# ABSTRACT

# DATE: August, 2001

# This paper examines certain core religious beliefs of Orthodox Judaism that serve as a permanent obstacle to full implementation of the 1993 Oslo accord. The religious beliefs and political ideology of Israel’s Orthodox Jews have sought to obstruct implementation of the Oslo agreement primarily because rabbinical Orthodox interpretations of Judaic law found in the *Torah, Talmud* and *Halacha* prohibit Jews from sharing power with non-Jews in the land of Israel. In addition, the Orthodox believe that the land in the West Bank, taken by military force in the June 1967 Six Day War, must be fully annexed and incorporated asthe land of Greater Israel.

# The success of the religious parties in the 1996 and 1999 Israeli national elections vastly increased the influence of Orthodox Jews in the Israeli political process. This shift of power has adversely affected substantive negotiations with the Palestinians involving implementation of the Oslo accord. Politically influential and highly visible Orthodox rabbis seek to convince Israel’s religiously observant Jews that the arrival of the Messiahis imminent only if Jews establish themselves as sole rulers in the biblical land of Israel. Orthodox rabbis and their followers believe that it is the destiny of this generation of Jews to prepare the way for the Messiah by securing and occupying all of this biblically designated land identified as Judea and Samaria and known to the rest of the world as the West Bank.

# The Orthodox believe that full implementation of the 1993 Oslo accord, predicated on full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, denies the Messiah the exact pre-conditions necessary for His arrival that will begin the process of Messianic Redemption and allow God to redeem the Jews as His chosen people. The Orthodox believe that any Israeli government compromise to return biblical lands to the Palestinians in exchange for a peace agreement is, in the eyes of God, a treacherous and a punishable act.

# The Orthodox are committed to derailing all Israeli government and international peace initiatives that would force them to give up any aspect of Jewish sovereignty, political autonomy and administrative control over all of Israel’s biblical land. Judaic imperatives to control the land, and to create a theocratic Jewish nation governed according to the Torah and tenets of Orthodox Judaism is, in their view, a direct commandment by God.

# In spite of Israel’s original 1948 Declaration of Independence that proclaims equality for all Israeli citizens, both Jew and non-Jew alike, many religiously observant Orthodox and ultra- Orthodox Jews totally reject all proposals and initiatives that would allow the non-Jew sovereignty and control over significant portions of the land of Israel. As long as the core beliefs and religious ideology of Orthodox Judaism remain valid for a politically active 20% of the Israeli Jewish population, the Oslo accord has little chance of survival in the current government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

**ORTHODOX JUDAISM**

**AND THE OSLO PEACE PROCESS**

by

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# U.S. Department of State

# PGIP Class 2001

# Unclassified thesis submitted to the Faculty

# of the Joint Military Intelligence College

# in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

# Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence

# August 2001

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