




The Jerusalem Institute
for Strategy and Security

MIGHT AT A CRITICAL MOMENT

**National Security
Policy for Israel**

by fellows of
The Jerusalem Institute
for Strategy and Security



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“No Illusions, No Despair”

At a much darker hour in Jewish history, prior to the U.N. vote in 1947, this was David Ben-Gurion's dictum: “No illusions, no despair. For us Jews, and particularly Zionists, two things are forbidden: Easy optimism and sterile pessimism.”

Introduction

This document suggests a national security policy for Israel. It reflects insights of the 17 JISS fellows, who jointly surveyed the challenges Israel's leaders are facing and crafted a comprehensive series of diplomatic and defense policy recommendations.

The 14 main recommendations can be summarized as follows: 1. Nurture national cohesion. 2. Prepare for several war scenarios with an emphasis on Iran-related threats. 3. Counter Iran's nuclear and regional ambitions, in cooperation with the US and regional partners. 4. Govern effectively and fairly in greater Jerusalem. 5. Manage the conflict with the Palestinians. 6. Respond positively to the US peace plan. 7. Deter Hamas in Gaza. 8. Prioritize relations with Egypt and Jordan while seeking new partnerships in the Arab world. 9. Exact a price for Erdogan's provocations and bolster alliances in the eastern Mediterranean. 10. Preserve bipartisan support for Israel in the US. 11. Maintain active dialogue and deconfliction channels with Russia. 12. Act to find European anchors to negate hostile attitudes in Brussels. 13. Tread carefully amidst rising tensions in Asia. 14. Enhance Israel's diplomatic toolbox.

















The background to this document is the assessment that Israel is a strong country and its strategic position is better than ever. Nevertheless, Israel still faces significant security challenges.

Primary among the growing challenges are the hegemonic ambitions of Iran – which is seeking nuclear weapons, alongside attendant threats to Israel's civilian home front from the Iranian regime and its proxies. In addition, for the foreseeable future, Israel faces a violent and intractable conflict with the Palestinians. Therefore, Israel must always be ready for war. This is the ultimate test for Israeli society, too.

The Israeli government's top priorities must be preservation of national cohesion and building Israel's military and diplomatic might in response to the main threats. At the same time, Israel should take advantage of strategic opportunities – such as the expected Trump Mideast peace plan – to change the rules of the game regarding relations with the Palestinians, the Arab world, and countries in the Mediterranean arena.

The Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS) was established in 2017 to express a realist strategic worldview. The institute advances pragmatic policies that keep Israel strong and will lead to stable diplomatic arrangements in the long term. It views the Jewish People's historic connection to the Land of Israel as a central component of security and national identity, and insists on the importance of a united Jerusalem to Israel's destiny and defense.

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NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Main Recommendations



NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Main Recommendations



1. Nurture National Cohesion

National cohesion is a vital component of Israel's resilience for the tough times that the highly problematic Middle East strategic environment may well engender. Therefore, Israel's government must nurture a spirit of unity and national purpose by building a policy consensus as broad as possible. This is necessary both in preparation for likely combat operations against Iran and its proxies, and in order to respond wisely to the American peace plan and to intelligently manage conflict with the Palestinians.



2. Prepare for Several War Scenarios

Israel must prepare simultaneously for a range of war scenarios. This includes development of a credible capacity to strike Iranian nuclear targets; preparation for war on three fronts against an Iranian-led coalition; the ability to "mow the grass" in the two Palestinian arenas; and the ability to withstand an intense missile war. The highest priority is building a ground force capable of swift maneuver and attaining a decisive victory by taking the fight into enemy territory. Reliance on intelligence and accurate firepower (which has been the IDF approach in recent years) is insufficient; this is an important adjunct, not an alternative, to ground combat. The IDF must not be deterred by the prospect of casualties. Casualties can be reduced by swift and forceful forays that rapidly bring about enemy collapse. This will also reduce the time that the home front is exposed to enemy missile fire.



3. Counter Iran's Ambitions

With Iran openly defying the international community, seeking to cow Europe into submission and derail American sanctions, Israel must make the necessary preparations for action. At a moment of truth, the IDF must be able to display a credible capability to foil the Iranian nuclear program – if necessary, alone. (Although the preferred option remains action by the US and others). Doing so will also assist in pushing Iran back to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, denying Iran's access to resources and advanced technologies must remain part of the toolbox of responses to Iranian threats. In order to prevent the emergence of an Iranian war machine in Syria and the building of long-range missile infrastructure in Iraq, Israel must demonstrate military determination – including readiness for an overall confrontation. It also must act diplomatically (especially versus Russia) to ensure that Syria and Iraq do not become Iranian bases of attack on Israel.



4. Govern Effectively and Fairly in Greater Jerusalem

Israel's national security requires control over Jerusalem and its environs. Strengthening Israel's hold on Jerusalem – a cause which is an Israeli consensus – should be a high priority, with the government acting to bolster the Zionist majority in the city, among other by building in the E-1 quadrant and linking the city to Maaleh Adumim. Arab parts of the city should be governed firmly and fairly, encouraging greater integration of Jerusalemite Arabs through investments in infrastructure and education. Resolute action needs to be taken against radical elements who seek to change the status quo on the Temple Mount, and against foreign elements who undermine Israel's sovereignty in the Jewish People's historic capital.



5. Manage the Conflict with the Palestinians

Israel should adhere to a strategy of "conflict management" regarding the Palestinians, designed to reduce the cost of conflict for both sides. This involves careful use of force; economic "carrots"; and adherence to the existing footprint of the settlement enterprise – except in greater Jerusalem, where Israel needs to build and expand significantly. Israel must also govern more effectively in Area C, whether it intends to retain or compromise on this zone in future negotiations. In any case, it would be wrong to succumb to the siren song of unilateral withdrawals – for reasons of national cohesion, as well as for security and diplomatic considerations. Unilateral withdrawal would only feed unrealistic Palestinian expectations and ensure persistence of the conflict, without any diplomatic reward. As for the extension of Israeli law to settlements in Judea and Samaria, no action should be taken until the American peace initiative has been exhausted; and even then, Israeli moves should adhere to the contours of broad national consensus and preserve possibilities for compromise with the Palestinians in the future.



6. Respond Positively to the US Peace Plan

When its political component is presented, Israel should welcome the Trump Administration's so-called "Deal of the Century," and agree to negotiate on its basis. The Trump plan may usefully upend stale "common wisdom" regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and suggest more realistic contours for a settlement. Unfortunately, it seems that the Palestinian leadership is not ripe for a historic compromise with Israel. Therefore, Israel must be ready for a security deterioration if the Palestinian leadership violently rejects the American initiative. Israel must also be ready to prevent a Hamas takeover of the PA in a post-Abbas era, and to preserve cooperation with security forces in the West Bank at the local level, if necessary.



7. Deter Hamas in Gaza

Israel should continue with the present policy of seeking to establish temporary deterrence versus Hamas for as long as possible, by identifying painful targets on the other side and maintaining levers of pressure on Hamas, while also offering significant "carrots" to the Gazans; i.e., opportunities for economic advancement. In the absence of long-term peace, the goal should be reduction of the material and psychological harm to Israeli citizens and minimizing the diplomatic costs of violent eruptions. Despite Hamas' annoying provocations, it must be borne in mind that the threats from Gaza are secondary to those posed to Israel on the northern front.



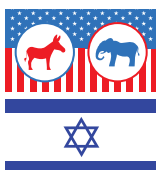
8. Prioritize Egypt and Jordan while Seeking New Alliances in the Arab World

Israel's confrontation with Iran and its proxies, and with other radical Islamist forces, has generated a profound and effective commonality of interests between Israel and key players in the Arab world. It is in Israel's interest to make the most of these opportunities, but it is also wise to take note of the nature of the Gulf states and of their limitations. It is therefore important to focus attention and efforts upon Egypt and Jordan, who are Israel's strategic partners and with whom Israel has signed peace treaties. Their stability is of far-reaching importance.



9. Exact a Price for Erdogan's Provocations and Bolster Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey's room for maneuver and troublemaking should be curtailed. Led by Erdogan, Turkey is hostile to Israel, supportive of Hamas, and subverting Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. Links should be further forged with countries in the region who share the same concern. Diplomacy involving the US and Europe should be leveraged to bring about moderation in Turkish policy; and Erdogan is susceptible to pressure. Turkish nuclear ambitions should also be monitored. In addition, it is important to bolster the strategic triangle of Israel, Greece and Cyprus as a counterweight to Erdogan, and expand it into a partnership of all like-minded players in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Israel should keep in mind that Turkey is an important Muslim country where other voices exist (as the recent elections in Istanbul have shown), and it is useful to maintain Israel-Turkey trade ties and open channels to the Turkish people as much as possible.



10. Preserve Bipartisan Support for Israel in the US

Israel has no substitute for US support, especially when facing the Iranian challenge. It is critical to maintain cooperation with the US military and the intelligence community regarding Iran, while taking care not to be seen as pushing the US into war. In the increasingly polarized American political arena, Israeli leadership also needs to maintain close relations with both US political parties, despite Israel's natural appreciation for President Trump's support of Israel. In this context, close coordination and consultation with American Jewry is of greater importance than ever. Avenues must be found to overcome the tensions of recent years relating to Israel's close working relationship with the Trump administration and stemming from conflicts over issues of religion and state in Israel.



11. Maintain Dialogue and Deconfliction Channels with Russia

As tensions rise regarding Iran, it is vital to sustain the ongoing dialogue and the channels of communication established with Russia and its forces in Syria (most specifically, deconfliction procedures). As much as possible, Israel should avoid taking stands in international fora that amount to a direct challenge to Russian positions. Thought should be given to incentivizing Moscow for further cooperation with Israel. The recent tripartite summit in Jerusalem involving US, Russian and Israeli national security advisers was a step in the right direction. Israel should continue to broker such important interactions.



12. Find Anchors in Europe Against Hostile Attitudes in Brussels

Israel's main goal in Europe should be to assist the Trump Administration in convincing key players not to undermine the renewed sanctions on Iran; to convince key countries to respond harshly to a renewal of Iranian nuclear enrichment activity, not with appeasement; and to enhance European awareness regarding Iranian terror and subversion on European soil as well as Iranian human rights abuses. More nations in Europe should be encouraged to follow Britain's example and designate Hizballah as a terrorist organization, abolishing the absurd distinction between a "military" and a "political" wing; and to bring their policies in line with the US on Palestinian matters, with regard to the Golan Heights and regarding Jerusalem. Israel should pursue the gas pipeline project to Europe; which if economically feasible, could bring Israel and Europe much closer together. Friendship with eastern and southeastern European nations, based on mutual interests as well as common anchors in national identity, is a necessary countermeasure to hostile initiatives in Brussels.



13. Tread Carefully Amidst Rising Tensions in Asia

Israel's unique relationship with India should be advanced as a pillar of Israel's relations. Economic relations with China should be managed more carefully, bearing in mind American sensitivities, while at the same time avoiding tensions with Beijing. The challenge will also be to maintain the right balance between cooperative projects with the PRC and the close relationships that Israel enjoys with many countries in Asia that fear China's rise to dominance. Israel should hasten the signing of FTA agreements with Asian countries, where and when trade volume justifies this. Meanwhile, efforts should continue to change the voting patterns of Asian (as well as African and Latin American) countries in international organizations – an achievable goal – given the declining importance of the Palestinian question. Israel should continue to look for breakthroughs with Asian Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh.



14. Enhance Israel's Diplomatic Toolbox

In addition to the impressive breakthroughs achieved at the highest levels of government, capitalizing on Israel's opportunities in the international arena requires strengthening the professional Israeli foreign service. This should include an active role for a full-time Minister of Foreign Affairs; a return to the MFA of professional units and functions dispersed among other ministries; the allocation of additional budgets for diplomacy; the enhancement of MASHAV (Israel's foreign aid agency) and the integration of Israeli (and Jewish) NGOs in aid projects overseas; and training cadres of professionals who can communicate with an increasingly attentive audience in the Arabic-speaking world. It is equally important to build up the array of Israeli trade representatives abroad. In parallel, the capacities of the Israeli intelligence community must continue to expand; its remarkable achievements should not be taken for granted. Inter-agency consultation should be enhanced, led by the National Security Council, with Jerusalem as the focal point of the policy process.

CHAPTER ONE

National Cohesion in Tough Times





Israel is a strong country and its strategic position is better than ever. Nevertheless, Israel still faces significant security challenges.

Primary among the growing challenges are the hegemonic ambitions of Iran which seeks nuclear weapons, alongside attendant threats to Israel's civilian home front from the Iranian regime and its proxies. In addition, for the foreseeable future, Israel faces a violent and intractable conflict with the Palestinians. Therefore, Israel must always be ready for war. This is the ultimate test for Israeli society, too.

Therefore, the most important challenge facing any government in Israel is nurturing cohesion in Israeli society; ensuring unity in the face of tests that may be posed to Israel by the violent Mideast environment. Such cohesion is important even at times of calm, due to its role in deterring Israel's enemies.

Deterrence is based not only on sheer military might, but on the country's willingness to use force when necessary; and above all, on the capacity to bear loss and pain both at the frontlines and on the home front.

**Israel must always be ready for war.
This is the ultimate test for Israeli society, too.**

Since peace for Israel is not yet around the corner, Israel's ability to present effective responses at times of crisis is crucially influenced by the level of cohesiveness among varied components of Israeli society. Deep social or political cleavages, or a disconnect between political and military echelons (or between both and public sentiments) undermine the effective implementation of national policy. Such divisions only subvert morale, undercut the authority of elected officials, and weaken resolve of the home front when under fire. This may encourage the enemy to attack.



The recent history of Israel stands as a warning against military and diplomatic wild adventures which were, perhaps, successful in the short-term but soon led to deep social fissures; to deep scars which have yet to heal.

Cases in point: The launch of the First Lebanon War in 1982, which at first was broadly backed by the public but soon gradually lost almost all support; the Oslo Accords, which from the start were extraordinarily divisive and became ever more bitterly contested following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; and the disengagement from Gaza and northern Samaria in 2005.

In our view, these political cleavages (which some have termed a division into separate “tribes”) do not overwhelm the basic bonds of solidarity which continue to characterize Israeli society. In fact, the persistence of centrist impulses in Israeli politics indicates wide common denominators.

In the security realm, broad public support for Operation Protective Edge in 2014 serves as proof that national cohesion does exist, particularly when the going gets tough and the public senses that there is no alternative to war. (More than 85% of the public backed that military campaign.)

Such Israeli national cohesion must be preserved – even at the expense of adopting some constraints on the government’s freedom of action, and even curtailing some military operations in order to maintain internal (and international) legitimacy.

Ambitious territorial changes are worth attempting only if they are likely to reap overwhelming strategic rewards.

Of course, the counter argument is that bold military and diplomatic initiatives aimed at changing problematic realities always require a shattering of consensus and the taking of dramatic risks. This is true, but very high-risk military operations, dicey diplomatic gambles, and ambitious territorial changes are worth attempting only if they are likely to reap overwhelming strategic rewards.

However, no such grand strategic rewards are to be found in Israel’s medium-term future, from any ambitious schemes. Specifically, unilateral Israeli withdrawals in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) will not enhance Israel’s security nor improve its international standing.

The fact is that Israeli withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza only perpetuated, and even exacerbated, conflict between Israel and its neighbors. Unilateral withdrawals in Judea and Samaria could lead to Hamas dominance in these areas. Moreover, such withdrawals would only whet Palestinian appetites for more concessions, while dangerously deepening the divisions within Israeli society.

Instead, what can the Israeli government do to nurture cohesion?

- » After the intemperate election campaigns of 2019, the government and opposition must restore restraint in public discourse and avoid demonization of political rivals.
- » Israel’s response to the Trump administration’s upcoming peace initiative should be designed to reflect the basic principle of preserving national cohesion. This means hewing to policies that enjoy nearly universal support within Israeli society.
- » Unilateral withdrawals that would deepen divisions in society should not be contemplated.



- » Building in Judea and Samaria should be restrained, maintaining the present territorial footprint – the contours of which are generally within an Israeli consensus. On the other hand, many more homes should be built in and around Jerusalem to strengthen Israel's hold on the broad Jerusalem envelope which lies at the heart of Israeli national consensus.
- » The conflict with the Palestinians should be carefully “managed” (as explained below).
- » Military force should be employed cautiously and undertaken only as a last resort.
- » The government should prepare the home front to withstand a missile war.



CHAPTER TWO

Judicious Use of Force





2.1 War Scenarios



Military force is a policy tool chronically pervasive in the Middle East. Israel, too, employs force to secure its survival and ensure the safety of its citizens, and to obtain other goals in the violent regional environment.

Since questions of life and death are involved, force must be used cautiously and tailored to the desired strategic goal. Therefore, political and military leadership should be in constant dialogue regarding defense policy and doctrine, as well as on the specific war scenarios and the relevant operational plans derived from them. Force structure needs to reflect these scenarios, the risks which can be taken, and budgetary constraints. Decisions on these issues must be based on a profound understanding by the political-strategic level of all these aspects.

Despite the great strength of the IDF, it is beyond Israel's ability to impose its will on enemies in the region in all matters. The range of likely achievement lies mainly in preventing the enemy from acting upon its threats to Israel's territory and population.

Israel has four permanent goals in all war scenarios:

1. To quickly eliminate a threat and protect the home front.
2. To severely degrade enemy capabilities, in order to generate near-term deterrence. (There is no guarantee, however, that any level of serious damage to the enemy will deter it for the long-term).
3. To maintain order on the home front, keeping production and supply lines open and ensuring normal civilian services.
4. To achieve the above at a tolerable level of casualties, and at reasonable direct and indirect economic costs, while maintaining domestic and international legitimacy.



The “worst case” scenario involves fighting a coalition of enemies led by Iran – Hizballah, Shi’a militias in Syria, and possibly also Hamas in Gaza – alongside broadscale popular unrest and significant terror attacks in the Palestinian arena. From this extreme scenario, which may become a dangerous reality soon if Persian Gulf tensions escalate, it is possible to deduce war sub-scenarios which involve some of these hostile forces.

The scope and intensity of Israeli action largely derives from the severity of the threat to the home front. In other words, the smaller the threat to the home front, the broader the range of Israeli military options.

Thus, faced with a northern war scenario involving an unprecedented threat to Israel’s population centers, Israel will have to fully mobilize all its forces and defeat Hizballah in Lebanon by combining a massive ground assault with air power. (More on this in the next chapter.) Even so, the IDF will have to set aside forces for other scenarios, even if there is no immediate threat. Given the frequent political upheavals in the region (such as upheavals in Egypt), the IDF must be ready at any time to fight a full-scale war with regular modern armies.

The government should enhance public awareness about the possible necessity of an Israeli preemptive strike or preventive war, in order to build legitimacy for such an eventuality.

On the other hand, confrontations in secondary arenas, such as with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, do not require full scale military action (although this is an option that Israel must weigh seriously depending on the circumstances).

Hamas is an extremely hostile organization well rooted in Palestinian society, driven by an intense religious-ideological motivation to harm Israel. It is impossible to completely bring such an organization to its knees by large scale military maneuver, unless the IDF is prepared to rule in Gaza for a long period at a high cost.





The alternative path, involving forceful but patient struggle against Hamas (occasionally referred to as “mowing the grass”) is meant to continuously degrade the enemy’s capacity to harm Israel as much as possible. Usually, Israel acts to “mow the grass” only after sustaining a series of attacks and demonstrating a great degree of perseverance and restraint – thus building legitimacy over time for its counterattack.

This approach seeks to generate temporary periods of deterrence, allowing the Israeli home front to enjoy relatively long periods of calm. The Israeli public, however, doesn’t always comprehend the strategic rationale of this policy – in which victory is measured in points, not knockouts; and instead seeks swift and decisive victories. But as explained above, Israel’s ability to conduct a measured war of attrition against Hamas in Gaza and to maintain a wide range of combat options is itself a demonstration of Israel’s military superiority.

To mitigate public frustration, the government and the IDF must articulate a clear strategic concept and explain to the public the nature of this limited, “managed” conflict with Hamas.

A war, or a large-scale military campaign, may be initiated by Israel or imposed on it. Thus, the government should enhance public awareness about the possible necessity of an Israeli preemptive strike or preventive war, in order to build legitimacy for such an eventuality. Dialogue on these matters should be undertaken with Israel’s allies, particularly with the US Congress and Administration and those who influence public opinion in North America and Europe.



2.2 Ground Maneuver and Decisive War: A Return to the Fundamentals



Over the last 30 years the IDF has excelled in special operations and air strikes, but achievements in the use of force via large military formations have been lacking.

In Israel's earlier decades, the IDF built its force structure with a focus on strong ground strike forces, required to quickly carry the war deep into enemy territory and bring about defeat of the enemy. This was known as *hachra'ah* – achieving a decisive victory.

But since the First Lebanon War in 1982, the predominant operational doctrine of the IDF has been the “Intel-Firepower” nexus. This is based on accurate intelligence and precision-guided firepower brought to bear upon the identified targets (mostly from the air), with the expectation that this will destroy the enemy and sap its will to fight.

This doctrine has led to ambiguous outcomes. It has made violent clashes longer; imposed continuous emergency conditions on the home front with attendant economic costs; and afforded a sense of achievement to enemy forces, which encourages them to persist in their provocations of Israel.

Sub-optimal outcomes over time indicate a basic problem in the operational doctrine. The equation: “accurate intel multiplied by precision-guided firepower equals destruction and collapse of the enemy” is faulty, insofar as it does not consider an essential element: the enemy. The latter is learning lessons from every confrontation, learning to deny the IDF accurate intelligence and/or minimize the effectiveness of pinpoint Israeli firepower. Enemy techniques aimed at undercutting the utility of the “Intel-Firepower” approach include fortifying facilities, going underground, dispersing and hiding assets, using human shields, and more.



In most clashes, a deleterious dynamic has repeated itself. At first, Israel successfully launches a salvo of firepower based on accurate intelligence gathered over a long period of time; then follows a decline in the quality of targeting intelligence with an attendant reduction in the number of targets which justify a strike; a recovery by the enemy and a continuation of its attacks against Israel; Israeli frustration, leading to attacks on targets with high collateral damage or on useless targets; an immense effort to acquire new quality targets, which can lead to an occasional success (but this does not alter the general picture); a prolonged war campaign, leading to public anger and frustration; and limited ground forces maneuver, not sufficiently effective to bring the enemy to the point of collapse.

Consequently, a return to combat along more traditional lines is inevitable in cases where a ground campaign, aggressively pursued, will render better results than air activity. In such situations it is necessary to maneuver into enemy territory, locate and destroy enemy forces (or capture them, thus undermining the myth of the self-sacrificing jihadi “resistance”). The “Intel-Firepower” effort is important, but it cannot be more than a supportive adjunct to the main thrust, via ground forces. Only a determined ground effort can break the spirit of the enemy.

Only a determined ground effort can break the spirit of the enemy.

There are exaggerated fears in Israel that such a military approach will entail heavy casualties. High friction does come with costs, but the relatively short period of fighting leading to the collapse of enemy forces may bring about lower numbers of losses on the frontlines; let alone in the rear.

Not in every situation will there be a need for this, but the IDF must be ready to carry out deep and swift ground maneuvers, for several reasons. First, even in fighting an enemy which is not a conventional army, it is important to capture territory used as an operational base by non-state military rivals. Controlling this territory denies their freedom of action. The reduction of missile and rocket fire on Israeli citizens can only be achieved by ground forces who act to destroy enemy launching sites.

Second, the capacity for ground maneuver is central to achieving effective deterrence. The enemy may be able to absorb immense damage from the air, but its very survival as a governing entity or its hold over territory is not in danger. On the other hand, the loss of significant territory does constitute a real threat to enemy organizations. Should Israel neglect the capacity to maneuver, its enemies will conclude that Israel's ability to harm them is limited.

Indeed, some of Israel's enemies today believe that Israel's fear of ground warfare and its unwillingness to suffer casualties suggests weakness in Israeli society. To restore deterrence, Israel must not shy away from convincingly demonstrating its capacity to carry-out a forceful ground offensive.

Third, ground maneuver must be the IDF's main tool in winning a campaign against a conventional army. Such a scenario is not on the horizon right now, but could become relevant given regional upheavals – e.g., if a radical Muslim Brotherhood regime should rise in a country like Egypt, or if the Syrian army would be rebuilt after that country's civil war. Bear in mind that building army ground forces is a complex process which takes time. Neglecting IDF ground maneuver capabilities is therefore a dangerous gamble.



Ground maneuver also has a moral dimension. It is the duty of government and the military to remove any threat to the home front as quickly as possible. A situation in which civilians become the IDF's shield (i.e., the home front takes casualties so that the IDF can avoid ground maneuver) is unacceptable. This amounts to abandoning the civilian population.

It should be recalled that at the beginning of the Palestinian terror campaign of 2000-2001, the government was unwilling to maneuver with ground forces into Palestinian cities, and even within the IDF it was commonly argued that the capture of significant territory was unnecessary. Hundreds of lives were lost until the IDF was sent into action into the cities of Judea and Samaria. Then, indeed, the IDF was able to achieve solid security results through ground maneuver.

Obviously, this matter requires constant dialogue between the IDF and political echelons to determine national security policy and to define achievable goals.



CHAPTER THREE

Trouble in the North

“From the North Evil Shall Erupt” (Jeremiah 1:14)





3.1 Foiling Iran's Nuclear Project



The Iranian existential threat to Israel is rooted both in Iran's ambitions for regional dominance, and in the central role that extreme hostility towards Israel plays in the Islamist regime's ideological outlook. Thus, the ongoing, undeniable Iranian quest for military nuclear capabilities is a security challenge of the first order. The July 2015 six-power nuclear accord with Iran known as the JCPOA actually preserved Iran's technological ability to break-out quickly towards a military nuclear capability. If current tensions between Iran and the US continue to escalate, an Iranian break-out could come sooner rather than later, greatly enhancing the prospect of an all-out confrontation.

Taken together, Iran's activities constitute a threat well beyond what Israel has faced in recent decades. This includes Iran's ongoing efforts to establish a military infrastructure for attacking Israel from Syrian soil, the presence of Iran in Iraq through control of Shi'a militias, its grip on Lebanon through Hizballah, and its influence in Gaza through control of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and assistance to Hamas. In addition, the Iranian presence in large parts of Yemen in support of the Houthi uprising gives Iran a chokehold on shipping lanes at the entrance of the Red Sea. Subversive Iranian terrorist activities and infrastructure have spread across the region and beyond it.

Israel's government cannot ignore Iran's determined drive to obtain nuclear weapons. Even if the route to nuclear weapons is taking much longer than many in Tehran might have expected, the plan has not been abandoned. It should remain Israel's basic strategic assumption that stable nuclear deterrence (the so-called MAD of the Cold War era) cannot be sustainable with a regime of this ideological bent, in a stormy and unstable region. An Iranian nuclear umbrella would provide cover for extensive terrorist aggression. It is thus imperative to prevent Iran from obtaining a bomb. Moreover, it is unsafe (as detailed in the next sub-chapter) to rely on the highly uncertain prospects for regime change in Iran in the near term. Nor is there any hope for a reduced level of hostility from the Islamic Republic towards the Jewish state.



At first, Iran did choose to keep its commitments under the JCPOA despite the Trump Administration's decision to withdraw from the accord, because Iran still hoped to sustain many ongoing benefits. It continued to focus on its long-range missile project and the centrifuge research program as allowed under JCPOA terms. However, Tehran seems to have concluded – as American sanctions have dramatically cut Iran's oil exports and the IRGC was designated a terror group – that there is no point anymore in honoring the JCPOA; and the time may have come to generate a crisis, and further down the road to break-out towards a nuclear device.

The more credible Israel's threat of military action against Iran is, the greater the likelihood that international actors will commit to an effective effort at curbing Iran's nuclear efforts.

In the face of further escalation and Iranian provocations, Israel must make three decisions:

1. To allocate the necessary resources to monitor as closely as possible all Iranian nuclear activity, in order to be ready on a short notice to translate such intelligence into the action necessary to foil the Iranian nuclear project.
2. To instruct the army and intelligence community to make all necessary preparations so that they can undertake, once an order is given, an active and credible effort to disrupt the project. Timetables and costs should be presented to the cabinet for approval. Israel's friends and allies should be put on notice (and thus may be energized to take their own measures).
3. While avoiding public statements on this matter, to re-affirm the directive to the IDF to prevent the emergence of an Iranian base in Syria – designed by Tehran to open another front with Israel and establish a hegemonic position in the region. This effort should proceed regardless of an Iranian decision on the resumption of nuclear activities.

All three decisions must be backed by a diplomatic campaign in the international arena, in conjunction with the US, in order to convince key actors that Iran's nuclearization is a global threat and must be prevented. Israel must also be willing to bear the economic costs necessary to build the military capabilities for foiling Iran's nuclear project and for handling confrontational responses of Iran and its proxies.

The Iranian threat is quite vivid to most Israelis. Thus, the suggested course of action is well within a national consensus, and in fact would strengthen national cohesion.

Israel benefits from the present US administration's apparent willingness to act resolutely against the Iranian regime. The growing level of threat and uncertainty requires close coordination between the two countries. So does the prospect of forcing Iran back to the negotiating table, where the regime is likely to do its best to mislead the West into another faulty deal.

Still, if US pressure on, and international reactions to, Iran should falter, Israel could be left alone in facing Iran's dash for the nuclear bomb. The need to take military action would then fall on Israel's shoulders. Paradoxically, the more credible Israel's threat of military action against Iran is, the greater the likelihood that international actors will commit to an effective effort at curbing Iran's nuclear efforts; thus making it less likely and necessary that Israel take military action alone.



3.2 Insight into Iran



Despite Iran's deepening internal problems, the regime appears stable, or at least capable of containing unrest by violent repression. In any case, no change is expected in Iran's threatening policies towards Israel. However, the regime is clearly worried about the massive impact of sanctions, since they may lead soon to a dramatic collapse in income with severe financial and economic repercussions. Apparently, Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i is no longer sure Iran can hold out until after the 2020 US elections.

There are, indeed, signs of disaffection and frustration in Iran which erupt overtly, mainly in the form of strikes and protests by blue-collar workers, particularly in the periphery of the country. The brutal repression of protest leaders, and the forced extraction of admissions regarding "political motivations" behind the protests, indicate that the regime needs both to break and discredit the protestors (although the Iranian public does not seem to trust the veracity of these admissions of guilt). Still, the fact that most protests have come from ethnic minorities in Iran means that they are unlikely to spread to other parts of the country and to other social groups.

Therefore, the prospects in the foreseeable future for regime change as a result of social unrest remain remote. However, the likelihood of a broader upheaval may increase as the effects of sanctions become more pronounced (and thought should be given as to whether, and how, to assist this). Other opportunities may arise after the death of the Supreme Leader, whose health is known to be fragile.

Iran's economy is in a bad shape. Inflation and unemployment are rampant. Still, it is only with the recent tightening of sanctions that the regime is facing a real crisis. Until now, Iran's trade ties with China (above all), Russia, India, Turkey and the EU have shielded Iran from most consequences of US withdrawal from the JCPOA. But while most of these countries have refused to formally cooperate with the US on re-imposing sanctions, they nevertheless now are confronted by difficulty if they persist in defying US sanctions. If they were to re-join the sanctions regime, under the influence of American pressure and in the face of a credible military threat on the part of Israel or the US, economic pressures on Iran could become even more effective.



Even without such formal adherence, the corporate response to US pressure has led to a drastic reduction of Iran's oil exports, gravely reducing the regime's income. Recent regime actions indicate that this new reality is keenly felt in Tehran, directly and deliberately leading to the recent escalation of tensions.

Despite slogans used at demonstrations in Iran against Iranian activities abroad, the protests have not led to any diminution in Iran's regional subversive activities. On the contrary, the regime sees subversion and terror as tools of counterpressure on the US. These activities are conducted by a highly compartmentalized component, separate from all other arms of the regime, and even from most elements of the IRGC. Orders come from the Supreme Leader, and he alone determines the scope of subversive activity beyond Iran's borders.

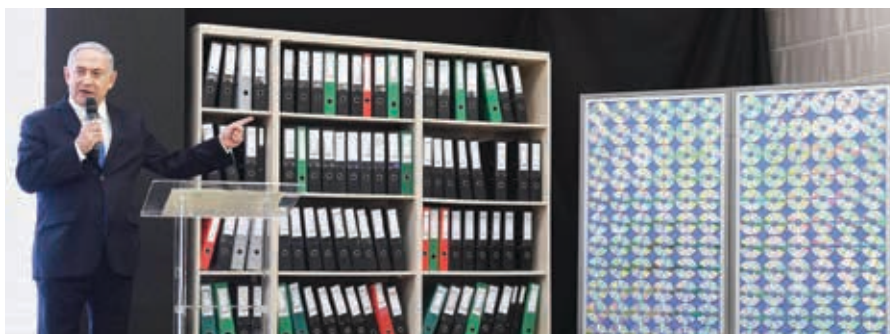
Israel should cooperate with all relevant countries in order to foment internal tensions in Iran.

The rivalry between President Rouhani and Supreme Leader Khamene'i sometimes makes it seem to optimists in the West as if Iran has two foci of power. But when it comes to actions outside Iran's borders, the Supreme Leader's harsh line undisputedly has the upper hand. There are reasons to doubt the seriousness of Rouhani's domestic reforms in Iran; but even if these are authentic, this relates only to internal matters. The Quds Force of the IRGC has been able to enshrine the doctrine according to which interventions in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere are an inseparable part of Iran's national security doctrine. This is now beyond dispute in Iranian decision-making circles.

Israel should cooperate with all relevant countries in order to foment internal tensions in Iran, whether the prospect of regime change is in the cards or not, as long as resources allocated to this effort reflect its secondary nature. While destabilization measures can have a restraining and delaying effect on Iran, they could also tempt the regime to lash out, making it even more necessary for Israel to be ready for a military escalation.

Iranian determination makes it more difficult to frustrate Iran's presence in Syria, and so does the involvement of its proxy militias. This raises the importance of finding other chinks in Iran's armor – from anti-Hizballah voices within Lebanon to anti-regime allies within Iran itself, particularly among ethnic minorities. Again, it should be taken into account that such subversion may engender aggressive regime responses.

With Iran's neighbors in the Gulf already committed to the effort to curb Iranian ambition, and the US too, it is important for Israel to demonstrate its value to its strategic partners in the region, demonstrating that it is ready and willing to act forcefully against Iran, if necessary.





3.3 Iran's Military Build-Up



An examination of Iran's conventional military forces reveals a focus on access denial and power projection, with less emphasis on forces for ground warfare. Iran has focused on acquisition of missiles – surface-to-surface, surface-to-sea, sea-to-sea, surface-to-air and air-to-surface missiles. It also has concentrated on developing unmanned aerial vehicles, small- and mid-sized naval vessels, cyber capabilities, and nuclear capabilities. Weapons displayed in frequent Iranian military parades are all in the realm of access denial and force projection. Its weapons for classic military maneuvering – manned aircraft, tanks and artillery – increasingly are outdated. There are no indications of efforts to modernize these.

The apparent conclusion is that Iran's national security doctrine accords priority to securing the Islamic regime, to deterring foreign invasions, and to enhancing Iran's capacity to influence other countries further afield. Nothing suggests plans for directly invading other countries, and the threat of invasion by Iran's neighbors is not considered to be serious. Iran's regional influence is to be secured through force projection (as in the case of the missile strike against a Kurdish command post inside Iraq); and through the creation, arming and training of local militias in target countries (such as Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen).

Another significant trend in Iran's military build-up is the emphasis on domestic production. Almost all new weapons are of indigenous development or licensed production. The single exception to this rule has been the acquisition of Russian-made modern air defense systems; and even in this field, in line with the policy of indigenous production capability, Iran is working to develop air defense systems with similar capabilities in its own defense industry. Iran is also developing tanks and combat aircraft, but these projects do not seem to have priority. There are reasons to believe that Iran deliberately exaggerates its achievements in the development of weapons systems that are usually the prerogative of great powers.



Iran's conventional build up can be slowed down and disrupted (but not reversed) by economic, diplomatic and covert means. In this context, Israel should do its best to back up American sanctions, which are bound to have an impact on Iran's ability to produce its own weapons or acquire them.

Iran's conventional build up can be slowed down and disrupted (but not reversed) by economic, diplomatic and covert means.

Israel should intensify intelligence efforts to uncover and expose Iranian purchases of sensitive materials and components from other countries for Iran's military projects, to block its channels of weapons acquisition.

Israel should leverage the renewed struggle between the US and Iran over the nuclear project – and the indications that the regime is desperate enough to lash out through proxy terror attacks and disruptive actions in vital sea lanes – to further delegitimize the regime and its various proxies.





3.4 Reducing the Iranian Threat from Syria



After eight years, Assad's success in the Syrian civil war seems certain – at least in the sense of defeating the uprising and the bid to unseat him. By now, there is no real military threat to the survival of his regime, nor are there any signs that his two allies, Russia and Iran, have any interest in bringing about a change at the top level in Syria.

Still, the war is not yet over. Assad rules only 60% of Syria. The areas east of the Euphrates river (some 30% of Syria) are under SDF Kurdish-led rule, backed by the US. This area contains more than 80% of the country's oil and gas resources. Another area in the north-west is under the control of the Turks and/or Sunni rebels.

Meanwhile, Iran is using the Syrian crisis to build a land bridge to the Mediterranean Sea, in pursuit of hegemony in the entire Fertile Crescent. These efforts may intensify as the US-Iran crisis escalates.

Iran has other goals in mind. First, it is seeking to erect on the Syrian side of the Golan border and in southern Syria generally a forward base of the al-Quds Forces of IRGC, assisted by Hizballah and Shi'a militias. This base is to serve as a launching pad for rockets (some of them produced in Syria) and as a base for raids into Israel. An Iranian military presence which would constitute a threat to Israeli population centers will give Tehran, presumably, a deterrent against a possible Israeli (or American) strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

A presence adjacent to the Jordanian border will also enable Iran to lay the groundwork for destabilization in Jordan, and ultimately to penetrate the Hashemite Kingdom in order to gain access to PA territory for attacks on Israel. Iran explicitly aspires to turn the West Bank into another Gaza.

Moreover, Iran seeks to provide the Hizballah forces with technology that would significantly improve the accuracy of their missiles. True, Iran has been airlifting missiles from Tehran to Beirut International Airport, which is under Hizballah control. But the land corridor allows for expanded scale and scope of deliveries.



Israel did not take sides in the Syrian civil war, beyond a tactical alliance with rebel groups in the areas immediately adjacent to the Israel's Golan border. However, Israel has used air strikes and special forces to foil Iranian basing efforts. These operations have inflicted significant damage upon Iran, Hizballah and the Shi'a militias and disrupted the creation of an Iranian forward base in the Syrian Golan Heights. Iran's deployment of weapons in Syria also has been constricted because of Israeli attacks. Hizballah's missile-upgrading project also has gained limited success. The organization has been able to improve the accuracy of only several dozen missiles.

In the period ahead, however, Israel may not be so successful. Assad's visit to Tehran in February 2019 produced a formal agreement enshrining Iran's presence in Syria, and this is likely to be used by Iran for advancing its military purposes – including the integration of IRGC elements, Hizballah and Shi'a militias within the Syrian army.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration has signaled (and then partly retracted) its intention to withdraw US forces from Syria. One of the stumbling blocks to the extension of the Iranian corridor has been the US military presence in al-Tanf in eastern Syria on the border with Iraq. If indeed the US does withdraw from this position, Iran could deepen its presence in Syria. This could also weaken the Kurds, whose presence in Iraq and Syria constrains Iran's designs on the land bridge. (Administration messages on this issue have been ambiguous, particularly regarding timing.)

Israel should prepare for the likely prospect that the more Assad's regime is entrenched, and his army resurrected, the more likely Syria will be to respond forcefully to Israeli air attacks.

At the same time, the efforts to stabilize Syria in the post-civil war era, including the return of Assad's regime to the Arab League from which it has been expelled and the renewal of diplomatic relations with the Arab world, may put further limitations on Israel's freedom of action in Syria.

Israel's explicit goal is to uproot the Iranian presence from Syrian soil. Given the scope of the Iranian project, and the extent of Iran's investment in it, Israel has not yet generated enough harm to make the Iranians change their policy. The militias which operate with Iranian support and local elements controlled by Iran cannot be eliminated by air strikes. Iranians are positioned within 60 kilometers of Israel's border. Consequently, Israel must consider the likelihood of an Iranian military reaction, at some point, either in the form of retaliatory action by proxy or even through a direct attack.

Attempts to force Assad to act against the Iranians or bring about their departure from all of Syria will not succeed at this time, since the Syrian regime, still dependent on Iran and its proxies, simply does not have what it takes to do so. Nevertheless, determined use of force by Israel can achieve a more limited goal, such as reducing Iranian activity in Syria and limiting its geographical scope.

Russia can be of help in limiting the Iranian presence. As detailed in the next sub-chapter, Russia does not share Iran's interest in turning Syria into a battlefield. Indeed, this runs counter to the strategic Russian goal of stabilizing Assad's regime. Thus, Moscow will continue to respond with little beyond rhetoric to the ongoing Israeli strikes in Syria, if they are not aimed at undermining Assad's rule. At the same time, active Russian help in removing Iran from the border areas can only be obtained if there will be an Israeli quid pro quo in support of Russian interests – and not necessarily in the Syrian context.



In any case, Israel should prepare for the likely prospect that the more Assad's regime is entrenched, and his army resurrected, the more likely Syria will be to respond forcefully to Israeli air attacks. If this happens, Russia should be notified that its client is taking unreasonable risks.

Recently, it seemed as if the Israeli policy of ambiguity about actions in Syria was being abandoned in favor of a more overt posture. The policy of ambiguity should be restored. Public comments on this issue should be avoided altogether, or at least confined to the vaguest generalities.





3.5 Strategic Dialogue with Russia



Russia is actively pursuing a policy of enhancing its international standing and emerging as a significant player in a multi-polar world. It takes an antagonistic view towards the US and the West. In this context, the Kremlin treats both Iran and Syria as levers that are useful in the pursuit of global Russian interests, and more specifically, in its immediate strategic environment. At the same time, Russia formally opposes Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, while leaving it to others (the US or Israel) to face the consequences of preventive action.

In Syria, the Russians have stressed that the preservation of Assad's regime is not a goal in itself, but a way to secure stability in the country and the region – which in turn serves their goals in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Their air and naval bases in Syria enable Russia to project power in these areas. Moreover, in the Syrian arena, and in the "Arab street" in general, Russian actions served as proof that it is a reliable ally, willing to use force in defense of its clients. (Whereas the US, under Obama, abandoned a long-term ally like Egypt's Hosni Mubarak).

For Russia, Syria is an arena where it can play a (partly) cooperative game with both Iran and Turkey to advance its goals. The Syrian situation also provides Russia with leverage for negotiating with the US and the West over other matters of importance. Russia's ability to bring about stable arrangements in Syria, which would also respond to Israeli concerns about Iran (as discussed above), serves Putin as cards in a larger game.

The Russians, lacking resources of their own, are also badly in need of partners in the huge undertaking of reconstructing Syria. They need to stabilize Assad's regime, gain renewed regional and international legitimacy for his rule, alongside acceptance of a permanent Russian presence in Syria.

Thus, Israel should once again affirm that if Iran's bid for control in Syria is reversed, this infrastructure reconstruction project (as distinct from a military build-up) will not be harmed or disrupted. Nor will Israel prevent Assad from asserting his nominal sovereign rule over all Syria (although it would be in Israel's interest that the Kurdish-led SDF should retain its autonomy and guns).



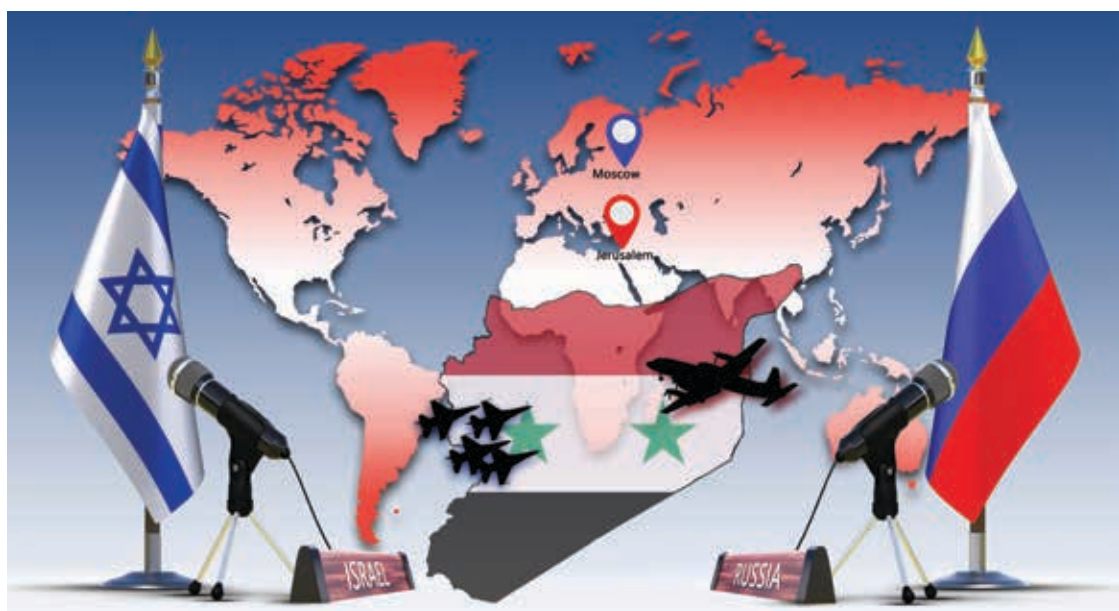
Israel should approach Moscow with deference, expressing respect for Russia and for Putin. Still, respect in Moscow for Israel's military power and Israel's ability to destabilize the Assad regime is Jerusalem's strongest card.

It is important, therefore, to increase coordination with Russia, within the limits imposed by military operational considerations. Israel should to continue to avoid, almost at all costs, hitting Russian personnel or hardware in Syria, or even Syrian assets involved in securing the stability of the regime – unless this is necessary in order to demonstrate to Moscow that Israel stands on its red lines. It is equally important to avoid public discussion of IDF activities in Syria, and to resist the temptation to comment on Israel's ability to overcome Russian defense systems deployed there.

It may prove possible to identify the components of a broad deal with Russia, which would involve an Israeli “give,” perhaps alongside the alleviation of US sanctions on Russia.

As much as possible, Israel should refrain from taking stands in international fora that directly contradict Russian interests (e.g., over Ukraine). Israeli discretion makes it easier for the Russians to quietly influence Syrian conduct.

It may prove possible to identify the components of a broad deal with Russia, which would involve an Israeli “give,” perhaps alongside the alleviation of US sanctions on Russia. This would in turn produce greater Russian willingness to support the pressure on Iran. When US National Security Adviser John Bolton, his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev, and Israeli NSC chief Meir Ben Shabbat met in Jerusalem in June, they hinted at a deal, involving the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Syria in return for the relief of US sanctions on Russia. Still, Israeli action should be conditioned by sensitivity to the deeply held hostility of the US defense community towards Russia.





3.6 Iran's Grip on Lebanon through Hizballah



Most political power centers in Lebanon are now directly or indirectly controlled by Hizballah. That organization has developed a network of alliances with various political and confessional groups; pushed changes in electoral law; neutralized political rivals, and more. In practice, today in Lebanon there is no political element that stands in the way of the organization, which is in possession of a huge arsenal of weapons. It fully controls all military decisions in Lebanon, and the Lebanese Armed Forces cooperate with it.

Recently, Hasan Nasrallah has begun to take control of Lebanon's economy too, thus completing his takeover of the three key power centers in the country: the political system, the military and the economy.

In fact, it has become difficult to distinguish the Lebanese state from Hizballah. The state is a tool in Hizballah's hands, while the organization hides behind it and directs it behind the scenes, in line with its interests. Therefore, it is right to hold Lebanon responsible for Hizballah's actions. Both the organization's political allies and its rivals should be put on notice that Lebanon will pay a heavy price for provoking Israel.

The US and the West should be provided with evidence that the legitimacy they accord to the Lebanese state serves Hizballah. More countries should be urged to follow the British example and brand Hizballah's political "wing" and leadership, not just its so-called "military wing," as a terrorist organization. (The distinction between "wings" is one that Hizballah itself never makes).

Israel should also make the point that international security guarantees to Israel relating to Lebanon have been shown to be inefficient, at best; utterly useless, at worst. Specific intelligence can be marshalled to this effect, including exposure of Hizballah's terror attack tunnels aimed at Israel and activities that should have been prevented under UNSCR 1701. (This is relevant, too, in the debate over utility of such international security guarantees in the context of a putative future settlement with the Palestinians).



There are internal disputes within Lebanon today regarding Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters and the delineation of the border with Israel. Both Hizballah and Amal have rejected Israel's suggestion that the EEZ and the "Blue Line" issues should be negotiated in a separate format; whereas their Christian allies – President Michel Aoun and his party – are willing to consider it. A new effort to mediate this matter under US and UN auspices is underway. Whether Hizballah will allow agreements to be reached remains to be seen.

Hizballah has no plans to give up its arms, and Lebanon is now a tool in Hizballah's hands.

In general, Israeli concessions related to Hizballah activity south of the Litani River, on border delineation, or on the EEZ will not bring a political settlement with Lebanon any closer, nor will this remove the danger that Hizballah poses to Israel. Iran, Hizballah's sponsor, continues to view Israel as a target for full destruction. There is no point in a "give" to an Iranian-controlled Lebanon.

On the other hand, however, an indirectly negotiated compromise (with the help of the US and Israel's Mediterranean friends) could create a common short-term interest in reducing friction, in order to draw-in investors for natural gas development in the eastern Mediterranean.

Meanwhile, Israel should find points of weakness in the Lebanese economic system. With Iran cash starved, Hizballah's predicament is increasingly serious. Economic conditions in Lebanon have deteriorated and may be at the edge of the abyss – a concern of great importance to all players, Hizballah included. Hizballah's base of support among the weakest socio-economic groups could suffer. The Lebanese economy is mostly sustained by banking, foreign deposits, services (tourism), real estate transactions and loans. It is therefore vulnerable to external pressures.

Thus, Saudi Arabia should be urged to join hands with other Gulf countries (UAE, Bahrain) in issuing or renewing a travel advisory, and/or in expelling Lebanese working in the Gulf, or in threatening to end easy loans to the Lebanese. In parallel, Israel should urge all participants to the 2018 Paris conference on the Lebanese economy – which ended with several countries pledged for support and investments in Lebanon – to stick to their conditions, which included both economic reform and a promise to consider disarming Hizballah.

Israel should emphasize that Hizballah has no plans to give up its arms, and that Lebanon is now a tool in Hizballah's hands. Hence, all assistance to Lebanon helps Hizballah; whereas any constraints on the Lebanese economy harm Hizballah and increase the financial burden on it.

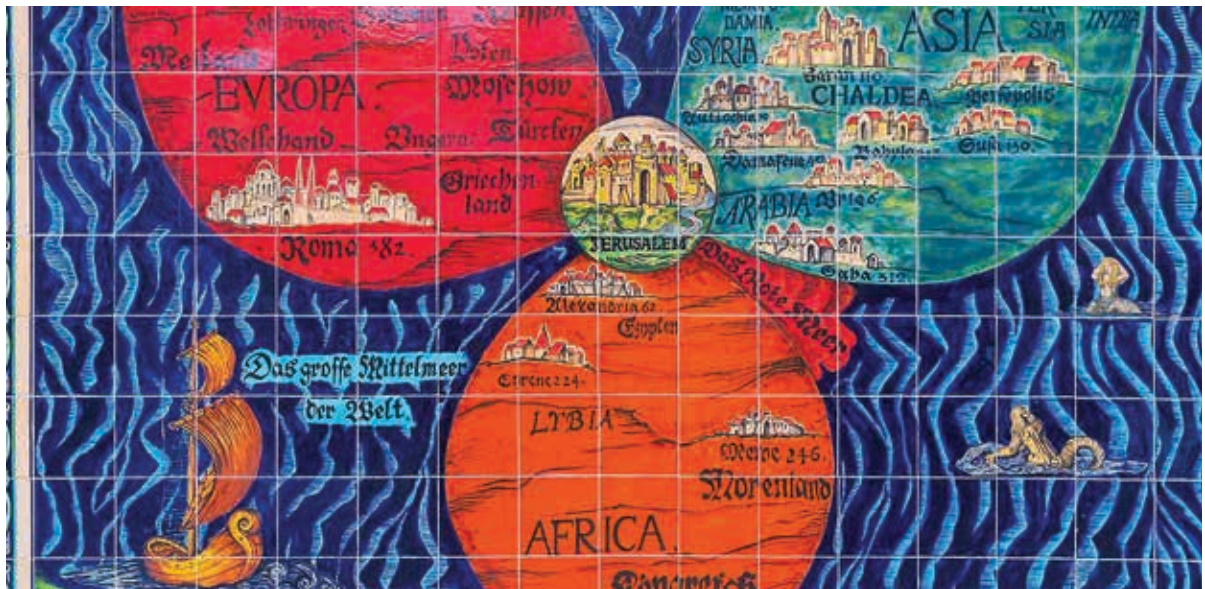
CHAPTER FOUR

Jerusalem





4.1 The Strategic Importance of Jerusalem



There is a strategic imperative for keeping Israel's capital unified, in addition to the historical and religious reasons for doing so. A united Jerusalem is vital to the securing of Israel's eastern border along the Jordan River. To some extent, control of the greater Jerusalem envelope compensates for Israel's lack of strategic depth and the topographical vulnerability of the coastal plain (where most of Israel's Jewish population resides). Jerusalem is also a source of ongoing intelligence for security operations across the PA-governed areas of Judea and Samaria.

Jerusalem is situated on a major crossroads that dominates the north-south axis, along the central mountain ridge watershed. The city also contains one of the few lateral axes suitable for transportation from the Jordan Valley westwards, across the mountain ridge and towards the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, this is the only urban crossroads that has a Jewish majority, a demographic reality that dates to the 19th Century.

There is a strategic imperative for keeping Israel's capital unified, in addition to the historical and religious reasons for doing so.

A Jewish majority along this east-west axis facilitates the smooth dispatch of military forces from the coast, where most of the IDF's reserve capacities and depots are based, to the Jordan Valley. Keeping this supply line open will be crucial in the event of an attempted invasion of Israel from the east. Thus, in strategic terms, the corridor from Jerusalem to Maaleh Adumim and further east to the Jordan Valley is of vital strategic importance. This corridor should be kept as wide as possible.

Every effort also should be made to avert a situation where Jerusalem is wholly dependent on a single supply and communications route; specifically, Highway No. 1 from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It is important to maintain control over other roads to Jerusalem as well, specifically Route 443 that leads to the north of Jerusalem and Route 375 that leads to the city's south-west.



A virtual consensus exists in Israel regarding the need to define the Jordan Valley as the defensible eastern border of Israel. The coastal plain is separated from the Jordan Valley by the mountains of Judea and Samaria, which in turn descend sharply to the east, producing a natural barrier. The Jordan Valley is 250-400 meters below sea level, while the mountain peaks – near Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron – rise above 900 meters. This means that an invading armored column attacking from the east would need to traverse some 20 miles along an extremely steep incline. Such an attack could only be executed through very narrow mountain passes. By controlling the entry points of these mountain passes, the IDF can prevent an attempted invasion from the east.

Indeed, this was the governing logic behind the Alon Plan (formulated by the Israel Labor Party after the Six-Day War) for keeping the Jordan Valley and the mountain passes. The plan also remains demographically sound, since the Jordan Valley is sparsely populated by Arabs.

Israel's eastern border is its most sensitive border, because it abuts the Haifa-Jerusalem-Gedera triangle, where most Israelis live and most of the country's economic infrastructure is located. From the Jordan River to Jerusalem is only 20 miles, with the Mediterranean coast only 50 miles away. These are shorter distances that an invading army would have to cross coming from Egypt in the south, or from Syria in the north.

Israel's long-term security interests require full control of the entire Jerusalem envelope.

Israeli policy should be to hold defensible borders that factor in changes in military technology, as well as local and regional political upheavals. And it would be a serious strategic miscalculation to outsource Israel's security needs to foreign powers or organizations.

A unified Jerusalem also compensates for the topographical inferiority of the coastal plain. From the east, the narrow coastal plain is dominated by the foothills of the Samarian and Judean mountain ranges. Control of these foothills offers many strategic advantages, including domination of the country's international airport, Ben-Gurion Airport. The airport and many other vital assets are all within standard rocket range (40 km). In addition, the narrow coastal plain makes it vulnerable to penetration by both mechanized forces and infantry soldiers. Israeli military forces moving to eliminate threats originating in the cities of Judea and Samaria would encounter serious difficulties. Such forces would need to convene in areas whose security has been compromised as a result of constant surveillance and intelligence gathering. They would have to attack under enemy fire from the foothills, and advance along winding mountain roads, through dense and hostile urban areas whose inhabitants have prepared for a long, protracted defense against Israel.

The solution to this challenge is Israel's control over the entire Jerusalem envelope. Such control was crucial in 1967, when the Jerusalem corridor created a wedge within the mountain range that enabled Israeli forces to capture the areas of Ramallah in the north and Hebron in the south. In 2002, control of this region was the basis for the IDF's successful "Protective Shield" military operation. Should Israel lose control over greater Jerusalem, the narrow and vulnerable coastal plain would effectively become indefensible.



Maintaining control over greater Jerusalem is also essential to Israel's ability to gather intelligence and pursue an effective campaign against terrorism. Jerusalem's elevation makes it possible for Israel to better collect intelligence to the east, but also to the south and north. Partitioning the city would greatly diminish Israel's 360-degree intelligence gathering capability. Jerusalem also is adjacent to several hubs of terrorist activity. As such, the city serves as a base of operations for IDF and other security forces.

Greater Jerusalem and the areas to its east form a wedge between densely populated Palestinian areas, preventing territorial contiguity between them. Such demographic disjointedness is important to Israeli security. (Note: This still allows for Palestinian transportation contiguity between, say, Ramallah and Bethlehem, via a network of roads with underpasses and overpasses through Israeli-held areas.)

Meanwhile, the PA is actively working to change realities on the ground, with help from the EU, by building without Israeli approval east of Maaleh Adumim, in the E-1 area. E-1 constitutes the largest area of land available for residential construction near Jerusalem, and thus its takeover by the PA must be prevented.

The strategic importance of Jerusalem is a critical factor when considering the implications of proposals to partition the city. Partition would lead to the loss of Israeli security control over the greater Jerusalem envelope, and would disrupt Israel's ability to secure the dominant mountain ridges/ passes and the Jordan Valley. Israel's long-term security interests require full control of the entire Jerusalem envelope.





4.2 Settling in Jerusalem: The Zionist Imperative



Jerusalem holds a central place in Israel's national ethos and is also a crucial national security issue. As such, there's little likelihood that any future government will agree to partition the city or hand away the Temple Mount compound. Nevertheless, Jewish control at the municipal level could be in danger. Jerusalem's demographic realities and their political consequences are a major concern. Therefore, the most urgent challenge to the Zionist enterprise is to settle Jews in Jerusalem. Indeed, the fate of Israel is closely linked to that of its eternal capital, because there can be no Zionism without Zion.

Jews are a majority (62%) in Jerusalem. Most of these Jewish residents of the city are Zionists (71%) who identify with Israel's core Zionist values. This includes 20% who self-identify as secular Jews, 33% as traditional Jews and 18% as religious Zionist Jews. Meanwhile, the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) community comprises 29% of the city's Jewish population and maintains an extremely high birth rate. In contrast, the number of secular inhabitants living in Jerusalem is declining as a result of migration from the city.

The fate of Israel is closely linked to that of its eternal capital, because there can be no Zionism without Zion.

The proportion of Arabs living in Jerusalem has grown from 26% to 38% since the city was unified in 1967. But because Jerusalem's Arabs have thus far refused to play an active role in municipal politics, their political influence remains marginal. For fifty years, Jerusalemite Arabs have boycotted local elections, even though their residency status gives them the right to vote.



There are potential problems with the growing proportion of Arab and Haredi communities in Jerusalem. The deep emotional connection of Israeli Jews to Jerusalem could significantly weaken if the city is increasingly identified with two non-Zionist population groups. If such a sentiment spreads and deepens, the existing consensus about keeping Jerusalem united (including consensus regarding the Temple Mount issue, which has far-reaching strategic implications of its own) will start to fray.

One plan that has been proposed to enhance the Jewish-Zionist majority in the city involves expanding Jerusalem's borders and creating a larger metropolitan entity by annexing surrounding Jewish towns. Another idea is to remove some Arab neighborhoods that are located beyond the security barrier (where 135,000 people currently reside) from Jerusalem's municipal jurisdiction. These neighborhoods would remain under Israeli sovereignty, as part of a new municipality separate from Jerusalem. Yet neither of these plans (which raise other problems, in turn) directly address the primary challenge, the need to increase the number of Zionist Jews who live in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem should become the focal point of all Jewish-Zionist settlement efforts.

To prevent emergence of a non-Zionist majority, Jerusalem should become the focal point of all Jewish-Zionist settlement efforts. As such, the Israeli government should endorse policies that encourage Jewish Zionists to move to Jerusalem. Specifically, housing projects and economic incentives need to be offered in order to attract young people to new neighborhoods in Jerusalem and nearby areas.

Construction should be undertaken in E-1, Givat HaMatos and Atarot (with the latter two areas lying within the city's municipal jurisdiction). These are the only large land reserves still left in and around Jerusalem for the absorption of tens of thousands of new residents. Changing the demographic dynamics in such a dramatic fashion would express Israel's determination to keep Jerusalem united under Israeli sovereignty.

Prioritizing a Jewish majority in Jerusalem should not impinge on the municipality's fair treatment of the city's Arab minority. The operative municipal slogan, "full (Israeli) sovereignty, full fairness (for Arab Jerusalemites)" is instructive in this context.

Most Arabs in the city only know life under Israeli rule. After the Oslo process collapsed, most Arab residents of Jerusalem concluded that the city would not be divided. Beyond political and diplomatic developments, the realities of daily life that have emerged over the last decade (relating to employment, health care and transportation) reduce the likelihood of separation between Jews and Arabs.

Efforts should be made to improve the national, municipal and police presence in Jerusalemite Arab neighborhoods. Doing so means putting a special emphasis on the provision of vital services and the strengthening of law enforcement measures. Ultimately, firm and fair Israeli rule will bolster the Zionist position in Jerusalem.



The appropriate budgetary framework for this effort already exists. Government Plan 3790 involves the investment of NIS 1.2 billion in Arab neighborhoods over the next five years. This plan is focused on improving transportation, higher education, schools, welfare services, employment opportunities, infrastructure and sanitation.

It seems that a majority of Jerusalemite Arabs prefer the status quo in the city, under Israeli sovereignty. Indeed, a process of “Israelization” is taking place among the city’s Arab population. A rapidly growing number of students in eastern Jerusalem study Hebrew intensively, and choose to study in schools that teach the Israeli high school curriculum (including preparation for national matriculation exams), which if completed, allows for enrolment in Israeli colleges and universities.

Simultaneously, action is needed to counter vicious disinformation that proliferates on Arab social networks about Israeli and local government activities in eastern Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Much more must be done to develop and distribute positive news coverage of policies being developed and implemented by City Hall and the national government that benefit all of Jerusalem’s residents.

The Jerusalemite Arab partners that Jerusalem City Hall and other Israeli authorities need to work with – community center leaders, school principals and mukhtars (neighborhood leaders) – should be made to feel welcome and valued. They should be given as much support as possible. Most importantly, Israeli authorities should do everything in their power to reward such civic leaders and protect them from Arab terrorism.





4.3 Confronting Foreign Elements that Subvert Israeli Sovereignty in Jerusalem



In recent years, various foreign agents have increased their diplomatic, cultural and educational activities in eastern Jerusalem. These activities – whether legal or illegal, community-based or security-focused – undermine Israeli sovereignty in the capital and delegitimize the Israeli presence in eastern Jerusalem. Some of these machinations have gone so far as to encourage nationalist Palestinian or Islamist terrorist activities in Jerusalem.

The agents who are seeking to undermine Israeli sovereignty can be categorized as belonging to one of three distinct networks: Palestinian, Islamist and international.

The Palestinian network uses two prongs of attack. One is Islamist in nature and is led by Hamas and the Islamic Movement in Israel – Northern Branch. These groups work to fuel local tensions and interfaith hostilities on the Temple Mount compound and in surrounding areas.

Foreign interventions in Jerusalem affairs must be blocked; this is a key national security matter.

The Palestinian network's second mode of resistance to Israeli rule is nationalist in nature, led by Fatah and the PA. To subvert any attempts by local Arabs to normalize relations with Jerusalem City Hall and the national government, Palestinian security operatives intimidate Arab residents they suspect of collaborating with Israeli "occupation authorities," and incite violent disobedience. Evidence suggests that both Palestinian prongs of attack against Israeli rule have had a cumulative influence, dampening the willingness of Jerusalemite Arabs to openly integrate in Israeli society or express support for Israeli administration of the city.



In Islamic circles, Turkey's influence is ascendant. Ankara is actively propagating an Islamist brand of anti-Israel radicalization among eastern Jerusalem Arabs. Under Erdogan's AKP, Turkey's long-term goal is to replace Jordan as the Muslim power player in the city. Ankara's ambitions extend to the Temple Mount compound, where the Hashemite Kingdom has special rights and privileges under the terms of the 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. Specifically, Jordan is recognized as the official custodian of the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem.

On the international level, there has been a change in the nature of the EU and UN role in Jerusalem. They no longer confine themselves to supporting pro-Palestinian NGOs. The scope of their activism has expanded to include such projects as funding the construction of commercial centers in Arab areas.

Though operationally distinct, these three networks often are interwoven in practice, which creates a powerful multiplier effect in their common resistance to Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. The networks are often united by religious and nationalist ties. Two specific alliances link them. One is Islamic and religious, the other nationalist and political.

Israel must act with determination to prevent radical groups from undermining the status quo on the Temple Mount.

The Islamist connection links the Turkish regime to the Muslim Brotherhood, which operates in Jerusalem under the leadership of Shaykh Ikrimah Sabri (who was the Mufti of Jerusalem, 1994-2006). Together, Ankara and the Brotherhood work to foment religious subversion in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, it's a political bond that brings together the PA and European officials. They seek to undermine the legitimacy of Israel's rule in eastern Jerusalem.

In the face of these challenges, Israeli policy should be based on defining these foreign interventions in Jerusalem affairs as a national security matter. Accordingly, the activities of the three networks need to be closely monitored and countered by an inter-agency task force comprised of officials from the Prime Minister's Office, Internal Security Ministry, GSS and other elements of the Israeli intelligence community, Foreign Ministry, Jerusalem Affairs Ministry, Jerusalem City Hall and Israel Police.

This team should reassess the "Implementation Law," which covers aspects of the PA's activity in Jerusalem, and extend its application; track and block financial transactions that fund improper foreign activities in Jerusalem; cap the amounts of money that can be legally transferred; and conduct a discreet dialogue with the Jordanian government, which has a major stake in preserving the status quo in Jerusalem, including calm on the Temple Mount.

The above steps can help thwart the efforts of subversive elements to change the status quo that has sustained the city for decades.

An Israeli civilian counteroffensive should be launched to counter the wave of foreign-based and funded hostile activities in Jerusalem. Full implementation of Plan 3790 for infrastructure, education, urban planning, sports facilities, transportation and employment is necessary.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Palestinian Question





5.1 Managing the Conflict with the Palestinians



The events commonly referred to as the “Arab Spring” and the rise of radical Islamism lend credence to the assertion that the Palestinian problem is not the root of all regional instability. Other geopolitical developments, such as the increasingly belligerent policies being adopted by Iran and the election of Donald Trump as president of the US, further reduce the amount of attention being paid to Palestinian grievances. Consequently, attempts (that are, alas, perennially futile) to find a “solution” to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have lost some of their urgency; and the issue has become less of a priority for the international community.

Today, Israeli national security priorities are based on the growing possibility of an armed confrontation with Iran, and the escalation of tensions with Hezbollah in Lebanon into potentially full-scale hostilities. But there are other concerns to consider as well. Turkey’s role during a regional crisis is difficult to gauge, as well, given President Erdogan’s capriciousness.

The prudent course for Israel is to pursue a policy of “conflict management” regarding the Palestinian issue.

Other unknowns include the depth of US support for Israel during a national security crisis, even in the age of Trump. Meanwhile, the aging PA President Mahmoud Abbas has doubled down on promoting the Palestinian narrative of victimhood. A changing of the Palestinian guard in the near-term future is inevitable, as well.



In Gaza, Hamas leaders continue to view their movement as essentially jihadist in nature. And though they have displayed an occasional willingness to negotiate with Israel via Egypt, Hamas continues to act with genocidal intent towards Israel. Effectively, Hamas's policy is to facilitate short, temporary, periods of calm with the Zionist state, while preparing for conflict.

Given these levels of uncertainty, the prudent course for Israel is to pursue a policy of "conflict management" regarding the Palestinian issue. This cautious approach is predicated on the (widely shared Israeli) assessment that the Palestinian national movement is not yet ready to reach a historic compromise with Israel; and especially not so until the Fatah-Hamas divide is overcome.

Alas, the gaps between Israel's minimum-security requirements and the PA's steadfast calls for expansive and almost-runaway statehood (based on their own reading of "international legitimacy") are too wide for there to be any movement on the diplomatic front, in the near future.

Under these circumstances, Israel's goals on the Palestinian front should be realistic. Specifically, Jerusalem should strive to reduce levels of violence to a minimum and patiently wait for broader regional events to develop that might create new diplomatic opportunities.

Effective management of the conflict with Palestinians includes the following:

- » Provisional arrangements: Israel should implement policies that ease tensions and reduce the risks of violent escalation. Such policies should be tethered to the defense of vital national security interests.
- » Judicious use of force: The use of force against people inciting violence and sedition is crucial to reestablishing Israel's deterrence capability. At the same time, Israeli security forces must carefully distinguish between terrorists, who should be targeted and neutralized swiftly, and the general population.
- » Improving governance in Area C: Israel should enforce existing laws to block the development of nationalist Palestinian projects that threaten Israeli strategic interests (particularly in areas such as E-1, the Jordan Valley and the southern Hebron foothills). However, Israel should adopt a two-pronged approach that also emphasizes good governance for all residents of Judea and Samaria. Whether Israel seeks to annex parts of Area C or hold Area C as a bargaining chip for future negotiations, good governance is the best way to block foreign interference in Area C.
- » Carrots and sticks: The national government should draw on elements of the Trump economic plan as a way of responding to the legitimate needs of the Palestinian population. Local Palestinian leaders should be recognized and rewarded for behavior that facilitates easing of tensions. To give this policy greater salience, international and regional players should be encouraged to use their influence with the Palestinian leadership. The use of economic "sticks," such as the reduction of US aid over the PA's "pay to slay" policy, should be carefully balanced with "carrots" that include increased investment in infrastructure and the development of a local job base. Significantly, Israel should focus on rewards that directly benefit the Palestinian people, not Ramallah's kleptocracy.
- » Settlements, restrained: Israel's settlement policy should be moderate in nature. The Israeli footprint should be restricted to territories deemed vital to national security and that are broadly within the Israeli consensus. These territories include greater Jerusalem as well as the Jordan Valley.



- » Diplomacy and public diplomacy: Following the PA's outright rejection of the Trump initiative, Israel should concentrate on strengthening American commitments to Israel. Efforts should be made to increase the international community's understanding of Israel's security imperatives regarding the Palestinian issue, including the way Israeli policies are implemented and the strategic considerations guiding its policies.

It is vital for Israelis to realize that territorial concessions, especially unilateral Israeli withdrawals, will not increase Israel's security or improve Israel's international standing. Unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza only served to exacerbate and aggravate Israel's conflicts with Hezbollah and Hamas, respectively.

Unilateral Israeli withdrawals will not increase Israel's security or improve Israel's international standing.

In much the same way, unilateral Israeli withdrawals from Judea and Samaria would likely embolden the Palestinians to push for further concessions from Israel; and this would lead to acute, unnecessary tensions within Israeli society. Moreover, Israeli withdrawals would likely result in Hamas seizing power in the West Bank.

At the same time, Israel should be careful about extending Israeli law to settlements in Judea and Samaria. Such a move should be considered only regarding areas in Judea and Samaria about which there is a broad Israeli national consensus, and in any case Israel must wait until the expected American peace initiative has run its course.

"Conflict management" is neither a weak default policy option nor the result of Israeli government reluctance to make difficult decisions. Rather it is worthy strategy with significant merits. Applied prudently, it is a realistic approach to the Palestinian issue, and it can be sustained into the foreseeable future. Given current circumstances, the components of conflict management enjoy broad Israeli public support, and this is a weighty consideration.



5.2 Trump's "Deal of the Century": Redefining the Possible



Much of the international community and the political left in Israel regard the "Clinton Parameters" as the only realistic basis for an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. The presumed parameters include the creation of a unitary Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli withdrawal to the pre-Six-Day War borders of June 4, 1967 (allowing for "limited and equal" land swaps with the Palestinians of perhaps three to six percent of the territory), a division of Jerusalem into two capitals, and dismantlement of a large part of the settlement enterprise in Judea and Samaria.

As it happens, this formula has repeatedly failed to facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian accord. The PA has been unwilling to agree to an end-of-claims agreement even on this basis, despite the willingness of several previous Israeli governments to accept the Clinton Parameters as the basis for negotiations.

The Trump administration should be lauded for its willingness to re-assess the parameters of a peace agreement.

Therefore, the Trump administration should be lauded for its willingness to break away from this paradigm and re-assess the parameters of a peace agreement. Equally praiseworthy are Washington's ongoing efforts to secure Arab support for its initiative, in order to provide political and economic backing for Palestinian agreement. Indeed, as the Bahrain "workshop" was designed to demonstrate, the Trump initiative could serve a better basis for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and it is likely to be more attentive to Israeli interests than previous proposals.

As such, the Israeli government should welcome the American plan when it is presented in full, even if the plan does not fully address every Israeli diplomatic or security need – including those needs related to settlements.



A positive Israeli response to the initiative is necessary in order to maintain close working relations with the Trump administration.

In addition, a positive response from Israel is equally important for domestic reasons. No Israeli government can afford to be perceived by the Israeli public as rejecting peace. Saying “yes” (or “yes, but”) to the Trump plan will strengthen social and political cohesion.

(Of course, if the American plan asks Israel to make unreasonable concessions, the government will have to push back and express its reservations, regardless of the Trump administration’s affections. But this is not what seems to be in the cards.)

The Arab world and wider international community will likely greet the Trump plan with muted support. The Palestinians, who have been boycotting virtually all channels of communication with Washington, are expected to reject the American plan outright. The impending struggle for succession in the post-Abbas era will likely strengthen the voices calling for rejection of the American plan.

Still, when a major power such as the United States presents a detailed set of new parameters for peace, this undoubtedly will influence the international discourse for the long term. Thus, it is useful that the Trump administration has shown a willingness to broach new diplomatic paradigms, including alternatives to the standard “two state solution” (2SS) paradigm.

It is important to note the “two state” paradigm as outlined in the Clinton Parameters was not part of the Oslo Accords, and this formula has become a barrier to the seeking of more practical options.

The 2SS paradigm in its broadest contours is regarded as holy writ by many in the international community and was codified in the waning days of the Obama administration in UN Security Council resolution 2334. But it is important to note that the “two state” paradigm as detailed in the Clinton Parameters was not part of the Oslo Accords, and this formula has become a barrier to seeking more practical options.

Israel should therefore make use of the opportunity offered by the Trump initiative – and the anticipated Palestinian rejection of it – to firm up support for the “conflict management” approach and for creative thinking about diplomatic arrangements for the long term.

In any case, any future agreement must include a provision whereby Palestinians recognize Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. Regarding Jerusalem, the optimal result would preserve present political realities, except perhaps in some outlying areas. It should be made clear that if significant changes are suggested in Jerusalem status quo – generally, or regarding the Temple Mount specifically – Israel will have new demands of its own including the right of Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.



5.3 The Day After Abbas



The Palestinian Authority is a failing political entity which finds it difficult to sustain stable state structures. It is an authoritarian regime that lacks mechanisms for facilitating a peaceful and legitimate transfer of power. PA President Mahmoud Abbas is 83 and in fragile medical condition. As a result, a succession struggle has begun and the ensuing turmoil for Palestinian leadership has thrown the entire future of the PA into doubt.

Among the candidates to succeed Abbas are, reportedly, former security chiefs Jibril Rajoub and Muhammad Dahlan, as well as current head of the Palestinian General Intelligence Service, Majid Faraj. Jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti is considered a candidate too, even though he is serving five life sentences for murder. Alternatively, several of the key players in the PA's political drama could agree to lead the next government together, something that might prevent bloodshed.

Israel must prevent a Hamas takeover of PA institutions or the extension of intra-Palestinian struggles into Jerusalem.

Yet another possibility is further fragmentation of the Palestinian polity based on local allegiances. Such a scenario would be characterized by small armed militias gaining control of towns and rural areas. Furthermore, Hamas could try to seize power in the West Bank, or at least establish its rule in parts of PA-governed areas. Any variation on these scenarios could lead to extreme political destabilization and chaos in the lives of many Palestinians.

As such, it's difficult to conceive of the first post-Abbas leader of the Palestinian Authority following in the footsteps of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and initiating substantial changes to either Palestinian domestic or foreign policy. The next leader of the PA is unlikely to make a clean break from the political culture established by Yasser Arafat, bequeathed to the PLO and the PA and largely left intact under Abbas (although the latter has shied away from the "armed struggle" as such).



What should be Israel's policy for the day after Abbas?

Israel must prevent a Hamas takeover of PA institutions or the extension of intra-Palestinian struggles into Jerusalem. However, the ability of Israel or any other external player to politically engineer its neighbors' ruling structures – particularly the Palestinian political system – is limited at best. As such, Israeli intervention in the internal Palestinian leadership struggle should be limited only to instances when highly specific security interests are at stake.

In any case, any attempt by Israel to lend support to one of the leading candidates to replace Abbas must be highly discreet. Should any such assistance be overt and public, the relevant candidate's legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian people would plummet.

The break-up of the PA into sub-units does not necessarily contradict Israel's interest in reducing the strength of the Palestinian national movement. However, the possible descent of PA-controlled areas into chaos would pose serious new security risks for Israel, given the likelihood of increased terrorist operations being launched from these areas.

Therefore, tempting interventions of all types should be shelved in favor of continued "conflict management," as discussed above. In any case, Israel must make provisions for a possible deterioration of its border security should the PA devolve into chaos.

The emerging regional situation under the shadow of the Trump plan and its rejection by the PA may be an opportunity to explore an alternative to the 2SS paradigm.

In conclusion, the emerging regional situation under the shadow of the Trump plan and its rejection by the PA may be an opportunity to explore an alternative to the 2SS paradigm. In a new regional calculus, the Arab world could assume a leading role in searching for viable alternatives to this apparently failing paradigm.

A new approach to relations between Israel and the Palestinians will become even more important should the PA crumble in the post-Abbas era. In such a situation, Jordan's role in administering parts of the Palestinian population may need to be broached anew.





5.4 Gaza: Carrying a Big Stick and Several Carrots Too



Below is a summary of the situation in Gaza, a reality that is not likely to change soon:

1. An intra-Palestinian reconciliation is unlikely, though understandings between rival political factions may be reached as circumstances dictate. Hamas will continue to rule Gaza and will not submit its military wing to any external authority.
2. Given the weakness of the PA, there is no viable alternative at this time to Hamas rule in Gaza. In addition, neither Israel nor Egypt have an interest in assuming responsibility over the governance of the Gaza Strip.
3. Hamas will remain actively committed to the destruction of the Jewish state. However, due to its military inferiority, Hamas has and will continue under certain circumstances to hold its fire against Israel.
4. The Hamas regime does not have a total monopoly over the use of force in Gaza. Other organizations, particularly Palestinian Islamic Jihad (an Iranian proxy), have rockets and firearms and are not beholden to Hamas. As a result, these organizations can and do periodically act against Israel independently of Hamas.
5. Hamas leaders are aware of Israel's reluctance to conquer and rule over Gaza again. They are also aware that the separation of Gaza from the PA is widely perceived by Israel as serving Israel's interests. Thus, the Hamas war of attrition targeting Israel's civilian population in the south of the country is a deliberate act of brinkmanship meant to test Israel's willingness to tolerate provocations from Gaza.

Israel should seek to manage the conflict with Hamas in Gaza, as Israel similarly seeks to manage the conflict with the PA in the West Bank. For the moment, this is the optimal way to reduce the emotional, psychological and physical harm inflicted on Israeli citizens by Hamas rockets. Conflict management also is the best way to reduce the diplomatic and reputational damage to Israel that inevitably ensues from any larger conflict. At the same time, Israel must find ways to rebuild its eroded deterrence capability versus Hamas.



It should be noted that the threats to Israeli security from Gaza are much less significant than those emanating from the country's northern border. Gaza is a secondary arena, which the IDF can address any time it decides to. As such, Israel should refrain from engaging in hasty military actions against Hamas and wait until the optimum moment presents itself.

Israel must find ways to rebuild its eroded deterrence capability versus Hamas.

The components of an effective Israeli policy regarding Gaza include:

- » Constant pressure: This includes maintaining the naval blockade and strict monitoring of all crossings into and out of Gaza. Not only do such actions restrict Hamas, they also highlight a clear distinction in Israeli policy between Gaza and West Bank areas controlled by the PA (which are less belligerent towards Israel).
- » Restoring deterrence: It can and should be made clear to Hamas that it should not mistake Israel's caution for fear of casualties in battle. The Israeli public across the political spectrum is outraged by Hamas provocations. If another major IDF strike against Hamas becomes necessary, it would enjoy broad legitimacy.
- » Hitting Hamas intelligently: Hamas leadership cares little about deprivation, death and destruction suffered by Gazans. Israel must develop targeting alternatives that inflict damage on specific Hamas political and military infrastructures, while not targeting civilian populations – something that is also important in terms of maintaining support within Israel for the struggle against Hamas. Israeli strikes against Hamas should be calibrated to inflict maximum damage on high value Hamas targets.
- » Economic carrots: Non-violent behavior by Hamas should be rewarded by Israeli economic assistance, something that also will help prevent full scale humanitarian crisis in Gaza. However, striking a perfect balance between carrots and sticks is difficult, and Israel should be aware that this is not a policy that will always succeed.
- » Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Hamas should be prevailed upon to significantly curb the activities of PIJ, which repeatedly has acted as Iran's provocative agent.

Israel should be aware of the risks inherent in the strategy outlined above. Military escalation remains a distinct possibility, especially since miscalculation is possible.

It should be noted that the threats to Israeli security from Gaza are much less significant than those emanating from the country's northern border.

This makes indirect channels of communication, mainly through Egypt, even more important. Egypt, which also maintains a naval blockade on Gaza, plays a crucial role in the facilitating and preserving of agreements between Israel and Hamas, alongside some funding from Qatar.

Another risk is that the difficult situation in Gaza will devolve into a humanitarian crisis as a result of an escalation between Israel and Hamas. This could lead to a demand for international intervention, something that Israel always seeks to avoid. Again, the mediation of Egypt and Qatar is useful in preventing this development.

CHAPTER SIX

Regional Realities and the Eastern Mediterranean



6.1 Prioritize Egypt and Jordan, While Exploring New Horizons in the Arab World



A new balance of power is emerging in the Arab world. At the regional level, several formative factors are at play. Above all, there is the lingering impact of the Arab upheavals that erupted in 2011. Indeed, the basic issues and fundamental problems that sparked the so-called “Arab Spring” persist.

Added to this are growing signs of American fatigue with its long and intensive involvement in the region; Russia’s return as a regional player; Turkey’s rise as a regional power; and Iran’s bid for regional hegemony.

The Arab world’s two most powerful countries, Iraq and Egypt, have seen their regional influence decline significantly. These two historic Arab centers of power are primarily preoccupied today with domestic matters, such as maintaining social, economic and political cohesion. Leadership of the Arab world is now sought by two relatively marginal states: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Both countries bring formidable amounts of money, dedication, focus and connections with Western elites to the table.

Saudi Arabia’s primary campaign is centered on its ongoing struggle against Iran and its Shi’a proxies. The second front of these emerging regional powers is one in which the UAE has a more dominant role. The UAE is engaged in a battle against revolutionary forces in the Arab world and identifies the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its offshoots as the main enemy. This campaign is directed at Qatar and, to some extent, Turkey. The hostility that the UAE displays towards Ankara and Doha is at least partially based on personal and dynastic tensions, as well as geopolitical rivalries.

There is reason to doubt whether the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the UAE (and their junior partner Bahrain) have the experience, knowledge or human capital to fulfill this leadership role successfully. Most of the initiatives and efforts of the two crown princes (and de facto leaders) of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Muhammad Bin Salman and Muhammad Bin Zayid (MBS and MBZ), have not gone well.

Support for the Syrian opposition to the Assad regime faltered; attempts to influence political realities in Lebanon and Libya have failed; plans for the Saudi state oil company Saudi-Aramco to be listed on international stock exchanges have turned out to be more complicated than expected, though



undeniably profitable; and the Khashoggi affair has cast a cloud of suspicion on MBS. Other than in Yemen, where the war has been both deadly and inconclusive, Saudi Arabia has no clear-cut victories against Iran anywhere.

For Israel, this evolving geopolitical situation presents challenges but also offers opportunities. Leaders of Arab countries have a vested interest in maintaining internal stability, and regard Iran and the Sunni jihadist organizations as primary threats to their continued rule. To bolster their respective positions, governments across the Arab world have come to value Israel's military might, its intelligence in dealing with sensitive security issues and its technological acumen. In addition, the declining salience of the Palestinian issue in the international arena partially has removed one key obstacle to better relationships between Arab governments and Israel.

The declining salience of the Palestinian issue in the international arena partially has removed one key obstacle to better relationships between Arab governments and Israel.

Additionally, America's ongoing retreat from international entanglements has united regional allies. These alliances have been formed in order to slow down the American withdrawal and contain the damage it may cause to regional stability. American fatigue with foreign involvements also has forced Arab governments to combine their efforts and explore alternative strategic structures that would compensate for the loss of American influence.

Most religiously conservative Arab regimes are reluctant to link up with Iran or Turkey; doing so would be tantamount to de facto acquiescence to these non-Arab nations' regional ambitions. As such, the remaining strategic alliances available to Arab governments are with Russia and Israel. Thus, the majority of these countries' leaders have indeed been seeking to cultivate stronger relationships with both Moscow and Jerusalem.

Still, the Arab Sunni camp is far from being a cohesive unit. Each Arab country has its own national interests, and the united front that is often presented obscures significant differences. For example, Egypt is opposed to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi's bid for regional hegemony in the Arab world – occasionally making its displeasure with these regimes known.

A key difference between Egypt and its rivals in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi is that Cairo does not regard Iran and the Shi'a as the primary regional antagonist. Rather, the Egyptian government views the Salafi terrorists and Muslim Brotherhood as the main threats. As it emerges from its self-imposed isolation, Egypt will increasingly challenge growing Saudi dominance in the region.

Jordan's position also differs from that of its financial benefactors, particularly when it comes to its stance on the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey. And even among the Gulf States, Oman and Kuwait are not on the same page with Saudi Arabia when it comes to Iran or Qatar.

Accordingly, Israel has an opportunity to improve relations with more Arab countries. Specifically, Israel could conceivably turn Saudi Arabia from a rival into a partner. Indeed, there are ample opportunities for broadening the already existing security and economic links between Jerusalem and Riyadh. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the Saudi Arabian leadership is not stable and may not succeed in reforming the kingdom and reshaping the region.



Therefore, it would be wise for Israel to reduce the visibility of these growing ties to Arab countries. Specifically, Jerusalem should take steps to avoid being portrayed as advocates of the Saudi leadership. Public discussion about the establishment of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, and repetition of the fact that the Palestinian issue has been eclipsed in favor of normalization with Israel, only hampers the development of Israel-Arab ties, and may even force some of these Arab countries to adopt less friendly stances.

The strengthening of relations with the Gulf Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, should be a long-term priority for Israel, but Jerusalem should continue to put a premium on its relations with Jordan and Egypt.

Establishing a basis for strengthening the relationship with Gulf Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, should be a long-term priority for Israel. The common geopolitical and economic interests shared by Israel and many Arab countries should be deepened and relations should not have to rely on the strong links they presently share with the Trump administration.

Such relations should not be based on a triangular relationship that might wither once the political dynamics in Washington change. Israel has no interest in allowing its developing relationships with Arab governments to become a hot-button issue in the increasingly polarized American political discourse.

In addition, it is worth keeping in mind that the establishment of formal relations would not be the primary benefit to Israel. As significant as such an achievement would be, the impact of normalizing relations with Arab governments on Israel could potentially be much broader, stretching from Asia to Africa and Latin America. This is because countries that choose to upgrade their relations with Israel no longer have to worry about the consequence of deteriorating economic relations with influential Gulf states. In many ways, this has been the situation already for the last few years.

Whichever direction relations between Israel and the Arab world develop, Israel's priorities must remain clear. To date, Israel has two strategic partners in the Arab world who signed peace treaties: Egypt and Jordan. Both Cairo and Amman have proven their strategic worth to Israel since they signed their respective treaties. Egypt and Jordan remain vital to maintaining security along Israel's longest borders.

Both Egypt and Jordan are suspicious of Israel's overtures to the Gulf States. The governments in Cairo and Amman do not want to be left behind as the regional geopolitical axis starts to tilt toward the Gulf. Despite the potentially historic benefits of normalization, the Israeli government should continue to put a premium on its relations with Egypt and Jordan. Specifically, Israel should assist the governments in Cairo and Amman whenever feasible and avoid getting embroiled in unnecessary crises – even if this means making concessions on sensitive matters.

Relatedly, the proposed conflict management strategy that Israel should pursue regarding the Palestinians has a dual benefit. By lowering tensions between Israel and the Palestinians, conflict management enables a strengthening of ties between Arab countries and Jerusalem. This makes it easier for Cairo and Amman to maintain their cooperation with Israel.

6.2 Exact a Price for Turkish Hostility



Over the last few years, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has destroyed Turkey's system of checks and balances. Today, Erdogan effectively controls his country's political apparatus. He has facilitated an intense process of Islamization in Turkey. As a result, a growing rift has opened between Ankara and the West, while Turkey's attitude towards Israel has become increasingly belligerent.

Turkey under Erdogan's rule has taken an increasingly active role in regional affairs. The Turkish military in northern Syria and northern Iraq seeks to impact the course of events in both countries. Specifically, Erdogan is adamantly opposed to the emergence of a Kurdish state.

Ankara is also escalating tensions with Greece around the Aegean Sea. Turkish forces are disrupting energy exploration efforts taking place in the Greek Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and Turkish ships have been carrying out exploratory work there. The Turkish government asserts that it has shared sovereignty over the island's maritime territories.

Another expression of Erdogan's regional ambition is the establishment of Turkish military bases in Qatar, Somalia and Sudan. In addition, Turkey refuses to cooperate with the US government regarding economic sanctions against Iran. Erdogan welcomes the slow-motion retreat of the US from the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean.

With regards to Israel, Erdogan has taken a confrontational stance that often verges on anti-Semitism. Indeed, Turkey uses every international forum as an opportunity to lash out at Israel. Under Erdogan, Ankara has positioned itself as the protector of the Palestinians and Islamic holy places in Jerusalem.

The Turkish government's policy towards Israel is a component of Erdogan's wider agenda: the realization of a regional neo-Ottoman order. This distinctly Islamist vision is closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, Turkey supports Hamas rule in Gaza. Erdogan and his AKP look upon Hamas as a sister party, an outgrowth of the Brotherhood.



Another reason for heightened tensions between Jerusalem and Ankara is Turkey's bid to increase its political and religious influence in Jerusalem (as discussed above, in chapter 4). Ankara showers financial support on the Palestinians. In recent years, Turkey has aided in the reconstruction of homes and established soup kitchens in Jerusalem. These efforts are being facilitated both indirectly, through the NGOs that Ankara sponsors, and directly, through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), that reports to the Prime Minister's office.

Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs ("Diyanet") plays a major role in organizing tourist missions to Jerusalem. Some of these excursions are funded by Ankara to increase the Turkish Muslim presence on the Temple Mount. These tours also visit Samuel's Tomb, the Cave of the Patriarchs and David's Tomb, with the aim of turning them into Muslim pilgrimage sites. This brand of tourism is specifically designed to expand Turkey's sphere of influence into Jerusalem's holy places.

Meanwhile, increased energy cooperation between Israel, Greece, Egypt, Cyprus, Italy, Jordan and the PA is perceived by Ankara as nothing more than an attempt to create an anti-Turkish alliance. This has raised tensions between the Turkish government and these countries.

One of Israel's chief diplomatic levers is its ability to hamper Turkish interests via Washington, specifically in the US Congress.

Yet despite its aggressive line towards Israel, Ankara continues to have low-level diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. One reason for this is the Turkish government's need to maintain access to Israel's holy sites. Moreover, trade relations between the two countries continue to develop, with Turkey enjoying a trade surplus with Israel. The Port of Haifa is vital to Turkey's trade with Jordan and other parts of the Arab world. Finally, the frequency of flights to Istanbul from Tel Aviv is of great economic value to the Turks.

Despite these mitigating circumstances, Israel should continue to monitor Turkey's ambitious military buildup. Special attention should be paid to Turkey's rapidly growing military industries, specifically its plan to upgrade its naval presence in the Mediterranean navy (the MILGEM project). This national warship program aims to build a modern littoral combat ship with anti-submarine warfare and high-seas patrol capabilities, extensively using the principles of stealth technology in its design.

Over the long term, it is also necessary to track Turkish progress in the area of nuclear technology. This assessment is based on a series of developments: Turkey's acquisition of nuclear power plants and official government statements that indicate an interest in obtaining uranium, or even developing a nuclear weapons capability.

Israel must maintain sufficient diplomatic and military capacity to deal with Turkey's growing involvement in the region. One of Israel's chief diplomatic levers is its ability to hamper Turkish interests via Washington, specifically in the US Congress. One example of this leverage is the cancellation of the F-35 deal between the US and Turkey. As tensions unfold, there are ways to focus US pressures on other aspects of Turkish behavior in the region, beyond its problematic acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system.



On the military front, Israel should strengthen its naval capabilities to maintain an acceptable balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean, and not just because of Turkey.

Israel should seek to maintain relations with Turkey even while Erdogan is in power.

Turkey is a powerful Muslim country that is strategically located. As such, Israel should seek to maintain relations with it even while Erdogan is in power. After all, only Turkey can be a viable regional counterweight to Iran. For this reason, Israeli responses to alarming statements from Turkey must distinguish between the Turkish people and Erdogan. Indeed, recent municipal election results revealed that across Turkey there are many voices that dissent from the policies of the country's president.

Israel should cultivate and sustain robust relations with key figures outside of Erdogan's ruling elite who are not hostile toward the Jewish state. One reason to pursue all possible channels is the (dwindling) Jewish community inside Turkey, whose well-being is an ongoing humanitarian concern.



6.3 Promote a Common Agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean



The summits held in Beersheba in December 2018 and Jerusalem in March 2019 were the fifth and sixth tripartite gatherings of the leaders of Israel, Greece and Cyprus. These meetings mark a further upgrading of an emerging alliance. A permanent secretariat of the three countries is being established in Nicosia, to coordinate a widening range of tripartite activities and meetings at various ministerial and professional levels. The secretariat will promote integration in the fields of energy, environmental protection, technology, responses to natural disasters, and more.

The Jerusalem summit was joined by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, thus granting the Trump administration's seal of approval to the strategic ties emerging in the eastern Mediterranean. Israel has a key interest in solidifying and broadening this partnership, as it facilitates the strategic change taking place in Israel's international and regional standing.

Israel has a key interest in solidifying and broadening eastern Mediterranean partnerships, as it facilitates the strategic change taking place in Israel's international and regional standing.

Meanwhile, a parallel integration initiative pertaining to Egypt, Greece and Cyprus has been formed. These interlocking building blocks indicate movement towards the creation of a new security architecture in the eastern Mediterranean.

In January 2019, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) was formed by the energy ministers of Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. (Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi openly admitted at that summit that Egypt cooperates with Israel in fighting terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula.)



There is reason to believe that the EMGF, with or without the PA, can evolve into a forum whose operational parameters go well beyond specific energy issues. A model like the 5+5 grouping in the western Mediterranean is a distinct possibility.

Building on this integration momentum, Israel's gas exports should be integrated with those of Egypt and Cyprus, either via a pipeline to Europe (through Greece and Italy) or through LNG facilities in Egypt and/or Cyprus.

Meanwhile, Turkey's neo-Ottoman and Islamist posturing and the regional ambitions of President Erdogan are bringing together the other countries in the region. Ankara's overt hostility towards Israel and the Egyptian regime, Turkey's threat to prevent Cyprus from using its gas fields and repeated hints about re-igniting the territorial dispute in the Aegean Sea with Greece that had been addressed in the Treaty of Lausanne – all drive the other countries in the region together.

Egypt has long viewed Turkey as a regional rival. But the tensions between Cairo and Ankara have ratcheted up significantly due to Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

For Israel and its Mediterranean allies, it is crucial that Egypt remain stable. This is a widely held sentiment, despite the fact that in Brussels and the US Congress there are voices calling for the slashing of aid, due to the repressive nature of Sisi's regime.

The growing interdependence and friendship that Israel is developing with Greece and Cyprus is important to Israel. As member states of the EU, the two are well positioned to keep Israel informed about trends and developments in European policy. Greece and Cyprus can also be useful to Israel when it comes to matters in Brussels, where policy decisions need to be enacted by consensus.

The new alignment in the eastern Mediterranean is also leading to closer military ties, including multinational military exercises. IAF squadrons are now training in Greece. IDF Special Forces have trained in Cyprus's mountainous regions.

Israel should provide the resources and manpower required to manage the Nicosia secretariat and the functions of the EMGF; broaden the scope of joint military exercises, integrating American forces whenever possible; increase public awareness in the region and around the world of the importance of regional cooperation; and promote the concept of a "Mediterranean identity" that can supplement or even replace the "Middle Eastern" identity, which is rooted in past colonial perspectives.

As discussed above, Israel needs to take steps to prevent a further deterioration of its relationship with Turkey. The prospect of future cooperation and even integration should be considered, but only if Ankara's Islamist stance softens. At the same time, it is of special value for Israel to increase cooperation with both Jordan and Egypt and explore avenues in which Jerusalem can contribute to the stability of the governments in Amman and Cairo.

Israel can also view issues related to Gaza, and specifically the Gaza Marine natural gas field, from a broader eastern Mediterranean perspective. Even in Gaza, there are practical ways for Israel to neutralize Turkish ambitions and strengthen the impact of Egypt and the other partners in the emerging regional realignment.

At the same time, Israeli assets in the Mediterranean such as natural gas drilling platforms require protection (by air and naval forces) against Hamas, Hezbollah and even Turkish aggression. As such, the Israeli navy must be upgraded to effectively counter emerging threats.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The International Arena





7.1 Preserving Bipartisan US Support for Israel



As the US presidential and congressional elections in November 2020 draw near, political polarization in Washington and across America already has begun to intensify, drawing Israel into debate. This poses a challenge for Israel and the pro-Israel community in the US. How do you continue to secure bipartisan support for the US-Israel diplomatic and strategic relationship?

This challenge may become even more difficult as tensions between the US and Iran escalate, possibly into open conflict. It is important that Israel not be perceived as having provoked a confrontation between the US and Iran.

The first component of this challenge is characterized by the rise of the radical-progressive wing within the Democratic Party. This group is highly critical, indeed hostile, towards Israel.

Israel should work to strengthen its identification with broad American values – social, cultural and political – and reach out to a wide cross-section of American society.

The ascension of the progressives has fueled Republican efforts to tar the entire Democratic Party as anti-Israeli, ignoring the differences between the radical fringe and the pro-Israeli stance of the party's mainstream. Support for Israel is thus being transformed from a bipartisan principle, the consensus for over 70 years, into a controversial issue that reflects even wider divisions in American politics.



However, the use of Israel to promote a partisan agenda did not begin with the Trump presidency or with the present Congress. This process has been in play for years, as positions became polarized during the Obama administration. This rift became evident in the lead up to the 2015 JCPOA, during which what could have been a serious national discussion about Iran became a politicized exchange of accusations.

To compensate for this increasingly polarized atmosphere in America, Israel should work to strengthen its identification with broad American values – social, cultural and political. Specifically, Israel must reach out to a wide cross-section of American society. Significant resources should be devoted to this effort. At the same time, Israel cannot recuse itself from the struggle against pro-BDS and anti-Zionist forces in the US.

Israel needs to accomplish two seemingly contradictory goals. On the one hand, it needs to maintain and strengthen close cooperation with the pro-Israel Trump administration on matters of vital national interest. Specifically, Israel and the US administration need to be working from the same playbook with regards to a possible confrontation with Iran (as they have worked together to advance recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Golan and to promote greater Israeli-Palestinian cooperation).

On the other hand, Israel must maintain a neutral position in all matters pertaining to the steaming cauldron that is 2020 US electoral politics. Special efforts should also be made to mend fences with the American Jewish community (see the next section).

Striking the right balance will not be easy and will require constant vigilance, discipline, and intensive personal involvement at the highest political levels.

Meanwhile, in the context of close cooperation with the Trump administration, Israel should seek to re-negotiate the terms of the US Foreign Military Financing aid package, agreed to during the Obama administration. Israel is now very limited in use of US aid for procurement from Israeli defense industries. And yet, Israel must maintain a strong technological base as part of its qualitative edge, and this means strengthening Israeli military industries. With all due respect to the Trump administration's declared role as an ardent defender of US industrial interests, Israel should delicately approach US officials about the prospects of returning to past practices.





7.2 American Jewry as a Strategic Asset



Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people, and consequently the Israeli government bears responsibility for Jewish fate and unity around the world. Israel also continues to rely on the support of North American Jewish communities, which constitute a large majority (approximately 75%) of Diaspora Jewry. Jewish leaders and organizations are counted on to influence the US administration and Congress, as well as Canadian counterparts.

This remains a factor of great strategic importance. Even in militarily terms, North American Jewish support is vital due to the scope of US aid and arms supplies. Diplomatically, the Diaspora community helps secure US support for Israel's core national security policies and its firm stance against Iran.

Israel should improve the forums of consultation with leaders of major North American Jewish organizations and other key figures in the Diaspora community.

Despite frictions between Israel and the Diaspora, the assessment that an irrevocable rift has opened between the two communities is overstated. Most American Jews hold a deep attachment to the Jewish state, one that's rooted in faith, historical memory, Jewish peoplehood and family ties. In addition, the growing and positive impact of Birthright, the not-for-profit educational organization that sponsors free heritage trips to Israel for young adults of Jewish heritage, should not be underestimated. However, there are clear warning signs that relations between the world's two largest Jewish communities are entering a difficult period. These challenges necessitate Israeli responses on several levels.



Israel has come to be perceived by a large percentage of American Jewry, which tends to support liberal causes, as being too closely associated with President Donald Trump. Even though the political culture in Israel is quite different than that of the US, bipartisanship in the American political arena should be clearly pursued by Israel (as discussed above). Specifically, relations with key Jewish pro-Israeli Democrats including Congressional leaders in both houses, should be intensely cultivated to overcome the dangerous winds blowing from this party's radical-progressive camp.

The welcome support for Israel of American Evangelical Christians is not a sufficient alternative to the support of the American Jewish community. Israel needs to renew efforts to reach agreements with America's non-Orthodox Jewish denominations – which continue to comprise the bulk of American Jewry. Israel should reach renewed understandings regarding egalitarian prayer arrangements at the Western Wall.

Alas, younger generations of Diaspora Jews are marching down the road of assimilation and intermarriage. Formative experiences like the Holocaust, the establishment of modern Israel and the Six-Day War resonate less and less with these young Jews. In addition, university students must contend with anti-Israel intimidation in the name of "intersectionality" on campus.

Under these circumstances, it is more important than ever to invest in Jewish education, including extensive funding for Jewish day schools. US Jews should also reconsider their long-held objections to the voucher system for parochial schools. Embracing such a system would enable relevant government agencies to support Jewish parents who are struggling to provide Jewish schooling for their children.

Israel should also do more to promote Birthright ("Taglit"), "Masa," and other like-minded educational programs. Israel should take concrete steps to facilitate the development of undergraduate and graduate study programs in English in Israeli universities and colleges; maintain contact with program participants via intensive post-program activities; and assist American Jewish organizations in mobilizing the leadership potential of outstanding program participants.

More broadly, it is important for Israel's political establishment to improve the forums of consultation with leaders of major North American Jewish organizations and other key figures in the Diaspora community. The ultimate responsibility for this lies with the Israeli prime minister, in close coordination with the Jewish Agency and the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry for Diaspora Affairs needs to be involved in such projects too, should it be retained as a separate ministry.





7.3 The European Arena



Europe is an important player in the international arena. The combined EU economy is the second largest in the world, in nominal terms. The EU is Israel's largest trading partner. Britain and France are permanent members of the UN Security Council. They also maintain a military presence in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean.

If and when it is ultimately implemented, Brexit will be a crucial indicator of a broader breakdown across Europe. The financial crisis of 2008 shook up European economies, threatened the Euro's stability and forced countries with severe budgetary deficits (such as Greece, Spain and Italy) to implement austerity measures.

Israel must continue to cultivate partners in Europe to neutralize unfriendly positions adopted in Brussels.

Immigration is another factor transforming European society. Since 2011, the civil wars in Syria and in Libya have triggered a massive influx of migrants to Europe. This development led German Chancellor Angela Merkel to make the controversial decision in 2015 to accept a million Syrian refugees. Significant migration is also originating from Africa, with new arrivals reaching Europe through the Mediterranean.

Austerity programs and the immigration issue have combined to fuel a rise in the strength of parties that are demanding that political and economic power be taken back from Brussels and returned to elected national governments. These parties, generally labeled as "populist", are currently in power in Italy, Poland and Hungary. Meanwhile, long established parties in Germany and Spain are weakening, as nationalist populists make it increasingly difficult for the traditional centers of political power to form stable governments.



Many populist parties and populist-led governments in Europe hold a positive view of Israel. These new political players regard Israel as an embodiment of their own strategic vision: A sovereign nation state with a thriving economy, conservative society and determination to secure its borders and fight terror. Populists also appreciate Israel's willingness to confront European institutions as necessary.

In recent years, Israel has managed to improve relations with the governments of Greece and Cyprus (as discussed above), Hungary, Poland and Italy. Israel also has openly disagreed with EU policies on upholding the JCPOA, imposition of sanctions on the Islamic Republic and the status of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, populist governments foiled the EU's plan to denounce the move of the US Embassy to Jerusalem. Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania have taken initial steps towards moving their embassies to Jerusalem.

The rift in Europe between populist and liberal governments offers opportunities for Israeli diplomacy. However, the rise of increasingly nationalist politics could also prove to be a boomerang that turns against Israel's vital interests. Moreover, some of the populist parties harbor thinly veiled anti-Semitic elements which bear ill will toward Jews and the Jewish state.

Despite the populist problem, Israel must continue to cultivate partners in Europe to neutralize unfriendly positions adopted in Brussels. The most urgent matter for Israel is to try and reverse the present policies of key European players, who seek to undermine the Trump administration's sanctions on the Iranian regime. In this context, Israel should step up its efforts to inform Europeans about Iranian terror activities being planned and perpetrated on their own continent.

Relatedly, Israel should pressure European countries to follow Britain's lead and end the artificial distinction they've drawn between Hezbollah's terrorist armed "wing" and its supposedly "legitimate" political leadership. Moreover, efforts should be redoubled to question, confront and change the EU's positions on the Palestinian issue and specifically on Jerusalem.

Israel should actively pursue the natural gas pipeline project linking Israel, Cyprus, Greece and Italy.

It is also in Israel's interest that harsh European criticisms of the Egyptian regime in general and President Sisi be dialed back. This policy should be implemented, as previously elaborated on, together with continuing Israeli efforts to increase Israeli cooperation with other eastern Mediterranean countries. Specifically, Israel should actively pursue the natural gas pipeline project linking Israel, Cyprus, Greece and Italy.

At the end of 2020, the seven-year EU R&D program, "Horizon 2020", will end. Horizon 2020 has become an important asset for the Israeli economy and research community. Israel should start preparing as soon as possible for negotiations over the next such program.

It's worth noting the difficulties that accompanied the negotiations in 2013 over Horizon 2020. During this period, Israel was unpleasantly surprised by the EU's blunt demand that funding be denied to all institutions located over the Green Line, including Jerusalem. At the time, a way was found to finesse what was arguably more of a symbolic than a practical issue. However, Israeli negotiators should learn from recent history and come to the negotiations armed with a detailed grasp of who in the European Commission is hostile to the country's interests and who might be more amenable to supporting Israel's contributions and participation.



7.4 The Asian Continent



Asia is on the rise in the 21st century, with the Pacific and Indian littoral regions becoming a central component of the international system. Today, this part of Asia is both the largest market and biggest production base in the world, outpacing growth in the rest of the world. China's ascendancy is the most notable, fueling fundamental geo-strategic shifts with profound implications for the structure of the international system.

Western countries are increasingly concerned about China's intentions, leading to concomitant rise in Western defense budgets. Many Asian countries also worry about a US foreign policy that seems less purposeful and coherent than in the past. This drift began during the Obama administration and continues today under the Trump presidency and is marked by increasingly isolationist tendencies.

Israel, a western Asian country, has chosen in recent decades to put a greater emphasis on Asia. Israel is a small country that is highly dependent for its continued prosperity on export markets. Asian economic growth has thus generated major opportunities for Israel. Since 2018, about one third of all Israeli exports have been to Asia and a similar proportion of foreign investment in Israel has come from Asian countries. Asian nations are also the largest market for Israel's defense-related industries.

Not surprisingly, the main markets for Israeli products and technologies are India and China. Both countries have populations of over 1.3 billion people. Relations with both countries thawed with the end of the Cold War.



Another economic giant, Japan, decided to lift its trade restrictions with Israel around the same time, as the constraints of the Arab boycott loosened. More recently, obstacles to security cooperation and arms sales between Jerusalem and Tokyo also were removed.

Alongside improved relations with Singapore that have increasingly become common knowledge, India has become the “Jewel in the Crown” of Israel’s Asian policy. The close interaction that has emerged has been described by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi as “strategic.” Relations between Jerusalem and New Delhi are characterized by extensive trade links and close cooperation between both countries’ security establishments and military industrial complexes.

At this point, efforts should be made by Israel to bolster its special relationship with India so that it may withstand a change in leadership and the possible return to power of the Congress Party, which historically has taken a decidedly less pro-Israeli stance.

As for China, growing trade and investment in Israel are important to both the Israeli economy and wider geo-political developments. However, the current trade war between the US and the PRC is probably just the very beginning of a wider confrontation between these two superpowers.

To allay US concerns, Israel should proceed with greater caution regarding its developing economic and technological relations with China.

Israel cannot afford to be perceived as ambiguous about who it is allied with, the US or China. To allay US concerns, Israel should proceed with greater caution regarding its developing economic and technological relations with the PRC. A policy of prudence also will prevent potential tensions between Israel and China.





A delicate issue that could shackle the blossoming Israel-China relationship are the security cooperation agreements that Israel has with many nations on the continent. These countries fear Beijing's long-term ambitions and are thus seeking to build up their own military capabilities. Israel has avoided developing similar security cooperation with China, as demanded by the US.

Besides China, Israel should nurture good relations with other Asian and Pacific countries. Some of them have in fact been on good terms with Israel for years: Korea, Thailand, Australia, several Pacific island nations, and Singapore.

These Asian countries are united by their pro-Americanism and concerns about China. These factors are contributing to growing security relations with Israel, as characterized by increased acquisitions of Israeli weapon systems. Japan has joined this club. Other countries, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, are establishing civilian and military ties with Israel, catalyzed by growing concerns about Chinese expansionism.

Israel also should invest diplomatic energy in influencing the voting patterns of Asian countries in international forums. The declining importance of the Palestinian issue in the international community and Israel's overt efforts to sustain a policy of conflict management make this a promising time for Israel to engage with Asia on the diplomatic front.

Israel should invest diplomatic energy in influencing the voting patterns of Asian countries in international forums.

Israel also should intensify its bridge building to Muslim countries in Asia, such as Bangladesh and Indonesia. While some Muslim countries, specifically Malaysia, are currently beyond Israel's reach, friendly Asian nations, such as Singapore and Australia, could play a prominent role in mediating between the Jewish state and governments that are currently hostile towards the Zionist enterprise.

Despite much progress on the economic front in recent years, Israel has no free trade area agreement with any Asian country. Israel should seek to expedite the signing of free trade agreements wherever the volume of trade justifies it.



7.5 Africa and Latin America



Israel's improved international standing has enabled significant diplomatic breakthroughs in Africa and Latin America. Once upon a time, many countries on both these continents were friendly towards Israel. Over the years, however, the growing power of the Arab world in international affairs caused African and Latin American governments to downgrade their relations with Israel. This decline is currently being reversed.

Today, countries around the world that wish to significantly boost their relations with Israel no longer fear an economic backlash from Arab states. Moreover, the declining relevance of the Palestinian problem, along with the clear-cut benefits of establishing strong relations with Jerusalem, are transforming Israel into a much-sought-after destination for many foreign ministers.

Countries around the world that wish to significantly boost their relations with Israel no longer fear an economic backlash from Arab states.

Israel has always maintained fruitful cooperation with several nations in Africa, Kenya being the most obvious example. But today, several new relationships are developing openly, including with Rwanda and Chad. Israel can parlay this trend into better relations with many more African nations, particularly those that have a significant evangelical Christian population.

Meanwhile, Israeli diplomatic efforts in Latin America are beginning to bear fruit. The dramatic transformations currently taking place in the largest Latin American country, Brazil, could catalyze change in other countries across South America.

Another reason for the prospect of improved relations is the declining prestige and power of radical regimes, such as those in Venezuela and Cuba. Historically, the stance of these regimes towards Israel have been invariably hostile.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Organizational Changes





8.1 Revitalizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



As prime minister, and at times also foreign minister and defense minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has registered a long list of diplomatic breakthroughs.

Israel's diplomatic achievements include: changes in US policy being implemented during the Trump administration with regards to Iran, Jerusalem and the Golan; Jerusalem's successful navigation of relations with Russia despite the complexities that have arisen since the outbreak of civil war in Syria; the strengthening of ties with India and Japan; strategic change in the eastern Mediterranean basin; better standing in Central and Eastern Europe; establishment of new relationships in Asia, Africa and Latin America; and diplomatic milestones with Arab and Muslim countries.

In every facet of Israeli diplomacy, Israel needs professionals who can turn diplomatic momentum into tangible outcomes.

But difficult challenges lie ahead, including in the vital American arena. The next Israeli government should have a full-time foreign minister who is dedicated to reforming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and rebuilding its authority, in order to capitalize on recent diplomatic successes. In every facet of Israeli diplomacy, Israel needs professionals who can turn diplomatic momentum into tangible outcomes.

However, the MFA has not always been well positioned to capitalize on diplomatic breakthroughs, frequently failing to develop strategic cooperation, trade and investment agreements with countries. And today, the Israeli foreign service is at a nadir, the result of severe cuts made to the MFA's budget and the parceling-out of many MFA responsibilities to other government agencies.



A comprehensive plan of action to reverse this decline would include the following:

- » Reclaim as many as possible of the functions that once had been under the MFA's purview. One example is Israel's ongoing battle against the global BDS movement. Confronting this phenomenon requires an intimate familiarity with the state of affairs in different Western countries, which MFA professionals possess. Another example is the advancement of cultural relations, a responsibility that also has been largely farmed out to other agencies.
- » Reverse the deep budgetary cuts of recent years. Undeniably, these cuts have reduced the ability of Israeli embassies around world to operate effectively. The scope of their activities should be expanded, and embassies should be empowered to determine some of their own specific priorities.
- » Enhance the activities of and increasing the budgets to MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation. The impact of this aid agency has dropped off noticeably in recent decades, despite Israel's extensive capabilities in this arena. Furthermore, MASHAV is tasked with fulfilling obligations that Israel has assumed as an OECD member state. MAHSAV is thus a diplomatic and informational mechanism of great importance to Israel.
- » Intensify cooperation with Israeli NGOs that manage a wide variety of international aid activities, including response to natural disasters and other emergency scenarios. These NGOs should be given relevant tax exemptions. Diaspora Jewish aid organizations could be better integrated with Israel's activities too, adding to the moral component of Israel-Diaspora relations.
- » Invest in public diplomacy. Israel must contend with the prospect of an armed conflict with Iran as well as the bad optics that result from warfare in densely populated areas. Israel's efforts at public diplomacy will continue to be of little benefit if its operating budget remains smaller than that of a mid-sized company's advertising budget.
- » Add and expand diplomatic missions around the world. Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania should be prioritized, since many of the countries in these regions are amenable to changing their voting patterns at international forums in support of Israel. The consular presence should also be expanded in the US, China and India. These three nations offer significant trade and development opportunities that are vital to Israel.
- » Train foreign service professionals to reach out to the populations of Arabic-speaking countries. This can advance change in the attitudes of people living in the Arab world towards Jews and ultimately towards Israel.





8.2 Jerusalem-Based National Security Policy Planning



Revitalizing the MFA should be part of a wider effort to synchronize all aspects of Israel's national security and foreign policy decision making via the Jerusalem-based National Security Staff (NSS) under the National Security Adviser (NSA).

The NSS and the NSA should also take the lead in updating and defining national security doctrines. Such an effort will include a range of carefully researched war and peace options; decision making procedures, including mandatory inter-agency consultations; and a systematic method for implementing cabinet decisions.

The NSS in Jerusalem, rather than the array of agencies centered at the Kirya in Tel Aviv (Ministry of Defense/IDF/Mossad), should be the main coordinating body for such work. The NSS should also integrate the insights and recommendations of other Jerusalem-based government agencies, including the MFA, Foreign Trade Administration, energy ministry and more. This is also symbolically important in the context of reinforcing Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital.

"From Zion shall emerge Israel's national security doctrine."

As such, the plan to transfer the Israel National Defense College (MABAL) to Jerusalem is a wise move for both educational and strategic reasons. Bringing MABAL and its high-ranking officers in the Israeli military and intelligence agencies to Jerusalem will transform the city into a center for strategic studies and geo-political thought.

MABAL is not tethered to current political trends, agendas and conventional wisdom. Leaders of the college can reflect on long term scenarios and interact with seasoned analysts and scholars at Jerusalem's non-governmental think tanks (like JISS).

In short, Jerusalem-based national security and foreign policy institutions can contribute to the realization of the prophetic vision, "From Zion shall go forth Torah," (Micah 4:2); or in a modern paraphrase, "From Zion shall emerge Israel's national security doctrine."





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