Strategic ASSESSMENT

Strategic
ASSESSMENT

CONTENTS

Strategic ASSESSMENT

The purpose of *Strategic Assessment* is to stimulate and enrich the public debate on issues that are, or should be, on Israel's national security agenda.

Strategic Assessment is a quarterly publication comprising policy-oriented articles written by INSS researchers and guest contributors. The views presented here are those of the authors alone.

The Institute for National Security Studies is a public benefit company.

Abstracts

"Iran First" or "Syria First": What Lies between the Iranian and Syrian Crises / Amos Yadlin

Bashar al-Assad's regime continues to slaughter the Syrian people, yet the international community has done little except issue weak statements of condemnation, convene useless commissions, and draft ineffectual plans. This article examines three policy options regarding Syria: "sit and wait" − avoiding preemptive, high signature activity in both arenas and waiting for conditions to ripen for regime change from within; "Iran first" − avoiding active intervention in the Syrian arena in order to preserve global focus on Iran; and "Syria first" − concentrating political efforts on the Syrian arena to topple the Assad regime, thereby also weakening Iran's regional power. The essay compares the options, in the effort to arrive at the strategic alternative that is both best suited to Western values and has the most realistic foundations.

Egypt after Morsi's Victory in the Presidential Elections / Shlomo Brom

Potential developments in Egypt after Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the presidential elections are cause for concern in Israel and the West, as some of the dire predictions made when President Mubarak was ousted are ostensibly becoming reality. The Islamic wave hijacked the revolution, flooding Egypt in its wake. It is difficult for Israel to imagine that such a regime will not be hostile to Israel, given the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and the popularity of anti-Israel policies in Egypt and the Arab world in general The purpose of this essay is to examine possible developments in Egypt and consider whether they are indeed as grave as might be suspected, assess the possible ramifications for Israel, and propose some initial ideas regarding Israeli policy.

Revival of the Periphery Concept in Israel's Foreign Policy? / Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauss

One of Israel's most notable political moves of recent years has been its reaching out to states on the Middle Eastern periphery in order to strengthen ties with them. This essay surveys the political constellation that seems to be forming, and focuses on Israel's relations with Greece, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and South Sudan. It considers the contribution of this alignment at the security-intelligence level, as well as at the political and economic levels. Although the importance of the current alignment is limited both because of these states' security, economic, and political circumstances and their relatively low international status, it seems that Israel attributes much significance to these relations in light of the possible ramifications of changes occurring in the region, the chronic instability marking the Arab sphere, and the growing strength of the radical Islamic elements.

Authority and Responsibility on the Civilian Front / Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler

Recent rounds of escalation in southern Israel exposed several troubling issues concerning relations and cooperation between organizations involved in managing the civilian front, and in particular, the Home Front Command and the local governments. This is an acute issue because mutual understanding and systemic collaboration are cornerstones for successful management of the campaign on the civilian front. This article analyzes the problematic dynamics that emerged in the recent rounds of escalation regarding authority and responsibility for the civilian front in general, and studies in particular the complex question of school closings during emergencies. The analysis is the basis for recommendations for building a tighter, more effective system.

From Vision to Reality: Tangible Steps toward a Two-State Solution / Gilead Sher

Although engrossed in the Iranian threat, Israel must continue to seek possibilities to renew the dialogue with the Palestinians, at least on transitional arrangements. If this attempt to reach understandings with the Palestinians fails, Israel should begin gradual, controlled, and measured implementation of unilateral steps. This article deals with

"how," proposing steps to actually create a reality of two national states. Among these measures: a construction freeze of Jewish settlements east of the security fence; a voluntary evacuation-compensation law; plans for absorption of those evacuated, and more. By promoting a reality of two states in a non-contingent manner, Israel will deliver a message that it does not see its future in territories east of the fence, without jeopardizing its security during and after the transition stages.

A Conceptual Framework and Decision Making Model for Israel about Iran / Amos Yadlin

Analysis of the Iranian nuclear issue demands a logical conceptual framework and a clear, transparent decision making model for the authorized decision making forum. One may point to five possible strategies to block, neutralize, or significantly delay Iranian military nuclearization: negotiations over an agreement, crippling sanctions, covert action, a military strike, and regime change. A sixth strategy, containment and deterrence, accepts a nuclear Iran. The first five strategies, designed to thwart an Iranian military nuclear program, complement and support one another. This article presents a conceptual approach that can enable Israel to navigate the various strategic options as it works to avoid either of the two extreme options: an Iranian bomb and the bombing of Iran.

Israel and the Palestinians: Policy Options Given the Infeasibility of Reaching a Final Status Agreement / Shlomo Brom

Policy options regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are among the main bones of contention in Israeli politics. At the same time, over the years a solid majority has developed in Israeli society agreeing that the preferred alternative for settling the conflict is separation from the Palestinians and implementation of a two-state solution to ensure Israel's existence as the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people. The purpose of this article is to examine Israeli policy options toward the Palestinians and the extent to which they bring Israel closer to a two-state reality. The main finding from a comparison of the options is that the unilateral option is reemerging as the preferred choice.

The Uprisings in the Arab World and their Ramifications for Israel / Mark A. Heller

The wave of protests, popular demonstrations, and anti-regime uprisings grouped under the rubric "Arab Spring" that spread over much of the Arab world has prompted a wave of speculations about future developments. Much of this analytical activity has focused on the presumed causes of what appears to be a sharp departure from the stability or quiescence that characterized Middle Eastern politics over the previous decades, and on the likely consequences across the region. While Israel is obviously unable to determine the outcomes of what are essentially domestic dynamics or even influence their course and direction, it can, however, take steps to mitigate their potentially threatening or dangerous ramifications.

Relations between Israel and the United States before and after the Presidential Elections / Oded Eran

Israel's relationship with the United States is one of the most important building components of Israel's political, security, and economic strategic situation. Israel puts tremendous effort into maintaining and nurturing this relationship, as it has no substitute on the international arena. The alliance and partnership between Israel and the United States are founded on a shared set of values and mutual strategic benefits. This article reviews some of the primary issues on the current US-Israel agenda, and considers measures that Israel might take to bolster the alliance at the political level. It also considers possibilities for stronger ties with the American Jewish community and other population sectors in the United States.

"Iran First" or "Syria First":
What Lies between the Iranian and Syrian Crises

Amos Yadlin

Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria continues to slaughter the Syrian people, yet despite more than 15,000 victims to date and hundreds of new fatalities every week the international community has done little except issue weak statements of condemnation, convene useless commissions, and draft irrelevant and ineffectual plans. The long list of excuses for the lack of effective action is somewhat reminiscent of the list of reasons for the passivity vis-à-vis the Iranian military nuclear program.

The dominant approach on military intervention in Syria currently guiding the West is "sit and wait." At the heart of the opposition to a proactive stance and the deference to caution lie the lessons learned in Afghanistan and Iraq. Another central argument against active involvement in Syria is concern about interference with the more important campaign of stopping the Iranian nuclear project. Nevertheless, precisely now, when senior members of Assad's regime are warning that the assassination of the four military leaders by the rebels will prompt the army to resort to unrestrained force,[1] and in light of the attacks on urban areas with conventional weapons and the concern lest chemical weapons target areas under rebel control, the international community must act before it is too late.

In an effort to assess what is the optimal policy regarding the most urgent issues facing the Middle East in mid 2012, namely, the Iranian nuclear issue and the Syrian crisis, this article examines three main policy options: one, diplomacy, caution, and consensus, i.e., "sit and wait" – avoiding preemptive, high signature activity in both arenas out of fear of "unanticipated results" and waiting for conditions to ripen for

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin is the Executive Director of INSS.

regime change from within the two nations; two, "Iran first" − avoiding active intervention in the Syrian arena in order to preserve global focus on the campaign against Iran, on the understanding that this is the more significant strategic challenge of the two; three, "Syria first" − concentrating political efforts on the Syrian arena to topple the Assad regime, thereby also weakening Iran's regional power. The proponents of these alternatives offer moral as well as pragmatic arguments based on Western interests. This essay will compare the options by analyzing their underlying arguments, in the effort to arrive at the strategic alternative that is both best suited to Western values and has the most realistic foundations.

"Sit and Wait"

The proponents of a "sit and wait" policy call for avoiding any significant intervention in Syria's internal affairs, beyond the low signature activity already underway. In their view, massive external intervention is liable to have negative ramifications.[2]

As the West's experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has shown, foreign intervention in another nation does not end with the toppling of the regime. Foreign elements that intervene are responsible for effecting the transformation to a democratic form of government, rebuilding the nation, and maintaining stability against those who would seek to undermine it. Western intervention is liable to lead to a complete collapse of governing institutions and increase chaos and violence by one ethnic group against another. The West, led by the American President who is in the midst of a reelection campaign, is afraid of these ramifications at a time when the bitter failure in Iraq and the inglorious withdrawal are still fresh in people's minds, the withdrawal from Afghanistan is not yet complete, the fate of Libya after the West toppled Qaddafi is still unclear, and Western economies are dealing with the fallout from the global economic crisis. Therefore, opponents of intervention in Syria would like to avoid becoming mired there and taking responsibility for the fate of yet another Muslim country. According to them, the Obama administration is seeking to shun intervention,

> The demand for foreign intervention in Syria has not gained international legitimacy, a key principle in the Obama doctrine.

especially before the November elections, because of the political cost the President may have to pay.

In light of Turkey's attempts to hinder an international military campaign against Assad's regime, the American doctrine of "leading from behind" as in Libya is less relevant here. Turkey's foreign policy approach is founded on the "zero problems with its neighbors" philosophy and the use of force as a last resort.[3] Thus despite Turkey's desire to expand its regional influence and stop the murder of Sunnis in Syria, Turkey fears a confrontation that would damage its political and economic ties with its two largest oil suppliers – Russia and Iran. In addition, Turkey is wary of increased tension with Kurdish terrorist organizations that could result from Assad's fall.

Another central argument focuses on the legitimacy of taking action. The demand for foreign intervention in Syria has not gained international legitimacy, a key principle in the Obama doctrine. As long as Russian and Chinese opposition precludes a UN Security Council resolution, and as long as the Arab League has not issued public calls for Western help or granted permission to intervene in other Muslim nations, such as the permission to intervene in Libya, there is no international legitimacy for Western intervention in Syria's internal affairs. There is little likelihood that the American administration would deviate from the principle requiring "broad legitimacy to act."[4]

Another argument contends that the Syrian opposition does not represent a practical or effective alternative, as there is no leader or group controlling opposition activity slated to replace Assad after his fall. There are no clear geographical boundaries between regime opponents and supporters, it is difficult to understand the nature of the various Syrian opposition factions, and their connection to the West is amorphous.[5] In light of this, the argument holds, it is hard to determine whom to support to ensure that Assad's replacement cooperates with the West and is not worse than he.[6] Those opposed to any action argue that Syria is unlike the Libyan arena where the West was a clear partner in leading the resistance to the regime. Therefore, one should allow internal processes to take their course, and hope that they will enable regime change without external intervention liable to exacerbate the crisis in the country.

Further support for the "sit and wait" approach lies in the claim that Western intervention in Syria would be counterproductive, as it might

actually strengthen the regime. Western intervention would serve as a propaganda tool for the Assad regime to claim that his nation is under attack by foreign forces, that the rebels are supported by the United States and Israel, and that the Syrian people are being denied their right to determine their own future; therefore, the regime's job is to defend Syria against Western occupation. This would ultimately broaden the legitimacy base of Assad's regime and, conversely, damage the legitimacy of the Syrian opposition.[7]

In addition, a major pragmatic reason against intervention is the complex challenge of confronting the Syrian army because of the size of the Syrian ORBAT and the more advanced weaponry than any the West had to deal with in Libya. Unlike in Libya, the West's forces would have a much more difficult time operating in Syrian skies. The Syrian air force numbers several hundred planes and the Syrian military has advanced Russian aerial defenses the West has not yet faced.[8] Moreover, Western forces would be compelled to operate against a country with one of the world's largest chemical and biological weapons stockpiles. Syria also has an extensive arsenal of ballistic missiles and long range rockets.[9] Because Syria is much smaller than Libya, the Syrian military can be expected to present a much more formidable challenge to the Western forces trying to intervene in order to guarantee buffer or no-fly zones.

Thus the need for international legitimacy, the absence of a cohesive Syrian coalition, and the concern over Syrian capabilities underlie the "sit and wait" approach.[10] These arguments were cited explicitly by President Obama in a press conference in March 2012 to justify an American policy of non-intervention in Syria.[11]

"Iran First"

The proponents of an "Iran first" policy in part include the camp opposed to significant foreign intervention in Syria, and to the arguments cited above add the negative implications that foreign intervention in Syria would have on the international campaign against Iran.[12] First, they say, opening a Syrian front would damage the momentum of the sanctions process against Iran. World attention would be diverted to Syria and events there. The world's limited capabilities to handle two arenas simultaneously would buy Iran time to continue its military nuclear program. Secretary of State Clinton hinted at this when she spoke about

confronting the Iranian challenge, stating that it was "far more important really than how we resolve the Syrian issue."[13] In addition, taking on Russia's support for the Assad regime in public is liable to deepen the rifts within the P5+1[14] and damage one of the most important achievements in the international campaign against Iran, namely Russia and China joining the West in facing Iran at the negotiations table. This concern is justified in light of the single minded allegiance Moscow has displayed towards Assad's regime – three vetoes cast in the UN Security Council – and Russian interests in Syria.[15]

An additional concern is that expanding the campaign against Assad would lead to a spillover of events beyond Syria's border and spark a regional war. Henry Kissinger, for example, has warned against military intervention in Syria, liable to lead to a regional confrontation.[16] Expanding support for the opposition would represent an immediate threat to Assad's regime and would serve as justification for other elements such as Iran and Hizbollah, interested in the current Syrian regime's survivability, to join the fray. Threats issued by Hizbollah's Hassan Nasrallah that a war in Syria would spread beyond the confines of its borders, and by the current speaker of the Iranian parliament[17] that "if the West attacks Syria, Israel will suffer," strengthen the claim that a significant international move against Assad's regime is liable to increase existing tensions with Iran and its proxies on the one hand, and the Middle East allies of Israel and the United States on the other, and lead to an undesirable result – namely, regional war. Since the West, headed by the United States, would like to avoid that scenario as it tries to confront Iran's military nuclear project, there is no rationale in promoting involvement in the Syrian arena, whose importance to Israeli and Western interests in the region is far less than the Iranian issue.

> Examination of the link between Western interests in Syria and Western interests in Iran indicates that among the policy alternatives, intervention in Syria is the preferred alternative for promoting Western interests in the region.

"Syria First"

The pragmatic and realistic arguments underpinning the two approaches described above point out the risks inherent in foreign intervention, but broader examination of the link between Western interests in

Syria and Western interests in Iran indicates that among the three policy alternatives, intervention in Syria is the preferred alternative for promoting Western interests in the region.

The West has the moral obligation to try to stop the bloodshed taking place in Syria where innocent citizens of all ethnic groups are subject to war crimes perpetrated by a brutal regime, "justified" by claims of sovereignty and the legitimate control of internal affairs. In 2005, the UN established that "the responsibility to protect" (R2P) should be an accepted norm in international law. The UN determined that if a country fails to fulfill its basic obligation to protect its own citizens against crime and mass atrocities,[18] the international community is obligated to intervene even if this means using force to stop the atrocities. This decision formed the moral basis for international intervention in Libya, and it obligates the leaders of the West, mandated to defend Western values, to act in concert with the Arab League and within UN institutions to promote a sustainable, quick solution to end the bloodshed in Syria.[19] Were Russia and China to agree, a move of this sort would best be made in the context of the Security Council. However, should Moscow and Beijing continue to defend Assad's murderous regime to protect their interests in Syria, "responsibility to protect" would afford the basis for legitimacy for external intervention in Syria.

Beyond the moral justification, other weighty arguments call for greater proactivism vis-à-vis Syria. First, toppling Assad's regime would irreparably damage the central component in the Tehran-Damascus-Beirut axis, thereby reducing Iran's influence on the Levant.[20] Syria is the geographical and political linchpin connecting the Iranian leadership with its proxies in region – Hizbollah and Palestinian terrorist organizations. The tension that emerged between Hamas' leadership in Damascus and Assad's regime is an example of the challenges the "axis of evil" in the region faces because of the ongoing upheaval in Syria. In an interview with CNN, Defense Minister Ehud Barak claimed that toppling Assad would upset the balance of power among Iran's allies and enemies in the area and weaken Iran's regional influence.[21] Since Iran is seeking

> The potential loss of control over developments in Syria and potential regional escalation compel intervention designed to put out the flames while it is still possible to do so.

to expand its regional hegemony and spread the Islamic revolution throughout the area, damaging its regional alliance means promoting regional stability. This is a crucial Western interest, and it would likewise bolster the campaign against the Iranian nuclear program, support for the peace process, and Western efforts to promote stability in the Middle East, particularly in light of the instability of the last year and a half.[22]

Second, the West must stop the bloodshed before the circles of violence widen and lead to utter lack of control in the country. Expanded circles of violence in Syria broaden the scope of the ethnic struggle. Every day the massacres continue, the violence draws in more bereaved families and tribes seeking revenge of the Alawites for the deeds of the regime. Had Assad stepped down a year ago, reconciliation and reconstruction in Syria would have been much more easily accomplished. As the circle of violence expands, the chances for limiting bloodshed in Syria during the confrontation with Assad's regime diminish, and the potential ability to attain stability, public order, and an ordered process of transformation to a democratic form of government declines. In other words, the longer the violence lasts and the broader its repercussions, the more Syria approaches the point at which it will be drawn into a civil war that will split the country along ethnic and religious lines and damage the chances for national rehabilitation after Assad's fall.

Indeed, ethnic identity is a key issue in the Middle East and therefore represents a regional tinderbox liable to explode as a result of the events in Syria. Recent violence in Lebanon testifies to the volatile situation there and the danger of spillover of ethnic tension from Syria into other nations in the region,[23] especially those marked by instability, among them Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. Therefore, for fear of escalating the struggle within and outside Syria's borders, the opponents of intervention in Syria are in fact encouraging a policy rife with risk for realizing this very scenario given the lack of control over events. The potential loss of control over developments in Syria and potential regional escalation compel intervention designed to put out the flames while it is still possible to do so.

Another argument in favor of external intervention in Syria is that the West must act to contain the chances that Assad will use his stockpile of chemical weapons. This perilous scenario could become reality should Assad and the military elite feel they are on the verge of defeat and decide

to use WMD as a last resort or hand it over to terrorist organizations to do the job for them. The probability of such a scenario has increased as a result of the blow Assad took when four senior members of his security establishment were assassinated by the rebels. Moreover, the more the regime loses the ability to control events, the more the Syrian army loses its ability to maintain control of their bases. Desertions and defections against Assad's oppressive regime, chaos in the chain of command of the Syrian army, or successful attacks by opposition elements on army bases – all of these could also lead to a situation in which Syria's chemical weapons end up in the hands of extremists who could use it either in Syria or against Western targets. Inserting forces into Syria or attacking WMD sites from the air would help contain this major risk.[24]

Moreover, significant Western intervention in Syria would signal the willingness of the nations of the West to preserve their values and interests in the Middle East in the face of totalitarian regimes. A signal of this kind persuaded Iran's leadership to suspend its military nuclear program when the United States and its allies invaded Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003.[25] However, nine years ago, the Iranian issue was not at the top the global agenda. Today, when the international community is preoccupied with the Iranian military nuclear program, such a signal could serve as a persuasive incentive for the Iranian leadership to stop the program, or at least begin serious negotiations with the West to arrive at an agreement ensuring the civilian nature of the program and guaranteeing against breakout towards the bomb. Those who would concede the Syrian issue out of concern for the international campaign against Iran do not consider that the lack of a

Action in Syria is likely to lead to better strategic conditions in the Iranian arena.

Western response to Assad's problematic policy is liable to be interpreted as Western weakness and could end up, given the West's inability to respond effectively and resolutely to the conduct of the Syrian regime, encouraging Tehran to entrench itself further, continue its defiance, and advance its nuclear project.

In terms of the question of Syria's future leadership, the "Syria first" policy offers a better response than the option proposed by the opponents of Western intervention. Precisely because there is no opposition element in Syria that is strong enough for the West to work with and rely on after Assad's fall, it is necessary to map the elements operating in Syria now

and strengthen those that can reasonably be expected to work with the West. This should not be left to chance. The rise of Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt points to the need for Western influence that would guarantee stability and ensure democratic values in the future to the extent possible. Those who oppose foreign intervention in Syria ignore the fact that Assad already tried and failed to enlist the support of the Syrian people by claiming he was defending Syria against Western and terrorist elements seeking to conquer it.[26] The opponents of "Syria first" want to prevent unnecessary escalation and the investment of Western resources in a less important Islamic country at a time of political and economic uncertainty, but their approach ignores the fact that avoiding the limited use of force is ironically liable to lead to more destructive and undesirable results, which would entail much more massive intervention in the future or the need to forfeit Western interests in the region altogether.

Conclusion: "Syria First" against Damascus and Tehran

There are three prevalent Western policy approaches regarding Syria in light of the campaign against Iran's nuclear program: avoiding military intervention in both arenas; sacrificing the Syrian issue in favor of maintaining momentum in the campaign against Iran; and concentrating efforts on Syria in order to create better conditions for the campaign against Iran on the day after Assad's fall. While the first two conclude that one should not intervene to stop the massacre taking place in Syria, the third approach, in favor of significant external intervention in Syria, is likely the best alternative for the West. In addition, there is a strong connection between the Syrian and Iranian arenas: action in Syria is likely to lead to better strategic conditions in the Iranian arena. This conclusion is important in light of statements made by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton explaining that a campaign in Syria is "complex" and does not allow intervention, as was the case in Libya, and warning that foreign intervention in Syria is liable to detract from the West's efforts in the central struggle, i.e., against Iran.

At the same time, it is important to note what is not called for, namely, a ground incursion into Syria along the lines of Iraq and Afghanistan. "Boots on the ground" are not in order here. Rather, the international military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and in Libya in

2011 is the preferred model: a Western aerial force paving the way for regime change. Should it be necessary to insert ground troops, there is both rationale and probability that a designated Turkish-Muslim force would carry out missions in the framework of a broad campaign led by the West. Thus the recommended strategy here comprises gradual steps to persuade Assad that a military move is possible, realistic, and credible: from moving forces (aircraft carriers to the Mediterranean, Turkish divisions to the Syrian border, and so on), through undertaking photographic and intelligence gathering sorties and declaring no fly zones and humanitarian corridors, to attacking Syrian aerial defenses. In an extreme scenario, Syrian centers of government might be attacked, such as the attacks on Qaddafi's stronghold in Bab al-Azizia.

Most of all, it is essential that Assad recognize that he is not immune to international intervention. Only if Assad understands that the West is serious in its intentions and resolute in seeing them through, even if this requires the use of military means, will there be a reasonable chance for an agreement leading to his ouster and an end to the bloodshed. This would prevent the breakout of a massive civil war, which will be nearly impossible to contain, and make it extremely difficult to transition to a more democratic model of governance and state rehabilitation.

Notes

1   E.g., "Tanks Roll on Damascus as Violence Reigns," *al-Jazeera*, July 19, 2012.

2   E.g., Henry Kissinger claims that American intervention should be limited to humanitarian assistance. Henry A. Kissinger, "Syrian Intervention Risks Upsetting Global Order," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2012. See also Joseph S. Nye, "The Intervention Dilemma," *Project Syndicate*, June 8, 2012.

3   For an in-depth look at a discussion about desirable Turkish policy, see Ömer Taşpinar, "Explaining Turkey's Inaction in Syria," *Today's Zaman*, May 6, 2012; Can Kasapoğlu, "Is Turkey Getting Dragged into War with Syria?" BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 170, April 18, 2012.

4   In an interview with Charlie Rose, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton insisted on the importance of the Arab League and the UN Security Council for earning legitimacy for the international community's policy on Syria. See "Conversations on Diplomacy Moderated by Charlie Rose," June 20, 2012, http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/06/193554.htm.

5   The central argument deals with the blurring of boundaries between the national Syrian opposition and terrorist organizations operating under the guise of being the opposition. James R. Clapper, Director of National

Intelligence, noted al-Qaeda efforts to infiltrate the opposition. See Greg Miller, "Al-Qaeda Infiltrating Syrian Opposition, U.S. Officials Say," *Washington Post,* February 16, 2012.

6   Secretary of State Clinton, in the same interview with Charlie Rose, explained that the lack of a single dominant leadership within the Syrian opposition is a major problem in promoting American assistance to the opposition.

7   Secretary of State Clinton buttressed this argument specifically in the interview with Charlie Rose when referring to the American administration's support for the Green movement's protests in Iran in 2009. According to Clinton, the American administration received clear messages from Iranian opposition elements that the message of support from the United States had damaged the legitimacy of their activity.

8   Particularly the "double digit" surface-to-air missiles SA-17, SA-19, and SA-22.

9   INSS, "Military Balance Files- Syria." See http://www.inss.org.il/weapons.php?cat=283.

10 For example, Steve Jones used these arguments to explain why the United States must avoid intervening in Syria. Steve Jones, "Why No U.S. Intervention in Syria?" http://usforeignpolicy.about.com/od/middleeast/a/Why-No-U-S-Intervention-In-Syria.htm.

11 The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Press Conference by the President: March 6, 2012." See http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/06/press-conference-president.

12 An example of this approach is Aaron David Miller's essay warning that even limited intervention in Syria to create security zones is liable to damage the campaign against Iran's military nuclear project. See "Creating Syria Safe Zones is a Dangerous Step toward War," *Bloomberg*, May 13, 2012.

13 In her interview with Charlie Rose, Clinton said, "I just think the Iranian issue there is far more important really than how we resolve the Syrian issue."

14 The P5+1 consists of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the United States, Russia, China, Britain, and France) plus Germany.

15 For more on Russian interests in Syria, see Zvi Magen, *Russia and the Middle East: Policy Challenges*, Memorandum No. 118 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, June 2012), http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1338982400.pdf. See also Alex Khlebnikov, "Why is Russia Standing by Syria," *Tel Aviv Notes* 5, no. 18, September 26, 2011.

16 Kissinger, "Syrian Intervention Risks Upsetting Global Order."

17 Roee Nahmias, "Nasrallah: If you Attack Iran, Expect a Comprehensive War," *Yediot Ahronot*, November 11, 2011; "Iran Threatens: If the West Attacks in Syria, Israel will Suffer," *Maariv*, May 30, 2012.

18 In determining this norm, the decision was made to include genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing on the list. United Nations General Assembly, "2005 World Summit Outcome," United Nations General Assembly, Sixtieth session, items 48 and 121 of the provisional agenda. Available at http://www.who.int/hiv/universalaccess2010/worldsummit.pdf.

19 Although this decision formed the basis for legitimacy in the Libyan intervention, Nye, "The Intervention Dilemma," claims that "the responsibility to protect" refers primarily to "soft power" (i.e., diplomacy) rather than violent means of enforcement.

20 Benedetta Berti and Yoel Guzansky, "Crushing the Radical Axis," *National Interest,* January 26, 2012.

21 "CNN's Amanpour: Interview with Ehud Barak," *CNN*, April 19, 2012. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1204/19/ampr.01.html.

22 James P. Rubin, "The Real Reason to Intervene in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2012.

23 David Ignatius stresses the rise in inter-ethnic tensions in Syria, Jordan, and Iraq and the fear that these tensions will set off large-scale confrontations in these nations. David Ignatius, "Syria's Restless Neighbors," *Washington Post*, May 24, 2012.

24 Some point to this reason as the main incentive for intervention in Syria. See, e.g., Charles P. Blair, "Fearful of a Nuclear Iran? The Real WMD Nightmare is Syria," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1, 2012. See http://thebulletin.org/web-edition/op-eds/fearful-of-nuclear-iran-the-real-wmdnightmare-syria.

25 Ephraim Kam, "Iran's Regional Status: Expanding Influence alongside Weaknesses," in Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom, eds., *Strategic Survey for Israel 2011* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2011), p. 79.

26 E.g., in his speech to parliament on March 6, 2012, Assad accused "foreign forces" of fomenting the riots throughout the country. He explained that these are Western and Israeli elements and terrorists seeking to destroy Syrian independence. See "In Parliament Speech, Assad Blames Syria Crisis on 'Outside Forces,'" *Haaretz*, March 6, 2012.

Egypt after Morsi's Victory in the Presidential Elections

Shlomo Brom

Background

Possible developments in Egypt after Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the presidential elections are cause for concern in Israel and the West. It seems that some of the dire predictions made when President Mubarak was ousted are becoming reality. The Islamic wave hijacked the revolution, flooding Egypt in its wake. The Islamists[1] swept the parliamentary elections, winning 75 percent of the seats, and now the Muslim Brotherhood candidate has taken control of the presidency, seemingly the most important position in Egypt, a semi-presidential republic. Traditionally, the president commands most of the authority and power in Egypt. Now, apparently, the Muslim Brotherhood can ensure its power and prove that when Islamists win elections, countries transition to the "one vote, one man, one time" pattern. In other words, after their victory the new rulers will not allow elections in which any opposing political element can win, similar to the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran since the Khomeini revolution.

It is difficult for Israel to imagine that such a regime will not be hostile to Israel, given the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and the popularity of anti-Israel policies in Egypt and the Arab world in general. Beyond the concern that such a regime would not preclude an abrogation of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the closeness between this regime and Hamas, itself an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, is also disturbing.

The purpose of this essay is to examine possible developments in Egypt and consider whether they are indeed as grave as might be suspected, assess the possible ramifications for Israel, and propose some

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Brom is a senior research associate at INSS.

initial ideas regarding Israeli policy. The underlying assumption is that any findings or proposals are preliminary only, given the difficulty in predicting developments in the complex and unstable reality of post-Mubarak Egypt.

The Developing Reality in Egypt

It is still unclear what the final balance of power in Egypt will look like, reflecting a not necessarily equal division of power among three loci of power. The first locus of power is the elected government – the president and the parliament – that will apparently be controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood. Even here, however, the situation is not definitive because the constitutional court dispersed the elected parliament, and it is uncertain whether the Muslim Brotherhood will win the new elections so overwhelmingly. The comparison between voting patterns in the first round of the parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections shows a drop in the scope of support for the Muslim Brotherhood (from 36.6 percent[2] to less than 25 percent), perhaps reflecting disappointment with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The second locus of power is the military, headed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). SCAF is interested in preserving its power to ensure its critical interests, such as keeping the defense budget off limits and guaranteeing non-interference in the army's economic empire, as well as safeguarding what the military considers Egypt's strategic interests against a rash, radical, inexperienced Islamic leadership.

The third locus of power is the civilian public of protestors, comprising primarily young people with more secular, liberal worldviews. While the election results showed that they do not necessarily represent the greater Egyptian public, their power stems from the fact that they have crossed the barrier of fear and can effectively organize large demonstrations to protest any move they deem unacceptable, whether made by SCAF or by the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. This capability has had significant influence over SCAF and Muslim Brotherhood decisions, as both elements, which fear that demonstrations are liable to sway public opinion drastically, are wary of head-on clashes with the demonstrators. This is why since Mubarak's fall so many SCAF orders have been

rescinded and canceled. The Muslim Brotherhood too has changed policies in order to be more in tune with revolutionary fervor.

The interplay of these three loci of power has been clearly visible in recent actions taken by all sides. SCAF allowed the presidential elections to take place and, after a delay, certified Morsi's victory, but led the constitutional court, whose composition has not changed since Mubarak's day, to cancel the results of the parliamentary elections. SCAF subsequently announced new parliamentary elections, and also issued an order sharply limiting the elected president's authority, giving itself control over the process of writing the new Egyptian constitution meant to determine the division of authority among the various branches of government. In defiance of SCAF, Morsi convened the parliament shortly after he was sworn in as president. The protesting public continued to organize demonstrations against the steps it deemed objectionable.

Should SCAF maintain its power, one may assume that the implications for Israel of Morsi's election will be limited, because the military sees the preservation of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty as a strategic Egyptian interest, perceives Iran and its nuclearization as a threat to Egypt, and eyes Hamas with much suspicion. It may be that SCAF will have to compromise with Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood on certain policies, most likely relations with Hamas and Egyptian policy vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip. The army is interested in improving security in the Sinai Peninsula (although to Israel's way of thinking it does not place a high enough priority on this compared to its other interests). At the same time, worried about mass protests, the army is on its guard against violent clashes with different segments of the population, in this case the Sinai Bedouins.

> It is unlikely that Egypt will support violence from the Gaza Strip directed at Israel, because it will understand that such activity is liable to mean its own entanglement.

The more the balance of power favors the Muslim Brotherhood and the protesters, the more Egyptian policy is likely to be anti-Israel.

In any case, the balance among the three loci of power, and especially the threat of the public fomenting dissatisfaction with the authorities, will in all likelihood guarantee that Egypt will not be ruled by any one element, and that neither the military nor the Islamists will attain absolute rule. Democratic procedures, in particular free

elections, will probably be maintained. This scenario is likely for the next few years, but can change in the longer run if the Muslim Brotherhood succeeds in entrenching its rule, slowly erodes the political power of the military, as was the case in Turkey, and overcomes Egypt's tremendous economic difficulties.

Indeed, Egypt is mired in an acute economic crisis in the wake of the Arab unrest. Its foreign currency reserves are dwindling rapidly, and in June, had Saudi Arabia not extended emergency assistance, they would have been erased.[3] Chaos in the country keeps tourists and investors away, and Egyptians working abroad are finding it difficult to transfer money back home. There was also a need to appease the irate public with salary raises and increased subsidies. The net result is a profound dependence on foreign aid coming from the West and the Gulf states. Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood have to make a special effort to build confidence with the West and the Gulf states, which are highly suspicious of the Islamists' intentions and are likely to scrutinize the activity of the new Egyptian regime with a high resolution magnifying glass. In the United States, elements in Congress are searching hard for an excuse to cut aid to Egypt, while the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood has always been complicated. There is a history of mutual hostility and suspicion between the Saudi Wahhabi strain of Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood, and there is fierce competition between them despite their seeming ideological proximity. It is no wonder that after his election, Morsi's first visit abroad was to Saudi Arabia: it was critical to guarantee the continued flow of cash. It is also not surprising that the first foreign senior political personality to visit Egypt was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Morsi could easily have postponed her visit using any number of excuses had he chosen to do so.

Possible Implications for Egypt's Foreign Policy

Iran greeted the "Arab Spring" with open arms, especially the fall of its old enemy, President Mubarak, and hoped it would lead to the rise of Islamic movements with which it could forge close relations and expand its influence over the Arab parts of the Middle East. However, different winds have blown though the Middle East. While Islamic movements are rising to power, as in Egypt, this by no means ensures an improvement in Iran's standing or enhanced regional relations. The Arab Spring's spread

to Bahrain and then to Syria exacerbated the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites in the Middle East, and has sparked tension between Iran and Islamic movements claiming victory in Arab states. Even the Islamic movements that had close relations with Iran and Syria, like Hamas, are turning a cold shoulder to their patron because of the heightened tensions between Sunni and Shia. The Hamas leadership left Damascus to seek refuge in Cairo, Qatar, and Amman.

Iranian expectations of Egypt have likewise not been met. For now there are no indications that Egypt is about to take the most basic step, namely, renew diplomatic relations with Iran. Morsi is certainly aware of how moving closer to Iran would be seen by the West and the Gulf states.

Nonetheless, one may expect a change in Egypt's attitude toward Hamas, which is basically a Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood movement, provided this has no effect on Egypt's critical interests. An interesting development, serving perhaps as a harbinger of future relations, occurred with Egypt's fuel supply to the Gaza Strip. Ironically, it was the Mubarak regime that ignored the large scale smuggling of fuel through the tunnels to the Gaza Strip, whereas it was the interim government that was formed after Mubarak's ouster that insisted on stopping it. The reason was simple: in Egypt, fuel is heavily subsidized. Subsidized fuel smuggled to Gaza meant that the Egyptian government was paying enormous sums of money to subsidize Gaza's fuel despite its own terrible economy. While this interim government was not a Muslim Brotherhood government, the Muslim Brotherhood will likely worry about Egyptian public opinion and shy away from preferring Gaza over Egyptian interests.

Improved Egyptian-Hamas relations would grant Egypt more influence over Hamas. So, for example, a Morsi government could level more pressure on Hamas to rein in its activity in Sinai should it think this constitutes an Egyptian interest. Improved relations would also likely generate some harm to Hamas' Palestinian rivals – the PLO and Fatah, led by Mahmoud Abbas – who would not be able to maintain the close relations they enjoyed with the Egyptian regime on Mubarak's watch.

> Israel clearly has an interest of the highest order to develop a dialogue with the new government in Egypt, while preserving relations with the elements with which a dialogue already exists, especially the Egyptian military.

Egypt's foreign policy is also tied to its self-image as a regional player. There is no reason to think that Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood don't share Egypt's traditional view of itself, whereby Egypt is the undisputed leader of the Arab world and leading country in the Middle East. Indeed, on the eve of the presidential elections, Morsi already made a statement to that effect, saying, "Egypt's destiny is to lead. If I am elected…I will make sure that Egypt fulfils its destiny."[4] This approach pits Egypt against others seeking to lead the Middle East, primarily Iran and Turkey, making it uncertain that the Morsi government will have warm relations even with Turkey, though the Turkish model – a political party with Islamic flavor ruling in the context of a procedurally democratic state – would appear to suit the Muslim Brotherhood and could serve Egypt well. This may have implications also for Egypt's involvement in the political process between Israel and the Palestinians. Egypt's view of itself as the natural leader in the region will not allow it to dissociate itself from this process, though one must assume that its policy would be less coordinated with Israel than in the past.

Significance for Israel

Israel has three fundamental concerns relating to Egypt:

a. Egypt might turn into an enemy, renege on the peace treaty, or even abrogate it.
b. Sinai might become a platform for attacks on Israel by non-state entities, jihadists, and Palestinian organizations.
c. Egypt may support the Hamas government in Gaza at the expense of the Palestinian Authority and damage the chances for regulating relations with the Palestinians.

It is evident that a Morsi government would not be in complete congruence with Israel and would not maintain an ongoing dialogue with it as did the Mubarak government, but there is still much distance between this and active enmity. The Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi himself have on different occasions – most recently during Clinton's visit to Egypt – declared that they will uphold all of Egypt's international commitments, code words for the peace treaty with Israel. There was talk of the need for examining certain elements of the treaty, meaning the military appendix limiting deployment of Egyptian forces in Sinai. Morsi may ask Israel to agree to certain changes in the appendix. As part

of the treaty, there are indeed existing mechanisms allowing for mutually agreeable changes.

The fall of Mubarak and the subsequent chaos in Egypt have weakened the Egyptian government's control of Sinai and increased the threat to Israel from various groups in the area. Given the internal Egyptian situation under President Morsi, the central government in Egypt is likely to continue to be weak and populist, and therefore a qualitative change in the situation in Sinai is unlikely, despite the uproar in Egypt following the killing of Egyptian soldiers by Sinai jihadists. As these recent events have shown, Israel will have to be prepared for more attacks from Sinai, while also recognizing the need to be cautious in responding, given the sensitivity of relations with Egypt's new regime and Egyptian public opinion. This certainly applies to responses within Sinai, but also has implications for the nature of responses vis-à-vis Gaza.

Egyptian-Hamas relations will in all likelihood be closer than in the past, as long as Egypt's interests are not harmed. Egypt will presumably continue to work to renew the Israeli-Palestinian political process, including through pressure on Hamas, because Egypt will continue to think that the political process serves its interests. An internal rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah will continue to be a central component of Egypt's Palestinian agenda. It is unlikely that Egypt will support violence from the Gaza Strip directed at Israel, because it will understand that such activity is liable to mean its own entanglement. It may be that Egypt's interest in the political process will continue also as a result of the new regime's desire not to become involved in consequence of a violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israeli Policy toward Egypt

Israel clearly has an interest of the highest order to develop a dialogue with the new government in Egypt, while preserving relations with the elements with which a dialogue already exists, especially the Egyptian military. It may be that agreeing to talk about changes in the military appendix to the peace treaty can be an excellent platform for launching such a dialogue. Israel can of course make good use of the services of third parties in this regard.

Israel must understand that every action it takes in Sinai and the Gaza Strip can have severe ramifications for relations with Egypt, and

therefore must conduct a very cautious policy on the security challenges in both arenas. This requires significant improvements in defense against infiltrations and attacks from the Sinai sector to reduce the number of instances necessitating responses within Sinai and the Gaza Strip.

There is every reason to take a new look at Israel's relationship with the Palestinians and examine the paradigms on which Israel bases its actions in this context. For example, should the current relationship with Hamas be continued, or do the Arab Spring and the changes in the Egyptian government open a door to a dialogue with Hamas, which would allow its inclusion in the political process? Such a dialogue would not have to be direct at first; it could be effected by communicating positive messages to Hamas, such as changing the policy on the border crossing to the Gaza Strip. Hamas has begun a process of replacing its old patrons – Iran and Syria – with new ones: Egypt, Qatar, and perhaps even Saudi Arabia. It will have to adapt its policy to theirs, and that will probably not include violent struggle with Israel, rather, support of a political process and application of political pressure on Israel. In any case, Israel will have to take into account the possible effects of a change in its policy toward Hamas on its traditional Palestinian partners.

Whatever Israel undertakes that is likely to have implications or ramifications for Egypt requires close coordination and cooperation with the United States, which will facilitate America's influence on the new Egyptian government.

Notes

1   Specifically, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists.
2   The Muslim Brotherhood won some 50 percent of the seats in parliament because of the elections system in which some of the seats were reserved for party lists elected nationally and others went to "the winner takes all" representatives in regional elections.
3   David P. Goldman, "The Economics of Confrontation in Egypt," *Asia Times online*, July 9, 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/others/spengler.html.
4   Mohamed Morsi, "If I am Elected Egypt's President, I will Serve our Revolution," *The Guardian*, June 14, 2012.

Revival of the Periphery Concept in Israel's Foreign Policy?

Yoel Guzansky and Gallia Lindenstrauss

One of Israel's most notable political moves of recent years has been its reaching out to states on the Middle Eastern periphery in order to strengthen ties with them. The background to this endeavor is Israel's ongoing rift with the Arab world and its relative isolation in various arenas. Even prior to the Gaza flotilla affair in late May 2010, which represented an unprecedented nadir in Israeli-Turkish relations, Israel had begun to consolidate old-new relations in terms of intelligence sharing, joint military training, and improved political and economic ties with several countries in the country's outer circle.

This essay surveys the political constellation that seems to be forming, and focuses on Israel's relations with Greece, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, and South Sudan. It considers the contribution of this alignment at the security-intelligence level, as well as at the political and economic levels. Although Israel seems not yet to have formulated a systematic strategy emphasizing the multilateral aspects of these bilateral relationships, it is apparent that the enhanced relations with these states stem from the same basic rationale of taking a wide-angled view of the peripheral environment. At the same time, the thesis here is that the importance of the current alignment is limited both because of these states' security, economic, and political circumstances and their relatively low international status, and because of the complexity of challenges facing Israel's foreign policy. Nevertheless, it seems that Israel attributes much significance to these relations in light of the possible ramifications of changes occurring in the region, the chronic instability marking the Arab sphere, and the growing strength of the radical Islamic elements.[1]

Yoel Guzansky and Dr. Gallia Lindenstrauss are research associates at INSS.

The Periphery Alliance 1.0

Israel's efforts to break out of its regional isolation and improve its international standing at the end of its first decade of existence included forming relationships with regional non-Arab states and various national minorities. These relationships, lasting almost a quarter of a century, earned – despite the ups and downs – the moniker of "the periphery alliance." There were, in fact, no treaties or formal agreements beyond bilateral relations between Israel and each of the states involved, beginning at the height of the Arab boycott, when pan-Arab winds were blowing through the region and Egypt seemed to be recovering from the defeat in the 1956 Sinai Campaign. These relations were particularly important because the United States, which relayed a cool attitude towards Israel, specifically following the Sinai Campaign, did not grant public and written guarantees to Israel and generally refused to transfer it arms lest US relations with the Arab states be damaged. Although the strategy of outflanking with states in the periphery of the Middle East arose even before 1957 and Israel had engaged in similar efforts since the establishment of the state, it was only in the late 1950s that the policy became a more significant element of Israel's foreign policy.

The purpose of the alliance was to promote Israel's overt and covert relations with Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia (and to a lesser extent, with the Kurds in Iraq and the Christians in Sudan).[2] The three states shared Israel's Western orientation, certain enemies in the Arab world, and the fear of Soviet expansionism. Analysts are in disagreement over Israel's key motives in promoting this alliance: did they stem from concern over Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser's aspirations and the support of the USSR, or was Israel exploiting changes in the Arab world in order to promote a policy it was already intending to pursue? Another debate centers on the extent to which the United States supported the initiative and the extent to which America's position affected Israel's conduct on the matter.[3]

From an intelligence perspective, the covert contacts, orchestrated by then-head of the Mossad Reuven Shiloah, created the only setting for meetings among the heads of the intelligence communities who used these opportunities for multilateral meetings as well.[4] Economic relations with Iran were of particular importance: many Israeli companies worked there and Iran provided oil to Israel and, via Israel, to European

destinations.[5] Close military relations were formed between the nations' security establishments, and Iran as well as Ethiopia became favored destinations for Israeli security exports,[6] even in the absence of an Iranian de jure recognition of Israel.[7]

In addition to the geopolitical dimension, the alliance had other aspects, such as humanitarian, including the ability to be in contact with and even assist Jewish communities to flee if necessary.[8] Israel also helped during natural disasters, e.g., severe earthquakes. Diplomacy too, though downplayed, had a role, consisting of frequent visits by senior Israelis in the states under discussion, all of which asked that these contacts be kept as informal as possible; indeed, Israel failed to change their voting patterns in the UN.

The ouster of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia and the Islamic Revolution in Iran left Turkey as the lone remaining member of the periphery alliance, but Israel's relations with Ankara have had their ups and downs. Overall, therefore, researchers dispute the alliance's success. On the one hand, there seems to have been an improvement in bilateral relations with the peripheral states, which afforded Israel many advantages. On the other hand, these were never leveraged into a multilateral alliance; they never generated any significant change in the policy of the Arab states; and Israel's greater closeness with the United States stemmed primarily from other reasons.[9]

The Periphery Alliance 2.0

It is difficult to draw a geographical line to designate what Israel considers its periphery. For the purpose of this discussion, the notion of a periphery alliance relates to states beyond the Arab sphere near Israel or located along an enemy's borders. Beyond the goal to strengthen pragmatic elements outside of the Arab sphere, ties with peripheral states generally generate security and intelligence dividends for Israel: (a) intelligence these nations can transmit to Israel, and (b) the fact that these nations border enemies of Israel, which allows improved intelligence gathering and operational activity.

At the most basic level, it seems that renewed thinking – if indeed there is systematic thought on a renewed periphery alliance – is rooted in the logic of "my enemy's enemy is my friend," or at least, "my enemy's neighbor is my friend."[10] Moreover, the rationale behind the periphery

strategy is more the value of blockage or obstruction, based on a comprehensive view of the balance of power, and less a military alliance in every sense in which the sides are compelled to defend one another from the aggression of a third party. Perhaps, then, one could object to the use of the term "alliance,"[11] though at times it seems that the sides expect assistance, even if limited, during violent conflicts. Beyond this, it seems that some of Israel's considerations are connected to the desire to apply pressure to Turkey to moderate the steps it has taken against Israel.[12] Most of Israel's new peripheral allies share Israel's concern about the changes taking place in Turkey, the ramifications of the "Arab Spring," and the infiltration of global jihadists into their region. In addition, they identify the potential for security, economic, and technological sharing with Israel, and sense that the response they are getting from the West to their problems is at times insufficient.

The Mediterranean basin: Closer relations with this region in recent years involve Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Croatia. In general, the threats Israel faces require it to maintain the capability of operating at very long distances, and the Israeli air force and navy will at times train in distant locations with nations with which Israel has cooperation agreements, especially in the Mediterranean basin. As part of the cooperation agreement between Israel and Romania (an agreement between the air forces was signed in 2003 and joint training began a year later), the Israel Air Force was afforded an opportunity to train in complex terrain and practice long distance flights simulating the ground features in destination countries, in a way impossible to replicate in Israel, and was able to learn from the experience accrued by these partners.[13] Israeli-Romanian relations had improved before Israel's rift with Turkey, but since then have intensified. According to the foreign press, Israel has in recent years held several maneuvers to practice attacking targets at distances of more than 1,000 km from Israel.[14]

The rapid deterioration in relations with Turkey, the suspension of security and intelligence cooperation, and the reduced scope of tourism resulting from the takeover of the MV *Mavi Marmara* caused Israel to turn greater diplomatic attention towards Greece, Turkey's longtime rival.[15] Greece was the last non-Arab Mediterranean basin country to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel, and raised them to the ambassadorial

level only after the end of the Cold War. For some time Greece has pressed for closer security relations, especially in the airpower domain, but Israel consistently balked because of the ramifications for its relations with Turkey. In July 2010, Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou visited Israel, the first visit by a Greek prime minister to Israel, and since then, relations have intensified. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a return visit in August 2010 and met with his Greek counterpart. The Greeks have even changed their UN voting patterns in Israel's favor.

In the Greek case, the first areas of cooperation were security, intelligence, and tourism, and large scale joint exercises between the navies and air forces are now routine.[16] The need for joint exercises arose once the Israel-Turkey crisis ended Israeli air force training in Turkey, and Greece has also in some cases become a partner in training exercises with the American air force (Operation Noble Dina).[17] Beyond this, when Israel requested international help during the Carmel forest fire (2010), Greece responded by sending four fire fighting planes and a supply plane. Further evidence of the growing closeness is the help by the Greek authorities in stopping the second flotilla to Gaza (2011). According to media reports, the Greek authorities complicated the bureaucracy for the flotilla participants in an attempt to keep them in Greek ports. While the Greeks take care to stress that their warmer relations with Israel have nothing to do with their relations with Turkey and that they would welcome an Israeli-Turkish reconciliation that would stabilize the region, the hope is that Israel-Greece relations will help rein in the Turks.

> The rationale behind the periphery strategy is more the value of blockage or obstruction, based on a comprehensive view of the balance of power, and less a military alliance in the sense in which the sides are compelled to defend one another from the aggression of a third party.

Similar to Greece, the Republic of Cyprus (Greek Cypriot side) until recently had tense relations with Israel. Israel objected to Cyprus' pro-Palestinian and pro-Arab stance, while Greek Cypriots were wary of the Israeli-Turkish alliance. From time to time, Turkey also pressured Israel to take steps that would have meant a de facto recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, whose independence is recognized only by Turkey. The recent forging of closer relations between Israel and

Cyprus is not only a result of the cooler Israel-Turkey relations, but also of the discovery of natural gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean. Still, relations with Cyprus were improving before the gas discoveries, so the opportunity has more helped to realize the policy than to create it. And while the natural gas discoveries have made a contribution to Israel-Cyprus relations, they have also added tension to Israeli-Lebanese relations and to Turkey's relations with Israel and Cyprus.

There have been several manifestations of the growing closeness between Israel and Cyprus. Already during the first flotilla to Gaza, in 2010, Cyprus refused to allow the ships to leave from its territorial waters, and it was among those helping Israel to stop the second flotilla. The signing of the agreement charting the naval borders between Israel and Cyprus in December 2010 was an important point in the relationship, as it allowed both countries to pursue their contacts with international gas and oil drilling companies. Turkey viewed this development negatively and claimed that the Republic of Cyprus was violating the sovereignty of the northern part of the island. Turkey even threatened to send a warship to the shores of Cyprus.[18] After Netanyahu's February 2012 visit to Cyprus, the first by an Israeli prime minister, rumors circulated that the states discussed the permanent or crisis-mode deployment of Israeli troops on Cyprus. In May 2012 there were reports that Turkish fighter jets intercepted Israeli jets on the charges of having violated the air space of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.[19]

The friendly relations between Israel and Cyprus and Greece are reflected in a string of planned projects that will connect the states more closely and for the long term. Under discussion, for example, is the possibility of Israel exporting natural gas to Europe either by way of a pipeline through Cyprus and Greece or by way of the joint establishment of liquefied natural gas terminals. These facilities would require serious security measures, and thus inter-state security cooperation would be promoted further. In March 2012, Israel, Cyprus, and Greece signed a memorandum of understanding on examining the profitability of constructing an underwater cable to connect Israel's electric grid with Europe's, which could provide backup for the various electric systems and allow Israel to export electricity should the country favor that option over exporting natural gas.[20] This is one of the largest of such projects in the world; its expected date of completion is 2016.[21]

The Caucasus: While until 2008 Israel had close security relations with Georgia, under pressure from Russia, then at war with Georgia, Israel suspended at least part of its arms sales there. Nonetheless, commercial relations have continued, and there is growing Israeli tourism to the country.

Israel enjoys close relations with Azerbaijan, notwithstanding the Shiite majority there. The two decades of Israeli-Azeri relations are somewhat different from the other examples presented here in that not only did this relationship develop long before the deterioration in relations with Turkey, but because at the outset the relationship was developed as part of a trilateral affiliation – Israel-Turkey-Azerbaijan – with America's blessing. Beyond the shared interests and desire to buy Israeli weapons and technology, the Azeri drive to improve relations with Israel stemmed from an effort to enlist the Jewish lobby in the US Congress to counter the Armenian lobby. The Jewish lobby's support was important because in 1992 the Armenian lobby had succeeded in passing Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, banning foreign aid to Azerbaijan as long as it continued its siege on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. This section retained its importance until 9/11.[22]

Relations with Azerbaijan are important to Israel on several levels. First, Azerbaijan is a central supplier of oil; the assessment is that it supplies Israel with about one-third of the country's oil needs through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. In terms of security, Azerbaijan's shared border with Iran gives it the potential for intelligence gathering on its southern neighbor; it has even been claimed that air bases in Azerbaijan would be made available to Israel should the latter decide to attack Iran.[23] Both Azerbaijan and Israel have denied these rumors, with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, on a visit to Baku in April 2012, calling them "science fiction."[24] Even without any ties to Azerbaijan, Israel would benefit from building platforms for action against Iran along the Iranian border should action be deemed necessary, or even if only for the purpose of deterrence. In the past there were reports that Israel had helped train the Azeri airport security forces and forces providing personal protection to senior personnel.[25] Among the Israeli weapon systems acquired by Azerbaijan were surface-to-air missiles, and Israeli companies were involved in upgrading the Azeris' T-72 tanks left from the Soviet era.[26] Recently, there was a report about a $1.6 billion deal

between Israel and Azerbaijan, including unmanned aerial vehicles and satellite systems.[27] Beyond security cooperation, there is also civilian cooperation, and several Israeli companies work there.

Azerbaijan acquires weapon systems from Israel in part to prepare for renewed fighting over Nagorno-Karabakh and nearby regions. Armenian forces currently control 16 percent of the area that belonged to the Azeri Republic during the Soviet era. Even though the two sides agreed to a ceasefire in 1994, fire is exchanged periodically. The Azeris refuse to accept the current situation, and they have threatened to renew the fighting if a political solution is not found. Iran too is viewed as a threat by Azerbaijan, because of the concern that Tehran is out to change the secular nature of the Azeri government. Similarly, there are tensions because of the large Azeri minority in Iran (one-fifth of the country's population), and there are disputes over water rights in the Caspian Sea.[28] In the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Iran sided with Armenia.[29] The tense relations between Azerbaijan and Iran deteriorated further during the first half of 2012 because of the growing concern in Iran over military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Israel. Border crossings between were often closed, and the ambassadors were recalled for consultations.[30] In addition, according to Azeri reports, in March 2012 an Iranian attempt to attack American and Israeli diplomats and other targets in Baku was foiled.[31] Iran announced that it was deploying light submarines and other advanced marine equipment in the Caspian Sea, apparently in an attempt to sow fear in Azerbaijan.[32]

Among the Turkmen republics, Azerbaijan is the closest to Turkey, both linguistically and historically. As Israeli-Turkish relations worsened, Turkey tried to pressure Azerbaijan to cool relations with Israel.[33] President Ilham Aliyev's regime has so far refused Turkey's entreaties, although from time to time Azerbaijan condemns Israel in various forums (e.g., it is a member of the Islamic Cooperation Council) and maintains no embassy in Israel. In Azerbaijan too there are those who worry about the growing influence of political Islam in Turkey; furthermore, the Azeris are still angered by the fact that in 2009 an agreement between Turkey and Armenia was signed without their knowledge and without Turkey insisting on a solution for Nagorno-Karabakh.

Africa: From the outset, Sudan's role was marginal in the context of Israel's peripheral states policy, if only because it is an Arab nation.

In a referendum held in January 2011, the residents of South Sudan, relatively oil-rich and with a Christian and animist majority, decided to split from the mostly Muslim and oil-poor north. In general, the crisis between Sudan and South Sudan, their geostrategic location, and the oil reserves there have made the area attractive to many foreign agents, and Israel is no exception. Israel may view its relations with South Sudan as a strategic asset: Israel will be allowed to use airports there and thus be better equipped to tackle arms smuggling and engage in a confrontation with Iran. Indeed, Iran seeks to strengthen its hold over Sudan by means of financial investments, cultural and ideological influence, and military assistance, thereby in practice helping Omar al-Bashir's regime survive. In addition, Iran sees Sudan as the preferred channel for arms smuggling to Hamas, Hizbollah, and other radical Islamic organizations in North Africa and around the Mediterranean basin. Because of its access to the sea, Sudan is a central smuggling junction. Iranian arms arrive by different routes and depart for the Gaza Strip through Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. The foreign press has reported that in recent years Israel has increased its presence in the Red Sea, intercepted arms caravans, and even sunk arms-carrying ships.

Even before it declared independence, South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit declared his interest in instituting diplomatic relations with Israel.[34] On July 28, 2011, the governments of Israel and South Sudan announced the formal establishment of relations between the countries, and ambassadors presented their credentials to the respective presidents.[35] It was also reported that the sides had agreed to cooperation in agriculture, natural resources development, infrastructures, science, and technology. Several Israeli companies have already started to investigate the potential of the local market. Overall, Israeli "investment" in South Sudan has proven itself. Beyond finances, however, the South Sudanese sympathy for and identification with Israel stem not only from security cooperation but also from a sense of shared destiny in the face of common persecution by Arabs and from the religious view of Israel as the cradle of Christianity.

> Strategic relations with nations in the periphery can increase Israel's security and political potential regarding certain issues, but reducing international isolation cannot serve as a substitute for serious attempts to promote the peace process if the opportunity arises.

South Sudan has a long way to go before becoming fully established as a nation, and Israel can certainly help in the fields of agriculture, health, education, and security. Israel must also assist in the process of returning South Sudanese residing without legal status in Israel, in part to avoid creating a crisis and ill will between the nations.[36] The hope was that South Sudanese independence would end the longtime war with the north, but in practice the fighting has continued.[37] Beyond the conflict with Sudan over the oil reserves in the Abyei Area and disputes over the shared border, there are inter-tribal conflicts within the nation leading to thousands of dead and a flow of refugees, and there is concern over worsening humanitarian conditions.[38]

Conclusion

There is a similarity between Israel's foreign relations with peripheral states in the early years of the state and the relationships Israel is currently developing with "outer circle" nations, but the comparison also reveals many differences. The singular value of the new "alliance" is smaller than the original model – not to mention that even with regard to the earlier version some objected to the use of the word "alliance" and questioned its success. The potential of the previous political effort was first and foremost connected to the relative power of the foreign nations – Turkey and Iran – with which Israel allied itself and to the fact that they were – except for Ethiopia – Muslim nations. Beyond this, in the late 1950s, some of the considerations in favor of such an alliance were arguably that it would help forge closer relations with the United States. Today Israel's relations with the United States are much stronger, and in any case it seems that the Americans would prefer Israel to mend fences with Turkey ahead of anything else.

Moreover, the previous political approach relied on a systematic thinking of the country's leaders, whereas currently there is, so it seems, only a series of ad hoc decisions. In addition to the difference in status between Israel's previous and current allies, Israel's own situation in its first decades of statehood is unlike its current situation, and thus its needs have changed. Even the nature of the threats Israel faces has changed: In the past, the threat of conventional war and a coalition of Arab nations against Israel loomed large, whereas today the threats range from terrorism, through nonconventional weapons, to lawfare and

delegitimization. Nonetheless, intelligence-related and other contacts with nations bordering or near enemy nations are valuable, and it is important to expand relations with non-Muslim nations.

One of the implications of the upheavals in the Middle East since early 2011 is concern for the future of the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the effect of these upheavals on the potential for a sustainable peace agreement with the Arab world in the future. The instability in some of the Arab states is likely in the short term to decrease the chance of a conventional war with a coalition of Arab states against Israel, but is liable also to erode the sovereignty of some of the states in the inner circle and increase the severity of the asymmetrical threats. In light of its strategic situation, Israel should consider preparing for greater regional isolation and therefore strengthen relations with peripheral actors. Strategic relations with nations in the periphery can increase Israel's security and political potential regarding certain issues, but reducing international isolation cannot serve as a substitute for serious attempts to promote the peace process if opportunity arises. The peripheral policy does not necessarily contradict or substitute parallel attempts to promote the peace process and general development of ties with the Arab world, and can in fact even promote such moves.

However, the states surveyed in this essay suffer from significant weaknesses and conflicts with their neighbors, and therefore it is not inconceivable that relations with them would entangle Israel in additional conflicts, and instead of easing its strategic situation could worsen it. It is also not inconceivable that these states would suffer because of their ties with Israel and therefore, for example, serve as targets for terrorist attacks. Thus it is necessary to become thoroughly familiar with these countries and the dilemmas they face. Greece is suffering from such severe economic and political problems that could result in its ouster from the Euro bloc. Cyprus too is suffering a debt crisis, mostly because of its exposure to the Greek economy, and it has turned to various institutions for emergency economic relief. Future Israel-Azerbaijan relations depend to a large degree on Aliyev staying in office. His regime, accused of corruption and suppression of the opposition, relies on income from oil exports, but the state's peak export years are already a thing of the past as its reserves dwindle. South Sudan in engaged in a conflict with the north and suffers from many internal problems, which only increase the country's weakness.

There is also something of a weakness paradox when it comes to relations with nations in Israel's outer circle. On the one hand, it would be better for Israel if these were more significant players on the international stage; on the other hand, the nations are interested in improving relations with Israel now precisely because they are weak. Once they grow stronger, they may balk at establishing closer relations.

Beyond forging improved relations with peripheral states, Israel in the past also reached out to various minorities. In addition to establishing relations with the Christians in Lebanon and Sudan, ties were formed with the Kurds in the Middle East, especially Iraq. Nowadays there are also reports from time to time on Israeli cooperation with the Kurds in Iraq, possibly for the sake of amplifying the struggle against Iran.[39] The fear that more and more states in the region will be weakened and that central regimes and sovereignty in the region will be undermined may force Israel to expand connections with various tribal and ethnic groups in neighboring countries. Israel can gain from having ties to minorities currently outside spheres of influence or groups at risk for losing power but able to maintain a certain measure of influence.

In the previous incarnation of the alliance, contacts with the states on Israel's periphery remained largely secret and the leaders of those nations sought to keep them out of the public eye as much as possible. At present, some of the nations with which Israel is developing relations can show public political support for Israel, and this is a positive contribution to Israel's position in international organizations and forums, especially the UN. Even at this early stage it is possible to discern a link between closer relations and a change in voting patterns of some of the players in Israel's favor. Thus while the political constellation that seems to be forming has no significant impact on the regional balance of power, expanding relations with some of the peripheral states may help Israel not only politically and economically but also expand its forces' maneuvering space and guarantee its ability to withstand a prolonged conflict.

Notes

1   For more on the continuing trend of the weakening of the Arab world, see Yoel Guzanksy and Amir Kulick, "The Failed State: Ramifications for Israel's

Security Environment," *Strategic Assessment* 13, no. 2 (2010): 39-54, http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1283414450.pdf.

2   *Documents on Israel's Foreign Policy*, Vol. 13 (1958-1959), State Archives, Jerusalem, 2001; Joel Peters, *Israel's Relations with Black Africa 1973-1985* (Oxford, PhD dissertation, 1987), pp. 27-28.

3   Ofra Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 41.

4   Reuven Merhav, "Covert Diplomacy: Its Wane Under the Spotlight," in Michal Sela, ed., *Diplomacy and the Media: Who Leads Whom?* (Tel Aviv University, June 2006).

5   Uri Bialer, "Fuel Bridge across the Middle East: Israel, Iran and the Eilat-Ashkelon Oil Pipeline," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 3 (2007): 36-37.

6   See also Aharon Kleinman, *The Double-Edged Sword: Israel's Security Exports and the Global Weapons Market* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1992).

7   Baruch Gilad, "Israeli-Iranian Relations: Underground Diplomacy," in Moshe Jegar, Yoseph Govrin, and Aryeh Oded, eds., *The Foreign Ministry: The First 50 Years* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2002).

8   Hanan Inor, "Ethiopia and Israel," in *The Foreign Ministry: The First 50 Years*.

9   Joseph Heller, *Israel and the Cold War: From the War of Independence to the Six-Day War* (Ben-Gurion Institute for Israel Studies, 2010), p. 27; Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, p. 43.

10 Security relations between Israel and the Arab Gulf states also worried about Iran are likewise attributed to this principle. See also Yoel Guzansky, *The Gulf State in a Changing Strategic Environment*, Memorandum No. 116 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2012), http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1333456484.pdf.

11 The main component of a classical security alliance is the obligation to provide support against external players, and indeed throughout history the reason states have formed alliances has been to take care of common threats larger than any one partner is capable of confronting alone. The military dimension sets alliances apart and distinguishes them from other forms of union, mainly economic and political.

12 "From the Kurds to the Armenians: Lieberman against Turkey," *Ynet*, September 9, 2011.

13 "Training in Romania to Fly High," *Ynet*, July 26, 2010.

14 Ron Ben Yishai, "Training Moves from Turkey to Romania," *Ynet*, July 27, 2011.

15 Ron Ben Yishai, "The Mighty Deeds of the Greeks," July 4, 2011.

16 Barak Ravid, "New Treaty in Greece: Israel, Greece and Bulgaria against Turkey," *Haaretz*, November 26, 2010.

17 Barak Ravid, "Israel and Greece Hold Naval and Aerial Exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Haaretz*, April 1, 2012.

18 "Turkish Threat against Cyprus: We'll Send the Navy if you Drill," *Ynet*, September 6, 2011.

19 "Turkey Accuses: Israeli Plane Entered Turkish Cyprus Airspace," *nrg*, May 17, 2012.

20 "Israel to Become Electricity Exporter? Better than Exporting Natural Gas," *Globes*, January 24, 2012.

21 Sharon Udasin, "Israel, Cyprus, Greece Sign Electric Cable Deal," *Jerusalem Post*, March 4, 2012.

22 After the 9/11 attacks, the president was given the opportunity to issue a waiver for this section. Alexander Murinson, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan: State Identity and Security in the Middle East and Caucasus* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 75.

23 Mark Perry, "Israel's Secret Staging Ground," *Foreign Policy,* March 28, 2012.

24 Herb Keinon, "Reports Baku gave Israel Airfields are Fiction," *Jerusalem Post,* April 23, 2012.

25 Murinson, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan*, p. 110.

26 "Azerbaijan-Israel: Firm Alliance? (2)," *Today's Zaman*, April 18, 2012.

27 Gili Cohen, "Israel Signed Large Scale Arms Deal with Azerbaijan," *Haaretz*, February 26, 2012.

28 Murinson, *Turkey's Entente with Israel and Azerbaijan,* p. 103.

29 This is a notable example of Iran making a decision for utilitarian rather than ideological reasons.

30 David Herszenhorn, "Iran and Azerbaijan, Already Wary Neighbors, Find even Less to Agree On," *New York Times*, June 5, 2012.

31 Dudi Cohen, "Iran versus Azerbaijan: Israeli Agents to Blame," *Ynet*, March 17, 2012.

32 Anshel Pfeffer, "Iran Claims it Upgraded its Submarine Fleet," *Haaretz*, June 29, 2012.

33 Dudi Cohen, "Turkey to Azerbaijan: Stand with us against Israel," *Ynet,* September 25, 2011.

34 Yoel Guzansky and Jonathan Schachter, "Sudan on the Verge of Division? The Referendum, Oil, and Foreign Involvement," *INSS Insight* No. 224, November 18, 2010, http://www.inss.org.il/publications. php?cat=21&incat=&read=4606.

35 "Israel and South Sudan Establishing Diplomatic Relations," Foreign Ministry announcement, Jerusalem, July 28, 2011.

36 Barak Ravid and Dana Weiler-Pollak, "Israeli Foreign Ministry: International Law Allows Deportation of South Sudan Asylum Seekers," *Haaretz*, May 15, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/israeli-foreign-ministry-international-law-allows-deportation-of-south-sudan-asylum-seekers. premium-1.430486.

37 "Sudan Declares South Sudan Hostile Nation," *Haaretz*, April 16, 2012.

38 Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Watching the New State of South Sudan Fall into Chaos," *Haaretz* May 18, 2012.

39 Seymour M. Hersh, "Plan B: As June 30 Approaches, Israel Looks to the Kurds," *New Yorker*, June 28, 2004.

Authority and Responsibility on the Civilian Front

Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler

Introduction

The recent rounds of escalation in the south of Israel (March 9-16 and June 18-26, 2012) provided a measure of good news: Hamas did not get involved in the first round, and exercised relative restraint in the second; on the Israeli side, casualties were rather limited, despite more than 450 launches from the Gaza Strip on an area populated by one million citizens; a ceasefire was achieved rather quickly; and the Iron Dome system performed quite impressively.[1] However, these episodes exposed several troubling issues concerning the cooperation between the organizations that are involved in managing the civilian front and in particular, the Home Front Command (HFC) and the local governments. Mutual understanding and systemic collaboration are cornerstones for managing a successful campaign on the civilian front. Therefore, it is necessary to detect as early as possible any point of friction that might spell failure in a future wide scale conflict.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the problematic dynamics that emerged in the recent rounds of escalation regarding authority and responsibility on the civilian front in general, and the complex question related to closing of schools during emergencies in particular. The analysis will be the basis for recommendations for building a tighter, more effective, and more inclusive system.

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Meir Elran is a senior research associate at INSS. Alex Altshuler is a Neubauer research associate at INSS.

Whose Authority, Whose Responsibility?

The question of authority and responsibility is fundamental to any discussion on system management, with profound organizational implications. This is the case also regarding the civilian front in Israel, which is still far from being properly structured from legal, administrative, and practical angles. The State Comptroller's report on the Second Lebanon War of 2006 discussed this issue extensively and critically, stating that "the existing law...diffuses the handling of the home front among several bodies and does not provide complete and coordinated tools for its management during times of emergency. The large number of bodies leads to a *blurring of responsibility and powers*...There is *no central national institution that is responsible* for the overall preparedness."[2]

This unfortunate situation has not yet been amended, which is particularly problematic given the increased terrorist threat that puts the civilians at high risk. The establishment of the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) in 2007 and the Home Front Ministry in 2011 did not alter this problematic situation. NEMA operated as a coordinating organ in the Ministry of Defense (until January 2011) and now is with the Ministry of Home Front Defense.[3] However, it does not meet the need for a central body with control and enforcement capabilities on the other agencies operating within the civilian front. In fact, some claim that NEMA contributes to the confusion and ambiguity, and complicates the organizational structure on the government level. Even according to the Minister for Home Front Defense,[4] the new ministry, established primarily out of political considerations, has not fundamentally improved the situation, except perhaps to create a representative ministerial anchor for the government handling of some of the national issues.

The urgency of this question is clear. For almost a generation now, Israel's security challenges have poised the civilian front at the forefront of the conflict. The lack of a body with clear authority and responsibility for the preparedness of the civilian front and its management during a major episode is a severe predicament. By its very nature the civilian front is decentralized, with numerous institutions involved. Many of them are not geared to work together, and occasionally they have built-in conflicts and lack a common operational language and command and control systems. Furthermore, some of them are organizationally and

functionally weak and require major restructuring, such as the firefighting and rescue systems. Reforming and regulating the civilian emergency system is indeed a great challenge that requires urgent implementation.

The severe lack of regulation applies also to the field echelons, where the HFC plays the strongest operational role. This is stated by the present law – especially when the government decides on a "special situation on the home front" – and also stems from its more extensive resources, its broad deployment, and its relative prestige as a branch of the IDF. Following the experience of the Second Lebanon War, the HFC underwent an important change of emphasis, shifting towards broader involvement with the civilian population in closer cooperation with the local governments (e.g., the establishment of the military liaison units to the municipalities). Still, in situations that are not officially proclaimed as emergencies, the HFC's legal status in connection with the civilians at large and the civil organizations has not yet been defined.[5]

In recent years, the need for a clear formula for the division of responsibility and authority between the Home Front Ministry and NEMA on the one hand, and the IDF and the HFC on the other, has become more acute. More than merely a normative question, it has clear practical aspects: Which of them bears the supreme responsibility for preparing for an emergency and for managing the affairs during a crisis? Who instructs whom, when, and on what subjects? As of now, there is no clear answer to these questions.

The situation in the lower levels is no clearer. Ostensibly, policymakers agree that the local governments should be regarded as the "cornerstones" of the civilian front.[6] However, in practice, it is not clear what the legal, operational, and organizational meaning of this statement is. According to the State Comptroller, the Second Lebanon War revealed a gloomy picture: the local governments' level of preparedness and readiness for emergencies was very low.[7] Five-and-a-half years later, the State Comptroller reached similar conclusions. In December 2011, he noted again that "the division of responsibility between the Ministry of the Interior [which is responsible, on behalf of the government, for the functioning of local governments], the HFC, and NEMA in preparing local governments for emergencies has still not been settled in a binding and unambiguous manner."[8]

The question is, to what extent do the mayors have the legal authority − with all that this implies from a legal, organizational, and budgetary standpoint − for managing their cities and residents during an emergency? Legally,[9] the mayor has no operational powers and control beyond the municipal apparatus itself, and as the head of the local National Economy Emergency System.[10] The Municipal Law addresses the subject of emergencies in a marginal way. It states merely that "the municipality has general authority to carry out . . . any act required to protect . . . public health and confidence in it," but it does not specify the powers and the means to implement this.

Another question is, how interested are mayors in taking upon themselves the responsibility of leading the system in preparations for and during an emergency, which is known to be a complicated and politically risky task? Even if the answer is positive, there are doubts as to whether the other agencies such as the Israel Police, Magen David Adom, and the HFC are willing to operate under the command and control of the mayors. In order to carry out such an innovative approach, a new doctrine would have to be adopted, to be implemented through a long and difficult process.

The practical answer to the question of the ability, willingness, and readiness of the mayors to assume authority and take responsibility in emergencies is neither clear nor uniform. It depends on many factors, including the robustness of his/her leadership, as well as the political, economic, and organizational strength of the particular municipality. The municipal sector in Israel is not generally perceived to be very effective even in regular times.[11] In recent years quite a few municipalities have made significant progress in assuming increasing responsibility for emergencies, and consequently have enhanced their preparedness by allocating resources to this purpose from their independent budget. Nevertheless, many others are still not interested in or not capable of dealing seriously with emergency issues as required, with some mayors occasionally play a duplicitous game in this sensitive field.

Closing of Schools: A Case Study

The decision to open or close schools in high risk situations is an extremely sensitive issue, particularly in the general context of the campaign against terror, when national interest calls for maintaining the routine as

long as it is possible. The opening or closing of schools affects not only the schools and the students and teachers themselves, but also large parts of the public. When schools are closed, many parents prefer to stay at home, which brings about wide scale absences from the workplace. This has a strong bearing not only on the economy, but also on the public attitude and resilience in the sensitive context of repeated security challenges stemming from protracted terrorism. Hence, a decision on this issue requires serious deliberation and an understanding of the wide socio-political picture. It must take into account local as well as national considerations, especially in a context of protracted attack against more than a few towns.

During the March 2012 terror attacks, the school issue was raised after five days of attacks when the schools were closed. The southern mayors, in cooperation with the HFC, decided that it was time for the region's school system to reopen for the 207,000 students.[12] However, as sporadic rocket attacks continued,[13] a disagreement arose between the HFC, which maintained it was possible to hold classes in these circumstances, and a number of mayors, led by the mayor of Beer Sheva, who insisted that schools should remain closed. Consequently, attentive to the wishes of their constituencies and pursuing a policy of caution,[14] these mayors announced their decision to keep the schools closed.[15] Against the backdrop of these differences, the HFC made an official announcement that "based on intelligence and the state of shelters . . . schools can be reopened . . . [However,] the mayors have the authority to be stricter than the HFC's instructions" (i.e., not to open schools).[16] The result was that schools were indeed closed in several towns, including the three largest cities, despite the HFC call.[17] Sometime later the disagreement was formally addressed by the National Tax Authority, which announced that residents of the south who missed work during the periods in dispute are entitled to compensation for their absence. The Finance Ministry thus recognized the legitimacy of the mayors' decisions on this issue.

During the round of attacks in June, the same situation repeated itself,[18] when the mayor of Ashkelon announced his decision not to open the schools.[19] In this round, the role of the parents' associations was especially prominent, which might indicate a trend toward further weakening of HFC authority on this issue.

These instances bring to the fore questions that are at the heart of this analysis: who has the responsibility? Beyond the theoretical question, what would happen if there were similar disagreements in cases of a mass disaster, such as an earthquake, the release of hazardous materials, or missile attack with chemical warheads? Who would then take the difficult decision? Who is the one to decide on a mass evacuation when required? Who would implement such a wide scale decision?

On the face of it, the Ministry of Education and the HFC presumably have the authority to order schools to close, certainly during a declared emergency (which was not the case in the instances discussed here, defined by the HFC as "a time of attack"). This is by virtue of the Ministry of Education's overall responsibility for the entire school system on the one hand, and the HFC's status,[20] which grants it, in a "special situation on the home front," the authority to order schools closed...on the basis of military and security considerations."[21] These assertions are also anchored in a directive of the Ministry of Education[22] and in the HFC's instructions for "time of attack," distributed in August 2011.[23]

In other words, despite continuous attempts to foster an atmosphere of cooperation with the local governments and grant them a central role in disaster management, the HFC still considers itself to be the organization who leads the system in emergency.

Several lessons emerge from this case study. First, as of now, and this is not expected to change in the future, the mayors' position is stricter and takes fewer risks than the HFC's. There was not a single instance when the HFC instructed schools to be closed and the mayors opted for the option to open them. Presumably they are not expected to take upon themselves any risk that might even remotely jeopardize the safety of the students, notwithstanding the other considerations.

Second, the gap on this issue between the HFC and the mayors was first exposed during Operation Cast Lead (2008-9) and has widened since. It reflects primarily the mayors' political need to publically demonstrate their concern for their residents, along with a measure of defiance toward the government and its extension with the IDF, which allegedly is not doing enough to prevent the launching of rocket fire on the civilian population.

Third, the mayors are neither a monolithic group nor do they have a uniform position, even concerning the issue of preparing for emergencies.

The differences between them stem from the variety of their approaches to political issues, the strength of their towns, and their own sense of leadership. Naturally, some mayors take their responsibility as far as preparedness is concerned more seriously than others, who lack the capacity to adequately assume the proposed role of "cornerstone" in the civilian front.

Fourth, there is generally a reasonable degree of cooperation and direct and open discourse between the mayors, as a group and as individuals, and the HFC, NEMA, and the Home Front Defense Ministry. The HFC prides itself with heralding the local governments as central players in the civil defense system, an attitude that is manifested both in the HFC's internal instructions and its continuous dialogue with them. The actual degree of operational cooperation depends to a large extent on the individuals involved, on both sides of the fence.

Finally, the real challenge is to prepare for extreme situations that are more serious than those that took place in the south since Operation Cast Lead. In such severe cases, there will not be enough time for deliberations, consultations, and differences of opinion. The severity of the emergency might necessitate difficult and quick decisions that are liable to require high risk taking and strategic national considerations. Who will make the decision in such situations? It is apparent that the national government has the supreme authority over the strategic domain. It is also clear that the HFC will carry out the government's decisions to the letter. But what will be the role of mayors in such sensitive situations? How much influence will they exert on the decisions in the local domain? This remains an open question.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is an urgent need to define clear boundaries of authority and responsibility for the organizations that work on disaster management in Israel, before the existing vagueness turns into chaos. In accordance with whatever strategy is selected, the relevant bodies should be granted the means and tools to carry out their responsibility. The present situation cannot continue, even if there are those whose interests are ostensibly served by the ambiguity (this is apparently one of the reasons why this issue has not yet been dealt with). Whatever approach is taken, it has to be based legally, even though legislature in itself will not suffice for a

serious process of constructing an efficient and effective administrative system for the civilian front.

Several essential measures are absolutely needed to change the present unwarranted situation. Although some of those have been suggested in the past, none have yet been fully implemented.

First, all aspects regarding authority and responsibility must be anchored in law. Although legislation in Israel may not be sufficient to create facts on the ground, it is likely to serve as a solid basis for constructing the system, as long as it unambiguously defines the necessary frameworks and relations between the various organs and provides a clear, unequivocal answer to two fundamental questions. One, which is the responsible organ – or what is the chain of authority – for preparing the civilian front for emergency scenarios and mass disasters, man-made (war, terror, missiles, and hazardous materials) and natural (earthquakes, large scope fires, and so on)? Two, which is the responsible element – or what is the chain of command – for managing the scene of a mass disaster? Yet another decision has to be made as to who is responsible for the recovery processes that follow a large scale emergency. The Home Front Law proposed several years ago has failed so far to come to fruition.

Second, the status and powers of the official organs and the interface between them should be defined in precise language: the government as a whole (the prime minister and the Ministerial Committee on National Security), the Ministry of Defense, the Home Front Defense Ministry (with other relevant government ministries), NEMA, the IDF, the HFC, and other agencies such as the Israel Police, the national Firefighting and Rescue Commission, Magen David Adom, and others. There should be an accepted, clear, and unequivocal legally based structure that defines their operational relationships, to specify who instructs whom, under different circumstances. A viable solution to the present entanglement could be the establishment of a ministerial position within the Prime Minister's Office, which will not only coordinate but also lead.

Third, the operational relations among the first responders and the local governments should also be defined by law. Beyond legislation, the future structure has to be widely accepted and practiced on a continuous basis. In order to facilitate the real upgrading of the municipal role, the government should allocate the necessary funds and lead a rapid process

of in-depth structuring, training, and maintaining the less powerful municipalities, so that they too can take on the mission. Such an effort would have a constructive impact on the local governments' capabilities during normal times as well.

Fourth, the voluntary organizations of the civic society have to be integrated fully, according to their missions and capacities, in the general effort to enhance societal resilience. It is imperative to provide them with the mechanisms to express themselves and to optimally manifest their role through ongoing dialogue and joint exercises.

But legislation by itself is not sufficient: the organs authorized by the long awaited law must be responsible for constructing the response system in such a way that they can stand up to the unique needs and the anticipated challenges. This is a formidable mission, but the apparent needs make it an immediate necessity. There is some room for optimism in the fact that the Prime Minister recently (albeit belatedly) took the reins and is now holding frequent home front preparedness meetings with the designated national bodies. Given Israel's unparalleled situation, there is no other option but for the Prime Minister to be personally involved in the process of designing the necessary guidelines for the civilian front. The test will be in keeping this initial momentum and creating the required long term processes that would result in strengthening the preparedness of the civilian front.

Notes

1   Uzi Rubin, "'Iron Dome' vs. Grad Rockets: A Dress Rehearsal for an All-Out War?" BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 173, July 3, 2012.
2   State Comptroller's Report, "Preparedness and Performance of the Home Front during the Second Lebanon War, 2007, "Main Findings, and also pp. 3-4, "The Normative Basis for Handling the Home Front" (emphasis added).
3   NEMA was established by resolution number 43/b of the Ministerial Committee on National Security on December 19, 2007, http://www.rahel.mod.gov.il/AboutUs/Documents/Decision%20B43.pdf.
4   Minister Matan Vilnai in September 2011at the INSS annual conference on the preparedness of the civilian front. See Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler, eds., *The Complex Mosaic of the Civilian Front in Israel*, Memorandum No. 120 (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2012).
5   This problematic situation did not fundamentally change even after the passage in March and August 2011 of amendments 15 and 16 to the original Civil Defense Law of 1951, http://oknesset.org/vote/4050/.

6   Home Front Commander Maj. Gen. Eyal Eisenberg in September 2011at the INSS annual conference on the preparedness of the civilian front. See *The Complex Mosaic of the Civilian Front in Israel*.

7   State Comptroller's Report, "Preparedness and Performance of the Home Front during the Second Lebanon War, 2007," p. 96.

8   State Comptroller's Report, "Report on Local Governments," December 2011, see pp. 3-89.

9   The Municipality Law of 2006 (new version) states in clause 248 (a) that "the municipality will do everything necessary to prepare the economy for an emergency and to run it at the same time, except for recruiting manpower and equipment to which different statutes apply, with all of this subject to the instructions of the minister responsible for operations in the relevant area and in accordance with a plan approved by the government or a party authorized by the government."

10 National Economy Emergency System Headquarters, *Planning, Organization, and Operation in the Local Government: General*, December 2004.

11 There has been relatively little confidence in the employees of municipalities and local governments compared to other sectors in the public service, with only religious services ranked a bit below them. See Eran Vigoda-Gadot and Shlomo Mizrahi, "Public Sector Performance in Israel," Working Paper no. 6, Center for Public Management and Policy, University of Haifa, 2006.

12 Yanir Yagna, Gili Cohen, and Barak Ravid, "Routine Slowly Returning to South after Four Days of Rockets," *Haaretz*, March 14, 2012.

13 A Grad rocket in Netivot injured one person, and some twenty people were treated for shock. In addition, twelve rockets and mortars fell in open areas. The following day, schools were in fact reopened in southern cities. However, on March 14, more rockets were fired on Ashdod, the Eshkol and Ashkelon Coast regional councils, Beer Sheva, and Netivot. These rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome system or landed in open areas. Gili Cohen and Yanir Yagna, "Iron Dome Intercepts Rocket Fired by Gaza Militants at Israeli City," *Haaretz*, March 15, 2012.

14 In the southern towns in which schools were open, some 70 percent of the students went to school.

15 The cities in which schools were closed on March 15 were Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer Sheva, Gan Yavne, Kiryat Gat, and Kiryat Malachi.

16 Yanir Yagna and Gili Cohen, "Rocket Fire on South Continues; Several Cities Keep Schools Closed,"*Haaretz*, March 16, 2012.

17 Thus, the mayor of Beer Sheva decided that the city would return to normal only when the situation had quieted down completely. "So long as missiles are fired at Beer Sheva . . . the children won't return to classes," he said. "Some municipal leaders don't use their discretion; they simply do what the Home Front Command recommends. We do things differently." He noted that missiles were still being fired on Beer Sheva, adding, "I'm not willing to accept that as routine." Ibid.

18 On June 6, the parents' committee of the Maagalim elementary school near Netivot decided that since the school was not protected, they would not hold classes. A. Binder and Agencies, "Escalation in the South: IDF Attacks in Gaza, Four More Rockets Fired," *nrg*, June 20, 2012.

19 N. Brenner, "130 Rockets so Far: 'Children Aren't Sleeping at Night,'" *Ynet*, June 21, 2012.

20 Thus, it was determined that "a directive on holding or canceling classes in some locations or nationally will be given by the minister of education according to a government decision and in coordination with the IDF, but any directive or instruction officially published in the media during an emergency on behalf of the IDF spokesman or the Home Front Command, applies immediately to educational institutions as well, and it is not necessary to wait for special instructions from the school system." "The Supreme Authority for Education during Emergencies and the National Economy Emergency System Headquarters," *Planning, Organization, and Operation in the Local Government: Education*, 2004, p. 3.

21 Ibid.

22 "The educational system will act to hold classes during emergencies in all educational institutions in accordance with the possibilities and the changing conditions, and as a result of various emergency situations, unless the IDF/Home Front Command in the geographic area of responsibility determines otherwise, and orders the closure of educational institutions and the cancellation of classes." Ministry of Education, Director General's Circular, "Safety, Security, and Emergencies," March 2004, http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/applications/mankal/arc//sd7bk5_4_6.htm.

23 A "time of attack," according to amendment number 15 (2011) to the Civil Defense Law, is "the time in which an attack is taking place in a certain area, from its start or from the time of the alarm, whichever comes first, and until the all-clear signal, or until twenty-four hours have elapsed since the start of the attack, whichever comes first; if several attacks have taken place in a period of twenty-four hours, the counting of the aforementioned twenty-four hours will start with the first attack." When a "time of attack" occurs, the home front commander is authorized to decide the defense policy, and by virtue of this policy, to give the necessary directives to the population. The directives can be for a particular type of person or the entire population, and they include every provision necessary for saving or preserving human life or property.

From Vision to Reality: Tangible Steps toward a Two-State Solution

Gilead Sher

Introduction

Israel is the only country in today's world facing an existential threat. Against the background of dramatic changes in the Middle East, especially in the Arab world, the Iranian nuclear threat has pushed other important issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, off the political and security agenda. At the most recent annual INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century," for example, held on May 29-30, 2012, senior government ministers and other speakers, among them several who until recently were very senior officials, devoted most of their remarks to this issue. At the same time, many speakers at the conference reiterated the Zionist vision of a democratic Jewish national state. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again called on Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas to join him at the negotiating table without preconditions. "Today I would like to speak about peace," Netanyahu said. "Unfortunately, the strong and I must say, natural desire of our people to extend our hand in peace is not always answered by governments in our region." He urged Abu Mazen, "Don't miss out on this opportunity to extend your hand in peace."[1] His words echoed the basic guidelines of the current government: the government will promote the political process and promote peace with Israel's neighbors, while maintaining Israel's defense, historic, and national interests.[2]

An INSS research group studying the Israeli-Palestinian question called for taking advantage of possibilities to renew the dialogue between the Israeli government and the Palestinians, at least on transitional arrangements. The team also noted that if this attempt to

Gilead Sher is a senior research associate at INSS.

reach understandings with the Palestinians fails, Israel must begin gradual, controlled, and measured implementation of unilateral steps, while examining the effect of any one step before moving on to the next. In essence, this approach advocates simultaneous progress along two tracks: cooperation with the Palestinians through negotiations, and an independent process relying solely on Israel's own decisions. No one disputes that ideally an agreement to bring about a separation from the Palestinians will be an outgrowth of negotiations between the parties, but it is proposed that preparations be made for a situation in which negotiations, if renewed, do not yield the desired results.[3]

This article will deal with "how," rather than "what": how to actually create a reality of two national states, the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people and a national state of the Palestinian people. The discussion addresses the Israeli-Palestinian political process, and does not deal with Israeli Arabs.

The Zionist Vision and Israel's National Interests

Proclaiming "the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country," Israel's Declaration of Independence affirms: "This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State."[4]

> It should not be assumed that separation from the Palestinians will free Israel of the threats against it. It is likely, however, to create a new and optimistic horizon for the Zionist vision.

Today, achieving the Zionist vision of a national home for the Jewish people requires a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The correct, moral basis for the continued existence of the State of Israel as the democratic state of the Jewish people will be anchored in a determination of Israel's borders that includes separation from the Palestinians. In a permanent settlement to be achieved by negotiations between the parties, borders will be delineated, and as a consequence of this, as stressed by Netanyahu in his speech before the US Congress in May 2011, it will be necessary to remove Jewish communities: "The status of the settlements will be decided only in negotiations. But we must also be honest. So I am saying today something that should be said publicly by anyone serious about

peace. In any peace agreement that ends the conflict, some settlements will end up beyond Israel's borders."[5]

Since the peace process began two decades ago, the policy of all Israeli governments has stressed an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict solely through negotiations. This article does not propose deviating from this policy. However, as a default option, in tandem with efforts towards negotiations and with actual talks, the infrastructure for unilateral measures that will lead to separation from the Palestinians should be prepared. This order of priorities in Israel's policy must first and foremost be explained to the Israeli public, and it should be clarified ahead of time to the Palestinian leadership and the international community.

The following are a number of strategic advantages of this approach, which under appropriate circumstances make it possible to carry out Israel's independent measures:

a. It will ensure a strong democratic Jewish majority under the State of Israel's jurisdiction, and reduce the inherent threat to the Zionist vision of a bi-national state.

b. It will facilitate the building of an effective strategic deterrent.

c. In the future, it will make it possible to institute permanent borders for the State of Israel that are likely to promote international recognition of Jewish Jerusalem's status as the capital of Israel.

d. Finally, deployment along the line of the security fence line or any other feasible route decided by the government, and removal of the settlements east of this line, will strengthen – if only temporarily – Israel's international status.

It should not be assumed that separation – whether as a result of an agreement, even if partial or gradual, or as a result of Israel's unilateral measures – will free Israel of the threats against it. It is likely, however, to create a new and optimistic horizon for the Zionist vision. It may also enable the country to devote most of its efforts and resources to dealing with internal problems, civilian involvement, and renewed growth and development, while focusing on closing socioeconomic gaps and building a just society. In this context, Israel would allocate economic resources currently used to maintain the civilian presence in Judea and Samaria to absorption of those who will be relocated, and to significant improvements in the educational and welfare systems as a key to creating equal opportunity.

A New Paradigm for the Political Process: Creating a Two-State Reality

It is now essential to formulate a new paradigm for the political process that will give the parties a sense of progress and hope, and facilitate a rapid return to negotiations, based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 – in other words, borders based on the June 1967 lines that include territorial swaps. In parallel to the effort to renew and maximize the political dialogue, Israel's interests require an independent political initiative by the Israeli government. This policy must be tightly coordinated in advance with the international community, headed by the US, as the main part of preparing for a regional reality of two states for two peoples. This policy should be tested specifically when Israel is not subject to pressure from violence and terrorism.

The alternative proposed here is based on constructive unilateral measures. These can come from Israel and/or from the Palestinians, and in certain cases, can be mutually coordinated.[6] In the present case, a unilateral measure is constructive if it does not contradict the vision of two states for two peoples – and even more so if it effectively promotes a reality of two states – and if its direct results do not obstruct a return to negotiations. Again, it is essential that any specific measure – along with the idea as a whole – be coordinated with the international community. Constructive unilateral measures make it possible to moderate the conflict by gradually creating a reality of two states, and are not contingent on a renewal of negotiations or progress in negotiations. They are designed to proceed in tandem with the ongoing commitment to undertake all possible efforts to negotiate a permanent settlement, or at least to achieve transitional arrangements (such as a partial agreement, phased agreement, interim agreement, and so on).

Some of the leading constructive unilateral measures that Israel should consider include:

a. A construction freeze east of the security fence and in the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem. In line with the policy of Israel's current government, construction in the settlement blocs and the Jewish neighborhoods in the Jerusalem region can be continued.[7]

b. Putting a voluntary evacuation-compensation law into effect for Jewish residents living east of the fence. This will assist those who

wish to move to within the Green Line or to the settlement blocs, whether or not an agreement is reached with the Palestinians, while giving them appropriate compensation for their property.

c. Preparing a national plan for absorbing Jewish residents returning to Israel's recognized and safe borders, with or without an agreement. The plan will include elements of urban, employment, economic, security, psychological, and social planning.

The internal political feasibility in Israel of adopting the proposed approach is an open question that lies outside the scope of this article. At the same time, it is not desirable to wait until the last minute to prepare matters that any government in Israel must address, even in a situation in which an agreement is reached through negotiations. On the day when Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria are called on to relocate to what are determined to be the State of Israel's borders, whether through negotiations or by an independent and non-contingent decision by Israel, it will be too late to properly plan their return. It is therefore proposed to begin these national preparations now.

Proposed Security Preparations

The Palestinians and many others in the Middle East and the Arab world are liable to interpret a unilateral and independent Israeli measure as an act of weakness by Israel. That is what happened after Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 and from Lebanon five years before that.

At the same time, this concern does not in itself negate the entire concept. If Israel acts independently, after having made a well-considered, maximum effort in the negotiating channel, it will be clear to everyone that Israel is trying to strengthen its security and determine its borders for the sake of preserving its character as a democratic Jewish state. Judicious and controlled implementation of non-contingent separation will convey strength and increase deterrence, thereby reducing potential propaganda damage.

The security deployment plan should take into account the worst scenarios from Israel's standpoint, including increased motivation by Palestinian and Islamic elements to attack Israel, with the Palestinian Authority being unwilling or unable to prevent it. The preparations must include a demonstration of power, prevention of smuggling and infiltration, prevention of high trajectory fire, and deterrence. Israel

will declare in advance how it will respond to missile and rocket fire against its territory, which will earn understanding in advance from the international community for Israel's responses.

Because the proposed measures do not include mandatory removal of Jewish residents, the IDF will in any case remain in the area where Jewish communities are located as well as in sites that have been voluntarily evacuated, and will maintain its freedom of action. As the process progresses and broader civilian separation is achieved, the IDF will continue to remain in the territories evacuated by Jewish residents, in contrast to the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria in August 2005. Israel will announce that it reserves absolute and non-contingent freedom of action in the evacuated territory, despite the civilian-political separation, in the event of violent action by Palestinians.

Civilian deployment along the demarcation line of the security fence (or any other feasible route chosen by the government) will take place according to a predetermined timetable. It will be made clear that Israel's entire policy is driven by choice and for the sake of its interests.[8] In the context of civilian separation, Israel must reserve for itself, or for a third party acceptable to it, control of the border crossings between the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, and Gaza, and control the level of security checks there in order to prevent the supply of weapons to Palestinians who support terrorism.

It is further proposed that only after the withdrawal of Israeli forces, following a long and monitored period of quiet, will Israel give positive consideration to the presence of an international force in the evacuated territories. This will prevent the creation of a governmental-security vacuum and avoid the serious mistake made in Gaza in 2005.

Internal Dialogue and Legitimacy

The civilian public constitutes the most important element for a leadership working to build confidence, and is the element that legitimizes both the process and the agreement or decision ultimately achieved. In other words, the citizens of Israel, and in particular, the sectors that stand to be affected most from the negotiation results, are of critical importance in the process. Along with the Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria, these groups include people of lower income and participants and activists in the social protest, who can be expected to oppose giving budgetary

preference to the residents of the evacuated settlements at a time when many others face a difficult economic situation. It may be especially important to heal the rifts with the religious Zionist community, including the many serving as commanders in the IDF. Serious preliminary discussion is necessary in order to build confidence through an internal empathetic and respectful Israeli dialogue. This would help earn substantial legitimacy for a government measure in the most basic democratic sense – exactly what then-Prime Minister Sharon lacked in the withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria in 2005.

The Economic Aspect

Assuming that any blueprint for an agreed political settlement or separation initiated by Israel will require the removal of up to 100,000 Jewish residents, current opinion surveys indicate that 27 percent of the residents designated for removal would likely leave voluntarily.[9] For the sake of this analysis, we will assume that fewer are involved – possibly 20,000. At most, therefore, 5,000 families are involved, and the cost of their evacuation will be less than NIS 10 billion.

It is assessed that voluntary evacuation and absorption planned in advance are likely to greatly reduce the cost, which will be spread over a number of years. To the extent that the measure is coordinated between Israel and the international community, headed by the US, it is especially likely that funding could come from a combination of: special American aid; long term government bonds marketed overseas; and long term government bonds marketed in Israel to be purchased primarily by the pension and provident funds. This financing can be spread out over 30 years or more.

The budgetary costs of the evacuation will not compete with budget spending in other areas such as education and welfare, or even defense: as in the 2005 disengagement, budget spending will be beyond the fiscal constraint established in the Foundations of the Budget Law (in professional jargon, the "box"), and this budget supplement will apply only to the relevant years and will then expire.[10]

> Constructive unilateral measures make it possible to moderate the conflict by gradually creating a reality of two states, and are not contingent on a renewal of negotiations or progress in negotiations.

According to Central Bureau of Statistics figures, specific civilian spending on the Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, and the Golan Heights averaged $215 million annually in 2004-10,[11] i.e., $1.5 billion over seven years. This is designated spending, in addition to the government support and participation in expenditures for Israeli citizens within the Green Line. At the same time, the American government deducted $2.3 billion from the guarantees granted to Israel for investment by the Israeli government in construction in Jewish communities outside the Green Line. This deduction gives an idea of the extent of construction in the territories directly or indirectly encouraged by the government.

Voluntary evacuation also has considerable economic advantages, reflected in savings on budget costs required to maintain the communities to be removed, a hoped-for improvement in the geopolitical situation, and an expected upgrading of Israel's credit rating. The cost of voluntary removal can therefore be regarded as an economic investment with additional returns.

The estimated budget required for a full removal of 100,000 people is several dozen billion shekels. This estimate does not include the cost of redeployment for the security forces.[12] It also does not include compensation that must be paid for businesses, farms, industrial buildings, and public buildings, and generating alternative jobs. If an agreement is reached with the Palestinians in negotiations, it can be assumed that some of these costs will be deducted from the total cost of implementing the agreement.

Absorption and Resettlement

Absorbing the Jewish residents evacuated under a settlement, or according to an independent decision by the Israeli government, must be done with consideration and respect for the population. These Israeli citizens will pay a heavy personal and communal price in giving up their life's work and ideology. Thus, a change in the discourse between the government and the Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria is likely to increase active support by people who favor a two-state solution by making them see relocation as a unifying step of building social strength and not as abandonment of an important Israeli sector, and thereby make it easier to deal with the complex challenge of this removal.

According to senior economists,[13] the task of absorbing 100,000 people moving back within Israel's accepted borders is entirely within the country's capability. Despite the different circumstances and context, the country and the economy have in the past absorbed large waves of immigrants with great success. Over three million immigrants have been absorbed since Israel was established. In the early 1950s and the early 1990s, Israel absorbed 200,000 immigrants per year. The absorption of other waves of immigration, such as tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews, whose absorption was especially costly, also indicates that the task is not impossible. Israel's GDP and population were much smaller than they are today, and the economy suffered from severe problems at that time.

Contrary to a predicted housing shortage for the evacuated families and communities, there is in fact a planning surplus in construction space between the Haifa and Beer Sheva lines, excluding Tel Aviv, from which planning permits can be issued for 200,000 housing units. Assuming that the Jewish residents are removed over 2-3 years, and assuming that at most 20,000-25,000 families are involved, the volume of housing units in question lies within the framework of detailed planning that is sufficient to provide a solution for them and for other population groups in the country. Preparing and extending the planning surplus, while removing various barriers, will add a considerable number of housing units to this inventory, even without the Negev and the Galilee.

Legislation

Legislation is called for that allows those living east of the security fence to redeem their homes, under state auspices, in exchange for an alternative home within the borders of the State of Israel. This law will assist those Jewish residents who are willing to move but are unable to do so because their home has no real value. The state will not move other civilians into the abandoned homes. Defense forces can be housed in them.

Just like the political measures, the fact that a law is enacted will represent an Israeli initiative that does not depend on a Palestinian partner or progress in the political process. Thus, while leaving the door open to negotiations, Israel will strengthen the international community's belief in its willingness to reach a settlement, without paying any price in security. Those who relocate voluntarily will have long term resettlement

prospects that will enable them to choose whether they wish to live under Israeli sovereignty or elsewhere.

Why is such a law necessary now? Given the lessons learned from the disengagement in 2005, it is clear that early passage of the law is likely to encourage Jewish residents living in isolated communities to recognize that they will eventually have to leave and thereby do so voluntarily. The consequences of the withdrawal will be spread over a longer period, the number of Jewish residents forced to move during a political settlement or other national decision will be smaller, and the entire process would presumably be less traumatic for the Jewish residents of the settlements and the public as a whole.

Referendum

Since decisive measures affecting the future of Israel are involved, it appears that a decision on these measures will have to be taken in general elections, by special Knesset majority, or in a referendum. Israel has never had a referendum, and there is great concern that the use of this tool is liable to take advantage of the lack of a sophisticated mechanism of checks and balances in the political system, thereby damaging Israeli parliamentary democracy.[14] In November 2010, the Knesset enacted a law entitled the "Referendum Law."[15] The criticism heard then focused on the risk that in the absence of legislation such as a basic law establishing a mechanism and conditions in advance, and requiring normative safeguards and decision by a special majority, a referendum is liable to become a tool of the government or strong interested parties.[16] Adopting the referendum as a regular mechanism in a basic law mitigates concern about manipulation by interested parties, because at least some rules of the game are set independently of the subject, time, and place.

> By promoting a reality of two states in a non-contingent manner, Israel will deliver a message that it does not see its future in territories east of the fence, without jeopardizing its security during and after the transition stages.

Such a basic law is necessary to regulate the matter of referenda in general. A Referendum Law as a basic law constitutes the only framework in which referenda will be held in Israel. It is suggested that before the government or the Knesset decides to hold a referendum, it will submit the proposal for a referendum to the Attorney General, who will decide

whether the proposed referendum conforms to the legal definition. Once approved by the Attorney General, the proposal will be sent to government or the Knesset for a decision. The referendum results will be binding on the government and the Knesset.

Conclusion

By promoting a reality of two states in a non-contingent manner, Israel will deliver a message that it does not see its future in territories east of the fence, without jeopardizing its security during and after the transition stages. Should negotiations resume and progress, it is proposed that they be held on the basis of agreement that what has been agreed will be implemented. This will replace the formula used by the parties in negotiations for a permanent settlement – "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" – and facilitate attainment of transitional arrangements and partial, gradual agreements. In this way, it will be possible to progress on core territorial and security issues without discussion of Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees holding up progress.

In the absence of a substantive diplomatic dialogue, however, and at a time decided by Israel, given the trend of events towards a bi-national state, it is proposed that Israel take constructive unilateral measures that advance its long term national interest. With proper advance coordination, while clarifying Israel's intentions to the Palestinians, it is hoped that the Palestinians will recognize that Israel does not oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state. Furthermore, continued construction in the settlement blocs will deliver the message that it is best for all concerned to resume negotiations, because in their absence, a reality of two states whose common border is the route of the security fence or any similar route decided by Israel, which is currently unacceptable to the Palestinians, will take hold.

The international community is likely to adopt the proposed plan, and encourage the parties to progress thereby. The Palestinians are also likely to win support from the international community for constructive unilateral measures of their own. The Israeli public will receive a clear message from its government concerning the urgent and essential need for a two-state solution. The absorption plan will call on the Israeli public to assist the Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria relocating within Israel's recognized borders, and begin to heal the split in Israeli

society resulting from the many years of dispute concerning the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria. Diaspora Jewry will be convinced of the strength of the Zionist enterprise, and Israel will ensure its future as a democratic Jewish state secure in its borders.

Notes

1 Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21ˢᵗ Century: Israel's Search for Opportunities in a Turbulent Region," May 29, 2012, http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speech290512.aspx.

2 http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Government/Policy.

3 See in this volume Shlomo Brom, "Israel and the Palestinians: Policy Options Given the Infeasibility of Reaching a Final Status Agreement." I was a member of the INSS working group that dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian arena and in that capacity contributed to the analysis of policy options.

4 http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel.

5 http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2011/Speech_PM_Netanyahu_US_Congress_24-May-2011.htm.

6 In contrast, consideration of unilateral steps by Israel has been criticized by other INSS researchers See, for example, Shmuel Even, "Israel's Strategy of Unilateral Withdrawal," *Strategic Assessment* 12, no. 1 (2009): 29-45.

7 On this subject, see Alan M. Dershowitz, "A Settlement Freeze Can Advance Israeli-Palestinian Peace," Gatestone Institute, July 5, 2012, http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3150/settlement-freeze.

8 According to the public opinion poll conducted by Rafi Smith for the Blue White Future movement in early June 2012 (as yet unpublished), 71 percent of those questioned said they supported the idea of voluntary removal in exchange for compensation, and support of the principle was widespread among most sectors, excluding those with a right wing conviction. Most of the public – almost 8 out of 10 of those expressing an opinion – agree with the principle that the IDF should remain in Judea and Samaria until a final peace agreement with the Palestinians is reached, and this support exists among all population sectors. A similar ratio of about 8 out of 10 noted that the State of Israel should prepare for absorbing Jews currently residing east of the separation fence in order to facilitate the measure, if and when it is decided.

9 This section is based on a position paper (January 2012, as yet unpublished) by former Ministry of Finance Director General Yarom Ariav and former senior Bank of Israel official and advisor to the Governor of the Bank of Israel Avner Halevy. On the public opinion survey, see a study by the Macro

Center for Political Economics headed by Dr. Roby Nathanson (May 2012, as yet unpublished).

10 This mechanism was acceptable to the rating agencies, international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, as well as to the American Department of the Treasury.

11 For example, see Local Authorities in Israel 2010, Publication No. 1498 of the Central Bureau of Statistics, June 28, 2012.

12 For the sake of comparison, in the removal of Jewish communities from Gaza and northern Samaria, the Ministry of Finance initially estimated the cost of the proposed government law at NIS 2.8 billion. Following the Knesset debate, the Ministry of Finance revised the cost of the law passed to NIS 3.8 billion. At a later stage, NIS 400 million was added to this estimate, following a High Court of Justice ruling that accepted some of the arguments by the Jewish residents. The estimate here is based on similar proportions, with the necessary changes, and according to a real estimate of the construction, planning, management, building and development fees, and land costs.

13 Prof. Amir Barnea and Yarom Ariav, interview with Shalom Yerushalmi, *Maariv*, April 12, 2012.

14 Preface by Asher Arian to Dana Blander and Gideon Rahat, "Policy Paper No. 20 – Referendum: Myth and Reality" (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2000). Prof. Arian emphasized, "For all its faults, the parliamentary system is the system used in Israel, and the parliament is the framework in which we will continue to make the vast majority of decisions regarding our laws and our common life, now and in the future. We should seek ways to reinforce this system instead of weakening it through decisions designed to circumvent the Knesset."

15 Administration of Rule and Justice Law (cancellation of application of law, jurisdiction, and administration) (Amendment), 2010, Law Code 58.

16 For example, see Ron Klein, "Laws in Brief – December 2010," legislative note: Administration of Rule and Justice Law (cancellation of application of law, jurisdiction, and administration) (Amendment), 2010, http://law.huji. ac.il/upload/ron_referendum(1).pdf; and Zeev Segal, "Referendum Law: A Revolution of Doubtful Legality," *Haaretz*, November 23, 2010, http://www. haaretz.co.il/news/law/1.1231293.

The Institute for National Security Studies
5th Annual International Conference (May 2012)

Security Challenges of the 21st Century: Israel's Search for Opportunities in a Turbulent Region

Findings and conclusions of INSS working groups,
prepared in advance of the conference

Amos Yadlin
**A Conceptual Framework and Decision Making
Model for Israel about Iran**

Shlomo Brom
**Israel and the Palestinians: Policy Options Given the
Infeasibility of Reaching a Final Status Agreement**

Mark A. Heller
**The Uprisings in the Arab World and their
Ramifications for Israel**

Oded Eran
**Relations between Israel and the United States
before and after the Presidential Elections**

A Conceptual Framework and Decision Making Model for Israel about Iran

Amos Yadlin

In recent months the public has been inundated with information on the Iranian nuclear issue. Some of the information has contributed to sound, open public discourse, whereas some of the information has been tendentious, vague, and rife with internal contradictions. Therefore, it is imperative that the current discussion rely on solid facts and the ability to assess the credibility of various sources of information and the motives of those supplying it. Underlying the discussion is an understanding that the issue is complex and has no magic solution. Above all, the analysis demands a logical conceptual framework and a clear, transparent decision making model for the authorized decision making forum.

Any discussion of the Iranian nuclear issue must begin from the premise that this is not an issue concerning Israel alone. The Iranian nuclear issue is a strategic, security, and political challenge to the entire international community, and Israel must avoid leading the global charge against Iran. It behooves Israel to take a back seat and not assume exclusive responsibility for preventing Iranian nuclearization.

When examining the Iranian nuclear issue, several major intelligence-related questions arise, whose answers lay the foundation for strategic and political guidelines. Among them: Is the objective of the Iranian nuclear program to manufacture nuclear weapons? If so, what is Iran's

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin is the Executive Director of INSS. This article summarizes the findings and conclusions of an INSS working group on the Iranian nuclear issue, which were first presented at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century: Israel's Search for Opportunities in a Turbulent Region." Other members of the working group included Dr. Ephraim Asculai, Dr. Yehuda Ben Meir, Brig. Gen. (ret.) Udi Dekel, Yoel Guzansky, Dr. Ephraim Kam, Dr. Emily Landau, Eliav Lieblich, and Gilead Sher.

strategy? How soon would Iran have nuclear bombs? If there were a successful strike against Iran, for how long would this postpone its attainment of the bomb? What would Iran's response be to an attack?

The estimation is that Iran, endowed with a careful but determined strategy, is progressing towards developing nuclear weapons. In the last decade, Iran has crossed the technological threshold and equipped itself with all the necessary capabilities and components to break out towards nuclear weapons the moment it decides to do so. That is to say, the Iranians will have a bomb when they decide they want it plus whatever breakout time is needed.

One may point to five possible strategies to block, neutralize, or significantly delay Iranian military nuclearization: negotiations over an agreement, crippling sanctions, covert action, a military strike, and regime change. A sixth strategy, containment and deterrence, accepts a nuclear Iran. The first five strategies, designed to thwart an Iranian military nuclear program, complement and support one another. Thus, any combination of strategies comprises a dynamic mix of diplomacy, international supervision and verification, steps in the technological and manufacturing areas, PR, and of course operational military moves. At the same time, there is uncertainty as to how Iran would respond to the different strategies. Any situation assessment must be fluid and relate to the relative and cumulative effects of each move, both on the Iranian regime and the Iranian people.

Without the existence of a credible threat of military action, the other strategies cannot generate results. Consider the interesting paradox: those who publicly claim that there is no military option or that it is too risky and its cost unacceptable are liable to create a situation in which it will be the only strategy left to block Iranian military nuclearization, whereas precisely those who prepare a possible and credible military option could create a situation in which it will not be necessary. Without a credible military option, the probability that the world will come together to support sanctions and the Iranians will understand that it is best for them to arrive at an agreement is much lower than with such a threat.

Careful examination of the sixth strategy − accepting that Iran has the bomb and relying on deterrence − suggests it is an unstable and risky option. Contrary to assertions made primarily in the United States, whereby were Iran to attain the bomb, there would be a stable "balance

of fear" as there was during the Cold War, the situation is completely different with regard to the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to several critical factors: an extreme religious ideology calling for wiping Israel off the map guides the Iranian decision making system; there are serious difficulties with controlling escalation and crises, because the sides do not communicate and have no diplomatic relations; there is the constant temptation to launch a first strike; and the relative sizes of the two nations is asymmetric and encourages instability. The existence of multilateral conflicts in the region and historical and current enmities would almost certainly lead to nuclear proliferation in the region. The presence of proxies, including terrorist groups, is another factor increasing instability, especially given the danger of nuclear matter falling into their hands.

Any strategy Israel chooses to confront Iranian nuclearization – especially by military means – must fulfill three preconditions: serving the supreme strategic need to prevent Iranian nuclearization, i.e., understanding that Iran in possession of military nuclear capabilities is the worst option for preventing a nuclear Iran; b) operational capabilities, i.e., Israeli capabilities to undertake an operation that would postpone the Iranian nuclear program by a significant period of time; c) legitimacy, i.e., the requisite level of international support for action, after understanding that all other options have been exhausted. This legitimacy is especially important vis-à-vis the United States.

Consequently, Israel faces a choice between two strategic options, both of which are high risk in terms of national security. One can see this as a choice between "bombs," and here the assessment is that the cost of an Iranian nuclear bomb is higher than the cost of bombing Iran. Furthermore, the Iranian response is considered not as dangerous as suggested by senior members of the American security establishment. Iran's threats prior to an attack are an effective means of deterrence, but the Iranians have neither the capability nor the interest in setting fire to the entire Middle East. It is almost certain that there would be an Iranian response after an attack, but calculated Iranian interests suggest that it would be measured and tolerable, especially in light of the achievement of stopping Iran's nuclear program. It has been said that in the next few months Iran will enter the zone of immunity, seemingly requiring an Israeli operation in the immediate future. However, the zone of immunity need not be the leading parameter in considerations on attacking Iran.

It is necessary to exhaust any third alternative – acceptance of neither Iranian nuclear bombs nor an attack on Iran – if there is a way to prevent Iran arming itself with nuclear bombs. In the next few months, it will be critical to exhaust the route of substantive sanctions on Iran and see if they affect Iran's willingness to come to an agreement. It is also important to build up maximal legitimacy for a future strike should diplomacy fail.

In this context, it is important to understand the components of a good – even if not ideal – agreement that may be a better alternative than either "the bomb" or "the bombing." Such an agreement would have to include three parameters: removing most enriched matter outside of Iran's borders for processing into nuclear fuel; stopping operations at the Fordow facility (rendering the zone of immunity parameter redundant); and more significant and effective inspections (at least according to the parameters of the Additional Protocol). Much caution must be taken not to enter into a bad agreement, liable to be a shared interest of Iran and the major world powers and reached in order to prevent an Israeli attack. An agreement limiting enrichment to 5 percent and even removing matter enriched to 20 percent is a bad agreement, because full enrichment capabilities and its future products would remain in Iran. This is an agreement from which Iran would be able to break out towards nuclear weapons whenever it wanted and achieve them within a short period of time. A good agreement would be measured by its ability to stop the nuclear clock and even turn it back. A good agreement would keep Iran at least two years away from nuclear bombs.

It would be a mistake to view an attack and its aftermath as an isolated incident. Rather, correct strategic thinking must weigh and assess what would happen on the day after the strike and in the decade after the attack. It is essential to plan well and integrate thinking about the operation with planning for the greater campaign. Theoretically, the best result of a military operation would be a five year delay. To turn those five years into ten – and then into many decades as was the case with Iraq, and the case of Syria where, five years after the attack, there is no sign of the project being renewed – it is incumbent to ensure that the entire world is prepared to participate in the ongoing effort to stop Iran the day and the decade after the attack. Demonstrating the scope of losses to Iran from maintaining its military nuclear program, continuing the sanctions, blocking critical technologies and materials, threatening repeated

attacks, and continuing diplomatic pressure are all part of a necessary next stage campaign in which Israel cannot succeed on its own. This manifests the importance of gaining legitimacy for an Israeli strike and international – or at least American – recognition that Israel acted only after all other attempts had failed.

When one considers all the components of such a campaign, one must of course note the differences between Israel and the United States in terms of approach and capabilities. While President Obama's speech at the March 2012 AIPAC conference marked agreement between the two nations on the strategic goal, namely stopping Iran from attaining military nuclear capabilities, the two countries disagree on what would constitute the trigger for military action. The differences of opinion stem from different assessments of risk, intelligence, effectiveness of the sanctions, and operational capabilities.

Because of these differences, the two nations have different red lines, leading to different understandings about the right timing for an attack. While Israel defines the red line at the point where Iran can break out to nuclear weapons, the United States identifies the line at the time of breakout in practice. The question, then, is, when the Iranian program is extensive, redundant, robust, and capable of breaking out within a short time, can American intelligence identify the breakout on short notice, and can so weighty a decision as attacking Iran be made and carried out within the tight timeframe of the Iranian breakout. In any case, should there be an American attack, it would in have to be surgical and limited to the nuclear sites to reduce the probability of a widespread, ongoing regional conflagration. A focused operation would make it clear to Iran that it still has much to lose should it decide to expand the confrontation.

An open, in-depth dialogue between Israel and the United States may, to the extent there is trust between the two leaders, lead to the possibility of realizing the third option, i.e., neither "the bomb" nor "the bombing." If the Iranian nuclear project is not blocked by agreement or covert activity and its nuclear clock does not stop ticking, military action against Iran would earn greater legitimacy, along with American support the day and the decade after. Without legitimacy allowing an international campaign over the subsequent decade, Israel faces the risk of finding itself opting for bombing and bearing its full cost, and still ending up with the Iranian bomb and its attendant dangers.

Israel and the Palestinians:
Policy Options Given the Infeasibility of Reaching a Final Status Agreement

Shlomo Brom

Goals and Basic Assumptions

Policy options regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are among the main bones of contention in Israeli politics. At the same time, over the years a solid majority has developed in Israeli society agreeing that the preferred alternative for settling the conflict is separation from the Palestinians and implementation of a two-state solution to ensure Israel's existence as the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people.

The purpose of this article is to examine Israeli policy options toward the Palestinians and the extent to which they bring Israel closer to a two-state reality. The starting assumption is that effective negotiation of a final status arrangement will not be possible in the foreseeable future, primarily due to the mutual lack of trust between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Each side is convinced that the other side is unwilling or unable to propose any acceptable agreement. Added to this is the complicated internal political situation on both sides. The territorial and political distance between the Fatah government in the West Bank and the Hamas government in Gaza divides the Palestinians. In Israel, there is much political discord and a government where powerful oppositionist elements are able to obstruct the road to a permanent

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Brom is a senior research associate at INSS. This article summarizes the findings and conclusions of an INSS working group on the Palestinian issue, which were first presented at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century: Israel's Search for Opportunities in a Turbulent Region." Other members of the working group included Brig. Gen. (ret.) Udi Dekel, Dr. Oded Eran, Oz Gertner, Dr. Anat Kurz, Yoram Schweitzer, Gilead Sher, and Einav Yogev.

agreement. Furthermore, the regional instability in the wake of the Arab uprisings complicates the mobilization of states in the region to support the negotiations. The United States, the main international actor, is neutralized as a result of the current presidential election campaign and the need to address more critical crises, and there are doubts as to its ability to intervene in any concrete way even after the elections.

The Method

In the more than twenty years of an Israeli-Palestinian political process, numerous possible options for resolving and managing the conflict have been raised in the Israeli and international political and public debate. Against this backdrop and as part of this study, all the options that do not contradict the goal of realizing the two-state solution were mapped and compared vis-à-vis their ability to promote the two-state solution. They were also assessed relative to a "sit and wait" approach. There is no purpose in pursuing a course of action that essentially channels Israel to a worse situation than one in which it does nothing. The comparison was conducted using a set of parameters that measure the extent to which the options bring Israel closer to achieving a secure two-state situation, and parameters that measure the political feasibility of the options.

The Alternatives

Three of the alternatives evaluated were judged to be viable. Three other options surface frequently in the public debate in Israel and were therefore worth examining, even if it is quickly concluded that they lack feasibility and fail to contribute toward the stated purpose.

The first relevant alternative is a "sit and wait" policy, which represents two versions: the "pure version," which is to avoid any change in the current situation, and "sit and do a little," in which "good faith" gestures to the Palestinians – such as easing the movement of people and goods and other actions to improve the Palestinians' economic situation – are used to bring about an improvement in the current situation, with the goal of enhancing their living conditions. It would appear that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was referring to such a policy when he proposed what he called "economic peace" early in his current term; this is clearly the visible preference of the Israeli political establishment. It does not require decisions that could bring about the collapse of coalitions and the fall of governments, and it avoids a confrontation with the settlement

movement and its supporters. However, this is not a real alternative to a policy aiming to create two states because not only does it not promote this solution; it does not even ensure that the current situation will be maintained. In practice, there is no actual status quo because the situation is constantly evolving: for example, the number of settlers in the West Bank is growing, Palestinian demographics are creating changes, the process of delegitimization of Israel in the international arena is gaining strength, and the pressure is increasing in the Palestinian pressure cooker. The result is that Israel is not standing still in relation to the two-state solution, rather, is moving away from it and toward the next flare-up on the Palestinian front, whose exact makeup and consequences cannot be predicted.

The second relevant alternative comprises unilateral moves, and here too, there are two versions. The first version is full unilateralism, with only tactical coordination with the Palestinians. The second version is coordinated unilateralism, a process in which each side coordinates the unilateral measures it implements with the other side and there is some sort of reciprocity. An example of such coordination and reciprocity are actions by Israel to stop the expansion of settlements, including limited evacuation, along with limited Palestinian actions toward rehabilitating Palestinian refugees on Palestinian territory, or Israeli territorial measures in coordination with a Palestinian declaration of the establishment of a state. A variety of measures can be included within the unilateral option, but for the purposes of the comparative examination, it is important to address the substantive measures. These include meaningful signals – limiting and stopping the settlement project (an evacuation/compensation law that would allow settlers to leave voluntarily from an area to be defined in advance in exchange for compensation, limiting building up to the line of the fence) – as well as gradual territorial changes that could include a full withdrawal to a line Israel decides upon (perhaps the line of the fence).

> There is no actual status quo because the situation is constantly evolving. The result is that Israel is not standing still in relation to the two-state solution, rather, is moving away from it and toward the next flare-up on the Palestinian front.

An important principle underlying this option is a distinction between a military and a civilian presence. This is a clear lesson of the

disengagement from the Gaza Strip. It is worth considering transferring territories to civilian Palestinian administration so that the Palestinians will be able to advance the project of building a Palestinian state, but at the same time, to continue with security control that will reduce security risks until the point at which it is clear that the Palestinians are willing and able to take responsibility for these areas, and the level of security coordination between the two sides ensures a high level of security.

The main advantage of the unilateral option is that it is dependent only on Israel's political will. The main problem with it is that it evokes negative connotations among the Israeli public as a result of security developments after the unilateral withdrawals from southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and the partially flawed implementation of those government decisions. The distinction between civilian withdrawal and security withdrawal addresses the concern that Israel is taking unacceptable risks with these unilateral actions. This would also make it possible to carry out such unilateral measures with the understanding that their implementation would not necessarily reduce the Palestinians' motivation to pressure Israel in various ways, including through violence, to achieve additional concessions. If this pressure is in fact contained, this would certainly be a positive development, but the main goal is to gradually separate from most of the Palestinian population and create a two-state situation.

The third alternative to be considered involves transitional arrangements. Intended here are partial, gradual arrangements that have been agreed on that will advance both sides toward a two-state reality and a permanent solution. In order for this progress to be significant, it must include real territorial components. This option can also address another issue, namely, the need to include Hamas in agreements with Israel. If Hamas is a partner to agreements with Israel, this means that there is a broad consensus in Palestinian society concerning an agreement, and the chances of its acceptance, viability, and endurance are greater. The inclusion of Hamas seems to be a more practical idea if the agreements are partial and do not require Hamas to give up its main ideological principles at an early stage. The main disadvantage of the idea of transitional arrangements results from vehement Palestinian opposition to holding negotiations on this basis, and even if Palestinians can be persuaded to start negotiations, it is doubtful that agreements will

be concluded. This disadvantage can be overcome if the two sides reach several basic understandings about a permanent settlement or are given sufficient safeguards concerning the permanent status agreement. In such a situation, it will be easier for the Palestinian leadership to enter into a process based on partial agreements.

Three ostensible options are in fact options in name only. The first is an imposed solution. There are different variations of an imposed solution – from constraining the sides to accept an agreement dictated by the major powers, to constraining them to accept a decision by arbitrators, to forcing Israel to withdraw from the territories and in its wake, establishing an international trusteeship in the territories en route to establishment of a Palestinian state. From Israel's perspective, these solutions are neither desirable nor realistic because they do not provide Israel with the ability to guarantee its essential interests. It is also very difficult to envision a situation in which the international community would want to impose a solution on the two sides and be capable of bearing the costs and risks of doing so.

The second alternative in this category is the Jordanian solution. Of late this option has aroused renewed interest, mainly due to frustration with the stalemate in the diplomatic process and because of the belief that Jordan is a reliable partner in contrast to the Palestinians, who are seen as unreliable. That does not necessarily make this solution more realistic, because this option too is based on an agreement and offers no better solution to the core issues. There is no reason to assume, for example, that it will be easier to reach an agreement with Jordan on the West Bank border or on refugees. The idea that Jordan is a more reliable partner and therefore it is easier to reach an agreement with it could also be problematic if the developments of the "Arab Spring" undermine Jordan's stability and affect its reliability. In any event, Jordan and the Palestinians reject this option, and the Hashemite kingdom perceives it as an Israeli attempt to push the Palestinian population into Jordan and as such, an existential

> The main advantage of the unilateral option is that it is dependent only on Israel's political will. The distinction between civilian withdrawal and security withdrawal addresses the concern that Israel is taking unacceptable risks with these unilateral actions.

threat to the kingdom. Therefore, any Israeli discussion of this idea harms relations with Jordan.

Finally, there is the regional solution: This option is also frequently raised in public discussion, but it cannot be a substitute for negotiations on an agreement with the Palestinians. In the Arab Peace Initiative, the regional solution is contingent on Israel's ability to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. This does not mean that there is no point in addressing the regional component of the agreements: this is an important supporting element, but it is not an independent option.

Comparing the Options

The two main parameters that were chosen to examine how each option contributes to achieving the goals are progress toward two states for two peoples and progress toward calm and security stability. The parameters selected for checking the feasibility of each option are the extent of Israeli control over the process, the degree of independence from the Palestinians, the degree of independence from involvement by the international community, and the degree of dependence on the regional system. The assumption is that the more control Israel has over the process and the less dependent it is on the Palestinians, the international community, and the regional system, the greater the feasibility. In this comparison, contributions to achieving the principal goals were given greater weight.

The main finding from a comparison of the options is that the unilateral option is reemerging as the preferred choice. This is no great surprise, since Israeli-Palestinian interactions have been characterized by the inability to reach agreements. Added to the understanding that the status quo is not acceptable and harms Israel's long term interests, the only course of action remaining is the unilateral path, which has the added value both of bringing a two-state situation closer and of feasibility. In addition, separating civilian withdrawal from the withdrawal of security forces makes it possible to control the security risk inherent in this option, which is perceived as its main weak point.

While in the current political reality the "sit and wait" policy appears to be the most feasible option because it does not create political problems, this picture is illusory. The policy poses many risks and pushes Israel farther away from the goal of two states because there is no real possibility

of freezing the situation and maintaining the status quo. It threatens the ability to preserve Israel's identity as the democratic nation state of the Jewish people, maintain its status among the nations of the world, and ensure its security interests.

In today's complex political situation on both the Israeli and the Palestinian side, with a frozen political process that seems to defy revival, it is natural that the unilateral options receive preference. The difficulty in reaching any agreement between the sides means that even among the unilateral options, one that is completely unilateral is slightly preferable. However, if the political situation allows the coordinated unilateral option to be implemented, that would be better for Israel.

By the same token, if and when they can be achieved, transitional arrangements are preferable from Israel's point of view. However, they are less viable given their dependence on other actors, especially the Palestinians, and hence the difficulty in agreeing to them.

The regional solution is not an authentic alternative. It merely provides assistance and support, which is needed in any case in order to maximize the chances and minimize the risks in each of the options. The Jordanian option has few chances of implementation, is generally not feasible, and lacks real advantages over any other solution based on an agreement. An imposed solution is undesirable for Israel.

The recommendation, then, is to take advantage of any political developments that may allow renewal of the talks between the government of Israel and the Palestinians in order to negotiate transitional arrangements in parallel to permanent status negotiations. At the same time, preparations should be made to implement the constructive unilateral measures examined above. If the attempt to reach understandings with the Palestinians fails, then Israel must begin to apply the unilateral steps in a gradual, controlled, and thoughtful manner, while examining the impact of each measure before proceeding to the next. The steps that have tremendous security significance, and in particular, ending Israel's presence and security activity in the Palestinian territories, should be postponed until later stages.

> The main finding from a comparison of the options is that the unilateral option is reemerging as the preferred choice.

Israeli interests suggest that two major combined policy efforts that support one another should be implemented simultaneously. The first is to vigorously pursue a negotiated solution with the Palestinians, even partial or gradual, that is based on the principle of two states for two peoples. The other is for Israel to initiate a policy to promote an actual situation of two states for two peoples with or without an agreement. The recommendation, therefore, is to advance on two parallel axes: agreement and coordination with the Palestinians, and a process that relies only on an independent Israeli decision.

One could claim that all the proposed courses of action are unrealistic because they require Israel to pay a heavy price, especially in evacuation of settlements, without receiving anything from the other side, or in the case of the transitional agreement option, with a very partial return from the other side. The logic of this claim is that only in the framework of a permanent settlement will it be possible to persuade the Israeli public that it is receiving full compensation for the price that it is paying. However, promoting the supreme interest of realizing the Zionist vision and preserving the existence and the image of the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people are an appropriate return for the price that Israel will be asked to pay, even if Israel does not receive anything from the Palestinians. Israel cannot wait for the Palestinians to give it appropriate compensation and allow its fate and its future to be dependent on a Palestinian decision.

The Uprisings in the Arab World and their Ramifications for Israel

Mark A. Heller

General Characteristics

The wave of protests, popular demonstrations, and anti-regime uprisings grouped under the rubric "Arab Spring" that erupted in Tunisia in late 2010 and spread over much of the Arab world since then has prompted a wave of speculations about future developments. Much of this analytical activity has focused on the presumed causes of what appears to be a sharp departure from the stability or quiescence that characterized Middle Eastern politics over the previous decades, and on the likely consequences across the region. This article focuses on the possible implications of these uprisings for Israel, based on several operating assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon. First, despite some commonalities, the uprisings are not a monolithic region-wide phenomenon, and consequently, few generalizations are universally valid. The few that do resonate widely relate to the vocalization of popular sentiments, the facilitation of communication and organization by dissidents due to the introduction of modern technologies (social networks), and the lowering of the barrier of fear.

Second, the sources of the unrest expressed in public demonstrations are not confined to the rejection of authoritarian rule, but consist of both political/psychological elements (e.g., denial of dignity, resentment over

Dr. Mark A. Heller is a principal research associate at INSS. This article summarizes the findings and conclusions of an INSS working group on the Arab world, which were first presented at the INSS conference "Security Challenges of the 21st Century: Israel's Search for Opportunities in a Turbulent Region." Other members of the working group included Dr. Benedetta Berti, Brig. Gen (ret.) Shlomo Brom, Yoel Guzansky, and Dr. Anat Kurz. Dr. Oded Eran assisted in formulating the policy recommendations.

widespread corruption, sense of individual as well as collective, i.e., ethnic or confessional deprivation) and economic/material elements (either economic stagnation or the unfair distribution of whatever benefits any economic growth was producing). However, the precise mix of these elements varies in each country, because each one has its own historical, political, social, cultural, economic, and demographic peculiarities.

Third, varying sources of discontent and varying aspirations mean that in many cases, the strengthening of "people power" is not necessarily equivalent to democratization. Sometimes it is manifested in the assertion of "authentic" group/collective identities or even of millenarian visions rather than the struggle for individual liberties, and therefore produces deep apprehension among ethnic/religious minorities or women.

Not all the changes that emanate from these dynamics have negative implications for Israel, particularly insofar as regional alignments are concerned. However, the upheavals do imply significant threats and dangers. Israel is obviously unable to determine the outcomes of what are essentially domestic dynamics or even influence their course and direction. It can, however, take steps to mitigate their potentially threatening or dangerous ramifications.

General Consequences

Given the heterogeneous character of the region, it is not certain that all states will experience serious upheavals (as opposed to mere discontent), and in those that do, the outcomes of the domestic struggles are inherently unpredictable. Even after the first signs of "spring" in Tunisia, few analysts foresaw the emergence of mass protest movements in Egypt or Syria, and when that did happen, many were surprised both that Husni Mubarak in Egypt was overthrown so quickly and that Bashar Assad in Syria was not. In fact, there is no historic inevitability about the outcomes of these struggles. Authoritarian regimes are not necessarily doomed to be challenged, much less overthrown; their fate very much depends on the presence or absence of active foreign intervention (especially military intervention), which was a decisive factor in the ability of the Bahraini monarchy, for example, to survive (thus far, at least), as well as in the inability of Muammar Qaddafi to defeat the uprising in Libya.

What seems less uncertain is that the regimes that survive domestic challenges, and even those that are spared such challenges, will be more attentive to public moods even if they do not display a greater willingness to cede power. Those that do not survive will not necessarily be replaced by less authoritarian alternatives. Indeed, in circumstances in which a culture of tolerance and common citizenship has not yet come to prevail, the political space opened up by the overthrow of existing regimes may be most successfully exploited by Islamist and/or nationalist forces, no more predisposed to encourage or tolerate the political culture underlying true participatory democracy than were their predecessors. In other words, emerging polities that accurately reflect majority interests, identities, or beliefs may nevertheless be incompatible with the practices of liberal democracy. It is also possible that the contest for power will not be decided for some considerable period of time and that protracted domestic conflict will lead to prolonged instability and the weakening or even break-up of familiar territorial units – an outcome already witnessed in Sudan and one that cannot be entirely precluded in Syria and Iraq.

Finally, regional alignments and balances of power may be subject to significant changes, depending on the outcomes of these domestic upheavals. The most obvious example of such change (positive from Israel's perspective) would be the removal of the Syrian component in the Iranian-led "axis of resistance," although other, more negative changes are also possible.

Implications for Israel

The greatest risk to Israel is the possibility that Husni Mubarak's warning to the United States with respect to Egypt – that the only realistic alternative to his model of authoritarian rule is Islamist authoritarian rule – will be borne out, not just in Egypt, but across the entire region. The emergence of radical Islamist regimes bent on implementing their ideological preferences, insensitive to military balances, or simply caught up in escalatory political dynamics of their own making constitutes an obvious danger. A second-order risk is that the weakening of central authority will enable terrorist organizations to exploit power vacuums in frontier regions to enhance their operational capabilities and, in circumstances of their choosing, step up attacks on Israel. This has already happened in southern Lebanon and in Sinai (even before the fall of Mubarak)

and could conceivably happen in southeastern Syria and even in the Jordan Valley. Either or both of these developments would produce a tenser regional environment and greater day-to-day insecurity as well as intentional confrontation or strategic miscalculation. It is even possible, though perhaps not likely, that radical Islamists in Sunni Arab states will make common cause with Iran, if only for short term tactical reasons. Persistent rumors of exploratory attempts at conciliation between Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have yet to be verified, much less to show tangible results, but the very fact that contacts have been established is noteworthy.

These risks are partially offset by more probable positive changes in regional alignments, i.e., the weakening of the Iran-led axis in the event that the Assad regime in Syria is overthrown. Moreover, it is not inconceivable that regimes led by Islamists will behave with greater practical restraint than their rhetoric/belief system might suggest, because of domestic and/or international constraints on their power. For example, following its electoral victory in Tunisia, the Islamist an-Nahda Party went to great lengths to reassure apprehensive Tunisians and interested foreign parties that it had no intention of implementing a repressive social agenda of the type favored by true fundamentalists. There are also some tentative signs, however inconclusive, that Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi, the elected president of Egypt, is (willingly or unwillingly) committed to a more similar domestic course and to a more ambivalent attitude toward the peace agreement with Israel than could have been extrapolated from the longstanding approach of the Brotherhood to this question. It is, of course, premature to conclude either that such intentions are sincere or that they are merely a form of dissembling meant to preempt domestic and international pressures. But the former possibility cannot yet be categorically precluded.

Conclusions

In many respects, the phenomenon known as the "Arab Spring" has profoundly changed the political landscape of the region. At the same time, it is important not to overstate the totality of change. For example, the emergence of "people power" means that public opinion has become a greater force to be reckoned with. Still, the "Arab street" was always a factor that both governments and foreign actors were always and

rightly enjoined to take into account. Similarly, domestic and regional uncertainties have clearly been exacerbated, but it is not as though the first demonstrations in Tunisia suddenly swept away a situation of stability and predictability in the domestic and regional politics of the Middle East.

In such circumstances, Israel does not now find itself in an unprecedented situation in which it needs to consider contingencies and policy implications that it was never obliged to think about before. Israel was always an outsider in the regional system, on which political and social grievances could be conveniently focused. That remains the case. Israel may never transform itself into an accepted, integral element of the region and its vulnerability may well grow as fluidity and upheaval in Arab countries continue to intensify (even as social and economic challenges logically demand greater attention to domestic affairs and pose greater, even insurmountable challenges to both incumbent regimes and their successors – and perhaps precisely because of that). Consequently, Israel should prudently explore actions to reduce the potency and appeal of anti-Israel demagogy, even in the full awareness that total elimination of regional hostility (authentic and therefore instrumentally useful) will remain a distant if not unrealizable goal.

To this end, several policies are in order for Israel. First, Israel should recognize the limits of power. Barring scenarios involving direct military intervention, even major world powers cannot decide the outcome of political upheavals in Arab countries. Israel certainly cannot do so. It cannot even help move events in desirable directions (with perhaps some minor exceptions).[1] Indeed, in some cases (especially Syria) it is far from self-evident what the desirable outcomes are or whether they bear any relation to reality. Moreover, Israel's generally toxic image means that even the appearance of a preference for one party or another in domestic conflicts may have a boomerang effect. At the same time, Israel should recognize that this is not a prescription for paralysis. Rather, it may be able to contain or reduce the potentially negative impact of current developments and perhaps

> The greatest risk to Israel is that Mubarak's erstwhile warning – whereby the only realistic alternative to the familiar Middle East model of authoritarian rule is Islamist authoritarian rule – will be borne out across the entire region.

exploit any opportunities that present themselves. In addition, it is important to avoid binary logic. The debate between those who advocate passivity while preparing for the worst and those who advocate activism in order to avoid the worst is based on a false contradiction. Both courses can and should be pursued simultaneously along different tracks.

Complementing these general imperatives are specific initiatives Israel might undertake. The first calls for proactive and highly publicized measures to reinvigorate the search for a resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians or at least to lower its profile. As the single most neuralgic issue in Arab (and non-Arab Muslim) attitudes toward Israel even before the Arab Spring, the imperative is not new, except in the urgency of the effort to reduce the possible negative fallout of the recent and ongoing wave of upheavals. Domestic policy disputes in Arab states will not be settled exclusively or even primarily by intellectual persuasion. Nevertheless, opponents of more aggressive approaches to Israel will at least have a better chance to put their case if they are provided with some "ammunition" to counter the putative rationale for escalatory actions by the proponents of confrontation.

In tandem and by the same logic, it is important that Israel endorse the principles of the Arab Peace Initiative and offer to discuss them with an Arab League contact group. Israel does not need to accept without reservation the content of the Arab Peace Initiative but it can benefit from any initiative to refute the claim that it continues to reject or ignore it. Similarly, Israel should attempt to open channels of communication with emerging political forces in the Arab world, including Islamists. There is no guarantee that Israel can succeed even in opening such channels (as the United States has done), much less generate some greater acceptance or empathy. But any effort at least to reduce misunderstandings and discredit harmful stereotypes is surely worthwhile. This could be enhanced by offers of humanitarian assistance. Such offers may well be rejected, and even if accepted, they are unlikely to have as appreciable an impact as will the assistance of states more willing and able to offer relief in the form of refuge to those fleeing the actual or anticipated consequences of violence, especially in Syria. Nevertheless, such offers, aside from their practical impact, may help to erode the hegemonial view of unmitigated Israeli hostility to Arab people.

In addition, other, more narrowly focused measures are indicated. One is the attempt to explore (with American help) whether Turkish-Iranian tensions, focused on Syria and Iraq but reflecting broader Sunni-Shiite suspicions, have created a more auspicious environment for Turkish-Israeli reconciliation. Two is the implementation of more active measures to help alleviate economic stress in Jordan (one of the elements contributing to instability in that country), especially in the fields of water and energy. Three, contingency planning for worst case developments, especially in Sinai, should be strengthened, including the fortification of border defenses and the creation in advance of command structures, force frameworks, and training programs that unfolding events may require. Possible responses to Egyptian requests for a review of the terms of the peace treaty should also be prepared. These actions should be undertaken in consultation with the United States and, wherever possible, with military authorities in neighboring states (in order to minimize misperceptions and unintended escalation) and should be accompanied by high profile offers of economic/technological cooperation, e.g., joint projects, with those states.

Note

1   The perception of Israel's negligible capacity to affect the direction of change is captured in a recent memorandum by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, which surveys possible international responses to events in Syria and explicitly refers to Russia, China, Turkey, Europe, NATO, Iran, Hizballah, Jordan, the Arab League, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, but fails even to mention Israel. See Muriel Asseburg and Heiko Wimmen, "The Violent Power Struggle in Syria: Scenarios and Policy Options for the International Community," *SWP Comments* no. 9 (March 2012).

Relations between Israel and the United States before and after the Presidential Elections

Oded Eran

Israel's relationship with the United States is one of the most important components of Israel's political, security, and economic strategic situation. Israel puts tremendous effort into maintaining and nurturing this relationship, as it has no substitute in the international arena. Despite some setbacks, which at times are given too much attention, the unwritten and informal alliance between the two and the strategic partnership have been carefully maintained.

The Foundations of the Relationship

The partnership and cooperation between Israel and the United States are founded on a shared set of values and mutual strategic benefits. At the basis of the shared values is the reality of Israel as a democratic society defending itself in a hostile environment without the need for active American intervention.

While public opinion polls in the United States indicate that support for Israel is firm, Israel must be sensitive to a certain erosion of that support, especially in the liberal segments of American society, resulting from what is perceived as Israel's religious intolerance, discrimination

against women, and harm caused to Palestinian life and property. Even within the Jewish community, criticism of these phenomena has increased in recent years, and although these voices as yet wield limited internal American political influence, it requires attention, as does the need to confront those who generate the criticism in order to minimize possible damage to the base of support for Israel in the American public.

The second major component of the Israel-United States relationship is the strategic partnership. Beginning in the early 1950s, Israel opted for a strategic connection to the West. While until 1967 Israel relied for military hardware primarily on France and Great Britain, that year Israel's political, security, and to a great extent also economic connection with the United States became almost exclusive. The strategic partnership was expressed through exchanges of intelligence assessments, arms supplies, and improvements in political and security coordination. The political coordination between the two was often a significant factor at important junctions. The strategic partnership does not necessarily signify complete congruence in terms of the strategic goals of the two nations and the paths they choose to reach these goals. Differences of opinion on fundamental issues have always existed, and some of these issues are even seen by Israel as existential, but this has never affected the depth and scope of the relations.

Comparing Israel's relations with the United States to its relations with Europe can be problematic, but it allows us to understand a situation in which there is a strategic partnership that allows differences of opinion without undermining the foundation of that partnership. For example, the positions of the United States on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are fairly similar to those of Europe and especially those of the European Union, but while differences of opinion between Israel and the EU caused a significant rupture and erosion in cooperation between the two sides, the foundation of the relations and cooperation with the United States, even on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, have never been seriously damaged. The fact that in the brief post-1967 history there have been personal tensions in the relations between the heads of state of Israel and the United States has never impacted on the overall fabric of the relationship.[1]

Current Events: Netanyahu-Obama Relations, the Arab Spring, and Iran

The topics on which recent public discourse in Israel has focused, such as the relations between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Barack Obama, must be seen in the context of American public support and the strategic partnership between the two nations. President Obama's attitude towards Israel is based on a comprehensive view of United States strategic interests and his liberal worldview, rather than on value-linked or emotional considerations about Israel. This distinction is also valid concerning his attitude to America's other allies, not just Israel. It is of course important to try to minimize interpersonal tensions when it comes to relations with the United States, especially given the probability that President Obama will be reelected.

Both because of the importance of the issue to Israel and the United States and in an attempt to improve the overall relationship with the United States, especially at the interpersonal level, Israel would do well to try to advance a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An American president in his second term would likely feel less constrained by internal political considerations than a first term president. President Obama has made the importance he attributes to the Palestinian issue eminently clear. Therefore, an assumption must be made that he will resort to the Israeli-Palestinian question, while learning the lessons of previous efforts and taking into account the far reaching changes that have occurred in the region since the beginning of his current term in office. An Israeli initiative, coordinated with the American administration, would contribute significantly to strengthening the bilateral relationship and especially the relations between the two heads of state. Such an initiative need not necessarily include a comprehensive solution to the three core issues: Jerusalem, refugees, and borders. An Israeli initiative could aim for a partial arrangement for an interim period, and it could include a series of unilateral steps as well as agreements with the Palestinian Authority.

> Differences of opinion between the United States and Israel on fundamental issues have always existed, but this has never affected the depth and scope of the relations.

Another current topic of public discourse − the "Arab Spring" − enhances the importance of an Israeli initiative for a political process

with the Palestinians. Several times, the Arab uprisings forced the United States to choose between friendly though non-democratic regimes and popular regimes relying on Muslim ideological majorities. This dilemma will only intensify if the civil revolution spreads to countries where the United States has clear strategic interests, such as the Gulf states. America's image was also damaged given a prevalent sense in the region that the United States is a superpower in decline because of the administration's decision to leave Iraq, reduce its presence in Afghanistan, lead the operation in Libya from behind, and until now refrain from military action against Syria. The image of a superpower in decline is also strengthened by America's strategic decision to shift the center of gravity of political and military activity to the Far East in order to curb China's growing influence in this part of the world. All of these have negative implications for Israel. A political initiative that would allow America room to maneuver politically is therefore of strategic interest for Israel. The importance of such an Israeli initiative is that it would give the United States room to maneuver in the region, which may help to improve America's image in the region. Such an improvement and continued American presence in the region are in Israel's best interests given recent regional transformations, some of which are liable to have a negative effect on Israel's strategic balance.

In recent months, the Iranian question has monopolized the attention of both the Israeli government and the American administration. The two are mostly in agreement, although their positions are not identical. Both agree on the objectives of the Iranian nuclear project and the projected timetable. Until now there was also agreement on the need to give the political efforts and negotiations, accompanied by effective sanctions, a real chance to work. By contrast, there is not full agreement on when a military option might be implemented, what its goals would be, and who would be responsible for carrying it out. Likewise, there is not complete agreement as to what Iran's response might be and how this response might affect the Middle East and the global economy.

President Obama's statement that Israel is a sovereign nation with the right to defend itself is important, but it does not relieve Israel of the need to avoid surprising the United States with particular moves, in light of the importance of American political and public support in the long run. Any Israeli action on Iran, whether political or military, has ramifications for

American strategic interests in the Middle East and the global economy, and therefore also an impact on American public opinion on Israel. These are considerations that any Israeli leader must take into account when deciding on Israel's response to Iran's ongoing nuclearization.

Social Trends and Relations with the Jewish Community

A third area of relations is connected to social and demographic trends in the United States and the American Jewish community. The Jewish community in the United States has influence on the strengthening of ties with Israel, and this community is an important pillar of the relationship. The proportion of the Jewish community involved in the American political and bureaucratic systems far exceeds its numerical size, and its political and moral support for Israel is an Israeli strategic asset. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the implications of some negative developments within the American Jewish community. Intermarriage, for example, has resulted in a demographic decrease in absolute numbers, while immigration of other minorities to the United States has resulted in a decrease in the relative percentage of the Jewish community within the American population. The fact that the Holocaust and establishment of the State of Israel – formative events for the Jewish people – recede in time results in a weakening of the emotional aspect of the connection between young American Jews and Israel. The fact that Jewish community-Israel relations are still conducted through older, formal mechanisms does not serve to widen the base of relations between the community and Israel. On the positive side, programs such as Masa Israel Journey and Birthright have had much success in bringing the younger generation closer to Israel, as does the involvement of this generation in the activities of AIPAC, devoted to promoting relations between Israel and the United States.

Significant improvements in the way Israel is viewed on the issues of state and religion and the Palestinian question, and strengthened cooperation with the American administration on Iran will also bolster Israel's ties with certain segments of the American Jewish community. At the same time, however, Israel will have to maintain its bond with the younger generation of religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews in the United States whose interest in political issues seems to be smaller than that of its secular counterpart.

In 2012, the number of minority infants born in the United States for the first time exceeded the number of infants born to white Americans, and hence the importance of Israel strengthening its image among the Hispanic, Asian, and African-American communities. Programs mentioned in the context of the Jewish community may, with necessary adaptations, contribute in this regard. It would be especially advisable to expand and intensify the effort to bring delegations of young, politically involved non-Jews to Israel (especially among Hispanics and Asians), encourage them to enroll in study programs, and participate in work programs. This recommendation dovetails with the aforementioned need to maintain the support of liberal Americans and the wide support Israel has enjoyed from this base for many decades.

In light of the challenges Israel will face in the coming years, the Israeli government must continue to preserve and nurture the relationship with the United States, at the personal level between the heads of state, at the strategic level in terms of coordinating interests, and at the level of segments of American society whose internal political influence is steadily growing.

Note

1   For example, there were personal tensions between President Carter and Prime Minister Begin, between President George H. W. Bush and Prime Minister Shamir, and between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

INSS Memoranda 2012

No. 121, July 2012, Emily Landau and Anat Kurz, eds., *Arms Control Dilemmas: Selected Issues* [Hebrew].

No. 120, July 2012, Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler, eds., *The Complex Mosaic of the Civilian Front in Israel* [Hebrew].

No. 119, June 2012, Meir Elran and Yehuda Ben Meir, eds., *Drafting the Ultra-Orthodox into the IDF: Renewal of the Tal Law* [Hebrew].

No. 118, June 2012, Zvi Magen, *Russia in the Middle East: Policy Challenges* [Hebrew].

No. 117, May 2012, Shmuel Even and David Siman-Tov, *Cyber Warfare: Concepts, Trends, and Implications for Israel*.

No. 116, April 2012, Yoel Guzansky, *The Gulf States in a Changing Strategic Environment* [Hebrew].

No. 115, March 2012, Emily B. Landau, *Decade of Diplomacy: Negotiations with Iran and North Korea and the Future of Nuclear Nonproliferation*.

No. 114, March 2012, Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, eds., *One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications* [Hebrew].

No. 113, March 2012, Yoel Guzansky and Mark A. Heller, eds., *One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications*.

No. 112, February 2012, Uzi Rabi and Yoel Guzansky, eds., *The Gulf States: Between Iran and the West* [Hebrew].