Alignment by Coincidence: Israel, the United States, and the Partition of Jerusalem, 1949-1953

The city of Jerusalem evokes powerful feelings and provokes stormy political debate. For Jews, the capital of ancient Israel remained a religious and cultural beacon for centuries and, after the state of Israel was created in 1948, control of the city became one of its most important goals. 'Paratroopers! Conquerors of Jerusalem!', Lieutnant General Mordechai Gur addressed victorious Israeli soldiers on the Temple Mount on 12 June 1967; 'you restored the Mount to the bosom of the nation. The Western Wall – the heartbeat of every Jew, the place to which every Jewish heart yearns – is once more in our hands ... Jerusalem is yours – forever!' In 1995, Israel launched a public relations campaign, 'Jerusalem 3000', to celebrate three millennia of Jewish presence in the city and to bolster its claim to sovereignty.2 When an American historian, writing in Diplomatic History in 1996, referred to the seat of the Israeli government in 1958 as Tel Aviv, the Israeli consul at San Francisco, Nimrod Barkan, protested to the editor, Michael J. Hogan: 'Clearly, the capital of Israel is now, and was then Jerusalem and not Tel Aviv. One does not necessarily have to agree with this for it to be a fact.'3

Palestinians, resentful of Jewish-Israeli claims to Jerusalem, have countered with their own. Israelis 'seized and usurped the sacred and historic City of Jerusalem, displaced and dispossessed its original inhabitants, and changed its demographic structure,' remarked Henry Cattan, a member of the Palestine Bar Association, in 1980. 'Israel's claim of an historic right to Jerusalem is nothing but a gigantic bluff by which the Zionist Jews have succeeded in deceiving world opinion. Such a claim is false and spurious, legally, factually, and historically.'4 After a critique of Israeli occupation policy, Edward Said concluded that 'Israel was ... able to project an idea of Jerusalem that contradicted not only its history but its very lived

3 Barkan to Hogan, Feb. 1996, Ohio State University, Diplomatic History correspondence files.
Recently, Palestinian political leaders protested against Israeli housing projects in East Jerusalem and the decision of the US Congress in 1995 to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The chronicles of Jerusalem are a gigantic quarry,' Meron Benvenisti aptly observes, from which each side has mined stones for the construction of its myths and for throwing at each other. Jerusalem 'does not seem like a provocative place,' adds F. E. Peters, though hundreds of thousands have fought and died to possess it, or perhaps simply to possess the idea that it represents.

This essay examines the political and cultural controversy over Jerusalem between 1949 and 1953. It analyses the negotiations after the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-9, which failed to decide to whom Jerusalem belonged and enabled Israel and Jordan to partition it. It explains why the administration of Harry S. Truman gave up the goal of internationalizing the city. It analyses Israel's use of Jerusalem in nation building. And it examines how Israel, borrowing from its earlier efforts to undermine state department support of the Bernadotte plan on territorial adjustments, used systematic political lobbying within the United States to influence US policy towards Jerusalem.

The standard works on US policy towards Israel during the Truman administration and surveys of US policy in the post-war Middle East mention Jerusalem only briefly. Whereas earlier works are handicapped by lack of access to recently declassified documents, recent works by Yossi Feintuch and Donald Neff neglect Israel. Even Motti Golani, who probes the Zionist-Israeli quest for Jerusalem from the 1930s to the prime minister, David Ben-Gurion's, proclamation of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 1949, downplays the role of the United States and the years after 1949. Similarly, studies of US policy towards Israel during the Truman administration emphasize his support for Israel in 1947-8. Few of

5 See most recently, H. W. Brands, Into the Labyrinth: The United States and the Middle East, 1945-93 (New York, 1994); D. Schoenbaum, The United States and the State of Israel (New York, 1993); M. J. Cohen, Truman and Israel (Berkeley, 1990).
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them, however, examine his policy after 1949, when Israel appeared more secure and Truman, safely re-elected, felt less beholden to domestic political interests.1 Overviews of US-Israeli relations – critical or otherwise – suggest that the United States and Israel had a close, if not 'special', relationship from the founding of the state.2 This essay reveals that, through 1953, the issue of Jerusalem generated considerable friction between the United States and Israel.

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The United Nations-brokered armistice that ended the Palestine War of 1948-9 left a number of political disputes unresolved: the permanent borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the fate of Palestinian refugees, the division of water from the River Jordan, the closure of the Suez Canal to Israel, and the political status of Jerusalem. From April 1949, the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) – a UN body with members from the United States, France, and Turkey – presided over negotiations at Lausanne that failed to lead to a general peace.

The fate of Jerusalem became an important international issue in 1948-9 when the outcome of the Palestine war called into question the viability of the principle of corpus separatum: that Jerusalem should become an international zone under UN control as directed by the UN resolution on partition of November 1947. During the war, Israeli soldiers occupied western Jerusalem, the so-called New City, which they provisioned by way of a highway corridor running from Tel Aviv through territory allocated in the UN resolution to the Palestinians. Jordan occupied the Old City and Arab neighbourhoods to the east, north, and south. In a resolution passed on 11 December 1948, the General Assembly reaffirmed the principle of corpus separatum and directed the PCC to draw up a plan to internationalize the city under UN auspices. The United States voted for the resolution, which satisfied neither Israel nor Jordan: 'The Jews demand that Jerusalem will be theirs,' the Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, told the cabinet on 23 February 1949, 'the Arabs demand that Jerusalem will belong to an Arab state, and the world demands that Jerusalem will be internationalized.'3

The relationship between Israel and Jordan over Jerusalem was odd. On the one hand, they were belligerents whose armies faced one another across the city from behind fragile armistice lines. On the other, after negotiating secretly throughout the war, both decided to defy the United Nations and partition the city between them. A preliminary agreement of May 1949 to resist international control was stymied, however, by disagreements about borders, demilitarization, and Israeli access to Mount Scopus.1

Even as Israel and Jordan negotiated, they seemed likely to renew the fighting. When Jordan, to preserve its access to the Old City from the north, rejected Israel’s demand for a territorial corridor to Mount Scopus, Israel decided in April 1949 to use force if necessary. On 6 June, Israeli troops sowed mines on Arab land near Government House and, on the 10th, violence flared up along the border as Israel sent troops to Jerusalem and Latrun and cancelled all military leave. Jordan replied that it would rather fight than agree under duress to Israel’s demands.2

US officials urged Israel to contain the violence. The UN mediator, Ralph Bunche, privately denounced Israel’s actions as ‘criminally crooked’, and the under-secretary of state, James Webb, told the Israeli chargé d’affaires at Washington that the United States ‘would be deeply disappointed’3 by an Israeli attack on Jordan. On 24 June 1949, Truman authorized the secretary of state, Dean Acheson, to warn Sharett that ‘the military phases of the Palestine question must now be considered as terminated, and that any government which attempts to effect a particular settlement by the renewal of hostilities or the threat of hostilities would incur a grave responsibility before the community of nations.’4 Although the United States persuaded both Israel and Jordan to join a Mixed Armistice Commission which restored the truce in late June, the political questions that provoked the war scare had not been resolved.

Israel left nobody in doubt that it would oppose the international control over Jewish Jerusalem stipulated by the UN resolutions. Sharett told the PCC in February that, given the United Nations’s failure to protect Jews living in Jerusalem during the war, Israel ‘could not now entrust [the] security of Jews in Jerusalem to any outside agency nor could their

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1 Sharett to Eban, 16 Jan. 1949, Israel, Foreign Ministry, Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, ii. 377; Rockwell to Mattiasen, 20 April 1949 [Washington, DC], USNA, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine.
2 Minutes of meeting in for. min., 22 April 1949, DFPI, ii. 583–9; Stabler to Acheson, 8 June 1949, USNA, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine.
4 Acheson to McDonald, 24 June 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1174.
economic security be safeguarded except by integration in Israel ... Israeli Jerusalem to all practical intent and purpose is now part of Israel. PGI [the Provisional Government of Israel] does not deny [its] attempt to keep it.71 The message was echoed by a foreign ministry official, Michael Comay, in March, Ben-Gurion in April, and Israeli officials at Lausanne in May and June.2

Israel took steps in the city itself between January and March 1949 to show its determination to gain permanent control. In the New City, it enforced Israeli laws on abandoned property, scheduled municipal elections and the first meeting of the constituent assembly, selected premises for the supreme court, and announced that the ministries of health, education, religion, and social welfare would move there as soon as conditions allowed. The ‘decision with regard to Jerusalem’, Ben-Gurion declared at the opening of the constituent assembly on 14 February, ‘was made 3,000 years ago when Bel Yishai (King David) made Jerusalem the Jewish centre ... The living Jerusalem will not again accept any rule but that of its own people, Israel.73

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Jerusalem posed a dilemma for US officials. Some wished to honour the UN resolutions that called for a corpus separatum under international control and to meet the wishes of American Christians who called for international control of the holy places.4 Others, for example the consul at Jerusalem, William C. Burdett, argued that the United States should endorse a bilateral agreement between Israel and Jordan. Yet others were disinclined to accept responsibility for enforcing international control, which Britain opposed on behalf of Jordan.5

The state department resolved the dilemma by compromising between practicality and the principle of international control. The United States would not recognize Israeli or Jordanian sovereignty over any part of Jerusalem, but would allow them to act as the local government, provided they accepted the principle of international control. The under-secretary of

1 Ethridge to Acheson, 8 Feb. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 735.
3 McDonald to Acheson, 14 Feb. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 749.
4 When the state dept. discussed the ‘holy places’, it referred specifically to ten sites in the Jerusalem-Bethlehem area: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Deir al Sultan, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Sanctuary of the Ascension, the Basilica of the Nativity, the Milk Grotto, and Shepherds Field (Christian); the Western Wall and Rachel's Tomb (Jewish); and Haram esh-Sharif (Muslim). See, e.g., unsigned policy paper, 28 July 1952, USNA, RG 59, lot 57 D 298, box 1.
state, Robert A. Lovett, told the US member of the PCC, Mark Ethridge, to try for an agreement by which Israel and Jordan would administer different sections of the city under a UN commissioner empowered to protect and ensure free access to the holy places.¹

The United States abandoned the principle of *corpus separatum* owing to the controversy it would cause. The deputy under-secretary of state, Dean Rusk, knew that the principle ‘will certainly cause a very strong unfavorable reaction in Israel and in American Zionist circles’.² The Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (NEA) added that the principle, difficult to enforce ‘against the strong wishes of ... the Jews’, would need a 4,000-man UN police force costing $30 million a year. Despite its cultural ties to the holy places, Burdett observed, the United States lacked any strategic interest in Jerusalem. Acheson therefore announced at the beginning of March that, although the United States remained ‘committed to ... [the] principle of internationalization, there is considerable flexibility in what might constitute an international regime’.³

Although the signs that ‘the Americans are prepared to be flexible on the matter of the international regime’⁴ pleased the Israeli cabinet, they were disappointed that the United States refused to recognize Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. The question of sovereignty reached a flashpoint in February, when Sharett invited the US ambassador, James G. McDonald, to attend the opening ceremony of the constituent assembly in Jerusalem and warned him that his absence ‘will very seriously mar relations’.⁵ Although McDonald wished to accept the invitation – to please Israel and deprive the Soviets of an opportunity to embarrass the United States by attending – Ethridge and Burdett argued that attendance would jeopardize the PCC’s efforts to set up international control. On 10 February 1949, Truman and Acheson, their patience frayed by a recent Israeli offensive against Egypt in the Negev, directed McDonald to decline. Angry Israeli officials in Washington, who briefed the press in an attempt to bring public pressure on Truman, failed to persuade him to change his mind.

In the months that followed, US insistence on the principle of international control led to tension with Israel. Acheson told Sharett on 5 April that Truman would endorse arrangements for local administration ‘which recognize international interest and authority for the Holy Places’, and Truman, at a meeting with the president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann,

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² Rusk to Acheson, 28 March 1949, USNA, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine.
³ Memo by Satterthwaite, 22 April 1949, USNA, RG 59, lot 54 D 403, box 9; Acheson to Embassy in Baghdad, 3 March 1949, USNA, RG 59, 501.BB Palestine.
urged him to compromise. In reply, Ben-Gurion told the PCC that Israel would accept 'international supervision of holy places' but reject international sovereignty. 'Jerusalem is to Jews', he argued on 7 April, 'what Rome and Paris are to Italians and French respectively.' As the deadlock persisted, Israel's representative at the United Nations, Abba Eban, sensed that Acheson was offended by Israel's disregard for his advice.

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Although the United States relied on the PCC to devise a compromise over Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Committee, which the PCC set up in March 1949, quickly became mired in controversy. When Ethridge proposed the US compromise – local government by Jordan and Israel under international control – France responded with internationalization, including a UN police force, courts, citizenship, and currency. Ethridge described the French plan as 'impossible and fantastic', but feared that Turkey might endorse it to embarrass Israel. Jordan and Israel, of course, rejected both of the proposals; they proposed instead that the PCC should recognize their bilateral partition.

On 1 September 1949, after months of deliberation, the PCC submitted to the UN secretary-general, Trygve Lie, a ‘Draft Instrument Establishing a Permanent International Regime for the Jerusalem Area’, which borrowed from both the French and US proposals. Under the PCC plan, Israel and Jordan would provide civil administration in their respective zones. The United Nations would appoint an administrator, neither Arab nor Israeli, to be advised by a mixed council of nine residents and protected by UN troops, and who would be responsible for guarding the holy places, guaranteeing human rights, and ensuring demilitarization. As a concession to France, the plan called for mixed and international tribunals to try civil cases.

Israeli diplomats privately criticized the PCC plan as an unwieldy mixture of the worst of both the French and US proposals: 'the unhappy off-spring of a misalliance between two conflicting ideas in the Commission'. Comay described it as 'like one of the gargoyles on the medieval cathedrals, with the head of one animal and the body of another. Anyway, it doesn't make sense.' Moshe Keren, of the foreign ministry's US Division, told the officer in the division of near eastern affairs, Wells Stabler, that 'no

1 Memo of con. by Acheson, 5 April 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 890; Burdett to Acheson, 9 April 1949, ibid., p. 902.
2 Ethridge to Acheson, 13 April 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 911.
4 Comay to Eytan, 31 May 1949, ISA [Records of the United States Division of the Foreign Ministry], RG 130.02, 2443/3.
Government in Israel could accept such a proposal and remain in office another day.' Israel demanded that the PCC should refer a decision on the status of Jerusalem to the Lausanne peace conference, presumably in the hope that it would then be forgotten.

The plan provoked widespread protest in Israel led by the political élite. Eban told Sharett: ‘The scheme ... would deprive a population of its rights of self-determination, violate devout patriotic sentiment, disrupt the stability and peace already achieved, and impose upon the Jews of Jerusalem alien intervention aiming to deprive them of their independence.' It ‘clearly and definitely exposes the principle of internationalization as impractical and unjust', added the foreign ministry.2 The ‘instrument stands as its own condemnation', Sharett declared on 16 September; ‘by every test of justice and realism [the] instrument is anachronistic and incongruous.' McDonald reported that the plan drew ‘strong opposition ... from all sides, with menacing tones now being heard from some extreme elements ... Public opinion [is] being whipped up to burning or possibly fighting point.3

The state department, by contrast, however sceptical, endorsed the PCC plan. Even if Israel and Jordan were likely to resist, the United Nations, supported by France urged on by the Vatican, might otherwise revert to its original objective of a corpus separatum. The United States warned Israel that, if the plan failed, the PCC might hand the status of Jerusalem back to the General Assembly to decide, which might impose terms that Israel would find even less acceptable.4

The state department also criticized Israeli extremism. When the NEA complained of the ‘intensive and violent press and publicity campaign’ and the threat by extremists to use violence, Keren replied that although violence ‘would be catastrophic', the extremists ‘had now been given a better case for propaganda than at any time since the termination of the Mandate'.5 Rusk warned the Israeli ambassador at Washington, Eliahu Elath, on 28 September that Sharett’s ‘sentimental and emotional approach' risked antagonizing American Christians, and Acheson told Sharett himself that, as Jerusalem was important to ‘three great world religions', Israel should seek a solution ‘by calm and constructive means'.6 Sharett merely

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1 Comay to Eytan, 11 May, Keren to Comay, 21 Sept. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/3.
2 Eban to Sharett, 13 Sept. 1949, DFPI, iv. 452/3; for. min. paper (Hebrew), 16 Sept. 1949, ISA [Records of the Israeli Embassy in Washington], RG 53.08, 366/122.
4 McDonald to Acheson, 26 July, Truman to Weizmann, 13 Aug. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1245 n., 1305; Eban to Sharett, 2 Aug. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/3.
5 McGhee to Rusk, 21 Sept., USNA, RG 59, lot 54 D 403, box 16; Keren to Comay, 21 Sept. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/3.
6 Memo of con. by Rusk, 28 Sept. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1409; Acheson to McDonald, 30 Sept. 1949.
replied that the PCC plan had ‘fanned into new flame’ a Jewish affinity for Jerusalem that had lasted for ‘some thousands of years’.1

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The General Assembly’s discussion of the PCC plan in September 1949 placed US officials in a second dilemma. Whereas both Israel and Jordan declared their opposition to international control over Jerusalem, other Arab states supported it as a safeguard against Israeli expansion. The Vatican and various Catholic countries lobbied for a corpus separatum, which the state department dismissed as ‘entirely impractical’. It supported the PCC plan as ‘the best chance of achieving an international regime and in the hope that the parties will acquiesce in a United Nations decision’.2 Acheson endorsed the plan in an address to the General Assembly on 21 September.

Eban naturally worked hard at the United Nations to kill the plan, to ‘dilute’ or ‘destroy’ it. His colleagues back home discussed other possibilities, including a treaty with the United Nations safeguarding the holy places and the purchase by the United Nations of all the land in the Old City, to reserve it for religious activities of all faiths. In the end, Sharett rejected all of the possibilities and relied on Eban to convince the Truman administration that the PCC plan, ‘built on legal and factual falsehood’, was ‘basically unacceptable’.3

Israel also tried to use its leverage inside the US administration. McDonald wrote directly to Truman’s special counsel, Clark Clifford, to register his ‘reservation’ over state department policy and in the hope that Clifford would persuade Truman to order the state department to oppose the PCC plan. If the United Nations imposed an administrator on Israel, McDonald predicted, ‘a repetition of the Bernadotte tragedy would not be improbable’: the administrator would be assassinated. Elath, lobbying hard, reported: ‘White House friends active issue Jerusalem.’4 A presidential adviser, David Niles, for instance, encouraged Truman to postpone voting in the General Assembly to avoid a conflict with Israel, and the agriculture secretary, Charles F. Brannan, who told Elath of his ‘utmost devotion’ to Israel, also told him that he was ‘constantly consulted’ by Truman about Jerusalem. Edwin Wright, an anti-Zionist state department official, confided unwittingly to an Israeli intelligence source on 3 December that

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1 McDonald to Acheson, 18 Oct. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1444.
4 McDonald to Clifford, 30 Nov. 1949 [Truman Library, Clark] Clifford Papers, box 13; Elath to Eytan, 24 Nov. 1949, DFPI, iv. 646.
‘the Jews have once again influenced Truman’ to override the state department.¹

Anticipating an Israeli effort to nobble Truman, Acheson had, in fact, obtained Truman’s approval on 21 November for state department policy. Truman authorized Acheson to support the PCC plan as the most practical way to protect the holy places and restore peace to and demilitarize Jerusalem, while acknowledging the special interests of Jordan and Israel. The state department should support the plan even if Israel, Jordan, and the Vatican objected.²

While the United States and Israel argued over the plan, both lost control of the discussion in the General Assembly, which took a decision that pleased neither. On 1 December, Australia, swayed by Catholic action groups, introduced a resolution directing the UN Trusteeship Council to implement the principle of corpus separatum by the spring of 1950. The state department opposed the resolution as impractical and Sharett tried to persuade Australia to withdraw it, but various UN delegations, urged on by the archbishop of New York, Cardinal Spellman, endorsed it. On 9 December, the Catholic states, the Arab states except Jordan, and the Soviet bloc passed Australia’s resolution by a vote of 39-14-5.³

The vote left US officials puzzled. According to Israeli intelligence, Wright said that the decision pleased the state department’s Arabists, because the Arab states might now ‘raise a lot of hell against Israel on the question of Jerusalem’. But Acheson seemed to throw up his hands in despair and leave the issue to others. He told Truman on 6 December that the state department would ‘say to the Vatican and the Jews that they should get together and talk to each other, but that we are not going to coerce them’.⁴

Israeli diplomats staunchly opposed the resolution. Sharett instructed them to protest against it and to try to have it reversed, but he avoided openly condemning it because he feared that he would antagonize the United States, ‘challenge world Christendom and kindle [a] feud with Catholicism which may last generations’. Israel would simply not carry out the resolution until it ‘fall[s] of its own weight and UN itself admit[s] its] unfeasibility’.⁵ Eban agreed with him that Israel should avoid a ‘head-on

¹ Elath to Eytan, 2 Dec. 1949, DFPI, iv. 674; intelligence report 192 A/4; 7 Dec. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/5.
³ Memo of con. by Power, 12 Dec. 1949, USNA, RG 59, lot 54 D 403, box 9; Sharett to Eavtt, 6 Nov., and YHL to Comay, 25 Nov. 1949, ISA, RG 130.09, 2443/4.
⁴ Intelligence report 197 A/4; 8 Dec. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/5; memo of con. by Acheson, 6 Dec. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1522.
⁵ Sharett to Eytan, 12 Dec., to Ben-Gurion, 10 Dec. 1949, DFPI, iv. 702, 694.
collision ... Our prospects are in direct proportion to our capacity [for] silence."

Other Israeli leaders, however, were less restrained. Ben-Gurion declared in the Knesset on 5 December that 'Jews will sacrifice themselves for Jerusalem no less than Englishmen for London, Russians for Moscow, or Americans for Washington.' He warned McDonald that 'it would take an army to get [the] Jews out of Jerusalem; and the only army I see willing to occupy Jerusalem is Russia's.' With cabinet approval, Ben-Gurion declared to the Knesset on 13 December that Israel would challenge the resolution by moving government offices and the Knesset to Jerusalem and by seeking access to the Old City. The director-general of the foreign ministry, Walter Eytan, explained to Sharett that in light of the 'strong upsurge [in] public opinion', the government would have to act to prevent 'private elements [from] taking [the] law into [their] own hands'.

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The United States and Israel disagreed as strongly about Israel's complementary plan to move its government offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In August 1949, when the Israeli cabinet discussed whether to make the move and declare Jerusalem the capital, Ben-Gurion argued for presenting the world with a fait accompli while the PCC deliberated. Sharett, however, argued for delay, in order to avoid antagonizing the United States and arousing American Catholics against Israel. The cabinet tried to satisfy both of them: it approved the move in principle, but postponed carrying it out.

When US officials discerned in September what was afoot, they expressed their disapproval lest Israel should prejudice the General Assembly debate and, by angering the Arab states, jeopardize the peace negotiations and the efforts to resolve the Palestinian refugees issue. After the state department decided to 'make every effort to discourage such action by Israel', Eytan told them that the rumours of the transfer were 'utterly without foundation'. Sharett added that 'nothing of this sort is intended': Israel 'realises it is not in its own interest to force the hand of the General Assembly'.

Nonetheless, five days after the passage of Australia's resolution, on the
14th Ben-Gurion moved the prime minister's office, and thus the seat of government, to Jerusalem. He confided to his diary that although he regretted having to flout the United Nations, the Catholic Church, the Arab states, and the Soviet Union, he had no choice: he must safeguard the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem and signal to Israel's adversaries that they should not expect concessions on other issues. Eban predicted that the decision would cost Israel the support of the United States in its bid to reverse the resolution. Sharett, embarrassed by his failure to forecast the vote in the United Nations, offered to resign, which Ben-Gurion refused to allow.1

As Eban and Sharett feared, the move angered US policy-makers. The NEA construed the 'unilateral establishment of the capital in Jerusalem ... as open opposition by Israel to the United Nations'. Acheson told Sharett that he considered the move 'particularly unfortunate'.2 When Keren asked the deputy assistant secretary of state, Raymond Hare, to promise not to support a UN condemnation of Israel, he refused. As 'a loyal member' of the United Nations, Hare explained, the United States 'was naturally going to play its part when the Council considered the course of action to take'. When Keren claimed that Israeli public opinion had forced Ben-Gurion's hand, Hare replied that 'as far as Jerusalem was concerned Israel had to reckon as well with world opinion.'3

From that moment, until the end of Truman's presidency, the state department refused to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Acheson repeatedly instructed US officials to refuse requests for recognition and told Israelis that the move had damaged Israel's reputation by placing it 'in clear violation' of UN resolutions.4 Nonetheless, the state department did not try to compel Israel to move the government back to Tel Aviv. In early 1950, when the Iraqi chargé d'affaires at Washington, Abdullah Ibrahim Bakr, asked the United States to threaten punitive measures, the assistant secretary of state, George McGhee, replied that threats would only 'strengthen the Government in its present policy'.5

The United States also showed its ambivalence in the way it did business in Israel. To put teeth into non-recognition, the state department at first instructed US diplomats stationed there to conduct official business in Tel Aviv and only allowed the consul at Jerusalem to make 'non-official courtesy and social contacts'. The regulations caused hardship and embarrassment, however, and the diplomatic corps asked the state department to

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2 Hare to Acheson, 17 Dec., Acheson to McDonald, 20 Dec. 1949, FRUS: 1949, vi. 1547. 1555.
revise them. In February 1951, therefore, the department authorized embassy officials to do business in Jerusalem when unavoidable, provided they stated on each occasion that the United States still favoured the internationalization of the city and did not recognize it as the capital. The state department refused to move the US embassy to Jerusalem.1

Israel’s announcement on 5 May 1952, over Sharett’s objections, that the foreign ministry would move to Jerusalem within the year made day-by-day business even more difficult to conduct. Israel attributed the decision to administrative convenience, not high policy: it should be interpreted ‘not [as] a political demonstration but [as] a domestic and organizational necessity’. As locating ministries in two cities was inefficient, the decision was the ‘logical and inevitable conclusion of the process that was decided on two-and-a-half years ago’.2

After Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq asked the United States not to move its embassy, the state department formally protested in July that the United States ‘continues to adhere to the policy that there should be a special international regime for Jerusalem … [It] would not view favorably the transfer of the Foreign Office of Israel to Jerusalem’, and the US embassy would not follow.3 Britain, France, Turkey, Australia, and Italy issued similar statements. Eban reported that a state department official had remarked: ‘Sharett is liable to find himself alone in Jerusalem.’4

The protests left the Israelis unmoved. The foreign ministry’s legal adviser, Shabtai Rosenne, remarked that the United States did not contest the move by other government offices to Jerusalem, demand that the decision to move the foreign ministry should be reversed, or rule out the possibility that the US embassy might move to Jerusalem in the future. As the United States sought only ‘a limited degree of functional internationalization’, its protest was explained by its anger at Israel’s ‘tactical mistake’ in not informing it of the decision beforehand. Eban agreed. One US official complained to him that news of the transfer had ‘brought [a] flood of Arab representations to State Dept [officials] when they [were] not ready’.5

Given such assessments, the West’s protests failed to persuade the Israeli government to change its mind. Sharett denied that the move would jeopardize the United Nations’s ability to protect the holy places, dismissed the Arab complaints as a ‘foregone conclusion’,6 and justified the

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1 Acheson to McDonald, 4 Jan. 1951, FRUS: 1950, v. 667; to Ford, 1 Sept. 1951, ibid., p. 991; memo by Lourie, 8 Feb. 1951, ISA, RG 93.05, 338/11; circular cable by Sharett, 10 Aug. 1951, DFPI, vi. 540.
2 Eytan circular telegrams, 5 May 1952, DFPI, vii. 209.
4 Eban to Bendor, 19 May 1952, DFPI, vii. 220.
5 Rosenne to Eytan, 11 July 1952, ISA, RC 130.02, 2444/4; Eban to USD, [99] July 1952, DFPI, vii. 392.
move as essential to efficient government. Nonetheless, the protests convinced the Israelis to postpone the move until after the autumn meeting of the General Assembly. When Eban urged Sharett, after the US presidential election in the autumn of 1952, to move by the end of December in the hope that Truman would move the US embassy – Eban expected Dwight D. Eisenhower to be less willing or able to take such a step – Sharett refused. He postponed the move until March 1953.1

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As Israel and the United States quarrelled over Israel's decision to declare Jerusalem the capital, both countries were drawn into controversy with Christian groups. In March 1949, Rev. Thomas J. McMahon, US national secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, protested about Israel's manoeuvres in Jerusalem to Lie. Because Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth were 'made holy by the historic events in the life of Jesus Christ on earth', McMahon explained, echoing a recent statement by Pope Pius XII, 'the Christian world has complete justification in requesting international status.' McMahon sent a copy of his letter to Eliahu Ben-Horin of the Israeli mission to the United Nations, who replied that internationalization 'would render the complete settlement of the Palestine controversy more difficult'.2

Spellman, who had met with Weizmann on 28 April 1949 to push for a corpus separatum and been offered only a UN protectorate over the holy places, asked Truman to confirm that the United States remained committed to a corpus separatum. Truman replied on 22 June that as an international regime was impractical, owing to the costs and opposition from the city's residents, he would only try to ensure access to the holy places, the most vital Christian interest. Unsatisfied, Spellman complained that the United States had allowed Israel to join the United Nations in May while it was defying UN resolutions. Truman replied that Israel was entitled to membership.3

By the summer, the Truman administration was at odds not only with the US Catholic Church but also with the Vatican. When Acheson failed in August to convince Spellman 'that we have no intention of recognizing the sovereignty of any state in the Jerusalem area',4 the Vatican's acting secretary of state, Monsignor Domenico Tardini, announced that only a corpus

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2 McMahon to Lie, 21 March, Ben-Horin to McMahon, 25 March 1949, ISA [Records of the Minister and Director-General of the Foreign Ministry], RC 190.02. 2468/13.
Separatum would ensure peace and tranquillity. When Acheson, in September, portrayed the PCC plan as a compromise worthy of the Vatican’s support, Tardini complained that the UN administrator would lack the power to deal with sovereign states.1

The administration naturally worried about a clash with the Roman Catholic Church in an election year. Soon after the General Assembly passed Australia’s resolution, Truman directed the state department to meet with White House staff ‘who are primarily concerned with political relations with the Jewish and Catholic groups … in this country … They may be able to exert the kind of influence which would contribute to the settlement’ arranged by the Trusteeship Council. Rusk emphasized ‘the importance of getting this question off the agenda before the 1950 campaigns if possible’.2 The need for action became obvious when a delegation from Protestant, Jewish, labour, and civil rights groups urged Webb and McGhee on 10 January 1950 to endorse Israel’s claim.

Meanwhile, in August 1949, in what Sharett called a ‘grim conversation’, McMahon, who represented the Vatican, threatened to turn world opinion against Israel unless it accepted a corpus separatum.3 Sharett, who resented the ‘veiled threats’, took action to counter them. He asked the US government for support and the Zionist activist, Joseph M. Proskauer, to rally American Jews to Israel’s defence, and he persuaded the cabinet to postpone moving more government offices to Jerusalem. Foreign ministry officials discussed how to drive a wedge between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, long-time rivals for control of the Christian shrines in Jerusalem, in hope of dividing the East European states from the Vatican. And they asked McDonald to visit Rome to argue Israel’s case.4

Sharett hoped to neutralize the Vatican by sowing discord between American Catholics and Protestants. ‘With reference to Catholic pressure regarding internationalization,’ he cabled Elath on 28 September, ‘it might be advisable to consider means of instigating anti-Catholic prejudice in Protestant circles … Suggest you contact Senator Robert Taft’s brother, who, reportedly, is the leading anti-Catholic Protestant’.5 Under threat from the Vatican, unable to modify US policy, and fearful lest the United Nations adopt internationalization, Sharett resorted to extraordinary measures.

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1 Acheson to Gowen, 1 Sept. 1949, FRUS, 1949, vi. 1540.
3 Sharett to Eban, 4 Aug. 1949, DFPI, iv. 288.
5 [Sharett to Elath], n.d. [28 Sept.], attached to Elath to Goldmann, 28 Sept. 1949, Goldmann Papers, Z6/204.
Israel's officials and its supporters in the United States promptly began a top-secret campaign to drive a wedge between Catholics and Protestants. Elath turned first to Lillie Schultz, the director of the Nation Associates, who confirmed that 'Taft and a few more Protestant leaders can be approached.' Elath asked Nachum Goldmann, the acting president of the World Jewish Congress and head of the US section of the Jewish Agency, to make the approaches. 'I am leaving it up to you to decide the best way to do this,' he added; 'I should appreciate very much your earliest advice about the steps taken by you in connection with Mr Sharett's cable.' Goldmann replied that 'we will naturally do everything to follow the suggestion of Moshe's cable and I will keep you informed what we have done.'

A cryptic communication from Schultz to Elath suggests that she and Goldmann began work in late September. Schultz met with Senator Frank P. Graham (D.-North Carolina) on 28 September 'because of Graham's very wide connections with Protestant circles'. When Graham asked whether Israel had not broken its promises about Jerusalem, Schultz won him over to Israel's view. She reported on the 29th that she and Goldmann had made arrangements on 'our matter ... He [Goldmann] thought he had found a way of doing it.' She 'wanted to get started quickly', she reported, and as Goldmann had asked her to 'begin to lay the groundwork ... I assume that it will happen'.

Although one does not know whether anything did happen, the Israelis remained worried for some time about the opinions of American Protestants. When a major Protestant convention, meeting in San Francisco in October 1949, fell under the sway of Rev. Walter C. Klein, chaplain at St George's Cathedral in East Jerusalem and an advocate of the Palestinian cause, it passed a resolution calling for internationalization. The first major Protestant statement on the issue, the resolution appeared to be a 'serious blow' to Israel. 'The feeling in Christian circles', the Israeli minister at London, Mordechai Eliash, reported, 'is that we shall be trying ... to make the Security Council and the General Assembly eat their words.'

By the spring of 1950, the Israelis were less worried. In April, Elath addressed a conference of one hundred delegates representing the nine million members of the Methodist Church, who displayed 'on the whole a tolerant attitude on the issue of Jerusalem. There was nothing of the aggressive tone used by the Catholics on this matter.' And on 24 May, Freda Kirchwey, president of the Nation Associates, sent Truman a petition, signed by 285 prominent Protestant clergymen and professors, including

1 Elath to Goldmann, 28 Sept., Goldmann to Elath, 29 Sept. 1949, Goldmann Papers, Z6/204.
2 Schultz to Elath, 29 Sept. 1949, ISA, RG 93.08, 366/52.
3 Zinder to Conant, 13 Oct., Eliash to Conant, 14 Oct. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/4.
4 Elath to for. min., 26 April 1950, ISA, RG 130.20, 2408/15.
Rienhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary and Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of New York, proposing that the United States should establish an ‘international curatorship’ over the Christian holy places, consistent with Israel’s policy aims.¹

Israel remained worried about Catholic influence in the United States and took extraordinary measures to counter it. ‘I need not discuss the influence which the thirty million Catholics in the United States have in every field of political, social, cultural, and economic life,’ Elath reported on 11 April. ‘The President is surrounded by Catholics who, in most cases, are more active and effective than our friends. I have seen, during the last year, how the President, under the pressure of his Catholic advisers and of Catholic public opinion, on some occasions was more intransigent on the Jerusalem question than the State Department.’ Worse, ‘the “chutzpah” of the Catholics is growing’ because of the state department’s reliance on the Vatican to help fight Communism. ‘The only way for us to reduce Catholic pressure’, Elath concluded, ‘is by counter-pressure.’ Echoing Sharett, he suggested a campaign to exploit ‘the great concern in progressive circles in this country and among the Protestant clergy’ because of the increasing influence of Catholics.²

Israel also continued to worry about the Vatican. Despite signs that the leaders of the Catholic countries understood that the UN resolution was impractical, a Vatican emissary told Eban in January 1950 that the Vatican wanted an international city set up around the holy places and ‘would never give in on this [principle] until the end of time’. Having monitored the support among Catholics for internationalization, Elath advised Sharett to cultivate the Soviets and Orthodox Christians as a counter-weight: ‘the Vatican’s political success … at New York is now giving rise to serious second thoughts on the part of the Eastern Churches.’³

Israeli officials, deeply troubled by the Vatican’s influence at the United Nations, its rapprochement with the Arabs, and articles criticizing Israel in the Catholic press, worked hard in 1951-2 to overcome the Vatican’s opposition. McMahon told the foreign ministry’s adviser on Jerusalem affairs, Yaakov Herzog, that the Vatican was demanding the guarantee of Christian interests promised in the partition resolution; he told Congress that aid to Israel should depend on adherence to UN resolutions. In response, Sharett tried to break the perceived Arab-Vatican connection and appease moderate Catholics by proposing that Jordan should withdraw from the Old City, which contained most of the Christian shrines,

¹ Kirchwey et al. to Truman, 24 May 1950, ISA, RG 190.02, 2443/8.
² Elath to Kohn, 11 April 1950, ISA, RG 190.02, 2443/7.
³ Eban to Sharett, 5 Jan. 1950, DFPY, v. 12; Rosenne to Eban, 21 Feb. 1950, ISA, RG 190.02, 2443/6.
and by stressing that Israel had protected the Christian holy places in the territory it controlled. To illustrate Israel's care for Christian shrines, it made an agreement with the Lutheran Federation, in which it recognized the Lutherans' control of sacred properties such as churches and seminaries and, in return, the Federation sold it commercial shops and undeveloped land. When Sharett visited the Vatican in May 1952 to try to make a similar agreement, he failed.1

* * *

The debate over Jerusalem, the attempt to head off the Catholics, and the perception that the Arab states might have more effective public relations led the Israeli government to launch its own public relations (or hasbara) campaign in the United States. Comay told Eban, for example, to refer publicly to Jewish residents of Jerusalem as 'Israelis' and to the New City as 'Israeli Jerusalem' in order to create in public perceptions a common identity between Israel and Jerusalem. Eban was already trying to mobilize American Jews to defend Israel's position. He sent a copy of his speech about Jerusalem to the General Assembly to Proskauer, noting that 'I need not say how much we would value the use of your influence in support of these principles.'

Congress also seemed worth cultivating. Taft, for example, told Rabbi Hillel Silver of Cleveland that he would lobby Truman and Acheson on issue a public statement about Jerusalem on Israel's behalf. Through Silver, Eban sent Taft a statement of Israel's goals. 'It would be very useful, indeed, if Senator Taft could exercise his great influence on behalf of these principles,' Eban wrote to Silver. 'Both a public statement and private representations to the Secretary of State, as he suggests, would be of far-reaching importance.'

Lastly, Israeli officials sought opportunities to influence the US media. When Lillie Schultz of The Nation sent a manuscript on Jerusalem to Eban for pre-publication comment, he told her how to strengthen her defence of Israel's policy and focus the demand for internationalization on the Old City, controlled by Jordan; The Nation seemed especially likely to help Israel influence 'prominent Protestants and liberals', Elath observed in April 1950.4 I. L. Kenen, a member of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations, also edited a photo essay for Hearst newspapers. When he learned that they were planning to publish pictures showing the devas-

1 Lourie to Eytan, 1 June 1951, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/9; Levin to for. min., 3 Aug. 1951, RG 130.20, 2468/13; Najar to Eytan, 4 May 1952, DFPI, vii. 208.
2 Comay to Eban, 6 Sept., Eban to Proskauer, 10 Oct. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/4
3 Eban to Silver, 18 Oct. 1949, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/4.
4 Elath to Kohn, 11 April 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2443/7.
tation in Jerusalem, which he feared would provide 'an argument for internationalization', he persuaded them to allow him to supply instead photos showing the city as a place of 'life, people and revival'. He wrote the text and persuaded a Hearst reporter to sign her name to it. Hearst's *Journal-American* ran a three-page spread and made it available to Hearst and Kings Features Syndicate papers nation-wide.¹

From such scattered initiatives, Israeli officials developed in the spring of 1950 a comprehensive public relations campaign. Because 'we may have to face a new major battle for Jerusalem when the General Assembly meets next autumn,' argued one of the foreign ministry's political advisers, Leo Kohn, Israel should trumpet its historic, strategic, and cultural claims to West Jerusalem to Jews, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, and selected Catholic leaders. Elath 'full-heartedly' agreed,² and the foreign ministry set up a committee to orchestrate 'a world-wide publicity campaign' to 'climax [at] ... the opening of the UN Assembly'. The campaign included publication in English, French, Spanish, and Russian of a glossy, ninety-six-page book aimed at the 'opinion-forming minority public' and intended to be 'an authoritative documentation of our case'. Other steps included the distribution of maps and pamphlets, press releases depicting Jerusalem as 'the focal centre of Israel[i] public and especially cultural life', invitations to forty 'well-known writers, journalists, politicians, and churchmen' to visit Israel, and plans for a Hollywood film. Israel's missions abroad were asked to 'supply us with a “shopping list” of the sort of articles and subjects they think they could place in the press'.³

The campaign had remarkable successes. Its focus was a book, *Jerusalem: Living City*, published in September 1950. One thousand copies were urgently shipped by air to the United States. The foreign ministry decided in October that 'as far as distribution of the Jerusalem Book is concerned, we have succeeded in spanning the whole globe – apart from the desert and the Arab States.' Second, 'a number of important people have visited the country within the framework of the Campaign and taken back with them favourable impressions and a sympathetic attitude towards our problems.'⁴

The campaign also had its failures. Jack Warner of Warner Brothers Studio agreed to rush production of a film and allow Israeli officials to select the images. By October, however, lack of funds led to its cancellation. To fend off criticism from Western Christians, Israeli officials also planned to publish a *Yearbook of Christian News from Israel*, a collection

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¹ Kenen to Sharett, 30 March 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2444/1.
² Kohn to Elath, 21 March, Elath to Kohn, 4 April 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2444/1.
³ Memos by Weidenfeld, 2 May, 1 June 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2444/1.
⁴ For. min. to Pape, 2 Oct. 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2444/2.
of articles by Christians living in Israel designed to show that Israel protected the Christian holy places. When one essay alleged that Israeli authorities mistreated Roman Catholics in Galilee, however, the project was cancelled in fear of a backlash. Lack of funds also limited the number of pamphlets distributed and foreigners invited to visit Israel.¹

Despite the setbacks, Israeli officials had no doubt that the campaign had strengthened their bid to keep control of the New City and were ready to revive it, if the United Nations took up the question of Jerusalem. ‘In the event of Catholic and Arab propaganda coming into full scale operation’, Herzog warned, Israel must be ready ‘to gain support from various Protestant groups in the States for our position’. The counsellor at the Israeli mission to the United Nations, Avraham Harman, agreed: ‘in the event of the subject arising it will, of course, be necessary to go out on a big campaign.’² He urged the foreign ministry to send him the materials he would need to print pamphlets for mass distribution on short notice.

* * *

In the context of Israel’s controversial relocation of its government to Jerusalem, the Vatican’s political battles with the United States and Israel, and the Israeli hasbara campaign, the international community faced the daunting task of finding a political resolution of the Jerusalem issue. When the Trusteeship Council met on 19 December 1949, it charged the president, Roger Garreau of France, to prepare a report on the status of Jerusalem. When the council asked Israel, meanwhile, to suspend its transfer of government offices to Jerusalem, Israel protested that the request violated the principle of self-determination implicit in the Charter of the United Nations.³

The commission’s action embarrassed the United States. On the one hand, it regarded the principle of corpus separatum as impractical and had not supported Australia’s resolution; on the other, it did not wish to defy the United Nations or anger the Vatican and the Arab states. With Truman’s approval, the state department decided to co-operate nominally with the commission, while discouraging other states from supporting the principle of corpus separatum and urging Israel, Jordan, and the Vatican to seek a compromise.⁴

Thus, the state department followed two policy tracks, one public and

¹ Agrün to Sharett (Hebrew), 7 May, Weidenfeld to Eytan, 11 May 1950, ISA, RG 190.02, 2444/1; memo by Weidenfeld, 10 July 1950, ISA, RG 190.02, 2444/2.
³ Memo of con. by Yeomans, 14 Dec. 1949, USNA, RG 59, lot 54 D 403, box 9; Ehan to Garreau, 30 Dec. 1949, DFPI, iv. 773.
⁴ Memo of con. by Acheson, 20 Dec. 1949, USNA, RG 59, ES, E394.
The Partition of Jerusalem

the other private. ‘Consistent in its policy of respect for decisions taken in the United Nations by a majority of its members’, the department declared publicly that the United States ‘abides by the decision [of 9 December] and is prepared as a member of the Trusteeship Council to participate constructively when the Council undertakes the task concerning Jerusalem given it by the Assembly’.1 But the moment he released the statement, Acheson told Niles, who told Elath, that the department would prefer to broker a deal between Israel, Jordan, and the Vatican.

In an attempt to take advantage, Israeli officials tried to lobby Truman independently of the state department. Ben-Gurion directed Eban on 28 December to write a letter to Truman, for Weizmann’s signature, that would ‘expand on [the] Biblical promise’ of Israeli control of Jerusalem. ‘We cannot agree, and we cannot be expected to agree,’ the letter claimed, ‘that our ancient Mother-city be severed from the new commonwealth of Israel. Jerusalem has been our capital since the days of David and Solomon … To countless generations of Jews … ascent to Jerusalem and residence within its precincts was the highest that life could offer.’2

Weizmann asked the head of the Federal Security Agency, Oscar Ewing, a friend of Israel, to deliver the letter. Truman, angered by the use of such an irregular channel, chose not to reply. Ewing told Elath, however, that Truman read the letter and expressed his hope that Israel would succeed in reaching its goals through negotiations with Jordan and the Vatican.3

As the Trusteeship Council discussed Jerusalem in early 1950, the United States and Israel both opposed a corpus separatum, albeit for different reasons. On 10 February, the council resolved to set one up and, in the weeks that followed, discussed a draft statute. When Israel, which repeatedly stated its opposition, asked the United States to do likewise, the United States agreed. It stated both publicly and privately that it objected to any resolution of the United Nations being carried out against the wishes of Israel and Jordan.4

The US hope, however, that Israel, Jordan, and the Vatican would reach an agreement proved vain. On 24 February, Israel and Jordan signed an agreement by which each took responsibility for the holy places within its de facto borders, affirmed them, and pledged non-aggression against the other for five years. When King Abdullah proved unable to persuade his

3 Weizmann to Ewing, 2 Jan. 1950, ISA, RG 130.02, 2403/18; memo by Rockwell, 3 Jan. 1950, FRUS: 1950, v. 661 n.
cabinet to ratify the agreement, however, Truman refused Israel's request for US support at Amman, for fear of undermining Abdullah in the forthcoming Jordanian parliamentary elections. Hare told Eban on 9 March that the state department, offended that neither Israel nor Jordan had consulted 'the Christian world', preferred the draft UN statute to a bilateral Israeli-Jordanian bargain.¹

The US response to the collapse of the Israeli-Jordanian agreement alarmed Israel, which feared that, without firm US opposition, the Trusteeship Council would pass the draft statute. In February and March, therefore, Eban orchestrated 'strong action by [our] friends' in Washington and New York to elicit US opposition. He directed his colleagues to make 'every effort', including appeals to the White House, to prevent the state department from supporting the council.² Within days, Goldmann paid a visit to Acheson at which, or so Goldmann reported, Acheson agreed to vote against the statute or abstain.

Although the Trusteeship Council approved the statute by a vote of nine to zero (with two abstentions) on 4 April, US opposition undermined it. The United States abstained, convinced the council to send the statute to Jordan and Israel for comment, and in May advised it to report to the General Assembly that the statute could not be implemented. In June, the council complied. Among themselves, US officials attributed their actions to their opposition to a corpus separatum.³

US officials were less successful in arranging a compromise between Jordan and Israel, on the one side, and the United Nations on the other. When the Arab League resolved in early April that Jerusalem should be internationalized, US officials encouraged Abdullah in his defiance. But McGhee also advised the Jordanian minister to Washington, Yusuf Haikal, to make concessions to the United Nations.⁴

Over the summer and autumn of 1950, US officials remained passive on the question of Jerusalem. On 'orders from the White House', the state department, 'its knuckles rapped' in December 1949, 'let someone else take the lead'.⁵ It did nothing to support the Trusteeship Council and had 'nothing to sponsor, support, or suggest', McGhee told Eban in late August. 'Our present intention is not to play an active role on this issue in the Assembly,' Burton Y. Berry of the NEA noted in September.⁶

² Eban to Elath, 21 Feb., Eban to Loure and Elath, 28 March 1950, DFPI, v. 137, 201.
³ Sayre to Truman, 4 April, state dept. position paper, 19 May, Austin to Acheson, 14 June 1950, FRUS: 1950, v. 827, 890, 931.
⁴ Memo of con. by Rockwell, 19 April, Gibson to Acheson, 24 April 1950, FRUS: 1950, v. 864, 872.
⁵ Memo of con. by Maffitt, 13 June 1950, FRUS: 1950, v. 927.
There are several reasons for the new style. First, no security imperatives dictated an immediate settlement. Second, the National Security Council noted that the viability of international control had declined when the Soviets withdrew their support. Corpus separatum, the officer-in-charge of Palestine, Israel, and Jordan Affairs, Stuart W. Rockwell, remarked, was ‘no longer practicable’. Third, US officials sensed that the deadlock between Israel, Jordan, and the Vatican was unbreakable, partly because Israel was confident that its public relations campaign had drummed up support in the United States for its de facto control of the New City. Truman may have been sensitive to such feelings in an election year.

US officials refrained from openly endorsing Israel’s case lest they offend the Arab states. Lebanon’s minister at Washington, Charles Malik, complained to McGee on 1 August of the ‘curve of deterioration’ in US support for UN resolutions governing Jerusalem. Syria’s minister, Faiz el-Khoury, likened Israel’s position to ‘that of a thief who has robbed you of all your furniture and compromises by offering to give you back a chair’. Iraqi and Egyptian officials expressed similar views. Although failing to persuade the United States to support the UN resolutions, their protests at least restrained US officials from openly siding with Israel.

In late 1950, the Jerusalem issue began to disappear from the UN agenda. The General Assembly debated various proposals in November and December but failed to approve any of them: Abdullah’s assassination in July 1951 drastically reduced the chance of an agreement between Jordan and Israel. Sensing that deadlock facilitated de facto control of the New City, Israel tried to discourage the United Nations by explaining that the arrangements for the protection of the holy places, worked out since 1950 by Israel, Jordan, and the local Christian communities, were best allowed to continue. They added the warning that they would resist a resolution they disapproved of, even if they deadlocked the United Nations. In particular, they would counter an Arab initiative with complaints about the Arabs’ refusal to give them access to the Suez Canal and an embargo on their trade. When the General Assembly failed to pass a resolution on Jerusalem in 1952, the US ambassador, Warren Austin, noted the Israelis’ ‘satisfaction bordering on enthusiasm’. Jerusalem would remain under joint Israeli-Jordanian control until Israel occupied the entire city during the Six Day War in 1967.

By remaining passive, US officials allowed the question of Jerusalem to recede from view as Israel wished. ‘We see no point in supporting any schemes for the internationalization,’ the state department reasoned in October 1951. Accordingly, the United States informally opposed a debate on Jerusalem during the General Assembly meeting of November 1951-February 1952 and, in November 1952, the state department resolved to ‘take no initiative’ on Jerusalem at the General Assembly and to ‘support [the] status quo’ if any other state raised the matter. On 17 December 1952, Truman directed the state department to ‘take sides with the Israeli Delegation against the Arabs.’

A few state department officials were disgruntled. The NEA stated in October 1952 that a UN authority in Jerusalem would ensure Arab security, help to solve the refugee problem, and strengthen the armistice agreements. It ‘would serve as a steadying influence in the area’ and ‘furnish the world with a listening post’. Officials who handled Arab interests assumed that a firm stand for internationalization would give ‘dramatic evidence to the Arab world that we can say “no” to Zionism.’

* * *

The debate over the status of Jerusalem produced winners and losers. Israel and Jordan obtained what they wanted, namely bipolar control of the city in defiance of UN resolutions. Israel planted its government in the New City and solidified its control, while Jordan remained in occupation of the Old City. The other Arab states failed to resist Israeli and Jordanian encroachment, and the Vatican and the United Nations failed to set up a corpus separatum. For the United States, the results of the debate were mixed. US officials failed to reach their goal of an international city, partly because they recognized that the city was not a vital interest of the United States, which would not pay the financial and strategic cost of enforcing internationalization.

In addition to gaining de facto sovereignty over the New City, Israel made two other gains. First, Israeli officials used Jerusalem to promote Israeli nationalism in the sense of what Benedict Anderson calls an ‘imagined community’. They phrased their policy towards Jerusalem in words designed to evoke an emotional and cultural response among Israel’s inhabitants. Ben-Gurion called up King David as a way of convincing other

2 Bruce to Davis, 18 Nov. 1952, FRUS:1952-4, ix. 1067; memo of con. by Bruce, 18 Dec. 1952, USNA, RG 59. ES, E394, box 2.
states that he would not retreat and encouraging Israelis to stand firm. The protests throughout Israel when the General Assembly passed Australia's resolution attest to Ben-Gurion's success. The evidence supports Ian S. Lustick's observation that Israel's leaders used rhetoric to create in the minds and hearts of their citizens an indelible identification with the city.1

Israel also benefited by learning the importance of shaping public opinion in the United States and developing the means to do so. Israel put its case directly to the American people; thus, it tried to divide American Protestants from Catholics and mobilize the former to neutralize the latter. The attempt seemed to bear fruit in 1950 when Protestant opinion shifted in favour of Israel, when the United States abstained on the Trusteeship Council, and when Acheson retreated into passivity.

At first, Jerusalem caused tension between the United States and Israel. Even when the United States abandoned its support for a corpus separatum in early 1949, Israel criticized its refusal to recognize Israeli sovereignty, defence of the principle of international control, and support for the PCC plan. For its part, the United States was worried that Israel might use force in defiance of UN authority. Thus, the United States refused to recognize Israel's decision to move the capital to Jerusalem.

The evidence reveals a serious rivalry between the state department and the foreign ministry. In short, two bureaucracies battled for Truman's blessing. Israeli officials used their political allies in the United States to try to convince Truman to overrule state department policies to which they objected. In response, the state department sought presidential approval in advance of any action. Until December 1949, the state department held its ground: despite pressure from Israel's friends in the United States, Truman endorsed Acheson's decisions to boycott the Constituent Assembly meeting in Jerusalem in early 1949 and endorse the PCC plan.

The debate over Jerusalem did witness, however, a gradual accommodation between the United States and Israel; despite their sparring, the two were increasingly in agreement. The narrowing of differences does not hide, nonetheless, disagreement over the status of Jerusalem between 1949 and 1953. Most works on Truman's foreign policy suggest that he favoured Israel, mainly for domestic political reasons. On the issue of Jerusalem, however, he did not consistently favour Israel: the US-Israeli alignment resulted less from an innate US propensity to back Israel than from the coincidental emergence of common policy objectives.

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