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Israel's Foreign Policy in the Test of 2020

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In many countries, the inauguration of a new government is a time to review important policy issues, including foreign policy. The parties comprising Israel's new government are different from those of the governments in the past decade, which in itself is a reason for a reassessment. Furthermore, global and regional processes over the past decade mandate reconsideration of current policy and adaptation to the new situation. Prominent among these processes are game changers such as the struggle between the United States and China, the gradual withdrawal of the United States from the Middle East, the collapse of the political structure in the Middle East following a decade of regional upheaval, and exploitation of the fragile and chaotic situation by regional powers such as Iran and Turkey. The withdrawal of the United States from the Middle East coincides with demographic and political changes in the US, including in the Jewish community. These changes are liable to weaken United States support for Israel, a cornerstone of Israel's foreign and security policy. This article urges an assessment of these regional and global processes and their significance for Israel, analysis of the modes of action and tools available to Israel's foreign policy, and planning for implementation of the policy formulated.

Keywords: Israel, foreign policy, Middle East, Europe, China, United States

Introduction

In mid-2020, Israel faces new challenges resulting from internal political changes that led to the formation of a government different from those of the past decade, and from changes in the regional and international theaters. All of these require the shapers of Israel's foreign policy to reassess the fundamental premises that have guided this policy until now, with an emphasis on three primary assumptions. The first is the political and security support for Israel by the United States, in addition to support from the Jewish community in the United States. A second assumption is that the importance of the Palestinian issue on the international and regional agenda has waned. A third assumption is that Israel can maintain reasonable relations with the various international actors, such as the European Union, Russia, and China, despite differences of opinion on matters of importance for Israel—the most important among them, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian nuclear program.

Beyond an examination of the validity of these fundamental assumptions, there is a need for a strategic Israeli response to the possibility that the United States withdrawal from the Middle East begun by President Obama and continued by President Trump will persist in the coming decade. A possible response includes dialogue and cooperation with certain Arab states facing a similar challenge posed by the weakening of American dominance in the region, consideration of expanding and deepening the dialogue with Russia, and dialogue with Turkey in order to prevent an inadvertent clash.

The Internal Theater and Israel's Foreign Policy

Following three election campaigns in Israel in 2019-2020, a government was formed comprising the traditional right wing bloc (the Likud and the ultra-Orthodox parties) and half of the center bloc. The coalition agreement between the blocs is for a three-year period, with changes of prime minister and ministers

of defense and foreign affairs after 18 months. These circumstances could generate disruption and confusion in Israel's defense and foreign policy that will be affected by differences in ideological and personal attitudes toward fundamental issues affecting Israel's foreign policy. Even if current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi share a common view of the danger to Israel of Iran's nuclear program, they have disagreed, and may continue to disagree, on the correct and preferred responses to this threat. These disagreements are significant; they concern Israel's overall security concept and its political relations, especially with the United States.

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Another key issue is annexation of territory in the West Bank. Here, too, the three leaders may not disagree about annexation in principle, but Gantz and Ashkenazi do not share the ideological drive of the right wing, led by Netanyahu. Their experience in defense and their current ministerial positions lend them a view of annexation and its consequences that is different from Netanyahu's.

The appointment of a full-time minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is an important change from the situation that existed for over a decade. However, the fact that he will leave his position in little more than a year raises the question of his desire to conduct a review and if necessary a revision of foreign policy in accordance with the findings. Nonetheless, the regional and international circumstances listed below make such an effort a necessity.

The Regional Theater

After a decade of upheaval of the so-called Arab Spring and half a year of the coronavirus crisis, the Arab world finds itself more battered and fragmented than ever. The internal wars in Yemen, Libya, and Syria have dragged on in other Arab countries; leading regional actors such as Turkey, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia; and actors outside the region, such as Russia and the United States. These wars and the involvement of external actors have direct and indirect consequences for Israel. Iran, Russia, and Turkey are intervening in the war in Syria, while Israel has a coordination and dialogue mechanism only with Russia, and even that is limited to specific situations. Russian involvement in a host of issues in a region that includes Israel, including the Eastern Mediterranean Basin, justifies an effort to expand this dialogue while maintaining Israel's freedom of action in cases of different assessments.

If the downturn in energy prices is not a temporary phenomenon, then laying an undersea pipeline to enable Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and Lebanon to pipe natural gas to Europe is not economically feasible. This requires rethinking, with one clear alternative being expansion of the liquefaction facilities in Egypt.

Turkey's direct intervention in the outlying areas of the region requires attention and a response from Israel. Turkey is intervening actively in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, Syria, and the Eastern Mediterranean; it poses challenges to Israel, the pragmatic Sunni countries, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the United States, the European Union, and NATO. This situation enables Israel to respond in a number of ways, including a direct dialogue with Arab states in North Africa and the pragmatic Gulf states, although the chances of success of such a dialogue are limited. It also requires, however, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of a possible dialogue with

Turkey, together with Israel's ongoing dialogue with Greece and Cyprus, and with Egypt, while taking into account the difficulties in each of these countries' relations with Turkey.

The question of transporting natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to markets in Europe is a significant issue in the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, which developed in recent years with the participation of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, among others. The global crisis in the energy market, which has pushed oil and natural gas prices down steeply, highlights the question of Israel's ability to continue leveraging this matter for its strategic goals, such as creating a bloc of Eastern Mediterranean countries with an interest in thwarting Russia and Turkey and promoting cooperation within the bloc, based on natural gas and on tourism. If the downturn in energy prices is not a temporary phenomenon, then laying an undersea pipeline to enable Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and Lebanon to pipe natural gas to Europe is not economically feasible. This requires rethinking, with one clear alternative being expansion of the liquefaction facilities in Egypt.

Israel's relations with Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states will be significantly affected by a decision by Israel to annex territory in the West Bank. An analysis of the "cost" of annexation mandates taking into account both measures that countries opposed to this step will take, and opportunities that will not materialize in post-annexation circumstances. To a large extent, annexation will eliminate Israel's ability to take advantage of the economic regression in the neighboring countries to offer economic cooperation that could improve their situation, thereby contributing to greater geopolitical stability in Israel's immediate neighborhood. Overall, a reappraisal of Israel's place in the regional theater in the coming decade should include a special section focusing on projects and matters for regional cooperation, an evaluation of their political and economic viability, and an assessment of the ability to attract international aid for their implementation. The list of potential

ventures should include initiatives in water and energy, transportation, tourism, and industrial parks in border areas.

The coronavirus crisis creates opportunities for Israel, because the emergence of the Middle East from this crisis requires, inter alia, regional cooperation. The crisis has damaged important economic sectors, such as tourism, and has highlighted the importance of renewable energy, food production, and water supplies. Turning Jordan into a regional breadbasket with Israel's help in supplying drinking water and irrigation can improve the economic balance of Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority. Even though the fall of the price of energy produced from fossil fuels reduces the economic advantage of producing solar and wind energy, such energy still has advantages, especially in Jordan because of its large desert areas and the many sunny days during the year. Cooperation in this field, based on production in Jordan and purchase of the energy by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, would be beneficial to all three economies. Ideas and initiatives of this type have not been carried out because of the political rift between Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan. Annexation, which would further aggravate the political rift, will annul the conditions and atmosphere needed to realize these ideas. A reassessment of foreign and defense policy should therefore also include an evaluation of the chances of utilizing political-economic options, the ability to obtain international financial assistance for them, and the possibility of using them to shape a more favorable regional environment for Israel. These possibilities depend on progress, however minimal, in the Israeli-Palestinian political process. In the absence of such progress, Arab countries with an interest in cooperation with Israel are hard-pressed to withstand internal and external criticism.

Israel's renewed look at the Middle East should focus on an evaluation of the consequences of the receding United States presence in the region—a process that

began during the Obama administration and accelerated during Trump's presidency. Ostensibly, Israel's security does not rely on a United States physical presence in the region, but this is only one aspect of the consequences resulting from a loss of American interest in the region. The possibility that regional actors, especially Iran and Turkey, as well as other actors, such as China and Russia, whose policy toward Israel ranges from neutral to hostile, will fill the vacuum created by an American withdrawal requires a political, security, and economic assessment that responds to the threats that may emerge in these circumstances. This consideration should also be part of the discussion of the consequences of annexation, because it is liable to hamper the ability to formulate, together with moderate actors such as Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states, a common strategy designed to minimize the damage that an American withdrawal from the region, however gradual, may cause.

The International Theater

In addition to the momentous impact on public health, the spread of the coronavirus enhances and accelerates processes that were visible even before the pandemic.

Weakening of the International Order

Above all, the fact that for the past six months the World Health Organization and the health systems of the most populous countries were unable to enforce rules for preventive action and behavior, or launch a coordinated international campaign against the pandemic highlights the failure of the international order. Most countries preferred to act independently without help from international organizations, except for financial organizations. Countries are renewing activity in economic sectors such as civil aviation, tourism, trade, and so on, with no regard for the actions of other countries. Members of economic organizations, such as the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), make

decisions on economic matters, while ignoring the policy of other member countries. These are only a few examples of the weak points in the international order, which thus far has failed to prevent the chaos created by the coronavirus crisis.

The actions of the two largest superpowers, China and the United States, both in their bilateral relations and in the multilateral sphere, have also contributed to the loss of some of the influence of the international order over the regulation of trade, communications, and copyrights. The failure to form a common international front in the struggle against the coronavirus is primarily a result of the intense competition between the two powers.

Globalization

The development of globalization rested on the assumption that the political and physical borders of countries would be loosened to allow free global movement of trade, knowledge and information, capital, and people. The unrestrained competition between the United States and China before the coronavirus crisis subsequently escalated during the pandemic, with mutual accusations levied. This is now threatening the expansion of globalization, and could lead to a search for alternatives for preserving the advantages of globalization that facilitate their utilization within friendly frameworks.

Competition between China and the United States (and other economic powers)

The declared strategies of the Chinese leadership leaves no room for doubt about its underlying long-term goal—to turn its demographic and economic size into political and military power in order to achieve a status equal to that of the other powers, i.e., the United States. Almost all means are justified in the Chinese view in this campaign. From the very beginning, the Obama administration recognized the Chinese strategy and the need to combat it and devote resources

to this purpose, even at the expense of other strategic missions. The Trump administration, whether because of its emphasis on rebuilding the economic power of the United States or because China under the Xi Jinping government has become more aggressive in an effort to conquer more economic strongholds, finds itself in a tough struggle against China, with many countries, including Israel, hard-pressed to find the golden mean between cooperating economically with China and maintaining close cooperation with the US.

Loss of Leadership in the West

The coronavirus crisis did not create the processes mentioned above, but it has definitely intensified them. The processes are underway in a state of affairs that has prevailed since the end of the Cold War, where the world leadership of the United States is waning. President Trump has merely added to and accelerated this process. There is no replacement for American leadership in either Europe or East Asia. This fact has weighty consequences for the ability of a country like Israel, identified as part of the West, to deal with the consequences of American withdrawal from the Middle East, with Washington focusing on the struggle against China and the erosion in the status of the United States as leader of the West.

The collapse of the Soviet Union could have been a springboard for the European Union and NATO to become the center of gravity for the West. The too rapid accession of countries from the former Soviet bloc to these two organizations, however, combined with the failure to complete the integration process, especially in the European Union, has resulted in a situation in which the two organizations are finding it difficult to maintain their cohesion and *raison d'être*. A number of member countries and ideological movements are using this difficulty in an effort to lessen the authority of the main institutions and bolster the supremacy of nation states and their authority against that of the two organizational institutions.

Such frameworks are ostensibly comfortable for Israel, because they do not involve an absolute abandonment of political or security freedom of action. For reasons concerning the organizations' charters, disagreements between their members, and lack of Israeli interest, however, full Israeli membership in them was not considered, and is not recommended. However, we do recommend upgrading Israel's relations and cooperation with both organizations.

Implications for Israel

Israel-United States Relations

Even if Israel manages to upgrade its political and security cooperation with specific countries in Europe and Southeast Asia, this cannot serve as an alternative to Israel's special relationship with the United States in the near future or replace the US as Israel's sole political and security bulwark. At the same time, there are weighty issues liable to affect the centrality and importance of the American element regarding Israel's power and strategic positioning.

An examination of the demographic processes in American society, especially those in the Jewish community, suggests that while Israel may have no better options, the American option is liable to face a devaluation in its political-security return.

The demographic and political weight of the ethnic minorities in the United States is growing. The interest of these minorities in the Jewish minority and the relations between the United States and Israel ranges from indifferent to hostile. The Afro-American minority is more interested in the Palestinian issue than in the Jewish leaders who marched at Martin Luther King's side over half a century ago. If there is one foreign policy issue on the agenda of the Black Lives Matter movement that has gained greater momentum in the United States in recent weeks, it is the Palestinian issue. The dimensions of the Afro-American minority's influence, as well as that of other minorities, will emerge primarily if the Democratic candidate enters the White

House in January 2021, and even more if the Democratic Party wins a majority in both houses of Congress.

At the same time, the process of alienation from Judaism and issues related to Israel among the younger generation of the American Jewish community continues. The result is a decline in the importance of Israel among the 70 percent of the community who vote for Democratic candidates. The demographic and ideological changes in this party are in any case liable to have a negative impact on relations between the United States and Israel.

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Those in charge of Israel's foreign policy must question the validity of outmoded conventions and clichés, such as the mantra that an American president will veto UN Security Council resolutions containing sanctions against Israel. Even if this belief proves valid, there is no guarantee that the United States itself will not impose sanctions, or that it will want to or be capable of preventing others on the Security Council from doing so. American presidents have used American sanctions, even if partially and for short periods, to force Israel to make decisions compatible with American interests. The next Democratic president is liable to disavow the Trump plan, especially if the Israeli government goes ahead with annexation on the basis of this plan. An Israeli decision to annex territory before the United States elections obviously requires preparation on the ground, but also preparation for a political confrontation in the international theater, including with the United States if Joe Biden wins the race for the White House.

Israel has begun preparing for some of the expected future problems in the United States,

for example by strengthening its connection with the ethnic minorities. However, faced with other problems, especially Israel's relations with the American Jewish community, Israeli governments have acted like ostriches burying their heads in the sand in the hope that differences of opinion would vanish, together with the need to find long-term solutions. A government that is not absolutely dependent on the ultra-Orthodox parties, which oppose solutions that take into account the opinions of the majority in the United States Jewish community, can implement a change and improve Israel's relations with most of the Jewish community in the United States. This can also help assist American Jewish institutions, and temper the younger generation's alienation from involvement in Jewish community life.

Israel's relations with the Democratic Party must be improved immediately, even if its presidential candidate does not enter the White House in January 2021. This will require a sustained effort, including taking it into account in political decisions on the Palestinian issue. Such an effort is mandatory because of the possibility that the Democratic Party will become the majority party for a long period, due to demographic changes in the American population.

Israel-United States-China Triangular Relations

Israel's exclusive reliance on the United States is also liable to create dilemmas in foreign policy in other areas, mostly in relations with China. Prime Minister Netanyahu has cultivated the two countries' relations on the basis of a correct assumption that China's status as a rising economic power and Israel's renown as a startup nation and hi-tech incubator is a winning combination. On the face of it, Israel does not face the risks that other countries have experienced in their relations with China; as a financially sound country, Israel is not indentured to China's economic power and its collateral effects, such as compliance in political

issues of importance to China. On the other hand, the escalating friction between the United States and China has caused Washington to intervene and force Israel to adopt measures for supervising involvement by Chinese concerns in the Israeli economy. The establishment of these processes and mechanisms may have been essential in any case, but it is clear that this was done under American pressure. Moreover, the attitude of the United States to China is perhaps one of the few issues on which there is no disagreement between the Democrats and the Republicans. Even if the Democratic Party adopts a different style, the substance of relations between the United States and China will not change. Escalation in the confrontation between the two powers is liable to lead to an American demand that its allies withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or disengage from the Belt and Road Initiative—two economic levers that have helped China label itself as a global economic power. The two major areas of Chinese-Israeli economic engagement, infrastructure (ports, railways, power stations) and hi-tech (5G communications) and artificial intelligence), have become problematic. Yielding to American pressure may result in rising costs of infrastructure projects and hi-tech research and development. Disregarding Washington's "advice" entail risks and costs as well.

Even without American pressure, a thorough examination and assessment of the costs and benefits in relations between Israel and China is warranted. Ever since the two countries forged diplomatic relations between them, and even after scientific cooperation between them drew closer, China has continued to vote consistently against Israel in international forums. China recently voted against a resolution calling on Iran to cooperate with IAEA inspectors, who expressed concern about Iranian breaches of the JCPOA regarding uranium enrichment. This action was not due to an anti-Israeli attitude, but it ignored the security interests of the Gulf states and those of Israel. The worsening economic situation of neighboring

Arab countries has created an opportunity for China, which can decide that a foothold in the region is worthwhile in the long term, especially if it does not involve a collision with interests of the United States, Russia, and Iran, which are unwilling or unable to make the huge investments needed for reconstruction, for example in Lebanon. A Chinese decision to invest in this country, which will necessarily involve a dialogue with Hezbollah, and perhaps also the supply of advanced Chinese weaponry, will harm Israel and its freedom of action in response to hostile activity from Lebanese territory.

Even though Israel is also inclined to prefer economic relations divorced from political considerations, other considerations pose questions about the overall balance of relations between Israel and China, both political and economic. Israel must consider whether continuation of its current policy is justified, despite the friction with the United States that it may cause, and examine whether there are untapped alternatives, such as increased cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. It is possible that for these countries, refraining from annexation could serve as an incentive to help promote direct or indirect cooperation with Muslim countries in Asia. Some of these countries, like the moderate Sunni countries in the Middle East, need a political process between Israel and its neighbors to exist in order to make progress in their relations with Israel. Indonesia, the largest Muslim country, is an example of this. India is still far from achieving the economic power of China, but it has economic and political potential that can be expanded.

Israel-European Union Relations

The coronavirus crisis has so far not generated exceptional political changes in the European Union, but has furthered those that were already visible. The coronavirus contributed to the processes of weakening the central institutions, as well as strengthening nation states against

the integration process and the tension between southern countries and northern countries. The European Union's fundamental economic problems were aggravated, and the question of who will replace German Chancellor Angela Merkel when she steps off the political stage was highlighted. These questions also affect Israel's considerations with respect to its interests and need to repair relations with the European Union's political and economic institutions.

The political-strategic dialogue between Israel and the European Union has not taken its policy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The European Union continues to adhere to the principle of two states for two peoples on the basis of the 1967 status quo, without taking into account the failure of a number of attempts to bring about this solution, and without proposing or adopting other paradigms for settling the conflict. For its part, Israel created a "Brussels-bypass" track in its relations with several European Union member countries. This bypass provides only a partial solution to the absence of an institutional dialogue, but it prevents the EU from attaining the consensus required under the EU constitution for decisions on foreign policy and defense matters, and thwarts efforts by a number of member countries to adopt a more "punitive" policy toward Israel, including sanctions.

Since Israel has suffered no significant economic damage in its relations with the European Union because of its policy on the Palestinian issue, and since it does not appear at this point that expanding economic cooperation can change the economic balance, the question arises whether Israel should change the policy it has followed until now. Those who want to use the economic leverage that the European Union can apply toward Israel, for example, by canceling the agreement for Israel's participation in the European Union's research and development Horizons programs in order to deter Israel from going ahead with annexation should take into account the possibility that beginning in the coming year,

the participating countries cannot be awarded research grants beyond the amount they invest in the program. If this is indeed the case, this program's attractiveness to Israel will decrease.

Nevertheless, a renewal of the strategic dialogue with the European Union is important for a number of matters of common interest, and because of Europe's ability to attempt to influence the emergence of related processes. Such matters include a more balanced policy than that of the United States toward China and Russia and a constraining policy toward Turkey. Even if the European Union rejects the Trump plan, it cannot remove it from the agenda at this stage until a new president enters the White House. The assumption is that at some point, the European Union will recognize the futility of its fixation on a complete solution to all of the issues in the conflict through the "all or nothing" paradigm, and Israel has an interest in a dialogue in order to exert influence in this matter.

France, Germany, Britain, and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, together with the US, Russia, and China, have negotiated with Iran on ending its military nuclear program and in 2015 reached the JCPOA. Israel's dialogue with Europe on this issue has not been severed completely, and a substitute exists in the form of a bilateral connection with each of these three European countries. Yet regular dialogue on the issues and the continued negotiations in this matter in the EU institutions, especially with the President of the Commission and the High Representative, is still important and needed, especially in light of the US decision to pull out of the JCPOA.

Renewal of the dialogue with the European Union is also important with respect to Turkish policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. It challenges EU members even more than it challenges Israel, Greece, and Cyprus. Turkey poses stark dilemmas to the European Union and NATO, for example with its military activity in Libya. The delineation of the maritime border

between Turkey and Libya is liable to harm freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean Sea, and Turkey's threats against Cyprus, accompanied by the beefing up of the Turkish fleet, are liable to affect Israel's security as well. The dialogue with Greece and Cyprus on this question cannot replace a dialogue with the ministers of defense and foreign affairs in the European Union, who in this framework are free of the constraints resulting from the presence of Turkish representatives in dialogues in the NATO framework.

In the competition and rivalry between China and the United States and the policy pursued by European countries that prefer diplomatic handling of problems without having to choose ties with only one of the parties, Israel can find a partner in the European Union for shaping a policy that will facilitate a more relaxed dialogue between Jerusalem and Washington, or between Jerusalem and Beijing.

The prolonged rift in the strategic dialogue between Israel and the European Union at the highest political level is due to the disagreements about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Annexation will aggravate this rift, and it is doubtful whether the European Union will agree to conduct a dialogue on other matters independent of the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Conclusion

At the outset of the third decade of the 21st century, the political, economic, and technological processes that have begun in recent decades require Israel to examine important aspects of its foreign policy. The titanic struggle between China and the United States will affect the entire political and economic international sphere, and will enmesh other countries. One result of this conflict is the change in priorities in the foreign and defense strategy of the United States, which is shifting its center of gravity to the Pacific region and reducing its involvement in the Middle East. Simultaneous with this strategic change, processes of political dissolution, worsening

of the economic crisis as a result of plummeted oil prices, the Arab upheaval in the region, and the temporary success of the Islamic State (ISIS), plus the appearance of the coronavirus, have been underway in the Middle East.

The decline of the political structure that prevailed in the region until a decade ago, combined with the gradual withdrawal of the United States from the region, highlights the question of the influence of the regional and international players that will try to fill this vacuum. Iran and Turkey are openly stepping up their activity aimed at creating strategic strongholds in regions that they regard as essential for them—Iran in the southern Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, and Turkey in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean Basin. China is still considering its policy in the Middle East, which it regards as important because the region is the source of most of China's energy. Russia is already present and active in the region, mainly in the military sphere. Each of these players constitutes a problem for Israel, but policymakers in Israel should not content themselves with diagnosing and comprehending the dynamic situation. They should consider the possibilities and opportunities for expanding the dialogue with Russia and reaching understandings with Turkey on areas of interest and influence that will ensure the strategic goals of each side and prevent a collision between them.

It is imperative to take advantage of the formation of a new government and the

appointment of new ministers of defense and foreign affairs to reassess Israel's foreign policy. This assessment was needed even before the outbreak of the pandemic, and is now more urgent, given the possible and already visible consequences of this crisis for the Middle East region and international arena. It requires an examination and validation of the old working assumptions, and the adjustment of policy to the new circumstances.

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Ambassador Shimon Stein, a senior research fellow at INSS, was Israel's Ambassador to Germany (2001-2007). Prior to this appointment, he served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as deputy director general for the CIS, as well as Eastern and Central Europe. Ambassador Stein held additional MFA posts in Washington, Germany, and Israel, and was a member of Israel's delegation in multilateral negotiations on arms control.