# Crossing the Rubicon: The Munich Syndrome and Forcing Israel to Peace, 1970-1978

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**Abstract:** The Munich Syndrome has been considered a constraint in the peace process decision-making of Israel. By raising questions such as what obstructs peacemaking in Israel, its costs, and whether it can force peace, the study employs the Munich analogy as a "historical lesson" method to examine why and how peace has turned into an anomaly in Israel. The Munich Agreement of 1938 by Britain and France, amid raging anti-Jewish violence in Europe, sought to appease Adolf Hitler by acquiescing to the German occupation of Czechoslovakia to prevent the world war outbreak, which, however, backfired and emerged as a metaphor for foreign policy decision-making weakness. This historical lesson has impacted Israeli society's and its leaders' attitudes towards peace, turning it into a Rubicon line. The study uses the 1970-1978 Arab-Israeli peace process as a case study to explain how the Munich Syndrome impedes peacemaking decisions and potential ways of overcoming it. It argues that a possible way to encourage Israel to make peace with its adversaries is with third parties providing significant concessions and guarantees.

**Keywords:** The Munich Syndrome, Rubicon, Israel, Arabs, Peace Decision, Guarantee

"The young generation of Israelis was growing up on the art of war; there were no heroes of Israeli diplomacy, no statesmen who stood as visionaries of long-term accommodation with the Arabs."

Patrick Tyler, Fortress Israel

## Introduction

Israel is one of the most powerful countries in the Middle East due to its technological, economic, and military power, notwithstanding its relatively small size. It achieved critical success in all the wars it fought in the region. Though this regional military supremacy was expected to provide the country significant flexibility in its foreign policy decision-making processes, the opposite is true as it acted the hardest and slowest during the peace process. Notwithstanding its military superiority, Israel's security concerns have remained unresolved, which forces its foreign policy decision-making elite to act slowly. While most of the Israelis desire peace with the Arabs to normalize Israel amongst the Arab nations,

however, the idea of making peace with the enemy/Arabs has become an anomaly/heteroclite. When any political leader attempts peacemaking or shows willingness towards it, there is a general perceptible fear about its outcome, both at the social level and among the leaders. This anxiety or fear causes Israel to turn the desired peace into an anomaly. Although the idea of peace is rhetorically powerful, it has become a Rubicon line for Israeli leaders and society.

One encounters questions such as what makes peacemaking so difficult[1] and an anomaly for Israel, its costs of crossing the Rubicon, and whether the state can force peace. Israel's approach to peace as an anomaly makes the price of crossing the Rubicon heavy like Julius Caesar's. The turmoil Julius Caesar created by crossing Italy's thin Rubicon River in 49 BC caused a protracted civil war that would end the Roman Republic and eventually caused him to die as a "traitor/enemy" of the people.[2] Likewise, a university student, Yigal Amir, killed the former Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, on November 4, 1995. A Jew killed a Jew for attempting peacemaking with Palestinians (Ephron, 2015, p.3). So, what did peace signify in Israel, or what was the historical lesson that peace evoked? Before his assassination, Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, in Washington in 1993, making the Palestinians partners in the "Promised Land." For Yigal Amir and his allies, crossing the Rubicon in this way represented the end of Israel and hence no harm in killing the king (prime minister). Israel's historical lesson on peace, the Munich Syndrome, revealed the consequences of peace with the enemy, and ignoring this to cross the Rubicon was likely to have similar and worse consequences.

Munich Syndrome is associated with the Holocaust and, as such, remains ingrained in the national cultural psyche of Israel. It paved the way for the Holocaust in 1938 when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed the historic "rotten" peace treaty with Adolf Hitler, giving Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland to Germany (Margalit, 2010; Record, 2017). This passive attitude of Chamberlain making compromises for peace resulted in the severest trauma of Jewish history, the Holocaust. If Chamberlain had not chosen to be a Herodian instead of a Zealot at the point of peace, the advantages of the Munich peace would not have been revealed to the enemy, and the Holocaust could have been averted ("Neville Chamberlain," Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2022). For Israel, this clear historical lesson causes leaders to carefully avoid displaying Chamberlain's passivity in foreign policy decision-making, especially concerning peace. In addition, the demographic distribution of Arabs causes criticism of settlers and far-right revisionist Israeli groups regarding bargaining over resources and land. The main stance of these groups on peace is that Chamberlain's passivity shown in the negotiations would cause another Holocaust. Rabin prepared to make a second agreement with Arafat

after the Oslo (1993) and Jordan (1994) agreements. In this context, the groups that Amir was affiliated with portrayed Rabin as a Nazi. Rabin, whose hands were bloodied on posters, was compared to Philippe Pétain, the leader of Vichy France, who collaborated with Nazi Germany (Ephron, 2015). Though Rabin's actions were a betrayal, making the Palestinians partners in the God-given lands was perceived as a reason enough to kill a king, as Ephron called it. Rabin's killing for crossing the Rubicon and ignoring Israel's historical lesson on peace is a prime example of how peace became an anomaly in Israel.

This study examines this limitation of the Israeli decision-making process in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations (1970-1978). Taking peace negotiations between 1970-1978 as foreign policy decisions, this study attempts to evaluate the Munich Syndrome as a constraint in Israeli foreign policy and place it conceptually in its foreign policy decision-making. The Munich Syndrome is both a constraint in Israeli foreign policy that affects leaders and an important pretext that prevents them from making the decisions they want to escape (Manipulation). Another reason why the Munich Syndrome may act as a constraining factor in Israel's decision-making process is the presence of a real threat to Israel (Trauma). The continuous danger the Arabs pose to Israel leads the Israeli decision-making elite to think about the Chamberlain and Holocaust connection during peace processes. However, this also gives good legitimacy to the opposition and groups inside or outside the cabinet as to why they oppose peace. This leads Israel to adopt a more active and uncompromising approach to peace rather than a passive one, thus placing the Munich analogy as a slowing and inhibiting (anti-diplomacy) factor in the decision-making process. The Munich Syndrome is exemplified by Israel's attitude towards the peace process during the 1970 Arab-Israeli peace talks, demonstrating all the different reactions associated with the syndrome. The study also reveals how Israel crossed the Rubicon by overcoming the syndrome through the Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1970s. In this context, the study maintains that Israel can only make peace with the enemy with the rewards and guarantees of a third party.

The Munich Syndrome significantly influenced Israel's foreign policy from 1980 to 2000, but the 1970s peace process is examined as it impacted various political factions. After 1980, there was a gradual shift as Labor, Revisionists, and Religious Zionists contended over Israeli identity, altering Labor's approach to peacemaking. Labor no longer viewed the world as uniformly hostile (Mousavi, 2015, p. 12, 311-312; Barnett, 1999, pp. 5-36; Siniver and Collins, 2015, pp. 215-231). The Munich syndrome also affected perceptions of Palestinians post-1980, but this period falls outside the study's scope.

## Method

The study focuses on the processes and dynamics influencing decision-making, namely prejudices, belief systems, emotions, and particularly historical analogy. It does not focus on the types of decision-making Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr. have determined to be effective in the decision-making types (one-shot, sequential, interactive, group) or the level of analysis (individual, group, coalition) and models (rational actor, cybernetic, bureaucratic policy, organizational, etc.) of decision-making in foreign policy. Israel's foreign policy decision-making process is a coalition-style decision-making process. Along with this, historical lessons/analogies that speed up or slow down the decision-making process in foreign policy are also important in understanding the process. Foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) refers to the choices made by individuals, groups, and coalitions that influence a nation's actions on the international stage. Understanding what influences the decision-making process is also important in understanding how the government will act in the following process (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, p.4). It is important to understand what pushes leaders to make vital decisions to understand the country's socio-politico-cultural structure. For example, Israel's reserved participation in the peace negotiations manifests that it prioritizes security over everything else (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, p.21).

As flagged above, Israel's coalition-style decision-making structure restricts leaders from taking unilateral decisions. Since people's perceptions and expectations in the coalition are usually high, it ought to consider popular feelings. For example, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert could not make land concessions towards Palestinians during his meeting with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the 2007 Annapolis Conference. His small coalition partners in the government (Kadima et al.) opposed any such concession, and crossing this Rubicon would have collapsed the coalition government. Shas Party's Eli Yishai and Israel Beytenu Party's Avigdor Liberman threatened to exit the coalition should the prime minister agree to any Palestinian concession on Jerusalem. This manifests that the coalition calculations and internal reactions contribute to limiting the decision-making powers of the Israeli prime ministers.

While multiple factors affect decision-making processes, the role of information processing, containment and cognitive biases in decision-making point towards a psychological approach to FPDM. The personality and beliefs of the leaders are essential in assessing how factors such as leadership style, emotions, images, cognitive consistency, and analogies affect foreign policy decision-making. Factors such as momentary consciousness, images of historical lessons, and belief systems affect the actor's decision-making. At the same time, analogies and learnings live in

the actor's mind for a long time. Some knowledge/memories have been learned and experienced before determining the actor's behavior. Analogies represent a powerful cognitive shortcut. When leaders experience events that require a decision, they tend to revert to past events that offered similar conditions, alternatives, and potential outcomes. As former US President Lyndon B. Johnson asserted, "When a president faces a decision involving war and peace, he draws back and thinks of the past and the future in the widest possible terms" (Rasmussen, 2003, p.499). Past events are called analogues. Analogies can provide useful shortcuts to learning about the environment and its counterpart. Learning from the past occurs when policymakers look to the past to deal with the present (Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, p.103; Shimko, 1994, pp.655-671).

The Cold War is the most suitable and used model for the historical lesson. The Munich Peace or Munich Syndrome largely dealt with its effect on US foreign policy at the beginning of the Cold War. As evident in the examples of Hitler and Nazi Germany, a passive policy against the aggressors, such as the Munich Peace, led to undesirable severe consequences. Therefore, the Munich analogy has evolved into a cognitive shortcut that informs leaders how to deal firmly with aggressors (May, 1973; Neustadt and May, 1986; Khong, 1992; Levy, 1994, pp.279-312; The Munich Analogy, largely associated with the Cold War, has been utilized to explain various events. For instance, it has been applied to cases such as the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1991 Gulf War, and the War on Terror (Nyyssönen and Humphreys, 2016; Connoly-Smith, 2009, pp.31-51: Spellman and Holyaok, 1992, pp.913-933; Record, 2005, pp.599-611). Acting on the cognitive shortcut of the Munich historical lesson on the strengthening of Soviet Russia and its spread in Eastern Europe, the USA found it appropriate to react instantly rather than with a passive policy and not repeat Chamberlain's mistakes of 1938 (Graebner and Burns, 2010, pp.5-10, 10-12, 67, 117-118, 335; Edwards, 2016). This model of political behavior, defined as the Munich Syndrome, represents a power-oriented policy that requires an immediate and double response to eliminate the danger.

The Munich Agreement is a negative analogy regarding its consequences for many countries. For this reason, the concern that the "new Munich" will knock on the door after every step taken toward peace has always existed. Munich analogies create doubts in the leaders' minds and hence act as a constraint in the decision-making processes. Thus, this historical analogy built on the Munich Peace became a historical lesson and turned into a cognitive shortcut. The recollection of events that created tragedies, such as the Holocaust, makes this analogy more powerful (Jervis, 1976, Chapter Six: How Decision Makers Learn from History, 217-287). The leader briefly formulates this over the fear of repeating historical events as event-lessons-future (Rasmussen, 2003, p.502). In peace processes, as indicated by

Nyyssönen and Humphreys, it creates a process that dangerously supports anti-diplomacy (Nyyssönen and Humphreys, 2016, p.186). Volkan explains this situation with the term of chosen trauma. In Volkan's own words: "When there is a present danger from "others," the current generation reactivates the group's chosen trauma to enhance the threatened group identity. This reactivation, in turn, becomes a stubborn resistance to peaceful activities for the resolution of ethnic or other large-group conflicts" (Volkan, 2001, p.79: Volkan, 2013, pp.210-246).

While the historical analogy of Munich was a factor that accelerated the Cold War decisions of the USA, it became a factor that slowed down the behavior of Israeli decision-makers on peace and turned into a historical lesson in the form of a syndrome. Just as Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Lyndon B. Johnson associated Munich with security policy within the framework of US foreign policy, Meir, Rabin, and Begin also directly associated Munich with security in Israel's peace negotiations with Arabs. The Munich analogy, based on the idea that peace, which Chamberlain referred to as the "peace of our time", became the war/tragedy of time, took on the Rubicon line identity as a factor that strengthens the determination of Israeli decision-makers to restrain from making any concessions in peace negotiations and hence a constraint in their decision-making. Every step and concession on peace was perceived as a factor that strengthened the enemy. It also supported the feeling that "passive" politics in peace with the enemy would create a new Munich. The Munich analogy for Israel, combined with the Holocaust, became a syndrome and constraining factor in its foreign policy decision-making processes.

## Israel and Peace: The Munich Syndrome as a Historical Lesson

> "For as long as I can remember, I remember fear. Existential fear. The Israel I grew up in -the Israel of the mid-1960-was energic, exuberant, and hopeful. But I always felt that beyond the well-to-do houses and upper-middle-class lawns of my hometown lay a dark ocean. One day, I dreaded that the dark ocean would rise and drown us all. A mythological tsunami would strike our shores and sweep my Israel away. It would become another Atlantis, lost in the depths of the sea" (Shavit, 2015, p.ix).

These words belong to Ari Shavit, one of Israel's leading journalists. Shavit manifests the feelings of all Israelis living with the spectra of the Holocaust. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, he, like other Israelis, worried whether "the walls of the third Jewish temple were shaking". Shavit's feelings were not misplaced, as the Jewish diaspora encountered multiple pogroms and massacres in their 2000 years

of history, topped by the mid-twentieth century European Holocaust, leaving close to seven million Jews dead (Segev, 1993).

Holocaust remains ingrained in Israel's sociocultural life. With the creation of Israel in British Mandate Palestine in 1948, while it was expected that this state would act as a protective shield against all these fears and worries, establishing it in a foreign but promised land pushed it to act with fear. These fears were exacerbated by the refusal of the Arab states to recognize Israel and identify it as a western crusade (Ajami, 1974, p.96; Ma'oz, 1988, pp.42-45, 83-89; Kissinger, 2011, p.555; Talas, 1997, p.663). With the securitization of this logic, foreign policy decision-makers started to act with a "never again" objective. This led David Ben-Gurion and Israeli elites steering foreign policy to constantly position Israel on security and a state of emergency. Ben-Gurion placed Israel in the friend-or-foe dichotomy throughout his long political life (Polat, 2020, p.371).

Behind this behavior of Ben-Gurion was the historical distrust of the Jews and their view of the Arabs rather than the Holocaust. For the Jewish elite, the primary objective was to ensure the survival of Israel. While focusing on the Jewish past and the struggle of Zionism in Palestine, power and masculinity were considered the most important tools for Israel's survival (Goldberg, 1991, pp.92-101; Ersoy, 2018, pp.73-100). This came from their historical European experiences, where Jews faced large-scale violence. By the end of the 19th century, power and violence had become a reality among the Zionists, especially among the youth/Sabra. When Theodor Herzl died in 1904, Ben-Gurion had written to a friend: "There will never be another man as wonderful as he who combined the heroism of the Maccabeans with the stratagems of David" (Shapira, 2014, p.10). On this logic, he changed his name when he immigrated to Palestine in 1906. As Shapira points out, he is now "no longer David Green, son of Avigdor, but David Ben-Gurion, scion of a leader of the Great Revolt against Rome" (Shapira, 2014, p.17). For Ben-Gurion, Jewish society had to be adorned with historical lessons such as Zealots and Masada, representing the warrior spirit of Jewish history. When he opposed Chamberlain's passive foreign policy in 1938 (Shapira, 2014, p.112) and Moshe Sharett's peace with Arabs in the 1950s (Sharett, 2019), it was because of his belief in power (Roberts, 1972, pp.40-53). At this point, the Holocaust was not a historical lesson to be remembered in Israel, as it was one of the greatest proofs of Jewish weakness (Piterberg, 2008). Peace and security could only be possible if Israel constantly showed its strong and warlike spirit against the Arabs (Shapira, 2014, p. 221).

## Remembering the Holocaust

The discussions around Holocaust were not mainstreamed in Israel until the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961. As such, the generation that grew up in this newly

established state was kept largely unaware of the historical wrong done to the community by the European Nazis. In 1960, Israeli agents captured and brought Adolf Eichmann, one of the main architects of the Holocaust, to Israel to stand trial. The trial, which opened on April 11, 1961, was televised and broadcast in Israel and internationally to highlight the Nazi crimes committed against the Nazi Jews in Europe. This event changed Israel's perception of itself as they were no longer victims; they had raised a powerful generation of people and had established an equally powerful state (Arendt, 1964). It was deemed necessary not to forget Jewish history's black chapters and take a firm, masculine, determined stance. Ben-Gurion used Holocaust to warn his society that the leviathan beast could awaken at any moment. This conflating of Arab threats with the Holocaust, placing fear on such a paranoid ground, led to an appetite for population, land, and armaments. Considering that it had to build itself on the binary of friend-or-foe and existence-extinction, it was natural that Israel, having won all its wars against Arabs, refused to implement the United Nations resolutions and ended negotiation processes (Polat, 2020, pp.386-391; Segev, 1993, pp.389-390).

While there was no great interest in remembering Holocaust until the 1967 war, its need emerged as the heroism and the achievements of the war erased the shame of the Holocaust (Finkelstein, 2003). At the same time, the "territories for peace" opportunity offered by the 1967 War determined how the Holocaust were to be remembered. After 1967, Israel's "liberation" of the Jewish "holy" lands under the "Arab occupation" caused great excitement on a national basis. The land of the "great Israel", which included Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, Golan, and Sinai, was in their hands, whose return was deemed unthinkable. However, after the war, many Israeli leaders, including Levi Eshkol, considered negotiating peace for the return of these lands. Though this did not fully resonate amongst Israeli leaders, it gradually turned into a Rubicon line over time. Amid Arab hostility, the isolation of Israel after the 1967 war triggered Holocaust fears among Israelis. This turned Holocaust memory into a functional instrument that could be exploited against Arabs and international powers to push Israel to make territorial concessions for peace (Wistrich, 1997, p.17). However, Israel's intransigence got checkmated during the 1973 War, which turned its fears into a reality and the holocaust instrument into a syndrome (Shapira, 2012, pp.299, 313-314, 361-363).

The 1973 War unleashed serious changes in Israeli society and politics. Within seven years of outright victory in the 1967 war, Israel found itself internationally isolated amidst dire economic circumstances (Ozacky-Lazar, 2018, Israel at 70, 18-24). The initial Arab victories in the October War damaged Jewish self-confidence and triggered fears of the imminent collapse of the Third Temple, bringing back Holocaust anxieties (Lipstick, 2017, pp.125-170; Elon, 1983, p.259). These losses

shook the nation's confidence raising concerns about its survivability for a long and questions over Prime Minister Golda Meir's leadership. While Israelis traditionally backed the prime minister for foreign policy and security decisions, the post-war consensus on foreign policy in Israel collapsed as there lacked consensus over what path to follow amid growing uncertainties. The decision-making process, largely closed to third-party intervention before the war, became susceptible to threats and reactions from third parties and groups (Browntein, 1977, pp.259-260). The most crucial problem the Israeli leadership encountered was the occupied lands that turned into the Rubicon line for the nation.

Although the October War reawakened Holocaust fears, the internal and international post-war pressures forced Israel to make concessions. The masculine Jewish identity that permeated the spirit of the Israeli state was weakened and forced concessions, and retreats were considered reminiscent of the diaspora experience. The leaders were quite hesitant about the request for concessions, especially peace, which was seen as a manifestation of the diaspora weakness that Israel found difficult to accept (Mousavi, 2015; Sprinzak, 1993). The Israeli leadership and its society recognized that any concession for peace would be followed by the next concession, which would render Jews to their former weak and insecure status. Despite the international pressures to make concessions, Israel's revisionist section favored maintaining an uncompromising position. Therefore, the 1970s peace negotiations were parallelled by strong opposition from the Kach movement, which called the "territories for peace" concessions "the new Holocaust", with its leader Rabbi Meir Kahane positioning himself as "the watchman of our times" to "never again" allow such deals (Kahane, 2012, p.5; Kahane, 2009). Amidst international pushes for making concessions for peace, it appears that the Israeli leadership never lost sight of the Munich analogy that was seen as a precursor to holocaust violence against the community, as it finds constant mentions by different leaders and political groups after the war (Sprinzak, 1993; Muminov, 2018, p.64; Netanyahu, 1993, p.282; Netanyahu, 1993; Elazar, 2022; Aslan-Levy, 2014). Israelis consistently identified Arabs with Nazis and Arab leaders (Nasser et al.) with Hitler (Ajami, 1974; Morris, 2001, p.308). As Col. Ehud Praver points out, the 1973 War "made us all realize that Israel was not the most secure place in the world" (Segev, 1993). This required being very sensitive about war, especially peace.

**1970-1973 Peace Process**

After the 1967 War, under the "territories for peace" framework, the Israelis had the opportunity to make peace by returning the occupied lands to the Arabs in exchange for their recognition of Israel. However, Golda Meir, who came to be

identified with "intransigentism," practiced the policy of military action and diplomatic inertia, a policy well supported by many political and civil society groups across the spectrum (Shlaim, 2014, pp.291-292).   The Israeli press compared the political behavior which could have resolved their problems with the Arabs peacefully pre-and post-1967 war with the Munich peace. This propaganda shaped a strong popular opinion against compromising and favoring war as the only solution.   For instance, Shimon Peres described the new 1967 borders as the wall protecting Israel from destruction.

On the other hand, Abba Eban described the pre-war borders as "Auschwitz borders," emphasizing that it was vital to avoid Chamberlain's mistake (Stav, 1997). Likewise, Levi Eshkol, while stressing that the Nazis were still alive, asserted that Eban's "Auschwitz borders" were protection from "the second Holocaust" (Morris, 2001, p.308).   This was reinforced by popular perceptions, as evidenced by 58% of Israelis believing in the danger of a second Holocaust (Muminov, 2018, pp.121-138; Segev, 1993, pp.396-399).   The memory of the Holocaust tragedy was afresh in most elderly generations, like Prime Minister Meir, whose all relatives were victims (Meir, 1977, p.3). These historic memories made it impossible for Meir to take Chamberlain's path to peacemaking (Meir, 1977, pp.128, 339).   Meir exposited in her diaries that she favored Churchill's "immediate and harsh response" over Chamberlain's "appeasement" for peace (Meir, 1977, p.381).   When looking at the attitudes of Meir and subsequent leaders towards peace processes, they continued the approach of Ben-Gurion in the 1950s, who described the negotiation efforts between Egypt and Israel by the US as Chamberlain's "appeasement" (Tyler, 2012, p.73).

This Israeli intransigence prompted Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser to launch the War of Attrition on March 8, 1969, to force Tel Aviv to return Egypt's Sinai, which brought the USA and the USSR head-to-head (Shlaim, 2014, p.291).   As the US proposed Rogers Plan to end this belligerence, Israel outrightly rejected it (Rabin, 1979, p.124).   Meir's administration called Nasser another Hitler who needed to be destroyed by shaking his Cairo throne than offering peace. Visiting Washington on September 25, 1969, Meir responded to President Nixon with "do unto others as they do unto you," despite all the peace negotiations (Quandt, 2005, p.66; Nixon, 1978, p.356).   The State Department, ostensibly unaffected by Meir's visit, continued pushing its plan to reach a common position on principles with the Soviet Union (FRUS/Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Vol. XII, d. 91, October 1, 1969, d. 93, October 20, 1969; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 66, November 11, 1969), which resulted in the announcement of the Rogers Plan, presented during the December 9, 1969 speech of the Secretary of State William Rogers (Nixon, 1978, p.357).   Despite communicating with Arab countries about

the Rogers Plan, Israel rejected it on December 22 and made deep attacks in Egypt due to Yitzhak Rabin's deception. This brought the Soviet Union into direct prominence in the War of Attrition to protect its Egyptian ally from Israeli attacks, something the American administration never desired (Primakov, 2009, pp.113-123; Tyler, 2009, p.116; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 96, March 10, 1970).

President Nixon delayed arms shipments to Tel Aviv to pressurize it. This decision created limited credibility for the Americans before the Arabs. Joseph Sisco was sent to Cairo between April 10-14, 1970, to convince Nasser that the United States was an honest broker. Nasser responded in his May Day speech, inviting Washington to launch a new political initiative (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 115, May 12, 1970). Sisco's visit proved a turning point for US Middle East diplomacy as a ceasefire agreement followed to end the War of Attrition within three months (Quandt, 2005, p.72). On June 19, 1970, the second American initiative, Rogers B, was announced. While Egypt (July 22) and Jordan (July 26) accepted this ceasefire, it was declared only after Israel's July 31 acceptance on August 7, 1970 (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 145, August 7, 1970).

The ceasefire provided by Roger B did not bring security to the region and Israeli borders. There must be peace that will disrupt the status quo in the region. However Israeli leaders feared the consequences of sustained peace negotiations. In fact, in 1971, Anwar Sadat presented a peace proposal resembling the 1974 and 1975 peace agreements with Egypt supported by the United States. However, Israel could not overcome the Munich syndrome. Waiting on the edge of the Rubicon and fearing to bear the burdens of peace gave birth to the 1973 War.

As the ceasefire neared its end on March 5, 1971, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat announced his peace plan on February 4, 1971 (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 203, February 1-7, 1971). Under this peace initiative (Sadat, 1979, pp.300-302), also known as the Canal Initiative, President Sadat offered to open the Suez Canal and move his troops to the east bank of the Canal if Israel withdrew to the Sinai passes extend the Roger Plan's three-month ceasefire by six months, and restart relations with the United States. Washington perceived this as the opportune situation to weaken the Soviet's Middle Eastern position, so Nixon and Rogers showed a willingness to back Egypt. However, Israelis considered the Canal initiative a retreat that compromised its security. Golda Meir described the ceasefire as dangerous and "equivalent to a renewal of war" and refused to negotiate "unrealistic clauses" on short notice. Meir asserted that Sadat's effort to open the Canal and move Egyptian forces to its eastern bank aimed at gaining a strategic advantage -like Hitler landing troops in the Czech Republic- (Israel's Foreign Policy, 1947-1974, Vol. I-II, Chapter XII, d. 29). While Secretary Rogers saw this as a great

opportunity to advance diplomatically, Israel's persistent demands for guarantees troubled Nixon's administration which saw Tel Aviv as an obstacle to peace (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 208, February 25, 1971, d. 209, February 26, 1971). Nevertheless, Washington evaluated the initiative as an important opportunity to break its position in the region and Israel's isolation. During his Cairo visit of May 4-5, 1971, Rogers was convinced that Egypt's effort to open the Canal to navigation could work, even if all these talks were futile (Ismael, 1987, pp.177-179).

After complaining to Rogers about paying for everything from the Soviets, President Sadat avowed he could drive out Soviet soldiers from Egypt within six months if his conditions of peace were accepted (Atabay, 2020, p.80). If accepted, this would have ended Washington's biggest Middle East problem of Soviet presence. Though Americans relayed Sadat's messages to Jerusalem, Israelis reverted negatively, limiting Rogers' position to settle matters. In his memo to Rogers afterwards, President Nixon stated that with Munich, Israel could not get over the 1957 syndrome (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 227, May 6, 1971; See 1957 Syndrome, Rabin, 1979, pp.203-205). Nixon gave Rogers full authority to press on a temporary settlement on the Canal and sent Joseph Sisco to Jerusalem to persuade Israel (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 243, July 16, 1971). However, Meir could not be won over during all the negotiations about an interim agreement with Egypt.

## 1974-1975 Peace Process

After the conclusion of the 1973 war, Arab-Israeli peace negotiations commenced again, this time under Henry Kissinger. A section of Israelis dissatisfied with Kissinger's peace effort started calling out to the ghosts of the past: "Chamberlain's 'peace' brought the holocaust; What will Kissinger's 'peace' bring? (Ajami, 1974, p.96) … Jew boy, go home…Hitler spared you so you could finish the job" (Kissinger, 1999, pp.302-303). While convincing Arab countries, seen as radical and intransigent for years, to achieve peace was not difficult, the real challenge lay in pursuing Israelis whom Kissinger believed would be willing to consider peace under the shadow of shock Arab victories at the outset of the war. The Nixon American administration was convinced that Anwar Sadat-led Egypt was ready for peace (Kissinger, 2011, p.155; Nixon, 1978), as demonstrated by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi's attitude during his meeting with Nixon and Kissinger in Washington on October 28, 1973 (Fahmi, 1985, pp.73-76). However, Golda Meir, who also visited the US on October 31, 1973, reiterated Israeli unwillingness to join the peace process. The war had punctured Israel's seven-year security bubble by breaking its notions of invincible regional military supremacy and burdening it with a weakness of US dependence. The war-shocked Meir feared that giving

concessions would be tantamount to breaking the 'Third Temple' walls. Israel, which faced largescale losses, may have been tactically successful but suffered a strategic loss. The country was dragged to a dead end with a divided people inside and an uncompromising attitude in the negotiations. It appeared like Israeli diplomacy and achievements since 1948 would turn into ashes. Despite these circumstances, Prime Minister Meir resisted sending even simple food supplies to Egypt's besieged Third Army, which was the starting point for the talks. Meir's biographer has pointed out that the Holocaust memory was a constant reminder and a guiding force to her behavior during the process (Medzini, 2017, Chapters 18 and 19: I Will Never Forgive Myself, 1973 and Salvage, 1973-1974). Even American administrators identified Jewish historical events like Munich and the Holocaust as one of the primary reasons for Israel's behavior towards peace (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 23, February 8, 1974).

After Fahmi and Meir's Washington visits, Kissinger commenced his first Middle East visit on November 5, 1973, in what came to be known as shuttle diplomacy (Kissinger, 2011, p.450; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXV, d. 305, November 1, 1973). The Israel-Egypt intense negotiations resulted in their signing of the Kilometer 101 Six-Point Agreement, under which Israeli forces withdrew to the borders on October 22 with the besieged Egyptian Third Army released. Kissinger maintained that the military deployment around the Suez Canal was made on President Sadat's initiative than concessions by Israel, perhaps to shield Prime Minister Meir from any public backlash (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXV, d. 324; Kissinger, 2011, pp.465, 590; Sadat, 1978, p.389; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 4, January 13, 1974; Fahmi, 1985, p.117). Interestingly, notwithstanding the internal opposition, Anwar Sadat agreed to the agreement without getting caught in the details and made generous concessions to ensure peace. Kissinger explicitly asserted that the most challenging issue was persuading Israelis. While the two sides agreed to the contents of the first Egyptian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement during Kissinger's Jerusalem visit on January 16, 1974, it was signed on January 18, 1974, at Kilometer 101, Egypt. Considering the attitudes of Meir and Sadat towards peace, it can be safely argued that Sadat's concessions kept Israel at the negotiating table. While Kissinger presented Sadat with Golda Meir's letter in Aswan on January 18, 1974, the Egyptian president underlined and assured to cease the hostilities by asserting, "I am today taking off my military uniform-I never expect to wear it again except for ceremonial occasions. Tell her (Golda) that is the answer to her letter" (Kissinger, 2011, p.602).

Disengagement Agreement aside, Israel's refusal to return to 1967 territories and negotiate on Palestinian rights only aggravated the situation. The war was likely to continue without a comprehensive deal or an agreement addressing Egypt's

concerns (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 95, August 12, 1974; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 99, September 10, 1974). This was compounded by the willingness of energy-rich Arab states like Saudi Arabia to create an oil crisis. For the Americans and Kissinger, Egyptians were the only ones in this anarchic environment to engage with and avert renewed war threats (Kissinger, 1999, pp.233-241). In his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon on August 1, 1974, Kissinger asserted that an agreement to return to the 1967 borders with Egypt was possible (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 94, August 1, 1974; Kissinger, 1999, p.442). The main areas of contestation between Israel and Egypt included the Gidi and Milta passes in Sinai, Sharm el-Sheikh and Sinai oils.

Although Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon were not ready for negotiations, President Gerald Ford's administration relaunched Middle East diplomacy in 1974. As Allon visited Washington on January 8, 1974, and presented Israeli conditions for restarting negotiations, Kissinger followed with his shuttle diplomacy in February to impress on President Sadat the benefits of moderation. The initiative failed because of Israel's renewed intransigence (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 130, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 150, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 161, 164, February 7-March 22, 1975), angering Ford and Kissinger, as they had risked endangering US-Soviet Détente and consequently deteriorating US-Israel relations. The American administration was concerned with Israel's continued intransigence, the fear of passing the Rubicon on peace, and the possibility of restarting the war and pushing Sadat to the Soviets. Despite this, Washington was determined to launch a new initiative for regional peace. Under this, as Ford toured Europe in 1975, Sadat was invited to Salzburg on June 1-2, and Rabin was invited on June 11-12. Kissinger followed with his shuttle diplomacy starting on August 21, 1975, shuttling between Egypt and Israel seven times and two times to Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. It resulted in the Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (Sinai II), signed in Geneva on September 4, 1975. However, peace was only possible after the United States made significant commitments to Israel (Rabin, 1979, pp.212-215).

## Forcing Israel to Peace

It was complicated for the Israelis to cross the Rubicon and overcome the Munich Syndrome, having described the 1967 borders as "Auschwitz borders" necessary to survive the "second Holocaust". This forced Henry Kissinger to exclaim that Israelis had a paranoid and incomplete picture of the real enemy. However, the memory of the persistent Jewish persecution throughout history reinforced Israel's sense of insecurity, be it the perpetual siege, from slavery in Egypt to the Chmielnicki massacre, to the pogroms of 1881, 1903, and 1905 in Russia, and the European

Holocaust. This made Israelis perpetually hesitant to believe that historical injustices toward the community would not repeat, strengthening Jewish national consciousness and forming an inextricable link with their existence as a people (Wistrich, 1997, p.18). While it raised questions of how Israel could be inspired to negotiate peace under these conditions, Kissinger reflected on why was overcoming the syndrome of mistrust among Israelis a difficult task: The Israeli government's focus on the Israeli reaction to peace initiatives often overshadowed broader considerations. Israel's historical context, with its precarious survival amidst a sea of potential enemies, shapes its leaders' cautious approach to diplomacy. They prioritize survival over grand gestures and are wary of appearing weak. Even when accepting peace proposals, Israeli leaders resist initially to assert strength and discourage further concessions. Israel's complex political system, characterized by coalition governments, hampers rapid decision-making and flexible diplomacy. Leaders may defer difficult choices to their ally, the United States, using "American pressure" as an excuse for necessary actions (Kissinger, 1979, pp.692-693).

Kissinger further revealed to Nixon that "Israel, with her survival at stake, cannot afford to take chances", but the American assurances on arms, borders, economics, and diplomacy could prove a worthwhile motivating factor (Kissinger, 1979, p.197). It is evidenced by Kissinger's conversation with Malcolm Toon, US Ambassador in Tel Aviv, on August 21, 1975, two weeks before the conclusion of the Sinai Agreement (signed September 4, 1975), which goes as:

> "Kissinger: What is the situation here now?
>
> Toon: Not good. The public is upset, and the press is very nasty. Rabin thinks he can do it.
>
> Kissinger: You think I doubt he can?
>
> Toon: If you are prepared to pay the price.
>
> Kissinger: What price?
>
> Toon: Aid, political commitments you might not be prepared to give" (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 216, August 21, 1975).

Between 1948 and 2000, twenty Arab-Israeli peace initiatives were undertaken, of which only the 1974-1975 and 1978 Camp David Accords were completed because of American influence. Before the Six-Day War of 1967, the two sides disagreed on peace mutually; however, after the war, it was the Israeli reluctance and refusal to give peace a chance like the Egyptians (Maoz, 2009, pp.389-390). Closely observation the completed peace initiatives reveals the role of third-party influence and pressure. For example, the Rogers B ceasefire of August 7, 1970, was

completed because of the US Government's assurances. Israel insisted it should be neither pressurized to accept the Arab definition of UNSC Resolution 242 nor compelled to accept any refugee settlement that would threaten its Jewish character and jeopardize security. It further maintained that no military withdrawal from the occupied territories should be sought pending a binding contractual agreement to its satisfaction. The Americans not only acquiesced to these conditions, but the Nixon administration additionally promised arms supplies to Israel (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 136, July 23, 1970). Golda Meir additionally sought Shrike missiles, Phantom jets, and the US commitment to veto anti-Israel resolutions at the UN (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXIII, d. 140, August 4, 1970).

The Kilometer 101 Six-Point Agreement, signed on January 18, 1974, thawed Egypt-Israel belligerence following the October War. It stipulated that Israel should withdraw some of the occupied territories on the west bank of the Suez Canal. The 30-km wide zone on the canal's east side was divided into three buffer zones. While Egypt was allowed to maintain thirty tanks, thirty-six artillery guns, 7000 soldiers and a bridgehead section over the canal region, Israel would match with equal force and ammunition in the eastern zone extending to the Sinai passes. The middle belt was a buffer zone under the control of the UN Emergency Force (Shlaim, 2014, p.327; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 8, January 16, 1974; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 11, January 17, 1974). Again, the US Government's commitments and doles convinced Israel to agree to the deal. Washington assured Israelis about opening the Suez Canal and the freedom of navigation, the security of military separation and buffer zones, and their access to the Gulf of Aqaba and Bab al-Mandeb straits. The US further committed to providing military equipment, and joint military action should Egyptians violate the ceasefire (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 14, January 18, 1974). President Sadat also assured to stay away from any military misadventure to avoid disturbing the power asymmetry should Syria attack Israel (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 230, September 1, 1975; Kissinger, 1999, pp.291-302; Fahmi, 1985, pp.242-252; Quandt, 2005, pp.155-170).

Like the Kilometer 101 military disengagement agreement, the Sinai II Agreement was signed on September 4, 1975. What was prominent was the role of the US in both the agreement and Israel. Under the deal, Tel Aviv renounced the Abu Rudies oil field and agreed to withdraw from the Sinai passes. Further, while retaining control over the hills at the eastern end of the Gidi Pass, it had to vacate the high-tech early warning point at Um Hashiba. The two sides also agreed to exclude military options for solving mutual issues. Interestingly, Yitzhak Rabin preconditioned Israel's participation in the negotiations to Washington's oversight, prompting the United States to provide significant assurances and support to the

country for signing the Sinai Agreement. Resultantly, Washington approved Israeli demands for F-16 fighter jets and Pershing missiles with conventional warheads worth $4 billion over three years and increased its aid by 200 per cent (Shlaim, 2014, pp.343-346; Rabin, 1979, pp.198-215; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 226, September 1, 1975; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 233; FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 234). The US also committed to non-recognition of and non-negotiation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) until the group accepted UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 and to consult the Israeli government before any new peace initiative was announced. Additionally, the US administration asked Tel Aviv to hold onto the Syrian Golan Heights because of its "great weight" in Israeli security. It relegated the importance of the PLO and the Golan Heights in American diplomacy, with Israel subjecting these to boycott (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVI, d. 227, September 1, 1975).

The US efforts to force Israel to the peace negotiations table continued at Camp David. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin proved the most difficult person to be persuaded for peace. Begin, a zealous revisionist Zionist had encountered fierce anti-Semitism in Poland during his youth, especially the memories of the Siberian camp in the 1940s and the Holocaust. Those experiences convinced Begin that the Jewish state could only survive by clinging to power and avoiding the passivity of the diaspora (Vance, 1983; Shapira, 2012, pp.360-364). As the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited Jerusalem with the message of peace, with great personal risks, creating great excitement in Israel, it also reminded ever-distrustful Israelis of Chamberlain's peace and the Holocaust (Segev, 1993, pp.398-399). On January 17, 1978, as pre-decided in Ismailia, the Israeli and Egyptian sides gathered in Jerusalem to commence peace negotiations. Prime Minister Begin's assertions at the dialogue dinner in honor of the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Kamil manifested why Israel could not afford to cross the Rubicon yet. Begin asserted, "The foreign minister of Egypt was still very young when the Holocaust was inflicted on the Jews by the Nazis, so he does not realize how badly they needed the return to the safety of their historical home" and more than "No to withdrawal to the 1967 lines, no to self-determination for the terrorists" (Shlaim, 2014, p.376; Haikal, 1991, p.270; Dayan, 1981). This spoiled the dialogue atmosphere, with President Sadat asking the Egyptian delegation to return to Cairo. This attitude of Israel has destroyed Sadat's trust in the process of progress with Israel alone. While for Begin, Israel had to choose between land or peace, Sadat insisted there was neither a war nor Egypt desired one. This appeared as a ploy by Begin, with Sadat understanding that Israel would not make any concessions anywhere except Sinai, forcing the Egyptian president to look up to the US again, failing which he threatened to leave the negotiations (Perlmutter, 1979, p.172).

During his Washington visit on February 3, 1978, President Sadat sought President Jimmy Carter's direct intervention (FRUS, 1977-1978, Vol. VIII, d. 211, February 4, 1978). Brzezinski emphasizes the crucial role of the United States in advancing the peace process between Egypt and Israel, as neither side could make significant progress independently, underscoring the necessity of American mediation for achieving a constructive resolution. (Brzezinski, 1983, p.122; Thrall, 2017, p.4 and look first chapter Forcing Compromise).

When the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, failed to negotiate between Egyptian Foreign Minister Ibrahim Kamil and his Israeli counterpart Moshe Dayan at Leeds Castle, England, President Carter asked Vance to convene the leaders at Camp David (Vance, 1983, p.202; FRUS, 1977-1980, Vol. VIII, 283-284, August 3, 1978). Consequently, the Camp David summit was convened during September 5-17, 1978 (FRUS, 1977-1980, Vol. IX, d. 54-57, September 17, 1978), where Menachem Begin remained intractable to any land for peace exchange. As much as Carter threatened to Begin that this uncompromising attitude could cause a severe break in US-Israel relations, he offered multiple assurances to win over the Israeli leadership, which resulted in the conclusion of the Camp David Accords on September 17, 1978. As part of the incentives, Israel was guaranteed oil resources for the next fifteen years, military support in case of agreement violations, and permanent pledges to support Israel's military and economic needs (Shlaim, 2014, pp.386-393). Although President Carter denied providing Israel with such inducements, it led to the conjectures that Americans had bought the peace agreement for 10-20 billion dollars. In three years, the US provided four billion dollars' worth of aid to both countries. In 1971, annual US aid to Israel was approximately $1.4 billion, which jumped to $3 billion after the deal (Carter, 2010, p.307). Brzezinski even claimed that the US taxpayers covered 20% of Israel's defense (Brzezinski, 1983, p.236). After the 1967 War, the share of Israeli defense expenditures in GNP increased from 7.9 percent to 20.6 percent in 1972 and 27 percent after 1973. This created a tremendous security weakness for Israel, which had increased its territory more than twice with the war. Their military establishments and cadres constantly expanded, which greatly strained its economy. These Camp David Agreements were expected to reduce Israel's military burden with the help of American commitments (McPeak, 1976, pp.426-443).

After the agreement, the relationship between the US and Israel was elevated to a remarkable alliance. The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1981, granting Israel a key role in the US Middle East policy (Schoenvaum, 1993; FRUS, 1977-1980, Vol. IX, d. 232). Despite the largely successful agreements with Egypt, the comprehensive arrangements promised by President Carter, particularly regarding Palestinian autonomy, were quietly overlooked amid strong

Israeli opposition. Likewise, Washington was not ready to commit to Begin's assurances to cross the Rubicon line (Rabin, 1979, pp.260-261). For example, in Egypt's case, Israel's crossing over the Rubicon line came at a significant cost. Because while advancing for peace by overlooking opposition from the coalition partners could effect a change in government (Likud victory 1977), it could also drag the country into greater misadventures and chaos to erase a concession (1982 Lebanon invasion), or a king could be perished (1995 Rabin Assassination).

## Conclusion

The direct link between peace and security in Israel made peace seem abnormal due to security concerns and historical influences, notably the Munich Syndrome. This study reveals how the Munich Syndrome affected Israeli society and leadership, particularly from 1967 to 1973. Historical lessons, such as Chamberlain's Munich Peace and the Holocaust memory, negatively impacted decision-making. This historical analogy clashed with the Zionist aspiration to move past the diaspora past. The Munich Syndrome provided leaders with shortcuts, serving as an excuse for evading decisions, especially in coalition-style governance. Israeli leaders preferred Churchill's assertiveness over Chamberlain's appeasement approach, ingraining this analogy in Israeli peace memories. During the Arab-Israeli peace process in the 1970s, only substantial guarantees from the United States could convince Israeli leaders to pursue peace. Examining the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians from 1980 to 2000, when the Munich Syndrome's effects were more pronounced, would provide valuable insights.

### Notes

[1] The question of why peace can't be achieved has been explored extensively, notably in Patrick Tyler's "Fortress Israel", which attributes the issue to the influence of military elites on decision-making (Tyler, 2012). This study aims to assess the impact of historical analogies on Israeli decision-making, building upon Tyler's insights. Valerie Rosoux and Jeffrey A. Lefebvre offer a broader perspective, analyzing historical analogies in Israel-Palestine and Franco-Algerian negotiations (Rosoux, 2019: 493-522; Lefebvre, 1994: 85-101). Israeli foreign policy often employs analogies, particularly in Israel-Palestine and Iran relations (Ağdemir, 2016: 59-83; Nili, 37-56; Turner, 2019: 489-513). This study focuses on the Munich analogy's role in anti-diplomacy within peace processes, examining Israel's strategies to overcome its constraints.

[2] The phrase "crossing the Rubicon" symbolizes irreversible decisions or situations, originating from Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon River in 49 BC, initiating a civil war. It signifies the start of conflict, crisis, or irreversible events, representing a point of no return where deliberation ends, and action begins. (Redonet 2017; Johnson and Tierney, 2011: 7-40).

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