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## ISRAELI-RUSSIAN RELATIONS SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

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**The Collapse of the USSR / Israel Views the Soviet Collapse / Yeltsin's First Year / Yeltsin Expands Ties / A Challenge from Parliament / An Evaluation**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian-Israeli relations have been a high priority for successive Israeli governments. While for most of Israel's existence the Soviet Union had been an avowed enemy of Israel, in the last years of the Gorbachev era there was a major improvement in Soviet-Israeli relations. The two countries restored diplomatic relations which had been severed by Moscow during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and also greatly expanded economic and cultural ties. On the diplomatic front, Moscow moved from a pro-Arab to an evenhanded position in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and also permitted the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews to Israel.

### The Collapse of the USSR

In the year prior to the abortive coup d'etat of August 1991, Soviet Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev moved to the right politically, a process punctuated by Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's December 1990 resignation in protest against Gorbachev's policies. The conservative forces, whose views were being publicly espoused

by *Pravda* and *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, were negatively disposed toward Israel, and this may have been one of the reasons why Gorbachev delayed raising the level of diplomatic relations with Israel to full ambassadorial status, and opposed repeal of the UN "Zionism is Racism" resolution. With the power of the conservatives in eclipse after the coup, however, Gorbachev was freer to move on relations with Israel. Unfortunately for the Soviet leader, however, he was to face many additional problems in the post-coup USSR.

In the aftermath of the abortive coup, the individual republics led by Russia under Boris Yeltsin became increasingly assertive, the Baltic states were given permission to leave the USSR, and Gorbachev found himself in a far weaker political position. The Soviet leader strove to arrange a new union agreement which would preserve his position as the country's leader, but he ran into increasing opposition from both Yeltsin and the leader of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk. In his struggle for political survival, Gorbachev had little time for foreign policy initiatives other than

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to request more economic aid from the West, and to try to draw closer to the United States in an effort to exploit President Bush's warm personal regard for him. As Gorbachev moved to closely align Soviet policy with the United States all over the world and especially in the Middle East, certain of the "old thinkers" in the Soviet foreign policy establishment, such as Yevgeny Primakov, Gorbachev's close adviser, continued to strive for a more independent Soviet position.

Perhaps the most important change in Soviet policy following the coup occurred with respect to Israel. One month after the coup, Moscow reversed its position on the "Zionism is Racism" declaration. Speaking at the UN on September 25, 1991, Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin declared: "The philosophy of new international solidarity signifies, as confirmed in practice, the de-ideologizing of the UN. Our organization has been renewed and it is imperative that once and for all it rejects the legacy of the Ice Age in which Zionism was compared with racism in an odious resolution." Three weeks later, Aeroflot signed an agreement with Israel's quasi-governmental Jewish Agency and Israel's El Al airlines to establish direct immigrant flights from Moscow and St. Petersburg to Tel Aviv.

While neither move was popular either in Arab circles or among Soviet conservatives, the most controversial issue was the reestablishment of full diplomatic relations. Liberal circles in the USSR had long been campaigning for it (Alexander Bovin, later to be Moscow's ambassador to Israel, had campaigned for it in *Izvestia*), while conservatives strongly opposed the move. An *Izvestia* editorial, reflecting the liberal point of view, pointedly noted on September 25, 1991: "We cannot go to the [peace] conference retaining full diplomatic relations with despotic Iraq while refusing to restore such relations with the democratic state of Israel."

Given the cross pressures, Gorbachev delayed the reestablishment of full diplomatic relations with Israel — Israel's price for agreeing to Moscow's co-chairmanship of the peace talks — until literally the last minute. Nonetheless, after two rounds of talks between Pankin and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy in Jerusalem, on October 18, Moscow agreed to reestablish full diplomatic relations. Immediately thereafter, Pankin and U.S. Secretary of State Baker in a joint statement issued in Jerusalem invited Israel, the Arab states, and the Palestinians to attend the Middle East peace conference which was to convene in Madrid less than two weeks later, on October 30, 1991. At the time of Gorbachev's decision to resume full diplomatic relations

there were already 200 Soviet-Israeli joint ventures reportedly at work. Soviet media reports dealing with the decision were aimed, at least in part, at convincing otherwise reluctant members of the Soviet elite and population that the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel would serve to aid the USSR's increasingly faltering economy as well as satisfying the United States.

The Pankin visit to Israel was part of a major post-coup effort by Gorbachev to reassert the Soviet position in the Middle East. Following the coup and the beginning of the disintegration of the USSR (the Baltic states were to get their full independence in early September), cosponsoring an Arab-Israeli peace conference was of particular importance to Gorbachev both for his own prestige and for his argument that keeping the union together enabled the country to play an important role in world affairs. Consequently, Gorbachev dispatched a number of missions to the Middle East from early September until the convening of the Madrid peace conference on October 30, in what appeared to be Moscow's most serious effort to date to help bring about an Arab-Israeli settlement.

The first, led by his Middle East adviser Yevgeny Primakov, had a number of other goals as well. The leaders of the countries he visited — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran and Turkey — had all supported Gorbachev during the coup and Primakov was sent both to give them Gorbachev's personal thanks for their support and to assure them that Gorbachev was now firmly in control. A second goal was to discuss bilateral relations between the USSR and the country visited. Perhaps most important of all, however, Primakov actively sought their financial aid for the faltering Soviet economy.

Soviet-PLO relations were rather sensitive at this time because Farouk Kaddoumi, a high-ranking PLO leader, and a number of other prominent PLO figures had supported the coup, although once the coup had failed Arafat sent a telegram of support to Gorbachev. The PLO ambassador to Moscow, Nabil 'Amr, when asked by *Komsomalskaya Pravda* on September 7 about the Palestinian reaction to the coup, replied: "I will be frank and say that the statements of these Palestinian figures were too hasty.... The official PLO viewpoint set out by the President of Palestine was totally different."

Less than two months after the opening of the Madrid peace conference, the Soviet Union collapsed, to be replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States. During this period the republics of the former

Soviet Union became independent, and a major transformation of Middle East politics took place — one whose outcome is far from clear. Not only was the Soviet Union no longer a unified entity influencing the states of the Middle East, but the states of the region, particularly Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and even Israel, now became engaged in a competition for influence in Central Asia and Transcaucasia.

### Israel Views the Soviet Collapse

The Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir had four major concerns about the collapse of the USSR. First was the fear that, given the desperate economic situation that virtually all the successor states found themselves in, nuclear weapons (on the soil of Russia, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan) might be sold to Israel's Middle East enemies like Syria, Libya, Iraq or Iran, or that nuclear scientists from the former Soviet Union might be persuaded to serve in these countries for far higher salaries than they were capable of earning in their home countries. A related concern was the sale of conventional weapons, which the states of the former Soviet Union had in abundance.

A second potential problem for the Israeli government was concern over any interruption in Jewish emigration to Israel. While arrangements for free emigration had been painfully worked out during the Gorbachev era, there were no guarantees that his successors, particularly in Ukraine and Central Asia, would continue his policy. A third major concern lay in the diplomacy of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The favorable shift in the Soviet position toward Israel, at a time when the United States remained Israel's primary diplomatic, military and economic supporter, greatly enhanced Israel's diplomatic and political position both in the world at large and vis-a-vis its Arab enemies. Nonetheless, there was no guarantee that this trend would continue, and Israeli policy-makers were particularly concerned about the stance of the six new Moslem states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kirgizistan) that had emerged from the Soviet Union. Finally, Israel was hopeful not only of maintaining but also developing the bilateral relations it had established in such areas as trade and cultural relations with many of the now independent states that had been Union Republics in the USSR, the most important of these being Russia.

### Yeltsin's First Year

Boris Yeltsin initially showed very little interest in Middle Eastern questions as he devoted his time and

energy to consolidating his power and to gaining approval in the West — particularly in the United States — for Russia to be the primary inheritor of the Soviet Union's international responsibilities, including its veto power in the United Nations Security Council. Yeltsin's priorities were shown when he failed to attend the multilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks that took place in Moscow in late January 1992, although such a conference had been the goal of Soviet leaders since the 1970s; he chose instead to rally support among Russian sailors in the Black Sea. When Middle East questions did arise, Yeltsin tended to follow the U.S. lead on virtually all issues. Thus on questions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq, and Libya, Yeltsin fully supported U.S. policies. Indeed, the Russian embassy in Libya was attacked because of Moscow's support of the U.S. sanctions initiative, and Russia supplied two warships to help enforce the UN blockade of Iraq.

The one exception to this pattern was continued Russian arms sales to Iran, an enemy not only of the United States but also of Israel. Yeltsin saw such sales as necessary not only to obtain desperately needed hard currency, but also to preclude Iranian efforts to spark Islamic unrest in Moslem areas of Russia such as Tatarstan, to gain Iranian support for the freeing of Russian prisoners of war still being held in Afghanistan, and to exercise influence on a critical state in the Persian Gulf in which the United States had no presence.

Following the Madrid conference, Russian-Israeli relations on a bilateral basis continued to improve. The Russian UN ambassador asked Israel to co-sponsor the entry of former Soviet republics into the United Nations; Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, was permitted to photocopy materials from the Communist party archives dealing with Jewish issues; the President of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences proposed the establishment of a foreign branch of the Academy in Israel; and Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky, the most famous of the former refuseniks now living in Israel, was declared innocent of charges that he had spied for the United States.

The rapidly improving Russian-Israeli relationship was, however, soon to be challenged. After the initial shock of the collapse of the Soviet Union had worn off, criticism of Yeltsin's foreign and domestic policies, especially his willingness to follow the lead of the United States on most foreign policy issues and his efforts to rapidly privatize the Russian economy, began to mount. The opposition centered in the Russian Parliament which had been elected several years before when Russia was still a republic of the Soviet Union.

Essentially, there were three major groups in Parliament. At one end of the political spectrum was the pro-Yeltsin group of legislators who supported his pro-Western foreign policy — including his advocacy of close ties with Israel — and his efforts to privatize the Russian economy. In the center of the political spectrum was a group of legislators who advocated a "Eurasian" emphasis on foreign policy. Headed by the Speaker of Parliament Ruslan Khasbulatov, they advocated a foreign policy which would not be exclusively focused on the United States and Western Europe but would reflect a balance toward all the world's regions. This group for the most part was also favorably inclined toward good ties with Israel, but also wanted to pursue ties with the Arab world. On domestic policy, while still in favor of reform, the centrists advocated a far slower process of privatization. Finally, on the right of the political spectrum were a combination of diehard Communists and ultranationalists. While they differed among themselves on economic policy, they all wanted a powerful, highly centralized Russia that would 1) actively protect Russians living in the so-called "near abroad" (the former states of the Soviet Union), 2) be a major world power, and 3) adopt a confrontational approach toward the United States which they saw as Russia's main enemy. Among the advocates of this position was the clearly anti-Semitic and anti-Israel Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who had placed third in the Russian presidential elections of June 1991. While both the pro-Yeltsin group and the centrists in Parliament supported good relations with Israel, the far right strongly opposed Israel, with Zhirinovskiy (not then in the Russian Parliament) sending "volunteers" from his party to aid Iraq in its confrontation with the United States and Israel. Over the next two years, as the struggle between Yeltsin and his opponents in Parliament grew, relations between Russia and Israel were to become one element of the struggle, although, to be sure, not the central one, as, increasingly, some of the centrists, including Khasbulatov, made common cause with the far right in their efforts to topple Yeltsin.

### Yeltsin Expands Ties

Despite his critics, in 1992 Yeltsin was able to pursue his major foreign policy initiatives without severe opposition, and included among these policies was the rapid development of ties with Israel. Evidence of the rapid development came in late April 1992 when Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, then still an ally of Yeltsin, visited Israel. At the airport he stated: "We consider Israel a very important place

because of the many Russians who now live here. They form a bridge between us that can enable us to broaden our relations." Rutskoi also stated that Russian authorities "should be very tough" with Russian anti-Semites who were trying to do the same thing as the Nazis. Rutskoi's comments, while obviously pleasing to his listeners, may have also been aimed at reassuring Jews back in Russia who were concerned about the anti-Semitic activities of such groups as Pamyat. While Israel wanted Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel, many of the leaders of the new countries wanted the Jews to stay so that their talents could be exploited to rebuild their native countries. At the time, a large number of Jews, seeing the economic difficulties in Israel, had decided to postpone emigration, and Rutskoi's comments could be seen as being aimed at reassuring them.

Following Rutskoi to Israel (Moscow's Mayor Gavril Popov had preceded him by two weeks) was former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who received the peace prize from Israel's Institute of Technology, the Technion, as well as honorary doctorates from two other Israeli universities. In addition to denouncing anti-Semitism, Gorbachev took the opportunity to criticize the Palestinian position during the Gulf War when they had backed Saddam Hussein.

Following Gorbachev's visit came the Israeli election, which was won by Yitzhak Rabin. When Rabin's first year witnessed an upsurge of fighting in Israel's security zone in Lebanon in November 1992, and the expulsion by Israel in December of more than 400 Hamas activists, Russian policy remained even-handed.

In December 1992, pressure from the Congress of Peoples Deputies led to a clear rightward turn in the Russian government, one which compelled Yeltsin to replace Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar with Viktor Chernomyrdin. Yet Israel's new ambassador to Russia, Haim Bar-Lev, continued to be optimistic about Russo-Israeli relations. In an interview published on New Year's Day 1993, Bar-Lev asserted that "Israel is altogether popular here" (in Russia), that the change in prime ministers was unlikely to have a bearing on Russo-Israeli relations, and that he hoped Russia would make the Arabs understand — given Russia's connections with the Arab world — that the Arabs, and especially the Palestinians, would also have to make concessions for there to be a peace settlement.

The early months of 1993 witnessed a temporary turn away from the United States by Yeltsin. In January 1993, in an apparent effort to gain support from his centrist critics in Parliament, Yeltsin distanced

himself from his pro-American Foreign Minister Kozyrev and announced a "balanced" policy for Russia as a "Eurasian state." He also condemned the renewed U.S. bombing of Iraq and asserted that U.S. pressure would not prevent Russia from signing a rocket technology agreement with India. Yet while U.S.-Russian relations chilled, Russian-Israeli relations continued to improve. Ruslan Khasbulatov, now an outspoken opponent of Yeltsin, visited Israel in early January 1993 as part of a trip to the Middle East. He met with Rabin and announced his support for the development of "businesslike cooperation" between Russia and Israel in the "economic, scientific, cultural and other spheres." Khasbulatov also downplayed the impact of the Hamas deportation.

In February 1993, the Russian government approved a draft agreement on scientific and technical cooperation with Israel, although a formal trade agreement had yet to be negotiated. In March came the announcement that Russian nuclear experts were discussing the construction of floating nuclear plants in Israel to help solve the problem of desalinizing sea water, and in April Israeli Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban visited Anatoly Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg, to discuss expanding Israel's cultural ties with St. Petersburg from which many thousands of Jews had emigrated to Israel.

### A Challenge from Parliament

As Israeli-Russian relations deepened, the conflict between Yeltsin and his opponents in Parliament worsened and Russia's ties with Israel became part of the confrontation. *Pravda*, previously the spokesman for Soviet conservatives and now a major organ of Russia's right-wing, on March 13 condemned the Russian government for following the American lead on the Arab-Israeli conflict, noting that "since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the opinion of the Russian delegate at the UN concerning the Middle East situation has never diverged from the opinion of the U.S. delegate however absurd it has been at times." As the date for the climatic popular referendum on Yeltsin's future approached, *Pravda* denounced Israel for its "extensive" influence in Russia and for its support of Yeltsin:

Not a single western country, not even all NATO countries together, has such an extensive network of direct official missions in the USSR as Israel. Only now is the special role which the United States once allocated to Israel in its struggle against the Soviet Union being fully realized.

Israeli press reports...constantly overemphasize

the "anti-Semitic nature" of Yeltsin's opponents... the Israeli mass media are depicting the essence of the referendum as a choice between the liberal democrat Yeltsin and the supporters of Pamyat (an anti-Semitic organization)...Israel's propaganda machine is now working for the victory of President Yeltsin, as usual putting the political interest of the Zionist movement above the genuine interests of Russian Jews.

Yeltsin's victory in the referendum did not slow the parliamentary attacks against him, and, ominously for Israel, a number of the centrist parliamentarians including Khasbulatov and his ally, Vice President Rutskoi, whom Yeltsin was to fire in early September 1993, began to make common cause with the anti-Semitic and anti-Israel "Red-Browns" on the right-wing of the Russian political spectrum during the spring and summer of 1993.

On May 5, 1993, *Pravda* reintroduced the medieval ritual murder charge against Russian Jews who were blamed for the murder of monks on Easter Sunday:

The Levites considered the sacrifice of a gentile on his sacred holiday to be a sign of national and religious might and a solicitation of God's great mercy. The more morally upright the sacrificial victim, the greater God's favor. Therefore they took children and religious figures to be sacrificed. Knife wounds to the armpits and groin were characteristic during the sacrifice. But that's not all. According to numerous investigations, these ritual murders have continued right up to the present day.

For example, among the Hasidim....

The *Pravda* article followed by three months the assertion by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, a high-ranking prelate of the Russian Orthodox Church, that the enemies of Russia were acting according to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (an anti-Semitic forgery).

While the Russian Foreign Ministry quickly denounced the article, there was a sharp increase in the number of anti-Semitic acts in Russia including the desecration of the Moscow Choral Synagogue with swastikas and an attack on the synagogue's cantor. At the same time, the National Salvation Front was formed, composed of hardline Communists and Russian nationalists who blamed Russia's problems on the Jews. Its leaders included Sergei Barburin, Ilya Konstantinov, General Albert Makashov, Valentin Rasputin, and Igor Shafarevich. At the same time, neo-fascists led by Aleksander Barkashov formed the Russian National Union, whose hero was Adolph Hitler and whose goal

was to reestablish the National-Socialist Reich and "free Russians from the grip of world Zionism."

The split between the opposition and Yeltsin grew during the summer, as Yeltsin, strengthened by his victory in the referendum, shifted back to a pro-American stance. Thus, Foreign Minister Kozyrev supported the U.S.'s June 1993 attack on Iraq's intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in response to the Iraqi assassination attempt against former American President George Bush, and Yeltsin acceded to American wishes and agreed to withhold rocket technology from India — moves that were severely condemned by Yeltsin's opponents.

The Declaration of Principles for peace between Israel and the PLO was formally signed at the White House in Washington on September 13, 1993, in the presence of Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, to whom U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was careful to give equal billing.

Russian attention soon shifted back to Yeltsin's confrontation with his enemies in Parliament when on September 21, 1993, frustrated by Parliament's constant sabotaging of his domestic programs, Yeltsin issued a decree dissolving it and announcing new parliamentary elections for December 12. Parliament responded by deposing Yeltsin and declaring Vice President Alexander Rutskoi, once an ally of Yeltsin but now his enemy, President. Yeltsin then sealed off the Parliament, whose leader, Ruslan Khasbulatov, called for public support.

As the crisis developed, it became clear that defending the Parliament had become the goal of large numbers of anti-Semites in Moscow, including swastika-wearing members of the Russian National Union. In the period before full-scale fighting broke out on October 3, numerous interviews were conducted with people manning the barricades around the Parliament. The deputy leader of the Russian National Union, Alexander Denisov, told a *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent, "Russia should be ruled by Russians. Yeltsin isn't a Russian. His wife is a Jew [Not true, R.F.]. The Russian national interest is an alien concept to him." A *New Times* (Moscow) correspondent heard a mob shouting "Let's run over to City Hall. They're handing out shields and clubs there. We'll murder those damned kikes....Chase the kikes out of the Kremlin." Similarly, a *Jerusalem Post* correspondent reported the comments of a 58-year-old woman, Irina Matveyeva: "Zionists have occupied our country. They are strangling us. They don't let us breathe. The Zionists have been behind all of Yeltsin's actions."

One *Washington Post* reporter noted the comments of old-age pensioner Olga Polkad: "Jews are flourishing everywhere in Russia while we are dying. They control everything. Yeltsin is just a puppet in their hands. Television is captured by Jews. Radio Russia is only Jews, and they don't let us say a word." Another *Washington Post* reporter interviewed Anatoly Ageyenko, a member of the National Salvation Front, who asserted that Yeltsin's government was controlled by Jews and that Yeltsin and Gorbachev were part of an international Zionist conspiracy that was to blame for the demise of the Soviet Union. Fortunately for both Israel and Russia's Jewish community, Yeltsin succeeded in defeating the fascist-supported forces of Parliament.

In the December 12 elections, both the Communists and Zhironovsky's anti-Semitic and anti-Israel Liberal Democratic party did surprisingly well, with Zhironovsky's party actually outpolling the pro-Yeltsin Peoples Choice party of Yegor Gaidar, although a number of observers saw the support for Zhironovsky more as a protest vote against the deteriorating Russian economy and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a superpower, than as a vote in support of fascism or anti-Semitism. Ironically, it was revealed after the election that Zhironovsky, whose father was apparently Jewish, had requested an invitation to emigrate to Israel in 1983. Yet despite the Zhironovsky victory, Yeltsin succeeded in winning approval for a new constitution that appeared to strengthen his hand vis-a-vis parliamentary efforts to oppose his foreign policies.

It first appeared as if the new Parliament might challenge Yeltsin almost as much as the old one did, and in one of its first acts the lower house of Parliament, the Duma, which was controlled by a coalition of Communists and right-wing nationalists, pardoned not only the participants in the October 1993 uprising against Yeltsin, but also those in the August 1991 abortive coup d'etat against Gorbachev.

Unlike the confrontational pattern of his relations with the old Parliament, however, Yeltsin sought to work with the new Parliament. Thus, he again removed from his government the controversial Yegor Gaidar (whom he had brought back in September 1993) and began to adopt a foreign policy line more independent of the U.S. He became far more assertive in protecting Russian interests in the "near abroad," using military and economic pressure to try to bring such recalcitrant states as Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan into line. In addition, he openly confronted the United States in Bosnia and succeeded in checking (with

British and French help) President Clinton's plans to take punitive military action against the Bosnian Serbs and the Serbian regime.

The Middle East was also to see unilateral intervention by Yeltsin, although it seemed more aimed at satisfying Yeltsin's domestic opposition than at challenging the U.S.-led Arab-Israeli peace process. Following the February 25, 1994, incident in Hebron where 29 Arabs were killed at the Cave of the Patriarchs, Yeltsin urged a return to Madrid to save the peace talks and supported the introduction of international observers to protect the Palestinians. He further invited both Arafat and Rabin to Moscow to demonstrate Russia's centrality as a cosponsor of the peace talks. Yet Moscow soon abandoned its "Madrid 2" plan, and the PLO and Israel soon returned to the peace talks after a token international presence was temporarily positioned in Hebron. In sum, while becoming more assertive in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world following the December 1993 Russian election, Yeltsin continued to maintain close ties with Israel and to cooperate with the United States in the Middle East peace process.

#### An Evaluation

The development of Russian-Israeli relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been quite positive, from the Israeli point of view. Economic and cultural relations continue to expand, Jews continue to be allowed to leave Russia in large numbers, Russia is supportive of Israeli interests in the Middle East peace process, and there is no evidence of Russia selling atomic weaponry to any of Israel's Middle Eastern enemies, although Moscow's continued sale of conventional arms to Iran and Syria and its willingness to help transship weapons from North Korea to Syria is an irritant in the Russian-Israeli relationship.

From the Russian point of view, cooperation with Israel offers several benefits. First, Israeli economic assistance, especially in the agricultural sector, holds out the promise of help for the hard-pressed Russian economy. Second, cooperation with Israel, whose ties to the United States have been greatly strengthened following Rabin's victory in the June 1992 Israeli election, help to reinforce Russian-American relations. Finally, the frequent visits of Russian leaders to Israel and Israeli leaders to Russia, as well as the prominent position accorded to Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev at the signing of the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn, help to demonstrate Russia's continued importance in world affairs, something Yeltsin, like Gorbachev before him, hopes to exploit to strengthen his domestic position.

Ironically, the closeness of Russian-Israeli relations is one of the major criticisms leveled at Yeltsin by his parliamentary opponents who, allied with clearly anti-Semitic and anti-Israel elements, sought to topple Yeltsin from power in early October 1993. Fortunately for both Russia's Jews and Russian-Israeli relations, Yeltsin defeated his parliamentary opponents, although the strong showing of Zhironovsky indicates that forces opposed to close Israeli-Russian relations are still powerful in the Russian body politic. In any case, it is clear that Israeli leaders will have to pay close attention to trends in Russian domestic politics as they seek to further develop Israel's ties with Russia.

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**Israel at the Polls, 1992**

*Edited by Daniel J. Elazar and Shmuel Sandler*

*Israel at the Polls, 1992* is the fifth book in the "Israel at the Polls" series begun in 1977 with the "upset" in the Israeli elections that brought down the Labor government which had ruled in Israel since the founding of the state. In the 1992 elections Labor returned as the ruling party and this book looks at the question of whether those elections mark the beginning of a new era in Israeli politics. Thirteen essays evaluate the downfall of Likud and the "national" camp, the major and minor parties, and the Israeli Arab and ex-Soviet Jewish vote, as well as the impact of the elections on foreign policy, the Israeli army, the economy, the style of the media campaign, and the role of interest groups. Special chapters focus on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's personality and style of leadership and review the first year and a half of the Rabin government.

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield and JCPA, 1995, 359 pp.

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**Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel:  
Biblical Foundations and Jewish Expressions**

*Volume 1 of The Covenant Tradition in Politics*

*Daniel J. Elazar*

The covenants of the Bible are the founding covenants of Western civilization. They have their beginnings in the need to establish clear and binding relationships between God and humans and among humans. These relationships are primarily political in character in that they were designed to establish lines of authority, distributions of power, and systems of law. This first volume of a trilogy addresses political uses of the idea of covenant, the tradition that has adhered to that idea, and the political arrangements that flow from it. The volume represents an in-depth exploration of biblical sources of the covenant tradition, its development in Scripture, and subsequently in Jewish history and thought. It traces the interconnections between ideas, culture, and behavior as well as between peoples and generations. Among the topics covered are covenant as a political concept, the Bible as a political commentary, the post-biblical tradition, medieval covenant theory, and Jewish political culture.

New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1994, 536pp.; \$49.95

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**Federal Systems of the World:  
A Handbook of Federal, Confederal and Autonomy Arrangements**  
*Second Edition, Revised and Expanded*

*Written and Edited by Daniel J. Elazar and the JCPA Staff*

Of the over 180 politically sovereign states now in existence, 50 are either federations or include within them forms of self-determination and self-government which represent extensions of the federal principle or applications of the idea of political autonomy. The previous edition of this handbook (1991) represented the first major effort to inventory and describe all known examples of federal and autonomous arrangements, compare their basic features, and classify them by form. This fully updated edition documents the extensive changes in the state system in recent years, including the dramatic events in the former USSR, Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the European Community/Union.

Longman Current Affairs (UK), 1994, 380 pages.