups, racist collectivities and inherently deprived communities which have reason to believe that democracy is a fraud. While none of these is inherently violent, many members consider violence a legitimate avenue to protect their interests in case of a serious threat or significant decline in their sociocultural status. Dramatic changes in the status quo in almost any democracy are largely expected to trigger violence.

The contradiction between democracy at home and military: occupation abroad

Modern political thinkers from Spencer to Lasswell have argued that a democracy cannot face a constant stress from abroad without becoming a garrison state. From 1948 to 1967, Israel may have been an exception to that maxim, but not after 1967. The expectations of many Israelis that the 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Golan Heights and Sinai, and the formation of an undemocratic military government in the occupied territories, could be implemented without corrupting Israeli democracy and culture were unrealistic. While some violent tragedies of the last 30 years were avoidable, the rise of Jewish extremism and violence seems inevitable. Democracy at home and military government in a neighbouring area across the border simply do not square. There is no humane occupation.

Democracy, violence and anticipated conflict resolution

While this article focuses on the violence introduced to Israeli politics by several of the nation's less than democratic movements, the Israeli experiment with democracy may also be used to illustrate the ways in which prudent democratic leaders reduce the potential to violence through accommodation, sensitivity to religious minorities and anticipated conflict management. Given the dearth of Jewish experience with Western liberal democracy, featured by the Russian and Polish

non-democratic origins of the founding fathers of Israel, and the enormous military challenges too, the Jewish conflicts in the nation's relatively short history should be appreciated. There are, thus, serious reasons to support the proposition that Israel's public life could have been more violent in at least two areas of constant sociopolitical friction: the uneasy relationships between Orthodox and Secular Jews and the Sephardi–Ashkenazi conflict.

Having lost the 1996 election to a coalition of conservative right-wingers and Orthodox Jews, who have since imposed on the Jewish state significant clerical demands, Israeli liberals are increasingly critical of the nation's 'original sin'. They believe that if the founding fathers of Israel had the wisdom to follow the American example of separation of church and state at a time when Israeli secularism was predominant, all issues presently dividing Jews would not have existed. What many of these distinguished critics seem to miss is the counterfactual argument about what the consequences of this decision might have been. The prime minister, David Ben Gurion, agreed that all state institutions would observe religious dietary laws and that Halakhic law would prevail in personal matters such as marriage, divorce and burial. He also allowed separate state-supported religious schools and an annual exemption from military service of a select group of a lifetime yeshiva students. A later law offered Israeli women who wish to be exempt from military service on religious grounds the right to do so.[41] It appears to me that these momentous concessions, made out of generosity and not political blackmail, have reduced dramatically the potential for Israeli religious violence. They expressed great deference to Jewish tradition and a genuine interest in creating a workable consensus in the newly established state.

The government of Israel, as mentioned earlier, did not do a good job initially in absorpting Middle East and North African Sephardi Jews. The reality behind the Zionist rhetoric of the 'ingathering of the exiles', dominant in the 1950s, was gloomy. These weak populations, most of whom came penniless and devoid of Western education, were for years left behind to compete with the educated and skilled Israelis of European origins. This created in the 1960s and early 1970s an explosive situation and led to violent social protest. But despite the animosity and anger generated among Ashkenazim by the aggressive Sephardi rebellion, the Israeli political elite responded to the challenge quickly, decisively and positively. It took the government less than three

years to change its socio-economic priorities and allocate large sums of money to education and construction in Sephardi areas. Affirmative action in education became the order of the day. The political system, long monopolized by the Ashkenazim, had also opened up and started recruiting young Sephardi politicians. While neither Labor nor Likud governments have been sufficiently persistent in their efforts to close the 'ethnic gap', the whole Sephardi rebellion, with its great violent potential, had been defused.

The future of Israeli political violence

While the post-1967 intensification of Israeli political violence may be looked upon as an unanticipated and unchecked consequence of the occupation of Arab territories and people, our comparative analysis of Israeli political violence suggests that in other areas of potential conflict, violent consequences were anticipated, acted upon and contained. This is an important conclusion because it shows that although democratic processes may generate political violence, violence is neither inevitable nor necessary. Violence may, in fact, be contained through learning processes which focus, among other things, on national traumas created by unintended consequences. The Rabin assassination is a case in point.

There are plenty of indications that the Rabin assassination, the most extreme expression of Israeli political violence ever, traumatized not only the Israeli left, but also Israel's religious right. While the leading authorities of the Gush Emunim camp were stunned by the disconfirmation of their messianic dreams and considered Yitzhak Rabin a traitor, they were neither eager to see him dead nor attracted by a possible Jewish civil war. Interviews with a number of Gush rabbis known for their pre-assassination extremism suggest that while none of them pleaded guilty or took responsibility for Yigal Amir's cultural upbringing, the assassination created in them a deep sense of guilt: guilt for allowing their extremist followers to take over the rhetoric of the anti-government campaign; guilt for overreacting to the acts of the Rabin government; and guilt for allowing the free yeshiva discussions of *Din Rodef* and *Din Moser*.[42] The only people who have not expressed remorse over the assassination are followers of Rabbi Kahane, but the murder totally isolated them.[43]

The main consequence of the trauma over the Rabin assassination has been a conscious rabbinical effort to downplay the rhetoric of the

extreme right and to rule out political violence. The post-assassination struggle for Eretz Israel and the fulfilment of the messianic dreams has, thus, moved to the realm of hyperactive religious and political activity. This shift is supported strongly by Rapoport and Festinger's generalizations. While violence and terrorism are to be expected in situations of acute messianic crises, they are not the only alternatives. More likely is, in fact, hypernomic activity by the movement's authorities and an effort to resolve the contradictions of reality by new interpretations. The most popular among these are arguments about God's infinity and the inability of humans to fully understand His mysterious ways. This is what is presently heard in Israel, especially after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the favourable candidate of the religious right, committed himself to the Oslo Agreements.

At the time of the writing of this article (June 1998), while Israelis remain as divided as ever, domestic violence has diminished. The only condition capable of bringing back intense messianic violence in Israel is a significant evacuation of ancient Jewish territories in the West Bank together with dramatic intensification of Palestinian violence. Muslim terrorism had played a major role in the radicalization of extremist Jews, and will probably do so in the future. What remains to be seen is whether the movements involved will remember the lessons of the Rabin assassination and continue to control their members, or whether they will repeat the grave mistakes of the past.

NOTES

1. E. Sprinzak, *Brother against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press, 1999) ch.3.
2. Ibid., ch.4.
3. Ibid.
4. See reference to Menachem Begin's approach to violence in Victor T. Le Vine, this volume.
5. Shlomo Nakdimon, *Altalena* (Jerusalem: Efanim Publishers, 1978; in Hebrew).
6. Kathy Marton, *A Death in Jerusalem* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993).
7. Isser Harel, *Security and Democracy* (Tel Aviv: Edanim Press, 1989; in Hebrew) pp.179–96.
8. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1977; in Hebrew) Vol. II, pp.922–3.
9. No one yet has documented and measured the partisan violence exercised in Israel's early elections. But as a young school boy I still remember vividly the physical confrontations in Rehovot, my home town, between members of left-wing and right-wing youth movements. For a discussion of electoral violence see David C. Rapoport and Leonard Weinberg, this volume.
10. Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1991; in Hebrew) ch.5.
11. Ehud Sprinzak, 'Extreme Politics in Israel', *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 5 (1977) pp.35–7.

12. Rael Jean Issac, *Israel Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) chs.3–4; Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) ch.2.
13. Ehud Sprinzak, 'Gush Emunim: The Tip of the Iceberg', *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 21 (Fall 1981).
14. Ehud Sprinzak (note 12) ch.7.
15. Ibid., pp.87–93.
16. Ibid., pp.94–9.
17. Ehud Sprinzak, 'Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Kahane: The Ideologization of the Mimetic Desire', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3/3 (Autumn 1991).
18. Ibid., pp.54–9.
19. Ben Kaspit, *Ma'ariv*, 4 March 1994.
20. See Rapoport and Weinberg's discussion of the general issue (note 9).
21. Lan Greilshammer, 'The Likud', in Howard R. Penniman and Daniel J. Elazar (eds), *Israel at the Polls* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986) pp.89–91.
22. Ned Temko, *To Win Or Die* (New York: William Morrow, 1987) pp.257–8.
23. Ibid, p.258.
24. Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Project* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institution, 1984) pp.57–60.
25. Mordechai Bar-on, *Peace Now* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985; in Hebrew) p.50.
26. Ibid., p.54.
27. Ibid., pp.58–9.
28. Quoted in Bar-On (note 25) pp.62–3.
29. Leon Festinger, 'When Prophecy Fails', in Stanley Schachter and Michael Gazzaniga (eds), *Extending Psychologicla Frontiers: Selected Works of Leon Festinger* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989).
30. David C. Rapoport, 'Messianic Sanctions for Terror', *Comparative Politics* 20/2 (1988) pp.195–211.
31. *Report of the State Investigation Committee in the Matter of the 1994 Massacre in Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs*, p.76.
32. Meir Kahane, *Forty Years* (Miami: Institute of the Jewish Idea, 1983).
33. Note 31, pp.76–80.
34. *Report of the State Investigation Committee in the Matter of the Assassination of Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin* (1996) pp.88–9.
35. Rabbi Dov Lior, Rabbi Daniel Shilo and Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, 'What is the Rule about this Bad Government?', in Dana Arieli-Horowitz (ed.), *Religion and State in Israel, 1994–1995* (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Pluralism, 1996; in Hebrew) pp.120–23.
36. This information is included in the undisclosed and confidential part of Amir's investigation. The author was allowed to see the document under the condition that no specific references are made.
37. Ibid.
38. Rapoport and Weinberg (note 9).
39. Adrian Guelke, this volume.
40. Anna Simons, this volume.
41. For a recent discussion of the religious complexity of Israel, as well as the debates, see 'Israel at 50: After Zionism', *The Economist* (a special supplement), (25 April–1 May).
42. The author conducted interviews with several Gush Emunim rabbis in December 1995 and January 1996.
43. One accusation Kahane's followers made after the Rabin assassination had to do with the 1994 outlawing of Kach (following the Hebron Massacre). The argument was that Igal Amir, who was close to Kach, acted the way he did because of the lack of legitimate avenues of political participation and protest. The party's outlawing was, according to this proposition, highly counterproductive. The issue of outlawing anti-

democratic parties is discussed in John Finn's article, this volume. There is, in my opinion, not a shred of evidence to support Kach's interpretation. Amir, who never was a Kahane follower, had all the opportunities to protest and demonstrate against the Oslo accords without Kach, and he did. The legal existence of Kach would have made, in my opinion, no difference whatsoever in the events of 1994–95, and I am not familiar with any systemic damage caused by this particular proscription.