STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

A Multidisciplinary Journal on National Security

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Strategic Assessment: A Multidisciplinary Journal on National Security is a quarterly journal published by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). It aims to challenge and to enrich the scholarly debate and public discourse on a range of subjects related to national security in the broadest sense of the term. Along with its focus on Israel and the Middle East, the journal includes articles on national security in the international arena as well. Academic and research-based articles are joined by policy papers, professional forums, academic surveys, and book reviews, and are written by INSS researchers and guest contributors. The views presented are those of the authors alone.

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A Note from the Editors

The current issue of *Strategic Assessment* is a themed issue pertaining to Israel's foreign policy and its influence on national security. The issue presents several fascinating aspects from historical, current, and even future perspectives that allow a theoretical, investigative, applied, comprehensive, and up-to-date view of Israel's foreign policy. In addition to research articles, policy analyses, a review of the literature, and book reviews concerning Israel's foreign policy, this issue includes a summary of a symposium of former senior figures in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who discussed issues and subjects concerning the Ministry's status, its patterns of activity, and the extent of its relevance and influence. Recommendations for structural and functional changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were presented as well.

The decision to devote the issue to Israel's foreign policy underscores the importance to national security of foreign relations and diplomacy, in its various dimensions and according to its broad and current definitions. The historical weakness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the subordinate role of diplomacy since the establishment of the State of Israel are well known. According to David Ben-Gurion and his successors, security in the military sense is of prime importance, with diplomacy regarded as secondary and aimed at bolstering security. The traditional and current national security concept shaped the tension between diplomacy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the one hand, and security and the security establishment, including the intelligence community, on the other. The tension between security, regarded as existential, and diplomacy, perceived as a mere accessory, perpetuated the weakness of the Foreign Ministry. This tension also generates theoretical and practical dilemmas involving the role of diplomacy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in making decisions about national security, the substance of foreign policy, its integration in measures that deal with national security challenges, and the role of diplomatic action in the defense and intelligence establishments.

In this issue, we have chosen to present a wide range of topics, questions, and dilemmas extending to interfaces between foreign policy and diplomacy and national security. These include the status of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel's foreign policy and its challenges, relations between Israel and the UN, Israel's relations with the major powers (the United States, Russia, and China), Israel's relations with regional powers (India) and the developing world (e.g. Latin America), and a look at the future of diplomacy, foreign relations, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We hope that this issue will contribute to the debate among scholars and practitioners, as well as to the public and professional discourse on these matters, and that it will challenge the existing consensus and encourage critical thinking about the current state of affairs, what is needed, and what can be changed.

The issue is a joint initiative of *Strategic Assessment* and Dr. Yaron Salman, who joined the editors as a guest editor, and helped shape the idea and the final result. We especially thank everyone who took part in the effort and contributed of their writing and their willingness to participate in the symposium, and we appreciate their receptiveness to criticisms by the outside readers and our editorial comments.

We hope you find the issue enjoyable and useful, and we invite you to visit the journal's new website and view the wealth of articles published since it was launched it its new format.

Kobi Michael and Carmit Valensi, Editors, *Strategic Assessment*
Yaron Salman, Guest Editor

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (l) with Sultan Qaboos in Oman, October 29, 2018. Photo: GPO/Handout via REUTERS

Israel and the Arab World: Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Eyal Zisser

Relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors seem poised to embark on a path of mutual cooperation. This new reciprocity stands in marked contrast to the relations of Israel's first decades, and reflects a transition from hostility, hatred, and rejection to coexistence and perhaps peace and cooperation, even if this change stems from the lack of other options. These new relations also reflect the changing face of the Middle East of recent years: the weakening of the Arab states, the decline of Arabism, and the rise of Israel to the point of its becoming a regional actor with significant military, political, and economic power. Although the Palestinian cause has lost its centrality as a defining issue in Arab-Israel relations, it continues as a glass ceiling that blocks efforts to promote relations between Israel and the Arab world. In addition, the relations Israel has formed with its Arab neighbors rest on regime and political interests, but lack widespread support among Arab public opinion.

Keywords: Arab-Israel relations, peace process, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Arab world

Introduction

In December 1999, peace negotiations between Israel and Syria were restarted. At a ceremony on the White House lawn, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk a-Sharaa, who was sent to Washington by Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to engage in the peace talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, declared that achieving peace between the two countries would turn the "existential conflict" between Israel and the Arabs, in which the two sides conducted a total war aimed at destroying one another, into a "border dispute" that could be settled at the negotiating table. A-Sharaa explained,

> Those who refuse to return the occupied territories to their original owners in the framework of international legitimacy [the UN resolutions] send a message to the Arabs that the conflict between Israel and Arabs is a conflict of existence in which bloodshed can never stop, and not a conflict about borders, which can be ended as soon as parties get their rights…We are approaching the moment of truth…And there is no doubt that everyone realizes that a peace agreement between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel would indeed mean for our region the end of a history of wars and conflicts, and may well usher in a dialogue of civilization and an honorable competition in various domains—the political, cultural, scientific and economy. (a-Sharaa, 1999)

Later, at a conference of the Arab Writers Union in Damascus in February 2000, a-Sharaa added that the Arabs should recognize that Zionism had the upper hand in its historic struggle with the Arab national movement, a struggle that began early in the 20th century with the emergence of these two movements on history's stage. He stated that achieving a peace agreement with Israel was therefore a lesser evil for the purpose of ending this struggle, which the Arabs could no longer win (a-Sharaa, 2000).

These remarks by a-Sharaa, and the fact that he was sent to the White House to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, showed willingness, and perhaps even urgency, on the part of Damascus to reach a peace agreement with Israel. The failure of the summit between Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and United States President Bill Clinton in Geneva in March 2000, however, and the Syrian President's death in June 2000 ended any chance of an agreement between Israel and Syria. Several months later, in September 2000, the second intifada broke out. This prompted the collapse of the negotiations that were underway between Israel and the Palestinians, and doomed the two sides to continue a bloody struggle that cost them thousands of victims (Rabinovich, 2004).

For a moment, it appeared as though the trend toward acceptance, and even reconciliation, between Israel and the Arabs, which in the late 1990s seemed to have progressed to a point of no return, had come to a halt. Two additional indications of this were Hezbollah becoming a recognized and important actor in Lebanon, following the IDF's unilateral withdrawal from the security zone in southern Lebanon in May 2000, and the Hamas takeover in the Gaza Strip in a military coup against the Palestinian Authority (PA) in February 2007, more than a year after Israel unilaterally withdrew from the area in August-September 2005. These two organizations reject the possibility of any acceptance of Israel or reconciliation with it, and advocate maintaining an armed conflict. Their achievements in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip therefore seemingly showed that despite the statements by Foreign Minister a-Sharaa, there was no necessity or urgency in reaching a settlement with Israel. On the contrary; it was possible to continue fighting and score achievements in this armed conflict. Eventually, however, Hezbollah and Hamas also had to reach understandings

with Israel, even if indirect. Moreover, Israel continued to advance relations with most of its Arab neighbors, and even achieved cooperation with several of them, mostly of a clandestine nature concerning security matters.

The story of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors since its founding in May 1948 is therefore one of evolution from hostility, enmity, and rejection of acceptance, to readiness for coexistence and peace, albeit sometimes for lack of choice, culminating even in a common desire for cooperation, partly in strategic dimensions, given shared challenges and threats.

All of this reflects the changes in the Middle East in recent decades: the weakening of Arab states and the decline of pan-Arabism, while Israel grew stronger and became a militarily, politically, and economically powerful regional actor. This change in the Middle East narrowed the centrality of the Palestinian question to the establishment of Arab-Israeli relations, as it was no longer the axis around which those relations revolved. The issue is still important, and continues to constitute a glass ceiling in any effort to promote relations between the Arab world and Israel. As of now, however, Arab countries have successfully maneuvered between their commitment to the Palestinian cause, especially the commitment of Arab public opinion on this issue, and their pressing political interest in preserving and advancing their relations with Israel.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, and even the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, has been perceived for many years as a key issue for the future of the Middle East, and of central importance to the stability of the entire region, with consequences for stability in other parts of the world. This accounts for the efforts that have been made by the international community and are still underway to resolve the conflict. Over the years, however, it has emerged that the conflict, or rather this amalgam of conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel's other Arab neighbors, was only one of a long series of conflicts and crises competing for a place on the current regional and international agenda, and not necessarily the most important. Other issues, such as religious fundamentalism, the spread of Islamic terrorism, and the rise of radical Islamic jihad groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have taken the place of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the public agenda. Furthermore, many Arab countries have experienced internal crises, some of which have caused the collapse of the nation-state; the appearance of non-state players, e.g., Hezbollah and Hamas; and the outbreak of bloody civil wars. Also noteworthy is the competition for influence and regional hegemony between two old-new regional powers, Turkey and Iran. Iran is the more dynamic, intransigent, and daring of the two. The rise of Shiite Iran and the tension between it and large parts of the mostly Sunni Arab world have marked a divide that now extends throughout the entire length and breadth of the Arab and Muslim world. Its success in consolidating its grip in large areas of the Middle East has cast a threatening shadow over Israel, but also over many of Israel's Arab neighbors.

The Middle East of today poses quite a few challenges to Israel, but opens a window of opportunity for it to play a leading role in the region, and in any case enables Israel to cultivate further its relations with the surrounding Arab world. Israel's working assumption should be that Arab-Israeli coexistence and cooperation can rest on firm ground, not on shifting sands.

Israel and the Arab World: From War to Peacemaking

During the first decades of its existence, Israel's relations with the Arab world surrounding it consisted of a bloody struggle between Jews and Arabs over the Land of Israel. This conflict began during the late period of the Ottoman Empire, when Jews began immigrating to the Land of Israel, and escalated during the years of the British Mandate. The conflict reached a peak in Israel's War of Independence in May 1948, which ended in a double defeat for the

Arab world: the defeat of the Arabs living in Palestine, many of whom became refugees in the neighboring Arab countries, and the defeat of Arab countries that sent their armies to take part in the fighting, with the declared aim of preventing the establishment of a Jewish state (Morris, 2003).

The conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine thereby became a conflict between Israel and the Arab world, and in effect an amalgam of conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Each of these conflicts—the conflict between Israel and Egypt, the conflict between Israel and Syria, and so on—developed in its own direction. These conflicts were linked to each other, and all of them obviously concerned the Palestinian question. Nevertheless, each developed, escalated, and erupted into an active conflict—and in the Egyptian and Jordanian cases, was resolved—in its own way.

The point of departure for the Arab side in the conflict was a determined and unequivocal refusal both to recognize Israel's right to exist in the region and to form peaceful relations with it. The Arab refusal fed a belief that the elimination of Israel was not only a "historic necessity," because the Arabs regarded Israel as an aggressive entity aiming at expansion, but also an achievable goal, even if in the long term, given the sources of Israel's weakness, above all a demographic imbalance in favor of the Arab side (Harkabi, 1968).

Over the years, however, cracks appeared in the walls of enmity and hostility surrounding Israel. De facto, the Arab world began to accept Israel's existence and show willingness to end the conflict and establish peaceful relations with it. The Six Day War in June 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973 to a great extent paved the way to peace, because they refuted the Arab belief that their victory was guaranteed in the long run, and that they should therefore adhere to the status quo of neither peace nor war. It became clear to the Arabs that if they wanted to regain the territories they had lost during the Six Day War, and if they wanted to gain entry to the heart and coffers of the United States in order to address their domestic social and economic problems, they would have to achieve a peaceful settlement with Israel.

Egyptian President Anwar a-Sadat was the first to breach the Arab wall of hostility and hatred with his historic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. The two sides subsequently signed a peace agreement in March 1979 (Stein, 1999). Following the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War in the spring of 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union later that year, then-US Secretary of State James Baker said there was a historic opportunity for promoting a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In October 1991, a peace conference was convened in Madrid, thereby opening a new chapter in Israel's relations with the Arab world, followed by peace negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including with the Palestinians (Bentzur, 1997).

The Arab-Israeli political process led to the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in October 1993 and the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in October 1994. The Oslo Accords were designed to pave the way to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement based on mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians, led by the PLO, of each side's national rights. The process also included a multilateral channel for promoting economic cooperation between Israel and Arab countries. Diplomatic ties were institutionalized, albeit on a low level, between Israel and several Arab countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Oman, and Qatar.

The Decline of Arab Nationalism, the Weakness of Arab States, and the Rising Power of Iran and Turkey

The change in the Arab stance toward Israel, which eventually led to the signing of peace agreements between Israel and some of its Arab neighbors, took place at a time when Arab nationalism was declining as a force in the Arab

world. The death of Nasser in September 1970, the undisputed leader of Arab nationalism at the time, preceded by the Arab defeat in the Six Day War, spelled the end of Nasserism and Egypt's struggle under Nasser's leadership for influence if not hegemony in the Arab world. Competing ideologies and doctrines replaced Arab nationalism, which had failed in its attempt to unify the Arabs and defeat Israel (Ajami, 1979/1978, 1981; Susser 2003).

The basic cause of this failure was the accumulation of domestic social and economic difficulties afflicting large parts of the Arab world. These difficulties stemmed from accelerated population growth, obstacles preventing modernization and economic progress, and the backwardness of Arab society. The Arab world was left trailing behind other parts of the globe by an ever-increasing margin. There is no doubt that the absence of openness and democracy also contributed to the failure (Ayubi, 1996).

The difficulties that afflicted the respective Arab countries motivated each to lend priority to its particular national interests, and especially those of the ruler and his regime, over the interests of Arab nationalism and a focus on the Palestinian question. This latter issue therefore lost its centrality and importance. The result was Arab willingness, or at least willingness on the part of several Arab countries, to settle the conflict with Israel and to make progress in political, security, and economic relations (Sela, 1998).

Israel was not the only beneficiary of the changes to the Middle East map. In the first decade of the 21st century, two old-new regional powers seeking to bolster their regional standing stood out: Turkey and Iran. These countries were perceived in the region as continuing the policy of two empires: the Ottoman Empire and the Persian-Safavid Empire (succeeded by the Qajar Empire), which fought against each other for hundreds of years. The Ottoman Empire controlled the Middle East for nearly 500 years, from the early 16th century until the end of WWI, when the region fell into the hands of Western powers, Britain and France.

Turkey and Iran now have the opportunity to try to regain their previous standing. Turkey, under the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the charismatic leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), has succeeded in giving Turkey political stability and economic prosperity. In contrast to all other Turkish governments since Ataturk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Erdogan has regarded the Arab and Muslim world, not Europe, as his preferred theater of action. He has tried to take advantage of the Islamic character of his party to promote his status and that of Turkey in the Arab world, with the help of Islamic political parties—mostly those belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which took advantage of the Arab Spring to improve their standing, and in several cases achieved power and kept it for a while: Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the Nahda Movement in Tunisia (Tol, 2019).

Iran has also profited from the changes in the Middle East. Tehran's ambitions to attain influence and hegemony and to create a security zone stretching from the Iranian mountain range to the Mediterranean shore began decades or even hundreds of years ago. These ambitions were evident under the shahs, who preceded the current regime of the ayatollahs. Moreover, Iran clearly profited from the wars waged in the region by the United States, first in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, and then in Iraq in the spring of 2003, which led to the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Both of these regimes were bitter enemies of Iran, and served as a counterweight to its eastward and westward expansionist ambitions. Of particular importance was the downfall of Saddam Hussein and the overthrow of the Iraqi state, through which Iran now seeks to penetrate the Fertile Crescent. The US entanglements in Afghanistan and Iraq also helped Tehran establish itself in the vacuum that emerged after the departure of

the United States and increase its power. Since Iran is a Shiite country trying to promote Shiite Islam and use it to consolidate its status among Shiite communities throughout the Arab world, its rise is also perceived as the rise of the Shiite world at the expense of the Sunni world. Iran has made strenuous efforts to develop nuclear capability, and its involvement in terrorism and subversion among Shiite Arab communities was designed to destabilize many Arab countries, especially the Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and even Kuwait. These actions have made these countries feel threatened, and have accentuated their fear of Iran (Saikal, 2019).

With the threat of Iran hanging over them, many of the moderate Arab countries, such as the Gulf states, have been increasingly willing to step up their cooperation with Israel and accept help against the Iranian threat.

With the threat of Iran hanging over them, many of the moderate Arab countries, such as the Gulf states, have been increasingly willing to step up their cooperation with Israel and accept help against the Iranian threat. As early as the 1990s, in the wake of the Arab-Israeli peace process led by the United States, a dialogue began between Israel and the Gulf states. Channels of political and security cooperation between them were created, and trade and economic ties, which previously had been kept on a low profile and a small scale, were expanded. Two Gulf states, Oman and Qatar, hosted official visits by Israeli leaders, such as the visit by Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Doha in early 1996. Diplomatic offices were opened in Israel, and the opening of Israeli offices in these countries was approved (Guzansky, 2009).

Israel and the Arabs: Dialogue for Lack of Choice

Events, however, have disproved the assumption that the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors has progressed beyond the point of no return, and that achievement of peace between the parties is mainly a question of time. In March 2000, the peace talks between Israel and Syria reached a deadlock. Israel and the Palestinians also failed in their efforts to bridge the gap between their respective positions. The al-Aqsa Intifada, which began in September 2000, widened the rift between Israel and the Palestinians, and worsened Israel's relations with many Arab countries.

The belief that a solution to the conflict is "historically inevitable" was put to the test and disproven in 2000, not only by the second intifada, but also by Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon after 18 years of involvement, including the presence of the Israeli army. This withdrawal followed Israel's failure in dealing with Hezbollah and the bloody clashes in South Lebanon.

Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah was quick to portray Israel's unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon as a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He claimed that Hezbollah had been able to achieve what no Arab country or army had ever achieved before—the unconditional removal of Israel from territory at no cost whatsoever, let alone a settlement or peace agreement. Nasrallah further explained that what happened in Lebanon proved that economic prosperity could be achieved and maintained without peace or any commitment from Washington, and even despite American opposition. Furthermore, Nasrallah boasted that Hezbollah possessed the key, and even a blueprint, that would subsequently enable the Arabs to overcome Israel, based on the disclosure of Israel's Achilles' heel—the fatigue and exhaustion felt by Israeli society, and its excessive sensitivity to the lives of its soldiers, as shown by the war and its aftermath (Zisser, 2009).

On May 26, 2000, Nasrallah gave a victory speech in the village of Bint Jbeil, from where the IDF had withdrawn a few days previously. This has become known as the "spider web"

speech, in which Nasrallah bragged, "Several hundred Hezbollah fighters forced the strongest state in the Middle East to raise the flag of defeat…The age in which the Zionists frightened the Lebanese and the Arabs has ended…Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons and the most powerful air force in the region—this Israel is weaker than a spider's web" (Hezbollah, 2000).

The results of the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 ostensibly provided support for Hezbollah's perception of Israel's weakness. Although the war was far from a Hezbollah victory, the organization saw quite a few achievements, and also exposed the limits of Israel's power and several of its weaknesses (Harel & Issacharoff, 2008). Indeed, in his "divine victory" speech on August 2006, following the end of the war, Nasrallah said that the war was a historic turning point in the chronicles of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Hezbollah, 2006). The takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in February 2007 was also regarded in the Arab world as proof of the reversal of the trend—from reconciliation and acceptance back to hostility and enmity, and especially the withdrawal from previous Arab willingness to reconcile with Israel.

The failure to progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, followed by the outbreak of the second intifada, halted progress in relations between Israel and Arab countries, and even reversed progress that had been made. At the same time, Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan survived the challenge, as did the channels of communication between Israel and other Arab countries, headed by the Gulf states. Led by Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states invested considerable effort in an attempt to revitalize the peace process and achieve progress. As part of this effort, they proposed various initiatives, most prominently, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API). This initiative was designed to break the deadlock in the peace process, with the Arab countries providing the Palestinians with backing and sponsorship, thereby making it easier for the Palestinians to accept painful compromises, while guaranteeing Israel what it sought—normalization in its relations with the entire Arab and Muslim world (Fuller, 2002). The API, however, was far from meeting the requirements of the Israeli government, which did not accept it. Later, during the Second Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah, many of the Gulf states, among others, almost openly supported the Israeli stance and military operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Finally, as the first decade of the 21st century drew to a close, with the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear capability, many Arab countries again supported Israel, albeit tacitly and indirectly (Kedar, 2018).

The Gulf states, headed by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, regard Iran as a concrete, immediate, and mounting threat. Iran has challenged them on their own territory or in their immediate neighborhoods, i.e., not only in remote theaters such as Lebanon, where Hezbollah has labored to impose itself on the country's political system and challenge the Sunni population and its leaders, most of whom were sponsored by Saudi Arabia, such as Saad el-Din al-Hariri (for example, Hezbollah's takeover of West Beirut in May 2008). Nor was it confined to Syria, led by the Alawite Assad dynasty, which adhered to its strategic alliance with Tehran, nor even to Iraq, where Iranian influence struck deep roots among the country's Shiite population.

This was apparently the background for the bolstering and expansion of the dialogue between Israel and several of the Gulf states, headed by Saudi Arabia. The media reported signs of covert cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia as part of the two countries' effort to thwart the Iranian nuclear program. For example, meetings were reported between Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and a Saudi leader, probably Prince Bandar bin Sultan, a former director general of the Saudi Intelligence Agency. It was also reported that Mossad head Meir Dagan visited

Riyadh. There were many media reports of an effort to achieve security coordination between the two countries for a possible Israeli military operation against Iran's nuclear facilities (Israel Held Secret Talks, 2006).

At the same time, modest progress was also made in Israel's economic relations with the Gulf states. In the first decade of the 21st century, the Gulf states became the third largest destination for Israeli goods in the Middle East, after the PA and Turkey. Trade with these countries was conducted primarily through third parties, which makes it difficult to obtain up-to-date statistical information, but it has been estimated at over $500 million annually, and presumably the true extent is greater than reported. The media also occasionally reported that companies producing security products—know-how, technology, or weapons—were conducting large-scale connections with these Gulf states. This trend toward economic cooperation gained momentum as Israel became a global leader in cyber intelligence (Zaken, 2019; Atkins, 2018; Levingston, 2019).

The Fall of the Arab Spring

The so-called Arab Spring, which began in December 2010, was a turning point in the history of the region that greatly changed the prevailing order, including relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The Arab Spring destabilized many of the Arab countries, overthrowing several regimes that had been in power for decades. At its height, it seemed to pose a challenge to the legitimacy of the borders and the 20th century political order in the Arab world that were determined at the San Remo conference in April 1920 (Michael & Guzansky, 2016). In addition, at least momentarily, it seemed that the Arab world was following the example of other parts of the world, such as Eastern Europe and South America, where politically active young people led a movement for change and even democracy. The term to describe the upheaval in the Arab world, "Arab Spring," originated in discourse in the media and among Western academics, reflecting the hope that this unrest would overthrow the prevailing political and social order in the Arab world, and propel Arab societies toward democracy and enlightenment that would culminate in political stability, economic prosperity, security, and social justice (Bayat, 2017). The Middle East, however, marches to its own drum, and the liberal-progressive wave gave way to an Islamic wave promoted by the forces of Islam in the region. The protests and revolutions were later succeeded by bloody civil wars that caused instability, insecurity, and chaos (Govrin, 2016; Podeh & Winckler, 2017; Rabi, 2017).

The regimes of Zine el-Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt were overthrown. The Islamic political parties took power briefly, but both of these countries eventually returned to their starting point of before the Arab Spring. In Tunisia, some of the secular forces that regained power had been part of Ben Ali's government. In Egypt, the army took power in June 2013 in a military coup led by Minister of Defense Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, overthrowing the Muslim Brotherhood government led by Mohamed Morsi. In Libya and Yemen, on the other hand, the overthrow of the regimes led to the collapse of the nation-state and the outbreak of bloody civil wars.

In Yemen, forces loyal to the Houthi movement (named for its founder, Hussein al-Houthi), which belongs to the Zaidi Shiite faction, gained control of Sanaa, the capital of Yemen. Iran became the Houthis' main supporter in their battle for control of Yemen, located in Saudi Arabia's backyard. Riyadh has long feared a scenario of Yemen becoming an Iranian frontline, from which it could threaten Saudi cities with missile barrages and blockade shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait at the entrance to the Red Sea. Fear of the Houthis and Iran, which increased its involvement in Yemen with the help of Hezbollah, united the Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia. In March 2015, the Gulf states launched Operation Decisive Storm, an aerial offensive aimed at

preventing the Houthis from taking over Yemen and denying Iran the stronghold it hoped to acquire in the southern Arabian Peninsula and at the entrance to the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia, however, was unable to achieve victory, and became entangled in a prolonged war in Yemen that exacerbated the security challenges created by the aid given by Iran to the Houthis (Gordon, 2018). The statement by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in October 2019 that Iran had stationed advanced missiles in Yemeni territory capable of hitting Israeli targets showed that Yemen had become a source of concern not only for Saudi Arabia, but for Israel as well (Eichner, Friedson, & Fuchs, 2019).

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad held on to power, but in his struggle for survival he dragged his country into a prolonged and bloody civil war in which over half a million Syrians were killed and millions more fled the country, becoming refugees. More important was the fact that Bashar al-Assad's victory was achieved because in September 2015 Russia and Iran entered the war on his side. These two countries' involvement gave them influence and control over events in Syria (Zisser, 2020).

Moscow was thereby able to play a key role in shaping the map of the region and designing its image according to Russia's interests and historic goals in the Middle East. Moscow's rise came at the expense of Washington. In the end, the outbreak of the Arab Spring signaled the end of a prolonged Pax Americana in the Middle East that began following the Gulf War in the spring of 1991 and gained greater force when the Soviet Union disintegrated in December of that year. Under both the Obama and the Trump administrations, it was believed that the United States wanted to sever itself from the region and its problems.

Russia did not operate in a vacuum, and was not the only power in the region. Iran and its satellites, which are all part of the radical Shiite axis that has emerged in the Middle East in recent decades, served as a platform and a helpful partner for Russia in the resumption of its place in the Middle East. Ironically, the Arab Spring, which many in and outside the region regarded as the rejuvenation of the Sunni Arab world in response to the Shiite challenge facing it, has strengthened the Shiite axis, instead of weakening it. Together with Russia, and in close cooperation with it, Iran has become an important element in large parts of the Middle East, and is perceived by many inside and outside the region as an actor contributing to stability in the Middle East, even while—and at the price of—promoting Tehran's goals in this region (Bolan, 2018). Tehran has thus been able to take advantage of the chaotic situation in the region to consolidate its grip in Iraq and Syria, and even in Yemen. Many Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, regard the strengthening of Iran as a threat. They turned to Israel because they regard it as an important regional actor, and also as a possible ally and partner, against the growing threat of Iran.

Initially Israel was thought likely to suffer as a result of the Arab Spring, which led to the overthrow of regimes regarded as its allies, above all the Mubarak regime in Egypt. The emerging trend in the early years of the Arab Spring toward strengthened Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which gained power in Egypt and ruled there for about a year, was also regarded as a negative development liable to pose a threat to Israel. However, the chaos that took hold in the Arab world, and the efforts by Arab regimes to retain power despite the threats they faced, strengthened Israel's position, and led a few Arab countries, notably Saudi Arabia and several other Gulf states, as well as Egypt and Jordan, to cooperate with Israel on matters of interest and importance. This cooperation was highly reminiscent of the alliance of the periphery, and in a more practical way, Israel's covert cooperation in the late 1950s, including in intelligence and security, with Ethiopia, Turkey, and Iran against the rising power of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel al-Nasser (Alpher, 2015). This time, however, the

cooperation was not aimed against Egypt, which instead was an important partner in this web of relations, together with other countries that joined forces against the threat of Iran, perhaps also against Turkish ambitions of hegemony, and in an effort to combat and halt the Islamic terrorism that has surfaced in the Arab world.

Turkey, the largest Sunni Muslim country, albeit not an Arab country, could have served as an axis for a general regional campaign by moderate pro-Western Sunni states aimed at countering and halting Iran. This, however, did not occur. Turkey's close alliance with Israel in the early 1990s came to an end with Erdogan's rise to power. Turkey tried to use the Arab Spring and ride the Islamist wave that appeared likely to sweep the Arab countries. The defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood, however, was also a defeat for Turkey, which was left with an unsated appetite. In any case, Erdogan, who more than once has subordinated Turkish foreign policy to his personal fancies or personal political interests, prevented Turkey from using the crisis to strengthen its standing, even though Ankara has expressed dissatisfaction with the strengthening of Iran, Turkey's biggest Shiite and regional competitor (Schanzer & Tahiroglu, 2016).

One example of this was Ankara's policy toward Israel and Egypt, two important regional actors. Due to Turkey's use of the Palestinian issue, its relations with Israel plummeted, and a prolonged rift began following the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla incident, followed by Erdogan's wild anti-Israeli rhetoric. In relations with Egypt, Erdogan refused to recognize the legitimacy of the military coup led by el-Sisi against the Muslim Brotherhood government in June 2013. This caused a rupture and severance of relations between the two countries. Turkey's growing intervention in the war in Libya in the last months of 2019 and its attempt to establish facts on the ground concerning ownership of territorial waters in areas adjacent to Egypt, which includes the proposed natural gas pipeline from Israel via Cyprus to Europe, again heightened the tension between Cairo and Ankara, and threatened to involve Israel in this dispute (Ben-Yishai, 2019).

The vacuum created in the region and the Iranian—and some will also say Turkish—threat have forced Israel and the other countries to step up the cooperation between them (Jones & Petersen, 2013). In this case, as with the alliance of the periphery 60 years earlier, there is no formal and official alliance; what is involved is a covert web of cooperation, mostly in intelligence and security. Israel has taken advantage of the war in Syria to attack arms deliveries that Iran tried to send to Hezbollah through Syria, and later targeted the bases established by Iran on Syrian territory for the Revolutionary Guards al-Quds force, or for the Shiite militias it brought to Syria. Israel has been at least partly successful in this campaign, since Iran has hesitated to embark on an all-out direct conflict with it. Iran withdrew its forces slightly from the Israeli-Syrian border, and also refrained from moving forward with the consolidation of its forces deep within Syrian territory. Israel's determined struggle against Iranian consolidation in Syria is believed to be effective and to have deterred Iran, and for the time being has also hindered if not halted Iranian consolidation in Syria. It has thereby provided a model and example for other countries, which have been inspired by Israel's willingness to confront Iran (Byman, 2018). Needless to say, the tightening of relations between Israel and the Gulf states was validated and rendered more significant by President Trump's intention to withdraw United States forces from Syria as part of a general US disengagement from the Middle East, a measure already begun by President Obama (Hall, 2019). Washington's reluctance to respond in the summer of 2019 to Iranian acts of aggression against the Gulf states merely augmented their reliance on Israel. Even when the United States killed al-Quds force commander Qasem Soleimani in Iraqi territory in early January 2020, many of the Arab countries gave Israel credit for the act.

To be sure, this Arab-Israeli cooperation is subject to constraints and weaknesses and a glass ceiling that the parties will have difficulty in overcoming, especially in the absence of any progress in the political process between Israel and the Palestinians. Some in Israel believe that this cooperation rests on shifting sands, and is regularly threatened by well-grounded relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and certainly by public opinion and elite circles in these countries, in contrast to the defense establishments, which favor this cooperation.

Nevertheless, the burgeoning cooperation between Israel and the Arab countries shows how the Middle East has changed, and the transformation in Israel's relations with the Arab world from enmity and hostility to acceptance, readiness to live in coexistence, and cooperation on essential strategic interests of many Arab countries. Furthermore, this cooperation can lay the groundwork for more extensive regional cooperation in the Mediterranean Basin by both Israel and the Arab countries with other players. One such example is the developing connection between Israel—and Egypt—with Cyprus and Greece.

Another example is the unprecedentedly close military cooperation between Israel and Egypt in combating the threat posed by the branch of the Islamic State operating in the Sinai Peninsula. Israel reportedly attacked Islamic State targets in Sinai in cooperation with the Egyptian army, and supplied the Egyptian army with intelligence information for assistance in the campaign against Islamic extremists. The Egyptian public has not changed its attitude toward Israel, but there is no doubt that the Egyptian government has become more committed and willing to undertake unprecedented cooperation with Israel in the military and intelligence spheres (Egypt, Israel in Close Cooperation, 2019). Jordan has also tightened security, and even military, cooperation with Israel, following efforts by the Islamic State to gain a foothold in the Syrian-Jordanian border strip, but also in view of Iran's plans to consolidate its grip near Jordanian territory.

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Cooperation is also expanding between Israel and the Gulf states, headed by Saudi Arabia (Melman, 2016). Along with closer security and intelligence ties, a political dimension has been added to these relations (Jones & Guzansky, 2019), for example, with Israel's willingness to come to Riyadh's aid in relations with the US administration following the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which was attributed to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Israel also expressed readiness to help Sudan following a historic meeting in February 2020 in Entebbe, Uganda between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan (Netanyahu Says Israeli Airliners Now Overflying Sudan, 2020). For their part, the Arab countries helped Washington promote the Trump administration's "deal of the century" as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and were willing to pressure the Palestinians to accept the proposal, which involves painful compromises for the Palestinians (Caspit, 2018). To the Palestinians' dismay, the response of some Arab countries to the publication of the American peace plan in late January 2020 was moderate, and even friendly. The Arab countries were not deterred by the fact that the Trump administration was regarded as committed to Israel, or by the measures it took even before the plan was published, such as moving the American embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing the Israeli presence in the Golan Heights, and stating that the Israeli settlements in the West

Bank did not constitute a breach of international law (Ravid, 2017).

Joining the enhanced military cooperation, and to some extent also political cooperation, is economic cooperation, which has expanded as a result of the discovery of offshore natural gas fields in the Mediterranean Sea. Israel was the first to discover and make use of gas fields, which made it an important player. Israel became a supplier of natural gas to Jordan, after having already committed in the 1994 peace treaty to supply water to Jordan, and it has increased the water quota over the years. Israel also signed agreements to supply gas to Egypt. Israel's efforts to leverage these discoveries to improve its relations with Turkey have been unsuccessful, as Erdogan's hostility has prevented any agreement for exporting gas to Europe via Turkey. As a substitute, Israel chose the Greek-Cypriot channel for gas exports to Europe. These economic ties were part of a deeper set of ties, unquestionably motivated by the three countries' anxiety about Turkey under Erdogan's leadership (Karbuz, 2017).

The system of regional alliances that Israel hopes to create is not limited to moderate Sunni Arab countries. Together with its connection to parties in the region such as the Kurds and South Sudan, which have historically been allies of Israel, Israel has also strengthened its connections with Cyprus and Greece, as well as Egypt. These relations carry economic weight, due to the desire to develop joint energy resources, especially offshore gas fields in the Mediterranean Sea. These relations have a security dimension as well, due to the anxiety about Turkey shared by Cyprus and Greece and the hostility between Cairo and Ankara (Macaron, 2019). Some also regard Israel's ties with countries such as Azerbaijan, Greece, Cyprus, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, and other Asian and Africa countries as a continuation of the historical alliance of the periphery in the 1950s.

Nevertheless, the shadow of the conflict with the Palestinians continues to hamper the effort to improve Israel's relations with the Arab countries (Black, 2017). One example is the chill in relations between Jordan and Israel. Amman refrained from celebrating the 25th anniversary of the peace agreement between the two countries, and demanded the return of the enclaves in its territory cultivated by Israeli farmers at Tzofar in the Arava region and at Naharayim. This deterioration in relations was a result of pressure from public opinion in Jordan, but also recognition by the Jordanian government itself that progress toward a solution of the Palestinian question is a critical issue for the kingdom—not necessarily out of concern about the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but out of concern that continuation of the conflict, or even the possibility that Israel will annex parts of the West Bank, is likely to pose a real threat to Jordan's stability and prompt a new wave of Palestinian refugees to Jordan and the possibility that the Palestinian national movement will seek to focus its efforts and activity in Jordan itself (Landau, 2019; Gal & Svetlova, 2019).

Conclusion

Over the 72 years since its founding, Israel's relations with the Arab world have changed completely. Hostility and enmity have given way to acceptance; willingness to live in coexistence—even if only for lack of choice; and relations of cooperation with strategic implications.

In the early decades of Israel's existence, Arab nationalism and its undisputed leader, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel al-Nasser, were perceived as enemies and the principal threat to Israel. Today, Iran is the reference threat for both Israel and many of its Arab neighbors. For this reason, the Arab countries with which Israel was in a prolonged and apparently unsolvable conflict, among them both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, became allies because of the Iranian threat, and to a lesser degree because of the Turkish challenge.

At the same time, this cooperation with Arab countries has clear limits involving the

lack of ability, and probably also the lack of desire, to make these relations public and extend them beyond security relations between rulers, governments, and defense institutions to normalization and a friendly peace between peoples.

An interesting question is whether the process is reversible, particularly in view of the fact that recognition of the importance of ties with Israel is confined to the Arab rulers, and particularly the security and military establishments behind the rulers. In contrast, popular opinion remains hostile to Israel, although it does not advocate a conflict with it, as it did in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s. This basic hostility, however, is fed by the absence of progress in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the perception of Israel as a non-Arab and non-Muslim foreign entity in the region that sometimes looms as a threatening opponent. This attitude constitutes a kind of glass ceiling hampering any effort to promote and enhance relations between Israel and the Arab world (Miller & Zand, 2018).

The Palestinian issue has therefore ceased to be a burning question, and no longer constitutes a barrier to all progress in relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. It still casts a shadow over such relations, however, and as such constitutes an obstacle that is hard to overcome. While Arab countries are no longer willing to subordinate their national and political interests to the Palestinian cause, and may also be willing to expand their relations with Israel even without a resolution to the Palestinian issue, they need calm and stability, and keeping this issue under the radar is a definite necessity for this purpose.

The Palestinian question remains a low common denominator for Arab public opinion in its search for identity and meaning, as well as a tool exploited by opposition groups and opponents of the regime in Arab countries to bait their rulers. The Palestinian issue is the sole issue around which it is possible to unite without fear of a rift or dispute between Arab communities in the Arab world or outside it, including expatriate Arab and Muslim communities, for example, Arab intellectuals and students on campuses in Western higher education institutions. This issue is the only one that can still trumpet the Arab identity that is still essential for many groups in the Arab world, and certainly among expatriates; hence the reason for the sensitivity of this issue among Arab rulers and regimes. In the absence of any chance of achieving an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement in the foreseeable future, the Palestinian issue will continue to cast a shadow on the effort to promote normalization and deeply rooted connections between Israel and the Arab countries. The truth is that peace currently appears more distant than ever, given the unbridgeable gaps between the parties' positions; the absence of leadership that is committed to peace, believes in it, and is willing to take risks to achieve it; and the hardening of Israel's positions, such as the disavowal among many of a commitment to the two-state solution and the desire to annex territory in the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley.

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Current relations between Israel and the Arab world reflect the changing face of the Middle East and the fundamental processes it has experienced, above all the fading of Arab nationalism and the decline of the Arab world, coupled with the rise in the influence and power of Iran and Turkey. These two powers are now dictating the path of the Middle East. The Arab Spring did not directly cause this development, but it unquestionably accelerated it. Cooperation between Israel and the Arab

countries, especially with the Gulf states, may focus on Iran, but it also has the potential to develop beyond the struggle against Iran, because both sides share additional political and security interests. It reflects Israel's transformation, not only from an ostracized state into a state accepted by the Arab world, but also from a marginal and weak country into a powerful actor that everyone in today's Middle East must take into account.

A wise policy by Israel's leadership, as well as by Israel's partners in the system of relations and given the understandings now emerging in the Middle East, is likely to enhance stability and promote peace efforts in the region, or at least dialogue and reconciliation. No less important, it is likely to yield substantial economic benefits for all of the regional actors. On the other hand, the use of these relations to enshrine the status quo and preserve it, or even to initiate conflict, in contrast to defense and deterrence against common enemies, is liable to aggravate instability in the region, and lead to cycles of violence. For example, the drawbacks of unilateral measures such as Israel's annexation of territory in the West Bank, while taking advantage of its edge over the Arab countries, even those with which there is cooperation, are likely to outweigh the benefits. Israel should also act with moderation and caution from a stance of legitimate defense in its conflict with Iran and its political friction with Turkey, not from an assertive and adventurous stance. Otherwise, a heavy shadow will be cast over the relations that Israel has formed with its neighbors, which are far more significant than mere acceptance of Israel's existence for lack of choice. These relations are still not sufficiently stable and established; they rest exclusively on regime and state interests, and lack a base in broad public support in Arab public opinion.

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Then-Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot with Gen. Joseph Dunford, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 4, 2016. Photo: United States Department of Defense

American Contributions to Israel's National Security

Eytan Gilboa

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the American contributions to Israel's security in a historical perspective. The concept "security" is defined here in a broad sense. Contributions include military aid; supply of modern and advanced weapons; joint development of revolutionary weapons; joint military maneuvers; intelligence sharing; efforts to thwart nuclear threats; resistance to lawfare; and mediation to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. In several of these areas, such as military and intelligence issues, both sides contribute to one another. In other areas, such as limiting or neutralizing anti-Israel activity in international organizations, Israel is completely dependent on the United States. The US contribution to Israel's security is anchored in the "special relationship" that has developed between the two countries since Israel's establishment. It is based on "hard elements," such as strategic interests and bipartisan support, and "soft elements," such as values and similar history. These elements, especially the soft, have eroded in recent years.

Keywords: US-Israel relations, national security, military aid, missile defense, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nuclear proliferation, public opinion, American Jewry, UN Human Rights Council, Iran nuclear deal

Introduction

Every study on American-Israel relations includes chapters on the importance of the cooperation between the two countries in national security. This cooperation is not unilateral. Each of the two countries contributes to the national security of the other, albeit in an asymmetric manner. The American contribution is much more significant and essential to Israel than Israel's contribution to the United States. This study discusses the prominent American contribution in a wide range of areas relevant to national security, including military and economic aid, supply of modern and advanced weapons, joint development of revolutionary weapons, intelligence sharing, thwarting of nuclear threats, resistance to lawfare, especially in international organizations, and mediation efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli peace.

The many American contributions to Israel's security are anchored in the "special relationship" that the two countries have developed since Israel's establishment. It rests on "hard elements," such as strategic interests, and "soft elements," such as values. After World War II, the United States became a superpower with global strategic interests, while those of Israel were limited and regional (Cohen, 2012). The Cold War fostered strategic American interests in Israel when the revolutionary Arab countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria joined the Soviet bloc, while Israel aligned with the United States-led Western bloc. Israel's overwhelming victories in the Sinai Campaign (1956) and the Six Day War (1967) over the Arab allies of the Soviet Union granted it the standing of a regional power with military might, and significantly raised its strategic value in the eyes of American leaders. This interest decreased following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1989, but within a decade other strategic interests developed in the face of a new global threat—radical Islam. On September 11, 2001, in the worst terrorist attack in American history, the Islamic terrorist organization al-Qaeda attacked and completely destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and damaged the Pentagon in Washington. For decades, Israel had been subject to Arab and Palestinian terrorism, and the September 11 attacks created a sense among politicians, officials, and the public that the United States and Israel are on the same front, facing similar enemies, and must use similar means to fight them. Al-Qaeda was joined by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a powerful terrorist extremist organization that declared war on the West and succeeded in taking over extensive swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria. Since then, the joint strategic interest of the United States and Israel has developed into an ongoing struggle against Islamic terrorist organizations. Israel was very familiar with this type of violence and significantly aided the United States in the effort to defeat it.

The soft elements in the special relationship have included similar features in the history of the two nations: the Judeo-Christian roots of American society, nation-building through waves of immigration, the pioneering spirit that beat in the hearts of the founding fathers of both the United States and Israel, and conquest of frontiers and wilderness.

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years, while the soft elements have remained fairly constant.

Military Aid and Strategic Cooperation

American military aid to Israel was intended to help it deter and defeat any pan-Arab aggression. Initially the aid was very limited and mainly humanitarian, and only in 1962 did the United States begin providing defensive weapons to Israel—Hawk anti-aircraft missiles. In 1964 the United States agreed to provide Israel with modern weapons, including fighter aircraft and tanks. There were significant increases in the amount of aid after the Yom Kippur War, in order to replenish the empty depots, and after the signing of the peace agreement with Egypt, in order to compensate for the loss of strategic depth and the transfer of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) bases from Sinai. Since then, the aid's amount and components have been determined according to the Qualitative Military Edge formula: on the one hand Israel is to be supplied and its defense industry is to be developed in a way that enables it to cope with any coalition of hostile armies; and on the other hand it enables the United States to sell less advanced weapons to its Arab allies (Freilich, 2017). This principle has appeared in several official documents and Congressional resolutions, and has enabled Israel to receive the most modern and high-quality weapons that the United States has, such as the F-35 fighter, where Israel was the first foreign country to receive it. The implementation of this principle over many years has been the direct result of the special relationship.

Starting in 1990, the amount and components of the military aid have been delineated in memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed between the Israeli government and the US administration for ten-year periods (Sharp, 2019). The idea was to set a basic ongoing format, without a need to have prolonged consultations and discussions each year. However, since foreign aid is also a budgetary issue, the approval of Congress is required each year, and it is entitled to increase or decrease the amount or change the components. Since 2011, the amount of annual aid has been $3 billion. The last MOU was signed between the Obama administration and the Israeli government on September 14, 2016, and it determined an overall framework of $38 billion for the decade between 2019 and 2028. Table 1 shows that of this sum, each year, $3.3 billion is designated for military aid, and half a billion for missile defense (Gaouette, 2018). In this MOU, Israel committed not to ask Congress for additional funding for other specific projects.

Most of the foreign aid is allocated to acquisition of weapons from American industries, and only a small portion of it can be spent in Israel. In the 2016 MOU, the sides agreed to gradually phase out the spending in Israel. It would be cut moderately until 2024 and afterwards considerably, before expiring completely in 2028. The cancellation of this clause has significant ramifications for Israel's defense industry, which has sometimes been in

Table 1. American aid to Israel, 2020-1946 (in millions of US dollars, not adjusted for inflation)

Financial year	Military aid	Economic aid	Missile defense	Total
1946-2017	94,790.100	34,281.000	5,705.609	154,776.709
2018	3,100.000	–	705.800	3,805.800
2019	3,300.000	–	500.000	3,800.000
2020	3,300.000	–	500.000	3,800.000
Total	**104,490.100**	**34,281.000**	**7,411.409**	**166,182.509**

Source: Sharp, 2019, p. 2.

competition with the corresponding industries in the United States. The Obama administration did not eye this competition favorably, and thus decided to stop it. Israel will have to spend higher amounts on acquisitions in Israel out of its own resources, while creating partnerships and perhaps even mergers with American companies, in order to maintain the option of acquiring weapons with the aid money. There is also a moderating measure at its disposal: in February 1987, President Ronald Reagan granted Israel the status of major non-NATO ally, which enabled local defense industries to compete in tenders for supplying weapons and equipment to the US army. Thus, Israel's defense industries can become a subcontractor of the American defense industries (Gold, 1993).

The majority of the aid budget has been channeled toward fighter aircraft (Sharp, 2019). Israel signed an agreement to acquire 75 F-35I aircraft at an estimated cost of some $15 billion. The value of reciprocal purchases from Israeli defense industries as part of this agreement is estimated at $4 billion. Another significant expense, at $1.9 billion, is converting "dumb" munitions to "smart" munitions. Israel is considering acquiring helicopters that would replace the old Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters, and aerial refueling aircraft, at prices that are not yet known.

Over the past decade, Israel was heavily exposed to the threat of rockets and missiles, and the United States and Israel are full partners in developing multi-layer missile defense. This involves joint development and manufacturing and technology transfer. The missile defense systems include Iron Dome for short range, David's Sling for short and medium range, and three generations of Arrow missiles for long range high trajectory interception. Table 2 presents the American investments in developing and arming the different defense systems. The total investment has reached $5.6 billion: about half of this amount has been invested in the Arrow and the rest in the other systems. In accordance with the 2016 MOU,

Table 2. Aid for developing and producing missile defense systems, 2019-2006 (in millions of dollars, not adjusted for inflation)

Financial year	Arrow 2	Arrow 3	David's Sling	Iron Dome	Total
2006	122.866	–	10.0	–	132.866
2007	117.494	–	20.4	–	137.894
2008	98.572	20.0	37.0	–	155.572
2009	74.342	30.0	72.895	–	177.237
2010	72.306	50.036	80.092	–	202.434
2011	66.427	58.966	84.722	205.000	415.115
2012	58.955	66.220	110.525	70.000	305.700
2013	40.800	74.700	137.500	194.000	447.000
2014	44.363	74.707	149.712	460.309	729.091
2015	56.201	74.707	137.934	350.972	619.814
2016	56.519	89.550	286.526	55.000	487.595
2017	67.331	204.893	266.511	62.000	600.735
2018	82.300	310.000	221.500	92.000	705.800
2019	163.000	80.000	187.000	70.000	500.000
Total	**1,121.476**	**1,133.779**	**1,802.317**	**1,559.281**	**5,616.853**

Source: Sharp, 2019, p. 19.

from 2019 on, Israel will receive half a billion dollars each year for missile defense purposes. The threat of the attack tunnels from Gaza and Lebanon led to further cooperation between the United States and Israel, with the aim of developing effective means of defense against them. The funding was provided for locating, mapping, and destroying the tunnels. From 2016 to 2019, the United States invested a total of $177.5 million in these measures, while the Israeli investment is estimated at $450 million (Sharp, 2019).

Foreign aid is not popular among American voters. Many of them prefer that the money be spent in the United States on health, education, welfare, and the environment. However, of foreign assistance, the aid to Israel is generally the most well-received, and over the years has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress.

In addition to the resources allocated to develop and acquire weapons, the United States maintains depots with large amounts of equipment and munitions in Israel (WRSA1). These repositories are intended for emergency use by both the United States and Israel, but Israel must request special permission and provide explanations to use the equipment, which include missiles, precision-guided munitions, and vehicles. Their value is estimated at $1.8 billion, and they are subordinate to the US European Command (EUCOM). Israel requested and received permission to use precision munitions from the repositories during the Second Lebanon War (2006), and tank shells and illumination mortars during Operation Protective Edge (2014) in Gaza.

The two armies carry out exercises intended to strengthen their fitness and capabilities. The most important exercise has been held almost every two years since 2001 (Juniper Cobra), and it is aimed at training teams in defense against regional threats, mainly ballistic missiles (Gross, 2018). In October-November 2012, a three-week exercise took place to test cooperation with about 3,500 American soldiers and forces from the UK and Germany (Austere Challenge). In the February 2019 exercise (Juniper Falcon), 300 American soldiers and 400 Israeli soldiers participated in an exercise designed to increase the coordination between the armies, practice emergency guidelines and regulations, and deepen the familiarity between the forces. Since 1998, the United States and Israel, together with additional countries, have also carried out joint naval forces exercises for rescue missions and counterterrorism (Reliant Mermaid).

The United States was able to use foreign aid to pressure Israel in cases of disagreement. In early 1975, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin objected to several clauses proposed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in an interim agreement that he tried to advance between Israel and Egypt. In response, Kissinger announced a "reassessment" of US-Israel relations, which meant suspending discussion and approval of new Israeli requests for weapons (Quandt, 2001). The pressure worked, and the Rabin government conceded. The US Foreign Assistance Act states that American weapons can only be used for the purposes of defense while observing US law regarding the use of force. After the June 7, 1981 Israeli attack on the nuclear reactor in Iraq, the Reagan administration delayed the delivery of F-16 fighters for a few weeks following an allegation that their use went beyond defensive purposes (Perlmutter, 1982).

In January 2007, the State Department investigated claims that Israel illegally used cluster bombs in the Second Lebanon War, but the report that it conveyed to Congress was vague and did not lead to countermeasures (Migdalovitz, 2009). Another US law states that the United States will not provide aid to countries that violate human rights. In February 2016, Senator Patrick Leahy from Vermont (sponsor of the Leahy Laws) and ten other members of Congress requested that the State Department investigate whether the military aid to Israel should be stopped due to the violation

of human rights in targeted killings and "torture" of suspected terrorists (Toosi, 2016). The State Department investigated and announced that Israel had not used the weapons in a manner that deviates from what is acceptable by US law.

Foreign aid is not popular among American voters. Many of them prefer that the money be spent in the United States on health, education, welfare, and the environment. However, of foreign assistance, the aid to Israel is generally the most well-received, and over the years has enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress. Critics of Israel occasionally lambast what in their opinion is excessive US aid granted to Israel, and the more hostile among them compare the aid to Israel with what they feel is too little aid given to the Palestinians. However, this commentary is demagogical, mistaken, and misleading. The comparison to the Palestinians is unfounded because the question is not just how much money is granted, but also how the resources are spent and what the United States receives in return. In comparison to the effective uses and significant return from Israel, some of the aid to the Palestinians is wasted on corruption and ostentatious measures, and the United States does not receive any return on its investments. Moreover, the Palestinian leadership sharply criticizes US policy, regularly votes against it in international organizations, and Pew Research Center surveys indicate that Palestinian public opinion is among the most hostile in the world to the United States (Pew, 2013).

Use of the term "aid" in the context of US-Israeli defense relations is misleading. The more accurate and appropriate term would be "investment" that provides enormous profit. First, most of the resources are invested in the American defense industries toward the acquisition of advanced weapons, and not in Israel. The United States receives ongoing critical intelligence from Israel of major value, combat experience that tests and improves the weapons, joint development of weapons that are among the most sophisticated in the world, original and innovative technologies, and proven combat doctrines. Over the past few decades, the cooperation has focused on low-intensity warfare and on the military and civilian threat to the home front. In these fields, the United States collaborates only with the IDF. Israel also works with the United States in the areas of cyber warfare and nuclear proliferation. A significant system of strategic coordination and consulting has developed between Israel and the United States, perhaps the closest of its kind. Delegations of officers and senior officials from both sides meet frequently and exchange information and ideas.

Indeed, the scope of the US aid to Israel should be compared to US expenditure on defending its allies in other places in the world (Kirchick, 2019; Organski, 1990). By virtue of bilateral defense agreements and defense alliances such as NATO, the United States maintains some 150,000 soldiers in various locations abroad, including some 50,000 in Japan, 30,000 in South Korea, and 40,000 in Germany. The annual expense of maintaining these forces ranges between $85 billion and $100 billion. Consequently, for example, the annual military aid to Japan costs some $27 billion, the aid to Germany some $21 billion, and to South Korea $15 billion. The defense of Europe costs some $36 billion. Added to these expenses are significant sums, usually annual, for joint maneuvers with allies, and regular and special operational activity such as naval patrols in the Gulf, the South China Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the North Sea. Furthermore, Israel has announced many times that it does not ask US soldiers to fight for it; it only needs weapons to defend itself on its own. In this perspective, the value of the military aid to Israel is much greater and contributes more to US national security than it seems.

Thwarting Nuclear Threats

Israel's struggle against the threat of destruction by Arab states in the 1950s and 1960s and by Iran in recent decades has required a suitable response on two levels: building a deterrent

nuclear infrastructure without being exposed to pressure from the United States and other countries to stop or disarm it, and thwarting attempts by enemy states to acquire nuclear weapons. The Holocaust and threats by Arab states to destroy the Jewish state led Israel to establish a nuclear infrastructure in the 1950s, and in 1960, France aided in the establishment of a nuclear research center in Dimona. President John F. Kennedy tried to prevent the Israeli nuclear program, and this was the main reason why he agreed to supply defensive weapons to the IDF for the first time. In return, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was willing to slow down the project, but not to cancel it. The Israeli effort to achieve nuclear capabilities contradicted the American goal of preventing nuclear proliferation. Israel formulated a position of ambiguity surrounding Dimona (Cohen, 2010), and stated that while it would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East, nor would it be the second (Feldman, 1997). Israel announced that it would be willing to discuss the demilitarization of the region from nuclear weapons only once comprehensive peace was achieved with neighbors, both near and far.

Memory of the Holocaust, the Arabs' threat of destruction, Israel's limited territory, the ambiguity, and the special relationship contributed to the US display of understanding and a tolerant exceptional position toward Israel's nuclear program. On September 25, 1969, President Richard Nixon agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir that the United States would not pressure Israel to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or open up the Dimona reactor to international supervision on the condition that Israel not publicly admit that it has nuclear weapons. American presidents have continued to respect this agreement. Following emphatic declarations by Obama against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Prime Minister Netanyahu feared that he would break the unwritten agreement, and raised the issue in their first meeting, held in May 2009 (Lake, 2009). The Obama administration supported making the Middle East a nuclear weapons-free zone, but in May 2015, during a conference of the NPT signatories, the US, along with the UK and Canada, thwarted an Egyptian proposal to force Israel to expose Dimona (Ravid, 2015). The agreement with Nixon on this issue remains in effect.

Israel adopted a strategic doctrine whereby it would not permit enemy states to acquire nuclear weapons, especially those that have also threatened to destroy it (the Begin Doctrine). This doctrine has been tested twice. In the 1970s, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein decided to develop nuclear weapons, and to this end acquired two nuclear reactors from France that could produce plutonium. The construction of the first, Osirak, was completed in 1977. On August 21, 1980, Saddam threatened to "destroy Tel Aviv and burn Israel." The United States and Israel applied pressure on France to cancel or stop the project, but to no avail (Sadot, 2016). On June 7, 1981, Israeli military aircraft destroyed the reactor. The destruction of the facility was so extensive that it could not be restored. The attack on Osirak was one of the only times when the United States did not have prior warning (Bass, 2015). Israel paid a heavy price for surprising the United States in the Suez-Sinai Campaign (1956) and since then has made sure to inform American administrations about its major military plans.

The Reagan administration criticized the action in Iraq and suspended a shipment of F-16 aircraft to Israel. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger said that "Begin has lost his mind" (Danon, 2012), and the UN and many states strongly condemned the operation. The US Congress also discussed the question of whether the use of American-made aircraft violated the foreign aid clause that limits the use of weapons to defensive purposes only. A relatively short time later, however, the supply of the aircraft was renewed, and Congress did not find cause to determine that the action had violated the

aid laws. During the Second Gulf War, Vice President Dick Cheney sent a satellite photo of the bombed reactor to the Israeli ambassador to the United States and commander of the Israeli Air Force at the time of the attack, Gen. David Ivry, on which he wrote: "with thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job… which made our job much easier in Operation Desert Storm" (Horovitz, 2008). The CIA also sent a similar letter to the Mossad.

In the 1990s, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad tried to acquire a nuclear reactor from Argentina and from Russia, but vigorous American diplomatic activity thwarted his plan. In 2006, the United States and Israel began to suspect that Syria was building a nuclear reactor in the area of Deir ez-Zur, near the Euphrates. The structure of the reactor was identical to the nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, a type that only North Korea produces. Israel had precise intelligence information about the site, backed up by pictures and documents that the Mossad took from the computer of Ibrahim Othman, director of Syria's Atomic Energy Commission, as well as a tour on the ground by the IDF's elite reconnaissance unit (Makovsky, 2012). The information was presented to the intelligence agencies of the United States, reviewed by them, and found to be reliable. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert asked the United States to bomb the reactor, but upon receiving a negative response, decided to carry out the strike. The George W. Bush administration knew about the plan and unofficially supported it (Bass, 2015; Katz, 2019). On September 6, 2007, Israel destroyed the reactor, but did not report the action or take responsibility for it. Syria behaved similarly, and did not retaliate. Israel admitted only ten years later that it had carried out the attack. The area of the reactor was later conquered by the Islamic State terrorist organization, and one can only imagine what would have happened had the reactor been active and producing nuclear materials for nuclear weapons.

Iran's effort to acquire nuclear weapons has presented much tougher challenges. Since the Islamic Revolution (1979), Iran has defined the United States and Israel as its greatest enemies—the "Great Satan" and the "Little Satan." Israel has defined Iran's conduct surrounding its borders and its nuclear program as the most severe military threat to its survival and wellbeing (David, 2012). US administrations have also defined Iranian nuclear bombs as a severe threat to the United States, its allies, and world peace, and have committed to take all measures at their disposal to stop it. The argument was not over objectives but over the most effective means of achieving them. A serious dispute arose between the Obama administration and the Israeli government regarding negotiations to reach a deal with Iran. Obama decided to negotiate a nuclear agreement together with the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany (P5+1).

Iran, a signatory to the NPT, has claimed many times that its nuclear facilities are intended for peaceful purposes only, that they meet the demands of the NPT and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), that it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons, and that such development even contradicts the tenets of Islam (Rezaei, 2017). But the reality is different. Iran's claim that its nuclear facilities are intended only for producing energy, research, and medical uses is false. Iran is one of the world's biggest exporters of oil, and there is no economic sense in building nuclear reactors for producing electricity. The nuclear infrastructure that Iran built was much larger than what is necessary for peaceful purposes, and it acquired equipment for the purpose of developing nuclear weapons from various countries. Iran also hid two facilities for enriching uranium, in Natanz and Fordow, and a reactor for producing plutonium in Arak.

The US intelligence agencies observed that considering the exposure of some of the secret facilities and skeptical IAEA reports, in 2003 Iran suspended its program to develop a nuclear bomb. Israel's intelligence data contradicted that conclusion. Later, it became clear that Iran

did indeed continue to secretly develop the infrastructure necessary for producing nuclear weapons. Israel worked to stop or at least to slow the program using diverse methods, including the possible killing of Iranian nuclear scientists and cyberattacks (Katz & Hendel, 2012). In June 2010, it became known that Israel, in cooperation with the United States, had inserted the Stuxnet virus into Iran's nuclear infrastructure computing system.

Between 2010 and 2012, Israel threatened to use force against the Iranian nuclear facilities and made operational preparations for an attack. The threats influenced the willingness of the United States and the international community to stop Iran's nuclear progress. Heavy sanctions, which were approved by the Security Council, led to Iran's willingness to engage in negotiations over its nuclear program (Hurst, 2018). The Obama administration led the negotiations along with the P5+1. The talks produced an agreement whereby in return for removing the sanctions, Iran committed to enrich uranium at a sub-military level that would not exceed 3.6 percent, dismantle its stockpile of enriched uranium, reduce the number of centrifuges that it holds by two thirds for at least 15 years, and enable closer supervision of its nuclear sites (Entessar & Afrasiabi, 2017).

A heated debate erupted in the United States and in Israel on the advantages and disadvantages of the agreement. Obama emphasized its advantages while Netanyahu emphasized its deficiencies. All agreed that continued sanctions were preferable to a bad agreement, but Obama argued that the agreement that they reached was better and the only alternative is war. Netanyahu said that the agreement is bad and would not succeed in stopping Iran. He also carried out an unusual action in defiance of Obama, when he accepted an invitation by the Republican Congressional leadership to present his opposition to the emerging deal, and on March 3, 2015 addressed both houses of Congress. A large portion of the Democratic representatives boycotted the speech, because they saw it as illegitimate criticism of Obama's policy. The Israeli campaign failed, and on July 14, 2015 in Vienna, the powers reached an agreement with Iran, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or by its popular name, "the nuclear deal" (The Obama White House, 2015).

There are several prominent deficiencies in the JCPOA. It is limited to between ten and fifteen years, after which, without a new agreement, Iran can use its nuclear infrastructure without restrictions. The agreement ignores the development of missiles that can carry nuclear warheads, and Iran's direct and indirect military interventions and subversion in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, and Yemen. Trump denounced the agreement, defined it as the worst deal in American history, and promised to cancel it and enter negotiations to rectify the deficiencies in the Obama agreement.

The Mossad does not usually reveal its work methods in enemy countries and its findings. In a rare exception, on April 30, 2018, Netanyahu exposed Iran's nuclear archive, which the Mossad had succeeded in bringing from Tehran. The material proved beyond a doubt that Iran had lied about the aims of its nuclear program, and that it had systematically prepared infrastructure for producing nuclear weapons. A few days later, on May 8, 2018, Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from the agreement and the imposition of severe sanctions on Iran (Entessar & Afrasiabi, 2019). Unlike Obama's strategy, which led to cooperation with Iran and recognition of its standing in the region and improved relations with the West, Trump adopted an opposite strategy of "maximum pressure," which, he argued, could lead to negotiations and to a new agreement. Israel and the Sunni Arab states hailed these actions, but all the partners to the agreement denounced Trump and made an unsuccessful effort to help Iran bypass the sanctions. In response, Iran began to violate the agreement and to accelerate the enrichment of uranium beyond the deal's permitted level.

Confronting Lawfare

Lawfare is "the strategy of using or misusing law as a substitute for traditional military means to achieve warfighting objectives" (Kittrie, 2016, p. 2). The Arabs and the Palestinians, in cooperation with countries in Western Europe and the developing world, have employed lawfare strategies to delegitimize and dehumanize Israel, primarily in international organizations (Gilboa, 2020). Israel is the state most discriminated against in international organizations, especially at the UN and its many agencies (Blum, 2016; Muravchik, 2013). Each year, the UN General Assembly adopts one-sided resolutions against Israel at an exceptionally high rate. From 2012 to 2019, the General Assembly adopted 202 resolutions that condemn countries, out of which 163 condemned Israel, accounting for 81 percent (UN Watch, 2019).

In comparison, in 2019 the General Assembly adopted 18 resolutions condemning Israel and one resolution on each of the following states: Syria, Iran, North Korea, the United States, and Myanmar. Often, in the face of massive voting in favor of the Palestinians, the side supporting Israel includes the United States and a few additional states such as Australia, Canada, or Micronesia. Votes at the General Assembly are not backed by enforcement capabilities; these exist only at the Security Council, which can impose sanctions, but there the United States has veto power. On 44 occasions the United States has vetoed especially extreme anti-Israel resolutions and resolutions condemning US policy, such as the one that condemned the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem.

Resolutions and actions of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) are highly relevant to Israel's security, inter alia because they deal with rules of war in conflict zones. The identities of the Council members, the discussion rules, and the resolutions indicate very little connection if any between the agency and human rights. The UNHRC systematically discriminates against Israel, indiscriminately adopts anti-Israeli resolutions, appoints biased and bizarre rapporteurs on the conflict, and establishes biased, unethical, and unprofessional committees of inquiry (Baker, 2019a). The discrimination is contained in the very agenda items of the Council's discussions—item 7 which is designated only for Israel, and another item for the whole world. This is a permanent item on the Council's agenda, and the only one that is aimed at a single country. The United States and several European countries have strongly condemned this built-in discrimination and tried to cancel it, but have not succeeded.

The UNHRC was established in 2006 to replace the UN Human Rights Commission due to its being tainted by politics, and because many of its members were the world's most flagrant violators of human rights. Despite the name change, the current Council suffers from the same afflictions that characterized its predecessor. The General Assembly selects the 47 members of the Council according to a geographic formula for a period of three years. Its members have included Cuba, Iran, Libya, Sudan, Pakistan, Qatar, Syria, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Somalia, China, and Russia. All these are countries that violate human rights defined by the UN itself.

In 2006, when the UN decided to establish the Council, the George W. Bush administration proposed reforms in the structure and rules of the new body, in order to rectify the deficiencies of the Commission that preceded it. The reforms were rejected, and Bush found no reason to join this body. Obama decided differently and the United States joined, assuming that membership in the Council would enable changing the organization's conduct from the inside. Obama was mistaken, and the Council continued to suffer from the same biases and failings. The United States attempted to moderate the Council's aggressive and hostile activity toward Israel but failed. Obama, who believed in close cooperation with international organizations, did not draw the evident conclusions and kept the US in the Council.

The Trump administration also tried to change the composition of the Council and correct the severe defects in its conduct, but it too did not succeed. Trump's conclusion was that the organization is irredeemable, and unlike Obama, in June 2018 he decided to leave it, largely due to the Council's hostile and biased attitude toward Israel (Gilboa, 2018). The United States demanded that the Council cancel the discriminatory item 7, but the members rejected the request. The US Ambassador to the UN at the time, Nikki Haley, explained that for a long time she tried to change the Council's structure and activity but did not succeed. She attacked the practice of choosing countries that are severe violators of human rights, such as Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to serve on the Council, and the Council's ongoing refusal to condemn rights violations in member countries such as Iran and China. Haley and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo attacked the Council's bias and prejudice toward Israel and the conflict with the Palestinians. The United States withdrawal harmed the Council's credibility and reputation, thus helping Israel's campaign against it.

Since its establishment, more than half of the resolutions passed by the UNHRC have concerned Israel and the conflict with the Palestinians. For comparison, in March 2019 the Council, discussed 11 reports, of which 7 dealt with Israel, 2 with North Korea, 1 with Iran, and 1 with Syria—i.e., 64 percent of the reports dealt with Israel (UN Watch, 2019). The Council adopted five resolutions against Israel and only one resolution against Iran. The majority of the Council's resolutions regarding Israel are one-sided and rely on biased, incorrect, and deliberately falsified evidence. The rapporteurs on Israel's conduct toward the Palestinians, appointed in part for their prejudice against Israel, frequently submit reports and opinions to the Council that are biased and not truthful. The greatest damage to Israel's security was caused by three ostensibly "independent" committees of inquiry that the Council established to investigate Israeli war crimes allegedly committed during military defensive operations against the aggression of Hamas and Islamic Jihad from Gaza. The bias is already contained in the definitions of the committees' mandate: investigation of Israel's "war crimes." Israel refused to cooperate with the committees due to their composition, the mandate they were given, and the Council's endemic hostile attitude.

The Goldstone Report, which was written about Operation Cast Lead (December 27, 2008-January 18, 2009) and submitted to the UNHRC in September 2009, accused Israel of a series of war crimes, including intentionally firing at and killing civilians (UN Human Rights Council, 2009). The report included only a few references to Hamas, but mostly targeted Israel. The United States and Israel castigated the biased and false report, but the Council approved it and its resolution was only against Israel. The report was sent to the General Assembly for approval and transfer for possible prosecution at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The General Assembly approved the request, but it stopped there, because in order to submit the lawsuits a Security Council resolution is needed, and it was clear that the United States would veto it.

The Obama administration criticized the report and ordered to vote against it at the Security Council meeting. The House of Representatives also passed a resolution with a majority of 344 to 36, stating that the report is irredeemably biased against Israel and is not legitimate, and demanded that Obama prevent its adoption at the Security Council. Obama indeed announced that he would veto any attempt to transfer the issue to the ICC, and thus at this stage Israel was saved from legal and reputation damages. Goldstone subsequently withdrew from some of the assertions of the committee that he headed, but in terms of the damage to Israel, his retraction was too little, too late (Goldstone, 2011).

The second UNHRC appointed committee of inquiry "investigated" Operation Protective Edge (July 8-August 26, 2014). The report it submitted to the Council in June 2015 was also highly biased, unethical, unprofessional, and mostly false. It too scarcely dealt with Hamas's responsibility for the violence and its own war crimes. The report accused Israel of war crimes, excessive use of force, and lack of effort to minimize damage to the civilian population. The report accused senior policymakers in Israel of ordering a policy of intentionally harming civilians. The Council, which approved the report, called for putting Israeli leaders on trial for war crimes according to the doctrine of "universal jurisdiction," whereby it is possible to put war criminals on trial in any country that has assumed such authority for itself. Again, the Obama administration castigated the committee of inquiry and the report's findings and conclusions (Lazaroff, 2015). The State Department announced that the report was tainted with attitudes hostile to Israel, and that the United States did not believe that it should be discussed or further acted upon at the UN (ToI Staff, 2015). When a spokesperson for the department was asked if the United States would support transferring the report to the ICC, he said it would not. Here too the hint was clear: if the issue reaches the Security Council, the United States will veto it.

In 2018, Hamas initiated and organized violent attacks on Israel's border with Gaza with tens of thousands of people, as part of what it called the "Marches of Return" (March 2018 to December 2019). In May 2018, a proposal was submitted to the Security Council to establish a committee of inquiry about Israel's conduct vis-à-vis the marches. The United States prevented its approval and also foiled another proposed resolution initiated by the Palestinians and submitted by Kuwait, which called for stationing international forces in Gaza in order to "defend" the population. In the meantime, the UNHRC strongly condemned Israel's defensive actions and appointed yet another biased committee of inquiry to investigate what it called "Israel's excessive use of force against peaceful protesters." While this committee noted that Hamas had failed to prevent violent attacks against IDF soldiers who guarded the border between Israel and Gaza, like previous reports, the bulk of the criticism was of Israel. The committee accused Israel of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and the United States again condemned the report and the UNHRC (Baker, 2019b).

All of the reports and discussions held at the Council on events in the Palestinian territories and Hamas's violence against Israel were biased and based on incorrect, slanted, and fabricated information. The reports absolved Hamas of responsibility for the violence, ignored the severe war crimes that it carried out, and primarily blamed Israel. The reports tried to limit Israel's right to self-defense. No country involved in an international conflict has ever been exposed to such baseless inquiries and reports as those that the UNHRC has conducted against Israel. The problem was that the Council's reports not only tarnished Israel's image; they were also intended from the beginning to produce a factual basis for putting Israeli leaders on trial at the ICC. At the Security Council, the United States indeed prevented the formal transfer of the UNHRC reports and resolutions to the Court, but the prosecutor at this institution has the authority in her own right to investigate and file a lawsuit against Israeli individuals, and she did so.

On December 20, 2019, Fatou Bensouda, the ICC's Chief Prosecutor, requested authorization from a pre-trial chamber of judges to begin an investigation of "war crimes" that Israel allegedly committed in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza (Gilboa, 2019). Like the UNHRC committees, she also referred to Hamas and "the other armed Palestinian organizations," but her clear intention was to focus mainly on Israel. This can be concluded from the Palestinians' enthusiasm from her actions. Bensouda's request relied on reports and resolutions of the UNHRC and

other UN institutions regarding the conflict. The Prosecutor's decision constitutes a severe threat to Israel. Unlike other international judicial institutions, the ICC files lawsuits against people and not against states. If allowed, Bensouda could summon senior Israeli policymakers and army officers for investigation with the accusation of war crimes, and if they refuse, as can be assumed, she could issue international arrest warrants against them that 123 countries that are currently members of the Court statute must honor.

Both the United States and Israel suspected that the ICC would position itself in similar fashion to the highly politicized conduct of the UNHRC, and did not join it. Both have lambasted Bensouda's decision. Israel claimed that first, the Court does not have the authority to hear the issue because Palestine is not a state, and the ICC can only hear crimes committed in states; second, since Israel is not a member of the Court's statute, its leaders cannot be investigated; and third, the Court was established in order to investigate and judge only leaders whose states do not investigate and put on trial those who have committed war crimes. Israel has recognized military and civilian legal systems that investigate and punish violations of the accepted laws of war, and thus the principle of complementarity overrides ICC investigations. As such, Israel does not meet any of ICC's criteria for prosecution and trial.

The United States had its own incident with Bensouda, who sought to investigate Americans accused of committing war crimes in Afghanistan. The Trump administration castigated the Prosecutor with extraordinary severity over the decision. Then-National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Pompeo stated that the ICC is tainted by corruption and a lack of legitimacy, authority, responsibility, and transparency. They warned that if it dares to prosecute Americans or individuals from among its allies, including Israel, the United States would retaliate with severe sanctions against the Prosecutor, her staff, and the judges. These include cancellation of visas to the United States, confiscation of US-based financial and other assets, and prosecution in US courts.

The United States did indeed cancel Bensouda's visa (Wroughton, 2019). They also threatened that if the Court detained American citizens, the United States would use force to free them (Khan, 2018). These threats were effective, and the pre-trial proceedings ended with a decision to reject Bensouda's request to investigate Americans. She appealed this decision to a higher court, which was accepted, but at this stage it is not clear if the investigations of the United States and Israel will take place. It is clear that the US activity to thwart dangerous anti-Israel resolutions and actions at the UN's political and legal institutions and to significantly undermine the credibility of organizations such as the UNHRC and the ICC has been essential in maintaining Israel's ability to defend itself.

Mediation in the Arab-Israeli conflict

From the initial stages that ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel, the United States made many every effort to mediate and advance a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Quandt, 2001). There were several reasons for this. First, it is an essential American strategic interest to ensure the peace and security of Israel. In the first decades of its existence, Israel faced Arab threats to wipe it off the map, and resolving the conflict would remove this threat. Second was the need to prevent wars, which in various periods such as the Cold War could lead to direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Third, the United States feared that support for Israel would harm its relations with the Arab world. These relations were important because of the dependence of the United States and its European allies on Arab oil, and due to the alliances between the Soviet Union and the revolutionary Arab states, which threatened the existence of the pro-American Arab regimes. There has not been

any other international conflict that so many American presidents have invested so much personal effort in resolving.

The first opportunity to bring about an end to the conflict was the partition plan, which, in the aftermath of World War II, was discussed and approved by the UN in November 1947. President Harry Truman supported the plan because he thought that if two national movements claim ownership over the same piece of land, partition is the most appropriate and just solution. Along with Turkey, the United States was a member of the Palestine Conciliation Commission that tried to advance a resolution of the conflict in 1949 after Israel's War of Independence. The next opportunities only appeared after the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973). In the Six Day War, Israel demonstrated its military might, and conquered territories that could be exchanged for peace agreements. In December 1969, during the War of Attrition, Nixon's Secretary of State William Rogers issued the first US detailed peace plan. Both Israel and the Arabs rejected it, because each saw only the concessions that it had to make and ignored what it would receive from the other side in exchange. Yet despite the heavy Soviet involvement in Egypt, which expanded and intensified after the Six Day War, American mediation led to the end of the War of Attrition and laid the foundations for exclusive, agreed-upon US mediation of the conflict in the coming years.

The Yom Kippur War with Egypt in the south and Syria in the north opened up new opportunities for serious American mediation. Israel and Egypt paid heavy prices that influenced their willingness to reach a settlement. President Anwar Sadat "transferred" Egypt from the Soviet bloc to the American bloc. Since then, the United States has been the only party that has enjoyed good relations with both Israel and the Arab states, and became the only possible mediator in attempts to reach a resolution. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger mediated between the sides and achieved ceasefire agreements, an agreement on disengagement and prisoner exchanges, and an interim agreement between Israel and Egypt, which paved the way for the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Since Kissinger's successful diplomacy, American efforts to mediate the conflict have multiplied and expanded (Ross, 2005).

The conflict's two most significant peace processes, the Israel-Egypt and Israel-Palestinian (Oslo) processes, began with secret direct talks between the parties with the United States outside of the picture, but the American involvement was essential in order to reach and implement agreements. Successive presidents intervened to overcome obstacles, close deals, and mobilize legitimacy and public support for agreements through high-profile media events at the White House and in the region. The United States also established a peacekeeping force in Sinai to prevent aggression, gave substantial military and economic aid to all of the parties; and various guarantees for implementing and carrying out the agreements. The United States provided aid to Israel that enabled the withdrawal from Sinai and the transfer of the IDF bases. It gave economic aid to Egypt and the Palestinians in order to demonstrate the fruits of peace.

After Begin and Sadat agreed on a peace process, it ran into difficulties. In September 1978, President Jimmy Carter summoned them to Camp David for a summit that ended with a statement of principles for a peace settlement. After difficulties also developed in translating these principles into practice, Carter undertook visits in the Middle East that ultimately produced the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement signed in March 1979. President George H. W. Bush initiated and convened the Madrid Conference that took place in October 1991 in order to promote a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. For the first time, representatives of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation participated alongside one another. After Israel and the PLO reached an agreement on mutual recognition in secret talks in Oslo,

President Bill Clinton took it under his auspices and held an impressive signing ceremony on the White House lawn. In October 1994, Clinton helped with the signing of a peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. When the implementation of the Oslo process ran into difficulties in October 1998, he initiated a summit at the Wye River Conference Center, with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir Arafat, and the two reached an important interim agreement. Toward the end of his term, in July 2000, Clinton made another personal effort to reach a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Arafat to Camp David. Barak proposed a far-reaching peace plan that Arafat rejected.

In December 2000, following the outbreak of the second violent Palestinian intifada, Clinton presented his own peace plan (also known as the Clinton Parameters), which included far-reaching Israeli concessions. Barak accepted the plan, but Arafat rejected it. This was a historic missed opportunity. Clinton also tried to mediate personally and advance a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. In January 1994, he met in Geneva with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad who expressed interest in negotiations with Israel. In January 2000, Clinton invited Barak and Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk a-Sharaa to a summit conference in Shepherdstown. Despite his efforts, this conference did not produce an agreement.

George W. Bush formulated a roadmap to resolve the conflict, participated in establishing the Quartet mechanism, and convened a summit peace conference at Annapolis, with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The Quartet was established in April 2002 during the second intifada, in order to advance a resolution of the conflict. It comprised the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the UN, and from 2007 to 2015 it was represented by Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the UK. Two months later, Bush presented his Roadmap for Peace, calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state and security arrangements for Israel. Bush was the first US president to explicitly support a Palestinian state, but he also ruled out Israel's return to the June 1967 borders. He argued that it is necessary to recognize the reality that developed in the West Bank, and the impracticality of removing the large Israeli settlement blocs. In order to maintain momentum toward an agreement, in November 2007 Bush invited Olmert and Abbas to a summit at the Naval Academy at Annapolis. The goal was to facilitate direct negotiations between the sides and cultivate international support for the Roadmap. Indeed, Olmert met with Abbas dozens of times and offered a more generous proposal than was ever offered to a Palestinian leader. Abbas did not respond to it, and this American attempt also failed.

Obama, who was one of the most pro-Palestinian presidents in American history, tried to advance a settlement, first via special envoy George Mitchell, who had formerly succeeded in mediating and achieving an agreement in Northern Ireland, and then via Secretary of State John Kerry. He personally intervened in the process less than his predecessors. His administration did not succeed in advancing an agreement, and in comparison to other administrations, during his presidency there were the fewest talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Obama succeeded in influencing Netanyahu's policy on two issues: he forced him to publicly support the two-state solution and to freeze settlements. These were Abbas's conditions for renewing the negotiations with Israel, and Obama thought that if Netanyahu accepted them, the talks would be renewed. He was wrong. In a speech at Bar-Ilan University in June 2009, Netanyahu declared support for the establishment of a Palestinian state under certain conditions, and in November 2009 he froze construction in the settlements for a period of ten months. Netanyahu met

Obama's conditions, but Abbas still refused to renew the negotiations.

Trump is one of the most pro-Israel presidents in American history. He reversed US policy toward the conflict, arguing that the approach of all of his predecessors had failed numerous times, and thus should be fundamentally changed. He recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and transferred the US embassy there. This was a historic correction, because states determine where to locate their capitals, and the case of Jerusalem was exceptional. The embassy was moved to West Jerusalem, a part of Jerusalem where no one questions Israel's sovereignty; it is the status of East Jerusalem that is contentious and requires negotiation.

Trump froze the economic aid to the Palestinian Authority, claiming it was intended for those who cooperate with the United States and not those who sharply criticize its policy. He also stopped funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, arguing that the agency is corrupt, perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem, and its schools are engendering hostility toward Israel and Jews. In addition, he closed the PLO office in Washington, claiming that after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority there was no more room for such a Palestinian mission. Trump also recognized Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights.

Trump ordered the preparation of a comprehensive and detailed plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace, which he called "the deal of the century." He placed this task in the hands of his closest associates, including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, Jason Greenblatt, who served as vice president and legal counsel for Trump's businesses, and David Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, who was Trump's attorney and advisor in his presidential election campaign. The plan included two main parts—economic and political (The Trump White House, 2020). The presentation of the plan was postponed several times due to the frequent rounds of elections in Israel.

Ultimately, the economic part was separated from the political part and presented at a workshop in Bahrain in June 2019, with only businesspeople and politicians from around the world, including from the Arab world. No official representatives of Israel or the Palestinians were present. The idea was to present a comprehensive package for economic development in the West Bank, Gaza, and states such as Jordan and Egypt, with a proposed scope of $50 billion. The 40-page document included 175 projects. The Palestinians boycotted the workshop and demanded that the Arab states not participate, claiming that the economic part is no more than a plot to buy welfare at the expense of the Palestinians' aspirations for independence. Abbas and his staff said that "Palestine is not for sale," but despite their efforts, they failed to prevent the workshop.

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The political portion of the plan was presented at a meeting held between Trump and Netanyahu on January 28, 2020 at the White House. The detailed plan, described over 180 pages, offers the Palestinians a state in the West Bank and Gaza and a capital on the periphery of East Jerusalem, and offers Israel significant security arrangements. It details a new division of the territory—70 percent of the West Bank for the Palestinians and 30 percent for Israel—as well as compensation for Palestinians in Israeli territory within the Green Line. Along with the territory of Gaza, the territory allocated for the establishment of a Palestinian state would reach approximately over 80 percent of the territory of the West Bank, and with the

compensation within Israel's territory it could reach 100 percent. The plan proposes a tunnel to connect Gaza and the West Bank. The territory that would be annexed to Israel includes the Jordan Valley, which is important for defending the state, and most of the Israeli settlements.

The establishment of the Palestinian state hinges on several conditions, including recognizing Israel as a Jewish state, restoring the Palestinian Authority's rule in Gaza and demilitarizing it, ending all activities against Israel at international organizations, ending the incitement against Israel, and forfeiting the right of return. Israel accepted the plan in principle, but the Palestinians rejected it outright. The Arab League also rejected it, and the European Union and a few more countries criticized the sections that enable Israeli annexation of territories separately from the implementation of other sections (Abdelaziz, 2020).

Conclusion

The United States contribution to Israel's security, in its various forms, is essential to Israel's existence and well-being (Freilich, 2017). These contributions are irreplaceable. They have been maintained over decades and survived less sympathetic administrations, like those of Carter and Obama (Ross, 2016). Among the contributions are essential military aid that includes the supply of modern and advanced weapons that Israel cannot acquire from any other source in the world; intelligence cooperation; efforts to thwart nuclear threats; diplomatic assistance; and mediation efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli peace. In several of these areas, such as those related to the military and intelligence cooperation, both sides contribute to one another. In other areas, such as neutralizing anti-Israel activity in international organizations, Israel is entirely dependent on the United States. Without the significant financial aid for acquiring advanced weapons, the burden of Israel's security on the country's budget would be much heavier.

The American contributions are a direct result of the special relationship that has developed between the two countries, which the United States does not have with almost any other country. Recently, Netanyahu proposed signing a defense pact with the United States and even discussed this with Trump (Gearan & Hendrix, 2019). It is not clear if the proposal surfaced only against the backdrop of the third round of elections in Israel within a year, or whether there is a deeper intention behind it. Nor is this a new idea. It has come up several times before and was rejected as unnecessary by the defense authorities and experts (Inbar, 2019; Sher & Pinkas, 2019). The findings of this study show that it is not necessary, because in the current situation all of the advantages of a defense pact exist without the inherent disadvantages, which could significantly limit Israel's freedom of action. While Israel usually informs the United States about military operations, there is a difference between merely informing and receiving official approval. Israel is always proud to say that it does not need the defense of American forces; if a situation develops that is so threatening and requires direct American intervention, one can assume that it would take place even without an official defense pact.

Erosion in the soft elements of the special relationship cast a shadow on the continued American contribution to Israel's security. While since the beginning of the 21st century two-thirds of the American public have a favorable view of Israel and majorities identify with its positions in the conflict, demographic segmentation shows that this support is high among older groups and much more limited among young people and minorities such as Hispanics and African-Americans (Gilboa, 2020 forthcoming). These populations have very little interest in Israel, and their proportion of the American population is gradually growing. Israel has lost bipartisan support in Congress as a result of the leftward tendency of the Democratic Party, Netanyahu's support for Republican presidential candidates

and the conflict with Obama over the Iranian nuclear issue, and Israel's policy on the conflict with the Palestinians. This development and the tendency toward religious and rightest extremism in Israeli politics have also negatively influenced the attitudes of the American Jewish community, the majority of which supports a liberal ideology and the Democratic Party. Israel must take a series of steps to restore its relations with the Democrats and American Jewry, to prevent harm to the essential American contributions to its national security.

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Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon, June 13, 2018. Photo: United Nations Gallery

The UN and Israel: From Confrontation to Participation

Yaron Salman

Over the years Israel-UN relations have been mixed. On the one hand, the decisions condemning Israel within the different institutions of the UN reflects the hostile attitude toward Israel. On the other hand, Israel's acceptance as a member of the Western European and Others Group and the gradual change in the voting patterns of developing countries indicate an expanding positive orientation toward Israel. The purpose of this article is to survey the primary trends in Israel-UN relations, with a focus on the change in Israeli policy over the past two decades, its catalysts, and its manifestation. The review reveals a shift from Israel's traditional policy of "the UN is nothing" to the adoption of a proactive approach and an expanded attempt to work from within the ranks of the UN in order to influence its decisions through three principal modes of action: taking part in meeting the global Millennium Development Goals; filling key positions within various UN institutions; and attempting to influence voting processes within the General Assembly.

Keywords: UN arena, Israel-UN relations, General Assembly

Introduction

Israel-UN relations over the years have been characterized by mixed trends. On the one hand, the decisions condemning Israel within the different UN institutions reflect a hostile attitude toward Israel. On the other hand, Israel's acceptance as a member of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), Danny Danon's election in 2017 as Vice President of the UN General Assembly, and a gradual change in the voting patterns of developing countries in Israel's favor exemplify the expanding positive orientation toward Israel in this institution. The aim of this article is to survey the primary trends in Israel-UN relations, with a focus on the change in Israeli policy vis-à-vis the UN toward proactive policy measures over the past two decades, an analysis of its causes, and the manner of its manifestation.

The main claim of this article is that recent decades have witnessed a gradual change in Israel's policy toward the UN. This has been manifested in a shift from Israel's traditional policy of writing the UN off ("*Umm shmum*" —"the UN is nothing") to the adoption of a proactive approach and an expanded attempt to work from within the ranks of the UN in order to influence its decisions. This approach runs counter to the passivity characteristic of Israeli policy in the past, which stemmed from the contention that the General Assembly harbored an automatic anti-Israel orientation.

The contribution of this article lies in its systematic chronological analysis of Israel-UN relations over a number of decades in order to build the argument that Israel is currently implementing a proactive policy toward the UN. This claim will be grounded in a general analysis, with a focus on three modes of action that reflect the transition from a policy of isolationism and lack of interest to a proactive approach. In other words, whereas the academic literature has focused on a historical survey of Israel-UN relations (Ben-Meir, 2011; Beker, 1998) or recognized a change in Israel's conduct toward the UN (Hatuel-Radoshitzky, 2016; 2017), the present article proposes a broad and comprehensive view of these relations, beginning with a chronological presentation of the reason for their decline, moving to an analysis of the reasons for the change in Israeli policy toward the UN that began in the early 2000s, and concluding with a systematic examination of the three channels through which the change was implemented in practice.

This article uses qualitative methodology by means of content analysis and chronological analysis. It begins with a chronological analysis of Israel's participation in the humanitarian development projects of the UN in an attempt to show its consistent increased activity in this realm. Israel's participation in these projects started at the outset of the 2000s, with the beginning of promotion of humanitarian development in Third World countries, led by then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. During previous periods, and certainly during the Cold War, the significant furthering of humanitarian initiatives by the UN was not possible in light of the UN's secondary status as a global actor eclipsed by the ideological struggle between the superpowers. It is therefore impossible to compare Israeli participation in these initiatives between the two periods (before and after the 2000s), and the analysis was based on the systematic chronological presentation of the increasing Israeli participation over the past two decades. A chronological analysis was also conducted in order to highlight the appointment processes and the service of Israeli officials in various key institutions, in an attempt to underline the consistent increase in this trend over the past two decades. Finally, empirical research was employed, including content analysis of the 95 resolutions approved by the General Assembly from the UN database and UN Watch, with the aim of examining Israel's attempt to influence voting patterns in the General Assembly.

The article consists of three parts. The first section presents the goals and the methodology of the article, a survey of the primary trends in

Israel-UN relations, and a review of the relevant literature, with an emphasis on the presentation of three main factors underlying the change in policy that occurred early in the 2000s. An empirical section examines the article's major argument through an analysis of the three major channels of Israel's activity within the various UN institutions, and a third section includes an analysis and discussion of the findings.

The Main Trends in Israel-UN Relations over the Decades

An overview of the subject indicates that Israel-UN relations over the years have been characterized by ups and down, but especially downs. The United Nations was established in 1945 with the aim of maintaining peace and security in the global arena and preventing future wars like World War II, which had just ended. The State of Israel was established soon thereafter, in 1948, and became the 59th country accepted into the United Nations. Initially, Israel-UN relations were characterized by positive trends (Beker, 1988), and Israel adopted the UN Charter and the principles of equality, universal rights, and social justice that are included in its own declaration of independence. In addition, in the early 1950s, Israel sought to consolidate its status and further its connections in the global arena, including the UN's diplomatic realm, in part given the importance to this ascribed by then-Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett. Israel was accepted, inter alia given its contribution to the family of nations and the generous assistance it granted to the developing countries of Africa when they became independent at the end of the colonial era (Oded, 2011; Decter, 1977; Chazan, 2006; Beker, 2006).

Nonetheless, the beginning of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union witnessed a gradual deterioration in the UN's attitude toward Israel, partially against the background of the Berlin crisis (1948-1949), the partition of the Korean Peninsula and the Korean War, and especially the paralysis of the UN Security Council in light of the Soviets' frequent use of their veto to remove from the agenda resolutions that ran counter to their interests (see UN website, Security Council—Quick links). These developments in the global arena, which also led to tension between the two superpowers in the various UN institutions, had a negative impact on Israel, as they precluded cooperation between them in a manner that would promote Israeli interests in the UN arena.

Israel-UN relations continued to decline over the years as the Arab-Israeli conflict intensified, and the more the UN dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, in 1956, the UN's weakness was prominent when Egypt violated the armistice agreement with its ongoing military provocations, proclamations regarding the destruction of Israel, and the use of *fedayeen* (armed groups that carried out attacks in Israel under Egyptian auspices). In 1967, the weakness was highlighted again in the UN's dealing with international crises, when the Security Council failed to take action to change the decision of Secretary-General U Thant regarding the withdrawal of UN forces from the Sinai Peninsula. Moreover, the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty (1979) was not received in a positive light in the broad UN arena, and certainly not in the General Assembly, where the bloc of non-aligned and Arab states enjoyed a majority,[1] as it was perceived as a separate agreement and not part of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement. The UN's approach to the peace agreement was difficult to understand, considering its goals and aspirations to stabilize peace and security in the global arena through diplomacy and negotiation. In other words, instead of welcoming the achievement in the spirit of the goals of the UN, voices in the General Assembly were actually critical of it (Kahana, 2002; Blum, 2002; 2008).

From the early 1950s onward, Israel became a regular object of criticism within UN institutions for a number of primary reasons: the formation of Israeli policy toward the UN in the early 1950s; the Cold War and the changing composition

of the UN; the adoption of the Palestinian narrative; and the politicization of the UN arena.

The Formation of Israeli Policy toward the UN in the Early 1950s

In the early 1950s, two diametrically opposing schools of statesmanship debated the shaping of Israeli foreign policy and modes of action vis-à-vis the UN, the superpowers, and the Arab world. The difference in approaches was reflected primarily in the attitude toward Israel's activity vis-à-vis the positions of the international community on core issues relating to Israel. The diplomatic school promoted by Moshe Sharett, one of the founders and designers of Israeli foreign relations, recognized the importance of the international arena and of the United Nations. Sharett maintained that Israel should not adopt a policy that would intensify criticism against it within UN institutions. He understood the importance of diplomacy and recognized the impact of Israel's actions on world public opinion—an expression of his adherence to the principle of dialogue and negotiations in order to resolve conflicts. Against this background, Sharett called for diplomacy in the relations of the *yishuv* with the British Mandate, and subsequently in the State of Israel's relations with the United States, the West, South America, and Asia, and especially the Arab countries and the Palestinians. In addition, Sharett's recognition of the critical importance of the UN in 1948 led him to refrain as much as possible from measures that might have been detrimental to Israel-UN relations. His devotion to diplomatic successes in 1947-1948, which culminated in Israel's acceptance as a member state of the UN, and his faith in the UN, reinforced his tendency early in the 1950s to demarcate a cautious foreign policy, to be reluctant about the use of violence, and to oppose cross-border reprisal raids and operations, in part out of concern regarding their negative impact on the UN's attitude toward Israel.

David Ben-Gurion espoused a different view. Ben-Gurion, like Sharett, was concerned about the actions of the international community and the UN, and held positions similar to those of Sharett regarding the fundamental issues facing Israel. In contrast, however, he advocated different courses of action, which prompted him to adopt a different policy toward the UN. Unlike Sharett, Ben-Gurion attributed little importance to diplomacy and followed an activist approach. As a result, conflicts arose between the two men, primarily following the 1948 war, As explained by Ilan Pappe (1991):

> In the days preceding the establishment of the state, the cooperation between the two figures outweighed the divisions. Nonetheless, they had different ways of life, occupations, and routes of advancement…and in the future they would influence the perspectives of those who, more than any other personality, would determine Israel's policy in the initial years of statehood.

A prominent example of the differences between Ben-Gurion and Sharett was reflected in their approach to the General Assembly's initiative to internationalize Jerusalem. Whereas Ben-Gurion proposed taking clear and rapid measures such as moving the offices of government ministries to Jerusalem, Sharett, the only opponent to the transfer of government ministries, believed that a diplomatic approach would enable them to change the position of the UN. The Israeli delegation to the General Assembly, he maintained, could change the UN position on the internationalization of Jerusalem using political means. The clash between the views of these two figures was reflected in Ben-Gurion's response to Sharett: "The State of Israel will not agree to any form of foreign rule in Jewish Jerusalem or its being torn from the state. And if we are faced with the choice of leaving Jerusalem or leaving the UN, we would prefer to leave the UN" (quoted from a telegram from Ben-Gurion to Sharett, in Bialer, 1985).

Bialer himself makes use of the term "clash" (*imut*) to describe the different approaches of the two figures with regard to their ways of contending with the UN on fundamental issues pertaining to the Israeli interest, and leaves no room for doubt regarding the differences in their approach: "There is no doubt that his [Ben-Gurion's] general approach ran counter to that of the foreign minister" (Bialer, 1985). Nonetheless, Sharett, for his part, expressed determined opposition to the course of action proposed by Ben-Gurion, and particularly to the idea of withdrawing from the UN, which he believed would "create an unfortunate impression" (quoted from a telegram from Sharett to Ben-Gurion, in Bialer, 1985). The gaps were likewise reflected in the letter of resignation that Sharett submitted to Ben-Gurion in light of the General Assembly's decision pertaining to the internationalization of Jerusalem, in which he explained his resignation in part as follows: "In the weighty campaign that lies ahead of us, I fear I will not be able to effectively and wholeheartedly defend the policy that is set" (quoted in Shalom, 1993). That is to say, Sharett would not be able to defend a decision that ran counter to his views. Elsewhere, Sharett said: "The talk of war in the world as a whole… is unfounded and completely detrimental… This entire method, of creating facts in foreign policy through direct declarations by the Prime Minister, in complete contrast to my style, makes my situation unbearable, and I am requesting your help. Prevent additional deterioration" (quoted from a telegram from Sharett to Eitan, in Shalom, 1993).

Ben-Gurion clearly pursued an activist policy, whereas Sharett pursued a more tempered policy focused on diplomacy. Beginning in 1954, the more Israel's border security was destabilized, the more the collision between the two approaches intensified, especially in light of Sharett's thwarting of reprisal operations. Against this background, in 1956, Ben-Gurion concluded that Sharett had become an obstacle to fortifying Israel's essential interests, and he dismissed him. Thus, from the mid-1950s onward, the activist component of Israeli policy grew stronger, in parallel to a reduction in the importance attributed to diplomacy and to the UN. This, perhaps, was best reflected in Ben-Gurion's expression "the nothing UN" (*"Umm shmum"*), which articulates the derisive approach to the UN among Israeli leaders (Sharett, 1955; Limor, 1967).[2]

The Cold War and the Changing Composition of the UN

Today there are 193 UN member states, including more than 100 states that are "liberated," non-democratic, African members of the Arab League, Muslim, and non-aligned that have joined the ranks of the organization over the years. These are circles that automatically support anti-Israel votes in the General Assembly. The composition of the UN today differs from its composition in 1945, when democratic member states from Europe and North America were predominant. At the end of the 1950s, the UN already had more than 100 members, and in addition to the numerical increase, the attributes of the states represented in the General Assembly also changed: the dominance of democratic states evolved into a structure characterized by a large number of new countries in Africa and Asia that had lived under colonial rule and were non-democratic, autocratic, and unaligned. Thus, a dynamic evolved whereby states that violated human rights began to denounce democratic states in the General Assembly. In its new structure, the UN also changed for the worse from Israel's perspective, in light of the considerable and prominent influence of the Arab and Muslim countries within the bloc of the non-aligned states.

This dynamic created an uncomfortable situation from Israel's perspective for two reasons, first, in light of the minority of the democratic countries in the General Assembly, and second, in light of Israel's intensified isolation stemming from decades[3] of non-membership in any regional group within the

UN. In the Asian Group, the Arab states did not accept Israel, nor did the European bloc, as from a geographical perspective it was located in Asia. This had implications for Israel's status in the UN arena, as states in all blocs submit recommendations together, and if Israel is not a member of any bloc, the chances of its pursuing its interests in the UN arena are limited.

Every year the General Assembly consistently approves unilateral anti-Israel resolutions. For example, in 2018, it approved 21 resolutions of condemnation against Israel and one resolution against each of the following countries: Iran, Syria, North Korea, Crimea, Myanmar, and the United States.

Adoption of the Palestinian Narrative

The deeper the UN delved into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the more the tendency to adopt the Palestinian narrative increased in all UN institutions. For example, in December 1970, the General Assembly recognized in Resolution 2535 "the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine" and their right to self-determination. Resolution 3210 of October 1974 invited Yasir Arafat to attend, address, and take part in the discussions of the General Assembly, and General Assembly Resolution 3237 (November 1974) granted the PLO observer status in all UN institutions. In addition, constituting a major turning point in the deterioration of Israel-UN relations, General Assembly Resolution 3379 of November 1975 determined "that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination," and appears to best exemplify the adoption of the Palestinian narrative.

In addition, every year the General Assembly consistently approves unilateral anti-Israel resolutions. For example, in 2018, it approved 21 resolutions of condemnation against Israel and one resolution against each of the following countries: Iran, Syria, North Korea, Crimea, Myanmar, and the United States. In other words, 21 resolutions of condemnation against Israel were approved, as opposed to only six resolutions of condemnation against other countries of the world (UN Watch, 2018). In 2019, the General Assembly approved 18 resolutions of condemnation against Israel and one resolution each against Syria, Iran, North Korea, the United States, Myanmar), and two resolutions against Crimea, for a ratio of 18 resolutions against Israel to only seven against the other countries of the world (UN Watch, 2019). In the context of this dynamic, Muravchik (2013) has argued that Israel is the state most discriminated against in the international organizations within the UN arena and its various agencies.

A number of prominent examples from recent years also testify to the adoption of the Palestinian narrative, for example, through the promotion of a policy of condemning Israel in the UN Human Rights Council and UNESCO (the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). In this context, two resolutions of UNESCO have been most prominent: one, approved in October 2016, which expresses doubt regarding the ties between Judaism and the Western Wall, and another, approved in May 2017, which negates Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem (Resnik, 2018; Salman, 2019b). These two resolutions demonstrate the ongoing trend of adopting the Palestinian narrative during the recent period. However, in contrast to past decades in which Israel chose a passive policy, over the past two decades, despite the continued acceptance of the Palestinian narrative by the UN institutions, and certainly by UNESCO, the policy is changing, as reflected in a more active approach on Israel's part.

Adoption of the Palestinian narrative has also been pronounced in the Security Council. Between 2001 and 2018, with its veto power, the United States blocked 13 proposed resolutions against Israel (Salman, 2019a; 2019b). In the General Assembly, this trend was manifested primarily during a special session held every year in which some 20 pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli resolutions were approved by an

automatic majority. This event, referred to as the International Day for Solidarity with the Palestinian People, has taken place in November on an annual basis since 1977, with the aim of expressing solidarity with the Palestinians. For example, between 2015 and 2018, 76 anti-Israeli resolutions were approved by an automatic majority (Salman, 2019a) during these special sessions. Although the resolutions in question were not operative in nature because General Assembly resolutions are decided by virtue of Chapter 6 of the United Nations Charter, symbolic resolutions hold value, certainly in the long term: in the era of mass media and the creation of virtual spaces and social media, which wield great influence on global public opinion, such resolutions can help create cognitive pressure that makes it possible to leave the issue on the global agenda with the aim of bringing about political change. In addition to the tendency within the various UN institutions to adopt the Palestinian narrative, the other reasons for the majority vote against Israel in many cases actually stemmed from General Assembly member states' expression of their dissatisfaction with the ability of the superpowers—in this case, the United States—to block Security Council resolutions in a manner that enabled them to continue pursuing a policy that is perceived by others as a deviation from the accepted international norms.

Politicization of the UN Arena

One of the reasons for the anti-Israeli orientation in the UN institutions is the dissatisfaction of UN member countries with US policy, given that one of the tools available for promoting measures against US policy is the adoption of an anti-Israeli position. Such actions are symbolic political measures that also serve geopolitical interests, as well as interests related to the global balance of power and regional arenas. For example, the Russian support for General Assembly Resolution A.ES-10/L.22 of December 2017, which denounced the relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem, may have stemmed in part from global political considerations and from the attempt to cope with the measures taken against it by the United States and the Western countries following its invasion of Ukraine in 2014. In this context, the General Assembly, like the Security Council, constitutes another arena for struggle between the superpowers, so that every discussion that concludes with a decision opposing US policy may be perceived as an achievement of Russian diplomacy, and vice-versa.

A prominent arena for the impact of politicized, biased, and discriminatory treatment of Israel in the UN is the UN Human Rights Council, which is responsible "for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations" and for making recommendations on them. To achieve its goals, it has approved resolutions on issues of human rights in the global arena since 2006, and since its inception its actions have been characterized by systematic discriminatory treatment of Israel. This is especially notable in item 7 of the Council's agenda, which bears the title "The Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories," and where every meeting focuses in order to voice criticism and condemnation specifically of Israel. Item 7 has had considerable influence on the effects of the Council's modes of actions against Israel, as it allows for open and consistent critical discussion, but only against Israel (Navoth, 2014). One prominent example of this was the Council's 2012 investigation of "the implications of the Israeli settlements," while it simultaneously refrained from investigating the Pakistani government's war against the Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (2007-2017), which caused the deaths of some 30,000 people (Resnik, 2018). Support for this assessment can be found in testimony that leaves no doubt regarding the bias against Israel in the UN Human Rights Council, articulated by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan:

> Whether their meetings coincided with the Lebanese war, or not, they have tended to focus on the Palestinian issue, and of course when you focus on the Palestinian-Israeli issue, without even discussing Darfur and other issues, some wonder what is this Council doing? Do they not have a sense of fair play? Why should they ignore other situations and focus on one area? (Schlein, 2006)

Thus, when the countries that are members of the Council, including autocratic states that themselves are not scrupulous about maintaining human rights within their own borders, are given the authority to make decisions regarding human rights, the results from Israel's perspective are unavoidable, and the decisions are meant to achieve politicization and consistent bias against Israel (Resnik, 2018; Navoth, 2014). The Council's prejudicial treatment of Israel manifested in its many critical decisions, follow-up reports, and discrimination against Israel has on more than one occasion been the subject of criticism, especially in light of the fact that its very establishment stemmed from the need to replace the UN Human Rights Commission, which operated until 2006, due to substantial criticism of its composition and its actions (Navoth, 2006, 2014; Ghanea, 2006; Bayefsky, 2011; Baker, 2013; Cotler, 2013).

Politicization has also been manifested in the agreements between the different blocs in terms of voting patterns. Israel must cope with the bloc of Islamic states that enjoy an automatic majority in voting in the UN arena, which sometimes compels Western countries to assign it greater importance due to political and economic considerations. For example, during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, countries of the Arab bloc supported the condemnation of apartheid, and countries of the African bloc supported the decisions denouncing Israel (Blum, 2008). Moreover, the international community's demonstrated loathing of the apartheid regime in South Africa today makes it easier for Palestinians and Israel-delegitimization activists to argue that the Israeli-Palestinian case reflects the violation of the right to self-determination. In this way, Israel has been perceived, in the UN arena and elsewhere, as oppressing the Palestinians in a manner similar to the regime that oppressed blacks in South Africa, making the Palestinian case an example of injustice perpetrated by Israel. This dynamic has also had implications for the UN arena, which has become a focal point of augmented politicization that is currently exploited by various parties, including the Palestinian Authority and proponents of delegitimization (Michael, 2017).

Voting in the General Assembly reflects bloc voting, and given the attempt to promote interests, this is one reason, for example, for the complexity that currently characterizes Israel's attempt to garner the political support of African states in the UN, in light of its attempt to demonstrate neutrality and to enjoy the best of both worlds. On the one hand, their membership in the Organization of African Unity obligates them to show solidarity and not deviate from the anti-Israel approach led by the Organization's African Muslim states, and on the other hand, they recognize the importance of their civil and security relations with Israel. Another example is the voting patterns of India, which while it has pursued warm relations and cooperative security efforts with Israel in recent years, has continued supporting anti-Israel decisions in the UN arena (Birvadker, 2016; Kumar, 2017). Ron Prosor, formerly Israel's ambassador to the UN, commented on this dynamic:

> When I heard ambassadors…praising Israel and complimenting it on its decision to be proactive, it reinforced my sense that the UN arena has substantial appreciation and respect for Israel…under the radar. After votes, I am approached by ambassadors who explain that they voted against

> because they had no choice. (Prosor, in an interview in Shamir, 2014)

Ambassador Danny Danon gave additional evidence of the politicization of voting in UN institutions in an interview in *Yediot Ahronot*:

> The former ambassadors with whom I spoke told me about the dual worlds—that of public relations and that of relations beneath the surface. However, it is amazing to see it really occur. The ambassador of a friendly country told me one thing before a discussion and ten minutes later took out his speech and said exactly the opposite. (Shmilovitz, 2015)

Thus from a chronological perspective and over a period of decades, a combination of the four factors discussed here led to tension in Israel-UN relations and created a situation in which Israel has, on more than one occasion, been compelled to defend itself against attacks and condemnations in UN bodies. Nonetheless, the past two decades have witnessed changes in this dynamic that may herald a change in trend. The literature review in the following discussion addresses the factors underlying the change in Israel's policy toward the UN.

Literature Review: The Reasons for the Change in Israeli Policy toward the UN

This article contends that over the past two decades, a change has occurred in Israeli activity in the UN arena, characterized by the adoption of a proactive approach manifested in increased attempts to influence the UN from within its ranks. This section will present the factors noted in the literature that played a role in the development of Israel-UN relations in the 1990s, with a focus on three additional factors: the increased importance of the UN in the global arena, Israel's acceptance into the UN's Western European and Others Group, and Palestinian activism in the UN arena. These three factors explain the turning point in Israeli policy that began in the year 2000.

In the 1990s, a number of shifts occurred in the global arena that aided the positive development of Israel-UN relations, including, for example, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the United States as the only superpower, the Madrid Conference and the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and the expansion of globalization (Ben-Meir, 2011; Bein, 2002; Blum, 2002). These factors indeed helped promote Israel-UN relations, but a turning point in Israeli policy was only facilitated in 2000, which is why, beyond the reasons discussed in the literature, the additional factors presented here may explain the expansion of Israel's proactive stance and constitute basic elements attesting to a change in policy.

First, it is important to note the recognition around the world and in Israel beginning in the 1990s of the increased importance of the UN as an actor in the international arena, particularly in light of its weakness during the Cold War when it operated in the shadow of the ideological struggle between the two superpowers regarding its role in the international community. For example, from 1989 onward, the attempt to contend with the civic and humanitarian issues in developing countries, such as environmental quality and challenges, civic development, population growth, humanitarian crises, droughts, water sources, hunger, and desertification rose in importance (Mingst & Karns, 2000). Moreover, from the 1990s onward, the UN has played a central role in dealing with the internal conflicts that pose challenges to the stability of regional order and peace and security in the international arena, in light of their proliferation and the human suffering they involve. At the same time, the number of conflicts in the global arena is on the decline (Pettersson & Eck, 2018; Pettersson et al., 2019), primarily due to peacekeeping missions under UN auspices at the focal points of conflicts

around the world (Salman, 2018).[4] Amos Yadlin has attested to the status and importance of the UN: "There is currently no country in the world that does not wish to be a member of the UN and to belong to this important international institution" (Yadlin, 2019).

Second, the changing trend began to gain significant momentum with Israel's acceptance into the Western European and Others Group in 2000, due in large degree to the efforts of the United States and its ambassador to the UN at the time, Richard Holbrooke. Although there is no concrete evidence, it is possible that the US efforts to facilitate Israel's acceptance into the WEOG were made against the background of the Israeli-Palestinian political process, which was then led by President Bill Clinton and culminated in the Camp David summit of July 2000. In any event, it was a major turning point, as Israel's acceptance to the group enabled it, for the first time, to take part in the activity of the UN and its various institutions, and to elect and be elected to positions in UN bodies, despite the opposition of the bloc of Arab states. For example, this enabled Israel, for the first time, to submit its candidacy for non-permanent membership in the Security Council. This position provides member states with substantial benefits, including the ability to support votes pertaining to the positions of superpowers and increase the state's presence and prestige in the international arena. This is even more important in the Israeli context, as in international institutions, Israel is compelled to contend inter alia with efforts at delegitimzation on the part of the Palestinians and their supporters. Hatuel-Radoshitzky (2016) sheds light on the importance of non-permanent Security Council membership, as non-permanent Security Council membership for a longstanding UN member state is comparable to membership in the General Assembly for new UN members. Although Israel finally withdrew its candidacy in light of its slim chance of election, this was nonetheless indicative of the changing orientation of Israel's policy toward the UN.

A third cause of change in Israeli policy toward the UN has stemmed from the Palestinians' activity and their increasing use over the past two decades of voting processes within UN institutions to pursue their political goals in a manner that has led Israel to take more concerted actions in the UN to thwart them. In 2000, following the failure of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, a new round of violence erupted, culminating in Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002. Following the lack of success in the realm of terrorism and the end of the Arafat era, the Palestinians appear to have adopted an alternative in the form of diplomatic activity in the UN arena via two primary channels. The first is a negative campaign revolving largely around the delegitimization of Israel, and the second is a positive struggle revolving around an attempt to win recognition of the establishment of a Palestinian state (Hatuel-Radoshitzky, 2015). Particularly notable in the context of the Palestinians' positive struggle was use of the mechanism of the Uniting for Peace resolution in the UN General Assembly.

The General Assembly serves as a forum for discussion of a host of global issues among the 193 UN member states. Its institutional structure is egalitarian in that each state has one vote, regardless of its size or power in the international arena, and no state has the right of veto. From this perspective, the United States and Togo, for example, have equal voting rights within the General Assembly. Based on an initiative of the United States from the 1950s, the Uniting for Peace resolution (Resolution 377) was approved in an attempt to deal with the paralysis that gripped the Security Council during the Korean War, when the Soviet Union made repeated use of its veto power in order to prevent the imposition of sanctions against North Korea; hence the paralysis of Security Council activity. The Uniting for Peace resolution facilitates the proposal of draft resolutions to the General Assembly even if they were previously not accepted for discussion before

the Security Council, as long as the initiative for discussion has the support of a two-thirds majority of members of the General Assembly. Since the end of the Cold War, this mechanism has served to leave issues on the agenda after they were torpedoed in the Security Council, and from 1997 onward, it has been used solely to promote Palestinian goals in an attempt to condemn Israel in light of the anti-Israel majority in the General Assembly. Therefore, in order to contend with the Palestinians in the UN arena and in parallel to US support, Israel works to expand its circle of political support from other UN states as well (Salman, 2018; 2019a). The following discussion analyzes Israel's three primary channels of operation, which demonstrate how the change in Israeli policy is made in practice.

Israeli Activity in the UN Arena: Empirical Analysis and Discussion

Although the fluctuations in the global arena in the 1990s aided in the development of Israel-UN relations, they are not a turning point in policy. Rather, there are three primary channels through which Israel's proactive approach has been implemented since the year 2000: participation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); attainment of key positions within UN institutions; and an effort to influence voting patterns in the General Assembly.

Millennium Development Goals

In addition to traditional UN goals, Israel has taken part in meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goals, such as civil, social, and economic development; the reduction of poverty; the provision of humanitarian aid; the promotion of human rights; the challenge of climate change and its effects, including phenomena related to desertification and drought; and improvement of the health situation in the Third World. In 2015, at the end of the 15-year period that was designated to meet the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon expanded the goals to included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, attesting to the importance the UN ascribes to these issues (UN website, 2015). With its technological abilities in the fields of drip irrigation systems, water conservation, water purification and reuse, solar energy development, and economic and efficient resource management, Israel has worked in the UN arena in recent years to initiate resolutions to promote civic and humanitarian development in Third World countries. These initiatives have increased Israel's presence among the family of nations, highlighted Israel's contribution to the UN attempt to promote its millennium goals, and helped create a positive image, beyond and contrasting with what is associated with its conflict with the Palestinians.

A chronological analysis beginning in 2000 demonstrates how Israel's humanitarian initiatives have surfaced. For example, Israel's initiative within the General Assembly regarding innovation in development in the Third World received the support of 129 countries (UN Resolution A/RES/202/67). In another draft resolution that was submitted at Israel's initiative—which dealt with making technological-agricultural abilities accessible and more effective for developing countries, particularly in poor regions suffering from drought and hunger, and was supported by a majority of 133 countries in December 2011—Israel's contributions to meeting the UN's millennium goals were recognized. Prosor assessed that "the resolution constitutes international recognition of Israel's excellence and its contribution to the world" (Shamir, 2011).

In 2013, Israel organized an event at the UN building on the subject of innovation and development, which was attended by the President of the General Assembly (Foreign Ministry website, 2013), and in May 2015 Ambassador Prosor presented the Israeli vision of renewable energy and ways of actualizing it within the framework of the UN forum on issues of sustainable energy at the initiative of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. Prosor

emphasized that Israel was developing technologies meant to harness solar energy for everyday use, and that it was committed to the development of alternative energy sources. As an expression of actualization of this vision, Prosor noted that the Knesset building is a model of efficient energy use because the building's roof is covered with solar panels, which reduces the building's energy needs by one-third and saves half a million dollars each year. The ambassador also noted that Israel is a center with a global international reputation for research and development for renewable energy, and that it is committed to share this innovation and expertise with developing countries (Dagoni, 2015).

Where Israel makes use of its technological abilities for humanitarian development needs, it is likely to win not only the support of the developing countries but also the support of the various UN institutions.

These examples reflect how Israeli envoys have been able to present the state from angles that transcend the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting its contribution to the family of nations. Nikolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, has cited the productive cooperation between Israel and the UN in the realm of humanitarian development (Mladenov, 2019). In conclusion, where Israel makes use of its technological abilities for humanitarian development needs, it is likely to win not only the support of the developing countries but also the support of the various UN institutions (Salman, 2019a).

Israeli Representatives in Key Positions in UN Institutions

Today, 103 Israelis serve in the UN in a variety of positions, including sensitive and senior positions (Eichner, 2019a). In addition to the fact that its acceptance to the WEOG has enabled Israel to elect and be elected for key positions in UN institutions, it also marked the onset of improvement in the country's status in the UN arena (Mladenov, 2019), which has been manifested in a number of appointments of Israeli representatives within UN institutions. For example, in 2016, Danny Danon, Israel's ambassador to the UN, was selected to serve as Vice President of the General Assembly, despite efforts by the Arab bloc to thwart his appointment. Danon's appointment to this position should be considered along with two previous appointments of Israeli ambassadors to this position in recent years: Dan Gillerman, who was appointed in 2005 as a representative of the WEOG, and Ron Prosor in 2012.[5]

Moreover, in May 2017, the UN withdrew its support for a Palestinian women's center named after a female terrorist who took part in the 1978 attack on an Israeli bus (known as the Coastal Road Massacre) and Norway followed suit. Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that the measure was taken after Israel appealed to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and emphasized that the appeal itself testified to a new Israeli policy toward the United Nations (Shalev, 2017). In addition, in January 2019, Israel was selected for the first time to represent the Western Group as deputy chair of the UN Committee on Non-Government Organizations (UN Watch, 2019), and in July Yaron Vaks was selected as deputy chair of the Fifth Committee, which deals with UN budget and administration, as the representative of the Western countries on the committee. Israel's prominent activity on issues of development and the provision of medical aid to the UN peacekeeping forces deployed to conflict areas is prominent, and Ambassador Danon noted: "Yaron's election to this senior position…is an expression of confidence in Israel on the part of tens of countries around the world" (Kahana, 2019).

These appointments exemplify a different aspect of Israel's proactive policy in the UN arena. This understanding is supported by Ambassador Gillerman, who maintained that from Israel's perspective, initiative within the

UN found expression inter alia in the dispatch of Israelis to serve in key positions within UN institutions in a variety of areas, including law and security (Gillerman, 2019).

Influencing Voting Patterns

There has been an attempt in recent years to win the political support of developing countries in UN institutions by promoting pro-Israel voting. The past decade has witnessed a notable trend of closer Israeli foreign relations with developing countries, especially on the African continent. One explicit goal of the improvement of relations has been to change the voting patterns of African countries in the UN to reflect support for Israel (Ravid, 2017). This is attested to by the remarks of Foreign Ministry officials. For example, in a February 2017 meeting with Israeli representatives on the African continent, the Prime Minister said:

> In the pyramid of our interests in foreign policy, Africa occupies a very high position…I would like to say what this interest is. The first interest is to dramatically change the situation of Africa's votes in the UN and international bodies from opposition to support…That is the first aim, and I am intentionally defining it. There are also many other aims, but this aim surpasses them all. (Prime Minister's Office, 2017)

Additional evidence lies in Netanyahu's remarks at a briefing for the delegation of ambassadors to the UN that arrived in Israel for a visit in February 2018: "This year alone… the General Assembly approved 20 resolutions against Israel and only 6 against the rest of the world…It is a ridiculous situation…We want you to change your voting patterns" (Prime Minister's Office, 2019). Against the background of a visit by Netanyahu to Africa in 2016, Arieh Oded, a former Israeli ambassador to a number of countries in Africa, maintained: "One of the goals of the visit is to change the situation, so that they don't automatically vote against us… so that they will at least abstain from the votes" (Cohen, 2016). That is to say, in Israel's view, a positive change in voting patterns in the UN arena can also be manifested in abstentions or absence from votes. Instructive support for this understanding is conveyed by Prosor, who describes a conversation with a state representative from South Africa: "And how will you vote?...The Arabs are putting serious pressure [on us], he responded…And you think that by tomorrow you'll be able to get over the bad case of the flu that you've contracted? Marco broke into a cough and was absent from the vote the next day" (Haimovitz, 2017).

The past decade has witnessed a notable trend of closer Israeli foreign relations with developing countries, especially on the African continent. One explicit goal of the improvement of relations has been to change the voting patterns of African countries in the UN to reflect support for Israel.

Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely leaves no room for doubt regarding Israel's activity in the UN arena to change the voting patterns:

> The major change on the world map regarding Israel and the strengthening of diplomatic relationships…with countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America is beginning to produce a change in the voting patterns…We are asking that all countries that still vote according to the voting patterns of the old world cease taking part in this Palestinian theater of the absurd… Many countries have changed their voting policy in the UN in light of their stronger relations with Israel. (Hotovely, 2017)

This trend is indeed reflected in the UN arena, albeit in a limited manner. On the one

hand, there has been a visible increase in the rate of support of Israel in the UN institutions, manifested in positive votes in the General Assembly. On the other hand, this increase has taken the form of abstentions and absences from anti-Israel votes. For example, an empirical examination of the voting patterns of four countries in central and eastern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Rwanda), based on content analysis of 95 resolutions approved by the General Assembly between 2014 and 2018 in the context of Israel found a connection between Israel's efforts and the trend in some countries' UN voting patterns in favor of Israel.[6] As noted, this trend has not been manifested in clear voting in favor of Israel; however, the consistent tendency to abstain and be absent from anti-Israel votes demonstrates the positive trend in the voting of South Sudan (47 abstentions and 39 absences, in a total of 86 out of 95 votes) and Rwanda (29 abstentions and 52 absences, for a total of 81 votes).

Moreover, the attempt to influence voting was reflected, for example, in the obstruction of the Palestinians' initiative to upgrade their status in the UN in early 2019 from that of a non-member observer state to full membership. In order to be accepted as a UN member state, a state must receive at least nine votes of support in the Security Council, followed by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. Thus, Israel's efforts in the Security Council led the Palestinians to recognize its slim chances of winning a majority and having the United States not veto the proposed resolution (Eichner, 2019b). This measure is consistent with Hotovely's remarks pertaining to Israel's activity to bring about a change in the voting patterns in the UN arena.

Conclusion

Against the background of the 70th anniversary of Israel-UN relations, this article has sought to examine the developments in Israel-UN relations over time, while analyzing the reasons for the deterioration of relations that began in the early 1950s and attempting to highlight the changes that have occurred in Israel's approach in the past two decades. The changes have been manifested in a shift from a policy of "the nothing UN" to a proactive policy aimed at influencing UN resolutions and improving Israel's status among the family of nations.

The analysis shows that a practical proactive approach in the UN arena was launched primarily with Israel's acceptance into the WEOG in 2000 and has been manifested largely in activity undertaken through three channels, which are both political and apolitical: participating in efforts to achieve the world Millennium Development Goals; holding key positions in UN bodies and institutions; and attempting to influence the voting patterns in the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The analysis showed that in the apolitical channels—in which Israel demonstrates initiative and works to promote diverse issues in the various UN bodies that are consistent with the MDGs—the cooperation between Israel and the UN has been positive, and Israel has won recognition of its abilities and its contribution to the international community. This cooperation has helped portray Israel beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has contributed to Israel's increased status in the UN arena and the international arena; it also reflects that many countries do not hesitate to cooperate with Israel and have made use of its abilities in different areas. At the same time, regarding political issues related largely to the conflict, Israel still finds it difficult to balance the situation. The consistent engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a major cause of Israel's mixed relations with the UN. This has found expression mainly in voting patterns regarding political issues, in which UN member states still vote in accordance with the traditional pattern. As a result, more than one instance exhibits a difference between the official anti-Israel voting patterns of specific countries and their positive bilateral relations with Israel when not in the limelight.

In conclusion, Israel-UN relations are complex and characterized by mixed trends. On the one hand, the advancement of resolutions condemning Israel in the Security Council, and the continued trend of anti-Israel resolutions in the Human Rights Council, have reflected the hostile approach to Israel within the UN. On the other hand, in January 2019, Israel was elected, for the first time, to represent the Western Group and to serve as vice-chair of the UN committee that supervises non-government human rights groups, and a gradual change in voting patterns in Israel's favor illustrates an expansion of the positive trend in the UN arena. This trend should be intensified, in part through ongoing, active, and consistent diplomatic activity vis-à-vis the UN and other international institutions.

Furthermore, the more Israel's foreign policy persists in making use of its technological and scientific abilities in the broader UN arena and offering technological solutions to the global humanitarian problems related to phenomena such as desertification, drought, hunger, agricultural development, and civic-humanitarian development, the more its ability to influence the different bodies of the UN will expand beyond the General Assembly and the Security Council. It therefore appears that Israel could benefit from continuing to adhere to what, despite it all, seems like an approach that enables it to take part in UN activity in an attempt to influence its decisions from within, as Israel's membership in the UN endows it with standing in the organization and strengthens its standing in the international community.

This claim echoes remarks by Dan Gillerman: The UN "is an important arena: [it is] the parliament of the world and an opportunity to show the real Israel…and a place in which to forge relationships with the countries of the world" (Gillerman, 2019). In addition, a conscious decision by Israel to not be part of the organization and its various bodies would serve those who oppose it, who sooner or later would fill the vacuum left by Israel. From this perspective, Israel's withdrawal from UNESCO following a similar American measure would not necessarily serve Israeli policy, precisely because it would allow its adversaries to operate more freely.

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Notes

1 The Non Aligned Movement (NAM), established in 1961, numbers 120 states (approximately two-thirds of the UN membership) that do not see themselves as in the domain of any particular superpower. See Profile: Non-Aligned Movement.

2 The sentence "The state was established only by the daring of Jews and not by the resolutions of the nothing UN" was spoken during a debate in late March 1955 between Ben-Gurion and Sharett regarding the nature of Israel's response to acts of terrorism. See Sharett (1955). Nonetheless, in a newspaper interview in 1967, Ben-Gurion spoke of the UN in a more moderate manner, and in response to the interviewer's question concerning his earlier use of the phrase "*Umm Shmum*" said: "The same is true today. But a nothing UN is better than nothing." See Limor (1967).

3 The division into regional groups was established in 1961, and the Arab states, which constituted a majority of the Asian Group, blocked Israel from joining. Thus, in addition to its isolation, Israel was unable to take part in UN activities in a meaningful manner.

4 There are currently 14 peacekeeping missions underway around the world. See https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate.

5 In 1952, Abba Eban was the first Israeli ambassador to the United Nations to be appointed Vice President of the General Assembly.

6 See the databases of the UN, http://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/voting.asp; the US State Department, https://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2017/practices/index.htm; and UN Watch, https://unwatch.org/2018-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-israel-texts-votes-analysis.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (l) with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, New Delhi, January 15, 2018. Photo: Prime Minister ´s Office

Shifting Sands of Time: India's Approach toward Israel

P. R. Kumaraswamy

Over the past hundred years India's policy toward Israel has faced numerous challenges and prompted different approaches. While there were no problems or disputes with Israel, India pursued a policy of recognition without relations. The end of the Cold War, the shift in Middle East dynamics after the Kuwaiti crisis (1990-1991), and India's economic growth prompted India to chart a new course that better reflects its interests and its desire to project its strength. Although normalization has been in place for over a quarter of a century, relations between India and Israel continue to arouse much interest, both in India and abroad, primarily due to the gradualist approach and the efforts to integrate Israel into a wider Middle East policy. Under the Narendra Modi government, Israel is "special," and India has successfully skirted the negative implications of relations with the Jewish state, but at the same time Israel is "normal," given that India no longer fears overt relations.

Keywords: India, Global South, Jerusalem, Narendra Modi, normalization, Israel-India relations, Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Introduction

In his campaign for the September 2019 Knesset election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu used images of three international figures: United States President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Though a rather unlikely montage, the inclusion of the first two leaders is understandable. The US is Israel's principal strategic ally, and bilateral ties have grown particularly strong under Trump, while the Russian immigrants comprise a sizable portion of the Israeli electorate. But why Modi? When the number of Israelis of Indian origin is insignificant, how many votes was Netanyahu planning to gain by playing the Modi card? Rather, instead of trying to lure voters, Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister was conveying a powerful message: under his leadership, Israel was not alone but has been courted by important global personalities (PM Modi features in Netanyahu's election campaign in Israel, 2019). Intentionally or otherwise, Netanyahu has heightened India's importance in Israel's foreign policy calculus. How did this happen? Or was it always the case?

The Indo-Israeli friendship flagged by Netanyahu is a post-Cold War development. It was only on January 29, 1992, while the multilateral Middle East conference was underway in Moscow, that India announced the establishment of diplomatic relations. Until then, India followed a policy of recognition-without-relations introduced in early 1952 by its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who promised full diplomatic relations with Israel. In announcing the establishment of relations with Israel, Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao signaled India's willingness to recognize and respond to the end of the Cold War, which demanded political pragmatism and abandonment of ideological blinders that dominated the inter-state relations for over four decades. More than any other possible measures, normalization of relations with Israel was the most powerful step that conveyed India's preparedness for the new world order.

The Indian journey toward formal relations with Israel and its subsequent expansion is century-old and began shortly after the Balfour Declaration, which promised the British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. It falls into four broad timeframes, with each marking a distinct pattern and set of interests.

The Process

The roots of India's Israel policy can be traced to the early 1920s when the Indian nationalists faced a pan-Islamic struggle regarding the office of caliph, then held by the Ottoman sultan. For centuries, the Indian Muslims were indifferent toward the Sunni Islamic institution. The existence of various Islamic dynasties based in India contributed to their long indifference and neglect of the caliphate. When the Ottoman Empire, the last prominent Islamic rule, came under attack during the First World War, despondency set in and the Indian Muslims began rallying against the British in support of the Ottoman sultan-cum-caliph (Minualt, 1982). The struggle, commonly known as the Khilafat Movement, eventually failed when the Turkish Republic abolished the caliphate in 1924.

It was during this pan-Islamic struggle that Indian nationalists paid attention to the question of Palestine and framed their position on the emerging demands for a Jewish national home. More than his contemporaries or future leaders, Mahatma Gandhi recognized the religious symbolism of the Palestinian problem. Shortly after the Balfour Declaration, he saw Palestine as an integral part of *Jazirat ul-Arab* (the Arabian Peninsula) and observed that according to the injunctions of Prophet Mohammed, Palestine could not be handed over to non-Muslim control or sovereignty. In April 1920, he observed that the injunction of the Prophet

> does not mean that the Jews and the Christians cannot freely go to Palestine, or even reside there and own property. What non-Muslims cannot do is to acquire *sovereign jurisdiction.* The Jews cannot receive sovereign

> rights in a place which has been *held for centuries* by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest. (CWMG, 19, p. 530, emphasis added)

In May 1921, he remarked that the leaders of Khilafat movement "claim Muslim control of *Jazirat ul-Arab* of which Palestine is but a part" (CWMG, 20, p. 129). What was the compulsion to adopt that position, especially when the Holy Land was promised to the Jews centuries before Mohammed?

The Khilafat movement was an eye-opener for the nationalists who were fighting for India's freedom from the British. The Indian National Congress could not be "Indian" or "National" with only minimal participation of the Muslim population. Mahatma Gandhi sought to remedy this situation. By embracing the pan-Islamic agenda of the Indian Muslims, he tried to involve them in the Congress party and its anti-British struggle. Though some within the Congress opposed embracing a pan-Islamic agenda, the opportunity was there, and soon Gandhi emerged as the leader of the Khilafat struggle until the movement dissipated after the abolition of the caliphate by Kamel Ataturk in 1924 (Nanda, 1989).

During the Khilafat period Palestine figured in the Indian political consciousness and was perceived through the Islamic prism. This approach became more pronounced in the 1930s when the Palestine question became an internal political battle between the Congress Party and the Muslim League. As the latter was championing Muslim separatism in British India, the demands for a Jewish national home in Palestine became a Congress-League contest for the support of Indian Muslims, something the Zionist leaders sought to avoid. Keeping India, especially its Muslim population, away from Palestine was the prime motive of Chaim Weizmann's brief encounter with Khilafat leader Shaukat Ali in January 1931 (Azaryahu & Reiter, 2015) and the meeting between Gandhi and the Zionist leaders in October that same year (Kumaraswamy, 2018b); both meetings took place in London.

On the eve of the Second World War, the Indian nationalists hardened their positions. Reflecting the historical absence of antisemitism, the Congress party was sympathetic toward the plight of the Jews in Europe, but this did not influence the Congress to endorse the Jewish aspirations for a homeland. The tiny Jewish population in India was part of the reason for the Indian unfamiliarity with Jewish history, the evolution of Zionism, and the Jewish longing for a home. Furthermore, British India had the largest Muslim population in the world, and this contributed to the Islamic narrative gaining prominence when discussing the Jewish claims to Palestine. Hence, the Congress party visualized an Arab state in Palestine with limited autonomy for the Jews.

The Congress party's opposition to Jewish self-determination could not be separated from its ongoing contest with the Muslim League in India; if the Jews were a separate nation because they follow a different religion, the Congress would have to accept the similar claims of the Muslim League. The Congress could not support the Jewish nationalist aspirations in Palestine while opposing a similar demand of the Muslim League in India, and vice-versa (Kumaraswamy, 2018b).

This became the formal Indian position when it was elected to the eleven-member United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) in May 1947. While a seven-member majority proposed partition as the solution, India—supported by Iran and what was then Yugoslavia—proposed Federal Palestine. The Indian plan offered autonomous Arab and Jewish states within one federal Palestinian state, which it saw as a compromise between partition and unitary Palestine demanded by the Arabs (Agwani, 1971).

The Federal Plan was the brainchild of India's Prime Minister Nehru and was formalized on September 1, 1947, literally two weeks after India's own partition along religious lines

(Kumaraswamy, 2010). Despite its ideological opposition to religion being the basis of nationality and the two-nation theory, the Congress party accepted the communal partition as the price of India's freedom. For the Congress, led by Nehru, partition was acceptable in the Indian context but not for Palestine. Likewise, the Muslim League followed a contradictory logic; partition and the formation of a separate state for the minorities was necessary for India but had to be opposed in Palestine.

The Indian proposal for a Federal Palestine came despite Nehru knowing the deep divisions between the two communities in Palestine through the periodic reporting of Abdul Rahman, the Indian representative to UNSCOP. Contrasts between the partition of India and Palestine are telling:

a. Partition of India was accepted by both the parties, and in Palestine it was vehemently rejected by the Arabs;
b. The Muslim community was a majority in Palestine, and a minority in India;
c. The majority party (Congress) accepted the partition in India, but the majority (Arabs) rejected it for Palestine; and
d. Partition left a sizable Muslim population both in India and Israel, and ensuring their civil and political rights as equal citizens has been one of the enduring challenges facing both the democracies.

The geographical proximity compelled the Congress party to be pragmatic and come to terms with the partition of India; but distance and larger foreign policy calculations resulted in the Indian nationalists' reluctance toward accepting the partition of Palestine.

Thus, India joined the Arab and Islamic countries in voting against the partition plan, and during the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly (April 16-May 15, 1948), it joined hands with the US in seeking to freeze the partition vote toward reducing the inter-communal violence in Palestine. The unilateral declaration of independence by the Zionist leaders on the eve of the British departure and its immediate recognition by President Harry S. Truman changed the regional dynamics. On May 17, 1948, the second full working day of the State of Israel, Moshe Sharett—Foreign Minister of the provisional government—wrote to Prime Minister Nehru, who also held the Foreign Ministry, asking for recognition. Conscious of its implications, India did not formally acknowledge, let alone reply to this request. It adopted the same response when the Mufti-led All Palestine Government sought India's recognition in October (Kumaraswamy, 1991). In line with its opposition to the partition plan, on May 11, 1949, New Delhi voted against Israel's admission into the UN, the only such occasion in India's history when it voted against admission of a country into the UN.

While India, an emerging player in the decolonized world, was important for the nascent Israeli state, New Delhi had limited political interests in the Jewish state, and this delayed progress toward formalizing recognition through diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile, the question of recognition of Israel figured in the Constituent Assembly, which drafted India's constitution. Nehru's acceptance of the People's Republic of China was flagged as a precedent and benchmark. Some Arab countries gravitating toward Pakistan and diplomatic pressures from the US influenced India's thinking on the issue. After much deliberations, on May 17, 1950—interestingly, the day future Prime Minister Narendra Modi was born—India recognized the State of Israel (Kumaraswamy, 1995).

In the initial years, a shortage of funds and personnel compelled India to be selective in opening new diplomatic missions in different parts of the world, including the Middle East. While India, an emerging player in the decolonized world, was important for the nascent Israeli state, New Delhi had limited political interests in the Jewish state, and this

delayed progress toward formalizing recognition through diplomatic relations. This prompted Israel to send Dr. Walter Eytan—Director-General of the Foreign Ministry—to India in March 1952. He met several Indian officials, and even lunched with Prime Minister Nehru. The Indian leader assured Eytan that relations would be established and promised to secure the cabinet approval shortly after the ongoing elections to the first Lok Sabha elections (Eytan, Israel State Archives, 21/2383). Nehru even asked Ministry officials to prepare the budget for a resident Indian mission in Tel Aviv.

None of these promises were fulfilled, or more precisely, they took more than four decades to materialize. According to the accounts of Nehru's biographers Michael Brecher (Brecher, 1968b) and Sarvepalli Gopal (Gopal, 1980), Nehru did take the matter to the cabinet but was cautioned by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Nehru's senior colleague and former president of the Congress party raised two concerns, namely, Pakistan and the domestic Muslim population. Azad feared that Pakistan would earn diplomatic capital in the Arab world by exploiting India's relations with Israel and gain their support for its position on the Kashmir question in the UN General Assembly. Having taken the Kashmir dispute to the UN, Nehru needed the Arab support, or at least neutrality, and normalization with Israel, Azad argued, would be counterproductive. Similarly, India's partition had traumatized the Muslims of India, and given the Islamic dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Azad feared that the Indian minority population would be further alienated from the Congress party and government over relations with Israel. As subsequent events proved, Nehru accepted Azad's concerns and logic and deferred normalization.

The absence of relations easily influenced Nehru to accept the Arab diktats over Israel's participation in the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. The Indian Prime Minister insisted on the participation of the People's Republic of China, which was not recognized by several Asian countries who were invited to Bandung, but he was unable to prevail over the Arab countries regarding their opposition to Israel's participation. Nehru's confidant Krishna Menon felt that even Indonesia—the host and the country with the largest Muslim population—could have been convinced, but not Pakistan (Brecher, 1968a). The exclusion from Bandung, conceded by Nehru, eventually led to Israel's exclusion from the Non-Aligned Movement (September 1961) and its isolation from the Global South. Indeed, the anti-Israeli chorus in the United Nations and various other forums since the mid-1950s was the direct outcome of the Bandung conference, and Nehru was a reluctant handmaid in this saga. Had India maintained formal ties with Israel at that time, Nehru would not have easily succumbed to Arab pressure tactics or the Pakistani blackmail.

However, formal Indian opposition to normalization came amidst the Suez crisis. Interestingly Moshe Sharett, who had resigned as foreign minister due to policy differences with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, met Nehru in New Delhi when newspapers carried the Israeli military offensive as the headline news (Caplan, 2002). By then, Nehru's friendship with Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser was firmly in place, and Cairo had become a stopover for Nehru's visits to Europe and the United States. More than the aggression against a friendly country, Nehru was infuriated by Israel's collaboration with the imperial powers. As he was championing decolonization, Nasser was slowly gravitating toward Nehru's worldview against the Cold War-centric military blocs in the Middle East. Though he came under criticism for his lenient views on the Hungarian crisis, which was unfolding at that time (Reid, 1981), Nehru was forceful in his disapproval of the tripartite aggression, which affected his views on relations with Israel. Having not implemented his March 1952 pledge to Eytan, he was now forceful in deferring the move. On November 20, 1956, he informed the Lok Sabha that "in view of the existing passion" over the Suez crisis,

"diplomatic exchanges [with Israel] were not possible" (Kumaraswamy, 2010, p. 124). Since then, time-is-not-ripe became the standard Indian position regarding relations with Israel.

From 1956 onwards, Israel's policy choices and behavior added to India's reluctance for normalization. Interestingly, a similar situation elsewhere did not impede India from maintaining formal relations with the outside world. The most notable examples are China and Pakistan. Political differences and even military confrontations did not prevent India from maintaining diplomatic relations and resident missions in Beijing and Islamabad. Relationships and political engagements with them were seen a necessary and effective way of mitigating tensions and further conflicts.

Israel, however, was treated differently. Why did New Delhi avoid even minimal ties with Israel, especially when there were no political, economic, cultural, or strategic problems with the Jewish state? Why was India more hostile toward the Jewish state than it was toward China or Pakistan? The answer lies in two closely-linked external factors, namely, India's political competition with Pakistan and its limited diplomatic capital, especially in the Arab-Islamic world. Before discussing these factors, which contributed to the absence of formal ties with Israel until 1992, it is essential to remember the prolonged neglect of India and its leaders by the Zionist movement.

Neglect of India

India never figured in the political or diplomatic calculations of Zionism, and leading figures of the Zionist movement, such as Chaim Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, or Sharett, never reached out to the Indian nationalists. The reasons are not difficult to understand. India has been one of the few places in the world free from the scourge of antisemitism. This and the small Jewish community meant that from a Zionist viewpoint, India was not a critical arena that needed attention, and hence it did not figure in Zionist diplomacy.

Moreover, the success of the homeland projected rested on British support, and this precluded the Zionists from identifying with or supporting the Indian nationalists who were fighting the British. Thus, other than one brief meeting in October 1931, the Zionist leadership never met Gandhi, who dominated the nationalist struggle for over two decades. In line with his earlier pro-Arab positions in November 1938, Gandhi observed: "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English and France to the French." Though his remarks were questionable (Ginat, 2009; Kumaraswamy, 2018c), the limited Zionist interest in Gandhi disappeared after this controversial remark. Likewise, Ben-Gurion never reached out to India until after both partitions.

From 1956 onwards, Israel's policy choices and behavior added to India's reluctance for normalization. Interestingly, a similar situation elsewhere did not impede India from maintaining formal relations with the outside world.

The Zionist neglect of India was in contrast to the Arabs and Palestinians who reached out, identified with its anti-imperial struggle, and in the process, secured the steadfast support of the Congress party. The convergence of interests and mutual support were prevalent both before and after India's independence. Nehru and his successors emerged as the prominent supporters of the Palestine cause, and unlike some Arab countries, India's support for the Palestinians was visible, consistent, and even uncompromising.

When there were no bilateral disputes, what was the logic behind the prolonged non-relations between India and Israel? Why did India persist with its recognition-without-relations policy for over four decades? The reasons lie in two closely-linked external factors, Pakistan and Palestine, which also symbolized India's limited external influence during the Cold War.

The Pakistan Factor

The rivalry between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League during the anti-British struggle before 1947 transformed into Indo-Pakistan rivalry after the British departure from the Indian subcontinent. Earlier the target audience was the domestic Muslim population, which both parties wanted in order to expand their support base. It began in the 1920s during the pan-Islamic Khilafat phase and intensified in the following decade when the situation in Palestine was heating up. The League's vociferous demand for the revocation of the Balfour Declaration, criticisms of the British policy in Mandatory Palestine, and protests in support of the Arabs compelled the Congress party to increase its focus and formulate its position on Palestine (Kumaraswamy, 2018b).

The Jewish demand for a homeland reflected the emerging agenda of the Muslim League and its aspirations for a Muslim homeland in post-British India. In both cases, a distinct religious group felt it was also a nation and hence was entitled to self-determination and sovereignty. If the Congress party were to accept the Zionist argument of Jews being a distinct nation, it would not be able to reject the same clams of the Muslim League. In the Indian context, the religious-national convergence undermined the Congress agenda of an inclusive and unified country after the British departure. Therefore, the Congress Party's sympathy in 1938 for the Jews in Europe, under growing Nazi power, was accompanied by its support for the Arab nature of Palestine.

The Congress-League rivalry played out internationally when the UN took over the Palestine question, and this also became the first formal arena for the Indo-Pakistani disputes over Palestine. As a member of UNSCOP, India proposed Federal Palestine, but Jews as well as Arabs opposed this and hence the plan was never discussed in the United Nations and was largely forgotten even by the academics. (For a notable exception, see Ginat, 2004.) Opposing the partition proposal, the Arab states pushed for a unified Palestine, and this forced the UN General Assembly to appoint another panel to deliberate the idea. Comprising primarily Arab and Islamic countries, the sub-committee was headed by Pakistan, which joined the UN only on September 30, weeks after the UNSCOP report was submitted. With limited deliberations, the group endorsed unitary Palestine (UNGA, 1947), but its recommendation was rejected by the General Assembly, thereby leaving only the partition plan for wider deliberations and vote. And on November 29, both India and Pakistan voted against the majority plan that formed the legal basis for the establishment of the State of Israel.

Since then, an intense Indo-Pakistani rivalry played out in the Middle East and was visible for the entire duration of the Cold War. As the conflict over the Himalayan State of Jammu and Kashmir intensified following the Pakistan-backed infiltration after partition, Prime Minister Nehru took the matter to the UN on December 31, 1947. In hindsight one could fault the very expectation of the UN's ability to resolve the problem as an error of judgment, but the Kashmir dispute came to shape India's Middle East policy. As Israeli diplomat Eliyahu Sasson observed in December 1950, Pakistan has been the "center of gravity" of the Indian diplomats.[1] In practical terms, this meant that Israel became the casualty of India's rivalry with Pakistan, evidenced when Azad raised Pakistan as a concern against the normalization of relations with Israel shortly after the Nehru-Eytan meeting in 1952. Another senior aide to Prime Minister Nehru admitted that Pakistan was responsible for India succumbing to Arab pressures for the exclusion of Israel from the Bandung conference.

A more visible manifestation of the Indo-Pakistani rivalry over Israel was played out in the first Islamic summit held in Rabat in September 1969. The conference was in response to the fire in the al-Aqsa mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem a few weeks earlier, which enraged the Muslim sentiments across the Global South.

The Saudi and Moroccan monarchs sought to use the opportunity to undermine Nasser and generate an Islamic response and agreed for a conference to be hosted by King Hassan V. The preparatory team set out two criteria for the attendees; countries with a Muslim-majority population or with Muslims as heads of state. India did not fulfill either of the yardsticks; while Muslims constitute a large population, they are a minority in India; and Zakir Hussain, who was the third president, passed away in May 1969.

However, India was keen to attend the proposed Islamic conference, largely because of the strategic shifts brought by the Six Day War in 1967. The Arab military defeat buried the secular pan-Arabism and heralded the upsurge of the Islamist revivalism led by the conservative Saudi monarchy. This shift was unfavorable to India, which was closer to and benefited from the Nasser-led regional order in place since the 1950s. The Nehru-Nasser bonhomie reflected India's Middle East policy, and between 1953 and July 1955 alone, both leaders met as many as eight times (Heikal, 1973). After the 1967 War, India was compelled to adjust to the new Saudi-dominated regional order.

In contrast, the new shift benefited Pakistan. Since its birth, Pakistan has emphasized the Islamic element in furtherance of its relations with the Middle East (Chaudhri, 1957; Delvioe, 1995), and actively but unsuccessfully promoted the idea of an international body or "commonwealth of Muslim nations" (Khan, 1961). Pakistan was also part of the US-sponsored military blocs in the region, a move vehemently opposed by Nasser. The rivalry was more than tactical; some of the Pakistani diplomats, for example, hailed the Israeli military advances during the Suez War (Kumaraswamy, 2000). The post-1967 Middle East favored Pakistan and undermined India's interests. Since the al-Aqsa fire, there were massive demonstrations in different parts of India against Israel, and one such event in Calcutta (now Kolkata) drew over a million protesters. Responding to the new situation, India abandoned its secular approach and was eager to attend the Rabat conference.

From the materials available in the public domain, one can reconstruct the following. India approached King Faisal of Saudi Arabia through back-channel diplomacy and questioned the logic of not inviting a country with a sizable Muslim population. This effort was successful: India secured a nod to attend Rabat, and an official delegation by senior minister Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad was sent to Morocco. Before the delegation could reach Rabat, the conference had started, and India was represented by its Ambassador in Morocco, Gurbachan Singh. The presence of a turban-wearing Sikh diplomat in the Islamic conference upset Pakistani President Yahya Khan, who chose to stay away after the inaugural session. The mediatory efforts by King Faisal were unsuccessful, and India did not attend the subsequent deliberations. The conference meant to discuss Israel and the al-Aqsa incident was hijacked by the Indo-Pakistan rivalry (Kumaraswamy, 2010; Singh, 2006).

The Rabat fiasco symbolized the influence of Pakistan upon India's policy toward Israel and the broader Middle East. The formation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (later Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OIC) boosted Pakistan's endeavors in waving the Kashmir issue in the Islamic forum and beyond and became a major foreign policy challenge to India. Despite its best efforts, India was unable to remove the Kashmir issue from the OIC agenda. However, over time its economic ascendance since the early 1990s and its growing ties with key Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE dented the negative fallout of the OIC positions on Kashmir.

Primarily due to the Pakistan factor, until the normalization of relations, India has refrained from publicly acknowledging Israel's military help, and political support during its wars with China (1962) and Pakistan (1965 and 1971), and periodically rejected Israeli overtures. For decades Israel's only representation in India was confined to the consulate in Mumbai with

limited diplomatic immunities and restricted functions (Kumaraswamy, 2007). Even this representation became problematic following controversial remarks by Consul Yosef Hassin. In a media interview, he lamented that the Indian leaders "are afraid of the Arabs, they are afraid that Iraq will cancel their contracts, Saudi Arabia will stop accepting laborers… India is always asking for floor at the UN and other international forums to denounce Israel and prove to the Arabs that you are doing more than Pakistan. That way, you think you will impress the Arabs" (Sunday Observer, 1982).

These remarks were not inaccurate, and when it came to Israel, India was presenting itself to be more pro-Arab than Pakistan. The Jan Sangh-led opposition had long made similar charges against the Congress-led government party. Hassin's undiplomatic and intemperate remarks came amidst Israel's invasion of Lebanon and resulted in his being declared *persona non grata*. There were suggestions that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi even contemplated closing down the consulate but was dissuaded due to American pressure. The Pakistan factor remained dominant until the end of the Cold War when India was compelled to dovetail its policy in the new US-dominated world order and to forge relations with Israel.

More than the end of the Cold War and structural changes in the international order, it was the diminishing influence of the Palestinian factor that spurred India to reexamine its Israel policy.

The normalization of relations did not end the Indo-Pakistani tussle over Israel but took a different turn. India's growing ties with Israel have spurred debates within Pakistan over its continued opposition to the Jewish state. A sense of uneasiness is visible, especially over the Indo-Israeli military relations (Noor, 2004). Several Pakistani leaders, diplomats, media personalities, and even religious figures have suggested a reexamination of the status quo, especially in the wake of the Oslo process (Kumaraswamy, 2000, 2006). In short, while previously the Pakistan factor inhibited India from normalizing relations with Israel, since 1992, India's friendship with Israel has encouraged a Pakistani rethink on Israel.

The Palestinian Factor

More than the end of the Cold War and structural changes in the international order, it was the diminishing influence of the Palestinian factor in the regional polity that spurred India to reexamine its Israel policy.

For long, the instruments through which India could further its interests abroad have been limited to its pre-independent legacy of non-violent national liberation and desire for a peaceful resolution of international disputes. They enabled India to play a pivotal role in several issues and crises such as anti-imperialism, decolonization, Afro-Asian solidarity, the Commonwealth, disarmament, the nuclear arms race, Korea, Vietnam, and others. If national liberation movements saw India as an inspiration, major powers viewed it as a possible role model for the decolonized countries. Despite its limited economic influence, the admiration of rival blocs of the Cold War was genuine, but this did not endure. The mid-1950s saw the arrival of a Soviet bias in India's worldview manifested during the Prague Spring, and gradually New Delhi gravitated toward Moscow on a host of issues and tensions. As its moral sheen began to fade, a fatal blow came over its military confrontation with China in 1962. The inability to defend its territories made India's leadership claims empty and unsustainable. Like the Yom Kippur War for Golda Meir, the Sino-Indian War ushered in Nehru's political eclipse.

India's diminishing diplomatic influence, limited economic clout, and preoccupation with Pakistan resulted in New Delhi looking for the Palestine cause to further its interests in the Arab-Islamic Middle East. Mahatma Gandhi's 1938 statement that "Palestine belongs to the Arabs" figured prominently in Indian discussions on

Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the broader Middle East (Abhyankar, 2007; Ahmad, 2014; Chakravorti, 2008; Dasgupta, 1992; India, MEA, ND; Ramakrishnan, 2014; Ward, 1992). Since 1947, the support for the Palestinians has been a standard requirement when Indian leaders meet their Arab counterparts. For example, in December 1963, when the West Bank was still a part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, King Hussein visited India and met Prime Minister Nehru. The joint communique issued on the occasion declared that both leaders "expressed understanding and appreciation of the Palestinian problem" (Heptullah, 1991). The Palestine cause filled the vacuum created by India lacking political influence or economic clout in the Arab world. Though this did not lead to Arab support during India's wars, a contrary position would have firmly placed the Arab countries on the side of Pakistan.

The reliance on the Palestinian factor became untenable after the Kuwait crisis (1990-91). The perceived Palestinian support for President Saddam Hussein and his offer to withdraw from Kuwait if Israel were to do the same vis-à-vis the Palestinian territories proved fatal for the PLO (Abed, 1991). It was in Kuwait that Yasir Arafat founded al-Fatah in 1959 when he was pursuing engineering. Hence, in the hour of their need, the Kuwaitis felt abandoned by the Palestinian leadership. Once the *status quo ante* was restored in Kuwait after US-led Operation Desert Storm, the tide turned against the Palestinians, and their stay in Gulf Arab countries became problematic. Kuwait alone expelled more than 350,000 Palestinians (The White House, 2020). For a while, some Arab countries even imposed an unofficial ban on Arafat, and because of the Kuwaiti refusal, he could not visit the emirate before his death in November 2004. Upon his election as president, Mahmoud Abbas visited the Emirate only after his public apology over the PLO's stand during the Kuwaiti crisis (BBC News, 2004).

Thus, in the wake of the Kuwaiti crisis, the Palestine cause through which India promoted its interest in the Middle East since independence suddenly lost its importance. The Arab anger in the Gulf over Arafat meant that no country, including India, could expect favorable treatment with their pro-Palestinian credentials. The Kuwait crisis was followed by the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference (October 30-November 1, 1991), which further exposed the diminishing influence of the Palestinian issue in regional affairs. By agreeing to attend the conference, the Palestinian leadership signaled its willingness to seek a political settlement and accommodation with Israel. Moreover, despite being recognized by the Global South as the "sole and legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people, the PLO agreed to go to Madrid as a joint delegation with Jordan and acceded to other Israeli demands for the Madrid format. Thus, when the Palestinians were ready to seek a negotiated political settlement with Israel, there was no compelling reason for India to be more Palestinian than Arafat or more Catholic than the Pope. Normalization of relations with Israel became a logical and even inevitable step.

Post-1992

The recognition-without-relations phase of India's Israel policy ended on January 29, 1992, when Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao reversed Nehru's policy and announced the establishment of diplomatic relations. Until then, it was a zero-sum approach whereby even minimal ties with Israel was seen as an anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian measure. Even though the Cold War was not responsible, the absence of relations was in sync with the emerging Afro-Asian bloc, namely Non-Alignment. Over time, the rhetoric against Israel emerged as one of the foreign policy issues that could unite an otherwise divergent and even incongruous group. The hostility of the Soviet bloc after the 1967 War added a "progressive" cloak to the anti-Israeli narrative.

Normalization was the second phase of India's Israel policy and was marked by the

establishment of resident missions in both countries. While reaching out to Israel, India pursued a delicate balance of not diluting its traditional support for the Palestinians. Through what can be described as a parallel track, India maintained its former positions on critical issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict such as Palestinian statehood, borders, settlements, and others. The 1990s saw India pursuing a delicate policy whereby it sought to balance its new-found friendship with Israel with its pro-Palestinian past. Though some were not happy with the balancing (Aiyar, 1993; Dasgupta, 1992; Pradhan, 1998), India actively pursued relations with Israel, including in the military-security arena (Inbar, 2004). The nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party, which came to power in 1998, expanded the relations through robust political contacts and hosted Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in September 2003 when not many Western countries were eager to engage with him.

In 1992 India normalized diplomatic relations with Israel, and Israel has become integral to India's overall Middle East policy. By moving gingerly and through his economic agenda, Modi has minimized the criticisms that India was pursuing an ideological approach toward Israel.

The third phase of the Indo-Israeli relations coincided with the return of the Congress party to power in 2004 under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Left parties, whose outside support was critical for the government, demanded "course correction" on Israel and reduced military ties (Cherian, 2004). The Indian government, however, followed a complex policy, reminiscent of the *yishuv's* posture on the MacDonald White Paper of 1939; it delinked the bilateral relations with Israel from the multilateral peace process and increased the former, despite disagreements over the latter. For example, India's initial reaction to the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers that spiraled into the Second Lebanon War was more balanced (India, MEA, 2006). This phase peaked in January 2008, when India launched an Israeli spy satellite into orbit (Subrahmanyam, 2008). It was during this period that the state governments in India playing a more vigorous role in promoting relations with Israel was evident (Kumaraswamy, 2017b, 2017c).

Modi-Bibi Phase

The arrival of Narendra Modi on the Indian national scene marks the fourth phase of the bilateral relations. On May 16, 2014, as the Lok Sabha results were streaming, Benjamin Netanyahu became the first world leader to telephone Narendra Modi on his impending landslide victory. Since then both leaders have followed each other on Twitter and exchanged greetings on each other's national days, festivals, electoral success, and other events. Unlike his predecessors, Modi has been more public and vocal about his admiration for Israel and its accomplishments and has frequently praised Israel. For his part, Benjamin Netanyahu used Modi's portrait for his election campaign in September 2019.

There has been a spate of political engagements and meetings between the two countries. Modi and Netanyahu met in September 2014 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session. The following March Modi met Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Singapore during the funeral of veteran statesperson Lee Kuan Yew. In October 2015, Pranab Mukherjee became the first Indian president to visit Israel (Kumaraswamy, 2015), and this was followed by the visit of President Rivlin to India in November 2016.[2] In July 2017, Modi became the first Indian premier to visit Israel (Kumaraswamy, 2018a). Contrary to initial speculations, Modi avoided going to Ramallah and underscored his dehyphenation.

Moreover, weeks before his Israel visit, Modi hosted Palestinian President Abbas. In a major policy shift, he announced India's support for an independent Palestinian state coexisting with Israel but without any reference to East

Jerusalem being its capital (Kumaraswamy, 2017a), even though for nearly a decade East Jerusalem figured prominently in India's statements on Palestine.[3] Soon after his Israel visit, Modi hosted Netanyahu in January 2018 (Roy, 2019) and media reports suggested that the Israeli leader wanted to visit India before the two Knesset elections held in 2019 (Chaudhary, 2019). Meanwhile, Home Minister Rajnath Singh (November 2014) and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj (January 2016) visited Israel, and in February 2015 Moshe Ya'alon became the first Israeli Defense Minister to visit India.

These political contacts were accompanied by calibrated moves in multilateral forums. Until he was compelled to deliver online presentations due to the Covid-19-related global lockdown, Prime Minister Modi skipped NAM gatherings and preferred to delegate others in his stead. Rather he focused his attention on great power politics and G-20 summits. This meant that India has been less active in joining the international chorus against Israel. Without diluting its overall support for the Palestine cause, India has been signaling its departure from the Global South. On July 1, 2015, it abstained during a vote in the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) that called for the Gaza War of 2014 to be investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Prashad, 2015). Likewise, after voting with the Arab-sponsored resolution in UNESCO in April 2016 that denied Jewish connections to Jerusalem, India abstained in the two subsequent votes in October that year and May 2017. In June 2019 India supported an Israeli move in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that denied observer status to the Palestinian NGO Shahed (Blarel, 2019).

India's position on President Trump's decision to declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital is interesting. On December 21, 2017 India joined the majority and voted against the American move. But at the bilateral level, its reaction was bland. Responding to media queries, the official spokesperson merely observed: "India's position on Palestine is independent and consistent. It is shaped by our views and interests, and not determined by any third country" (India, MEA, 2017). Some saw it as Modi's government adopting an ideology that could dovetail with the Trump administration (Joshi, 2017).

The most interesting feature of the ongoing fourth phase of the India-Israel relations is the normalization of a different kind. In 1992 India normalized diplomatic relations with Israel, and now, Israel has become integral to India's overall Middle East policy. By moving gingerly and through his economic agenda, Modi has minimized the criticisms that India was pursuing an ideological approach toward Israel. While not everyone is happy with his approach (Aiyar, 2017; Gandhi, 2017), there were few criticisms from the Middle East over Indo-Israeli relations, with the Islamic Republic of Iran being the notable exception (TNN, 2017).

By carefully focusing on the provincial governments, Israel has enhanced the economic and non-political component of the relations and, in the process, sought to minimize differences over the peace process. While the military-security relations occupy a prime position (Inbar, 2017; Inbar & Ningthoujam, 2012), the bilateral relations are dominated by economic and developmental issues such as agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, recycling, water management, health and others (Kumaraswamy, 2018a). Minimizing the focus on the security agenda should also rid the negative tag normally attached to the securitization of relations with Israel and provide positive content and make cooperation more widely acceptable within India.

Conclusion

In its century-long trajectory, India's Israel policy faced different challenges and responses. Historical relations with the Jews and the absence of antisemitism were accompanied by the lack of understanding of Jewish history and longing for a home. It was compounded by

Palestine becoming a domestic Indian agenda and competition with the Muslim League. Since independence, a weak economic base limited India's diplomatic options. Political competition with Pakistan in the Arab-Islamic Middle East resulted in its relying heavily on the Palestine question to further its interests. Despite the absence of any bilateral dispute or problems, non-relations marked India's policy toward Israel. The end of the ideological divide, the post-Kuwait shifts in regional dynamics, and its own economic ascendance have enabled India to be pragmatic in charting a course that reflects its interests and power projections. Even a quarter of a century after normalization, Indo-Israeli relations continue to invoke attention both within and outside India, due primarily to the gradualism in its approach and its ability to integrate Israel within its broader Middle East policy. At one level, Israel is "special," because India managed to avoid the usual negative repercussions that are normally associated with relations with the Jewish state; but Israel is also "normal," because India is no longer shy in dealing with it more openly.

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Notes

1 Eliyahu Sasson to S. Divon 28 December 1950, Israel State Archives 53/6b.

2 This was the second presidential visit from Israel, as Ezer Weizmann visited India in December 1996-January 1997.

3 Surprisingly, East Jerusalem reentered in the Indian lexicon during Modi's visit to Riyadh in October 2019 (India, MEA, 2019).

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (c) and his wife, Sara, at the opening of the Guatemalan embassy in Jerusalem, May 16, 2018. Photo: GPO/Kobi Gideon

The "Mobileye Effect" in Latin America-Israel Relations, 2009-2019

Mauricio Dimant

This article analyzes relations between Latin American countries and Israel over the past decade (2009-2019) and argues that Israel's strengthened image as a technological leader with an entrepreneurial culture plays a key role in what is perceived as its being closely identified with Asia in Latin American eyes. This, along with other developments, has led Latin American countries to start viewing Israel as a new and intriguing source for technology. This trend is almost across the board and irrespective of the political situation in the Middle East and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The article analyzes the context of these changes in Latin American approaches to relations with Israel over the past decade, and in particular the coverage in the Latin American media, taking note of changes in the region's UN votes on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It considers Israeli policy on international aid to Latin America (Mashav programs), which constitutes the core of Israel's low-key policy in Latin America. In addition, it raises questions regarding short-term challenges to the relations and Israel's ability and willingness to meet these expectations vis-à-vis the Latin American countries.

Keywords: Israel, Latin America, Asia, UN, embassies, technologies, start-up nation

Introduction

In recent years, parallel to the political crises and regime changes in Latin America, there has been a significant improvement from the left and right in countries on the continent towards Israel. This article discusses approaches in Latin America to relations with Israel over the past decade (2009-2019) and argues that Israel's strengthened image as a start-up nation with a culture of entrepreneurship has played a central role in Latin America placing Israel in the same category as a number of fast growing and hi-tech savvy Asian nations. As a result of this process, Latin American states have started to view Israel as on par with the economic attractiveness of Asia as a new source of technology, and an economic model that is worthy of emulation. This change comes about irrespective of the political situation in the Middle East and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The trend coincides with the way Asia has become more relevant for Latin America and the changing influence of the United States on Latin America over the course of the years, as well as the political changes in the region.

Despite Israel's image as a technology leader and the entrepreneurial mentality in its relations with Latin America, to date the trend has not been included in assessments of Israel's relations with the region or received adequate research attention (Grossman, 2018; Kacowicz, 2017; Mena & Segura, 2016; Robinson, 2019; Vigevani & Calandrin, 2019).

This article analyzes the context of the changes in the perception of relations between Israel and Latin America over the past decade, and in particular examines the interpretation of the Latin American media in light of the changes in the region's voting at the UN on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also relates to Israel's policy on international aid in Latin America (Mashav programs), which is the main focus of Israel's low-key policy in Latin America.

The "Mobileye Effect": The Change in Latin America's Relations with Israel, 2009-2019

There are currently 15 embassies of Latin American countries in Israel: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Paraguay, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Along with bilateral frameworks, these embassies operate in Israel along two parallel channels that create a regional dynamic in relations with Israel: in multinational regional blocs, and a regional framework that comprises all the Latin American countries.

In addition to direct relations, Latin American countries manage their relations with Israel in a unified front, via multinational Latin American blocs. Three blocs have been especially relevant to Israel over the past decade, with varying levels of influence. One is Mercosur (the Southern Common Market), a trade bloc established by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, with Venezuela joining a few years ago; the second is SICA (the Central American Integration System), whose members include Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panama; and the third is the Pacific Alliance, a trade bloc established by Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Colombia.[1] The purpose of these sub-regional frameworks is mainly to facilitate trade between countries with similar geographical characteristics, by canceling or reducing tariffs to encourage economic development, improve their international standing, and prevent economic-political conflicts among the members (Florensa et al., 2015). In the case of Mercosur, the Paraná River passes through four countries that belong to this bloc and the river is used for trade between them. In the case of the Pacific Alliance, the four member states have the option to cooperate on trade with Asia.

Latin America is a geopolitical region with a population of 750 million people and comprises 33 states, which account for 17 percent of the voting members at the UN General Assembly.

The region is the world's largest food producer, and the third largest energy producer. The Latin America governments relate to their power in the international arena primarily on the regional level, which is greater than that of any individual country on its own. Nevertheless, the cumulative power of these regional organizations is still limited. Therefore, the significance of regional frameworks in Latin America can be appreciated despite the disagreements between the various governments (AFP, 2019).

The relevance of these frameworks for Latin America's embassies in Israel stems not only from the agreements and from Israel's involvement in some of them, but mainly from projects that these countries try to advance in Israel in the framework of the regional organizations. An example is the free trade agreement that Israel signed with the Mercosur states in 2007 (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). In addition, on February 10, 2014, Israel was accepted as an observer state to the Pacific Alliance (Basuk, 2014). By means of these blocs, Israel has also succeeded in building connections and even influencing Latin American countries in the absence of official diplomatic ties or a mission, such as in the case of Venezuela.

The second framework of Latin American countries in Israel is GRULAC (Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), which includes all the Latin American ambassadors in Israel (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). GRULAC is a representative framework without real operational capabilities and is headed by the ambassador with the greatest seniority in Israel. Nevertheless, through GRULAC Latin American ambassadors have succeeded in increasing their countries' influence, and the group serves as a platform for broader contacts for Latin American countries that are not generally the major focus of Israel's foreign policy. Israeli and Latin American representatives use the framework to advance projects that would be likely to encounter obstacles in a bilateral framework. In addition, it serves as a forum for joint consultations for all the Latin American ambassadors in Israel, and organizes meetings with various sectors of Israeli society (Embajada de Panamá en Israel, 2019).

The use of these frameworks by Latin American ambassadors to Israel leads to almost immediate regional implications for bilateral projects and agreements. For example, the projects that Israel hoped to advance with the SICA states shed light on the context in which decisions were made regarding the renewal of relations with Nicaragua (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Israel attempted to be admitted to SICA and promoted projects in the fields of renewable energy, water purification, and others. Another element of importance is the participation of unofficial actors interested in fostering ties between Israel and Latin America like the Jewish communities in the various countries, who regularly participate in the relationship.

The regional character of the work conducted by Latin American embassies with Israel revealed early in the past decade the complexity of these relations. In 2009, Bolivia and Venezuela cut off diplomatic relations with Israel following Operation Cast Lead, the military operation by the IDF in the Gaza Strip (December 2008-January 2009). Nicaragua followed suit in 2010 (AP, 2009; Keinon, 2009). Relations with these countries began to deteriorate even before the fighting in Gaza over ideological differences with those countries. However, their decisions had clear regional implications, in part because the rest of the Latin American countries felt the need to publicly address the question of how to enable continued relations with Israel despite the decisions of their partners in various regional blocs.

At the outset of the previous decade, Israel's standing in Latin America was problematic, especially in the largest and most influential countries in the region. In 2010, the Brazilian government officially recognized the Palestinian Authority as an independent state within the 1967 borders, including all of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem—a decision

that was adopted by almost all of the Latin American countries in 2010-2011. However, from Israel's perspective the problematic stance of Latin American governments toward Israel in those years was not only related to the conflict with the Palestinians. An example of this was Brazil's organizing of a summit in May 2010 with Turkey and Iran in order to discuss various ways for Iran to progress in its nuclear program. The Brazilian move came despite explicit requests by the Israeli government in international forums against such moves and the total awareness of Latin American countries of the implications for Israel (Barrionuevo & Arsu, 2010).

Israel's standing in Latin America continued to be problematic in 2011. There were reports in the Argentinian press on direct negotiations between the governments of Argentina and Iran for improving their relations and jointly investigating the 1994 attack on the Jewish community center building in Buenos Aires (Eliaschev, 2011). Following the Argentinian government's decision, other countries in the region also began to strengthen their ties with Iran, Uruguay among them (EFE, 2011). During that period, Israel opposed the interim agreement on the nuclear issue, the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) (Landau and Kurz, 2014), which was finalized as the JCPOA in 2015. In Latin America, the public believed the rationale for this was Iran's support for terrorism, such as the attack on the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, and not the Israeli position that Iran constitutes a direct threat to the State of Israel and a destabilizing force for additional countries in the Middle East (Clarín Política, 2013).

The negative attitude of Latin American governments toward Israel early in the decade can also be seen in discussions at international forums. In 2009, for example, there were five votes at the UN General Assembly on the topic of the "Palestinian territories," and four votes on the "Palestinian question."[2] There was a total of 135 votes by the 15 states that had embassies in Israel in 2019. The results of the nine votes in 2009 were 107 against Israel, 20 abstentions, and five not present. Only the government of Panama supported Israel on three occasions. The following year the results were even worse from Israel's perspective.[3]

International developments in 2009 were especially complex from the perspective of Israel's standing in Latin America. The relationship must be viewed from within the framework of Latin America-Middle East relations and the tension between ideology and pragmatism in Latin America, especially toward the Middle East (Funk, 2016). Operation Cast Lead took place when Barack Obama began his term as President of the United States, which can be defined as the beginning of a new era in US-Latin America relations. Latin America was not a high priority for the Obama administration. Nevertheless, the period coincided with the term of Hugo Chavez as a defiant President of Venezuela and the US administration's attempts to strengthen relations, and the renewal of relations with Cuba (which became official in 2015 despite the opposition from Congress). In addition, the reform of the US health system by President Obama was viewed in Latin America as a left wing policy (de la Torre, 2017; Reid, 2015).

Despite the global economic crisis in 2008, Latin American governments felt confident in their decisions in the international arena and sensed that they had the power to manage an independent policy in international forums. Examples of this were Brazil's support for Iran's position on the nuclear program (Lopes & Faria, 2016), and the ability of certain Latin American countries to fund development projects on their own. Similarly, Latin American governments felt they were capable of establishing new multinational regional frameworks that left the United States outside of Latin America's decision making processes (Petersen & Schulz, 2018). In May 2008, the governments of South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela) signed an agreement

to establish the UNASUR bloc (Cancillería Colombia, UNASUR). Nearly two years later all of the countries in Latin America decided to establish a new bloc separate from the United States and Canada named the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños, Celac).[4]

During this period, a broad consensus developed in the region regarding the failure of neoliberal policy, which was seen as part of the United States interest in international financial organizations (Ruckert et al., 2017). The support of Latin American countries for Palestinian claims was connected not only to discussions in the international community on the Palestinian demand for self-determination. It also stemmed from internal socio-political discussions and policy in Latin America, which focused on topics related to human rights and the integration of minorities and those in need—and not from an anti-Israel stance (Redacción BBC Mundo, 2010).

Against this backdrop, Latin America lost interest in Israel during a period when Israel was changing some of its outlets for dialogue with Latin American society. This included the closure of the Ibero-America institute for Israeli culture (2010), which operated as a conduit for dialogue with figures with influence on public opinion in Latin America, including in countries without official relations with Israel. The decision was taken for budgetary reasons and due to the erosion of the institute's effectiveness. Various players in Latin America viewed this as an additional example of the problematic attitude of the Israeli government toward Latin America during those years, namely, canceling a channel of communication without offering suitable alternatives (DB-GB, 2010).

After the March 2009 change of government in Israel and the appointment of Avigdor Liberman as Foreign Minister (2009-2012), there was an attempt to improve Israel's standing in Latin America. Liberman himself announced on the Foreign Ministry's website in Spanish, "The purpose of [my] visit is to emphasize the great importance that the Foreign Ministry attaches to the region" (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009)—but it was seen as too little, too late. Indeed, when in July 2009 Lieberman went on an official visit to Colombia, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina, the local press did not display much interest in his visit. From the viewpoint of Latin American countries, Israel should have presented its firm stance on the Iranian issue before Iran improved its relations with Latin America. Even though the Foreign Minister's message, as reported in the media, was "to take action against Iran's increasing activity in South America" (AFP, 2009), there were no assessments indicating any benefit in relations with Israel. Instead, it was perceived mainly as a "symbolic gesture" from Israel that merely aimed to influence public opinion in Latin America.[5]

In contrast with the apathy expressed during that period regarding relations with Israel, there was increasing interest in Latin America in the Arab countries (NA, 2009). The visits of Arab leaders, such as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's in July 2010 to Latin American countries (Venezuela, Cuba, Brazil, and Argentina), were viewed in the local media as an economic opportunity to increase exports to Arab markets,[6] as offers of trade agreements were raised regarding the export of agricultural products and beef from Latin America (Ayuso et al., 2018).

Israel's lack of attractiveness to Latin America during that period was also expressed within the frameworks of Israel's low-key aid, which operated in a similar manner to that during the 1990s. The Mashav projects (from Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that included participants from Latin American countries are a good example. Mashav programs in Latin America in 2010 (MASHAV, 2010) were not very different from the 1996 programs (MASHAV, 1996) and their impact on improving Israel's standing in the region was limited.

The first signs of change in attitudes toward Israel in the Latin American media emerged in late 2011 (Reuters, 2011), when articles began to appear in Spanish on the Israeli hi-tech industry. This was accompanied by official Foreign Ministry publicity in Latin America about new technology projects. In that year an article was published on the website of the Israeli embassy in Argentina entitled "Science, Technology, and Business" about the success of several Israeli hi-tech projects; among those cited was Mobileye. The article explained how large companies in the United States and Europe such as Coca-Cola have integrated Israeli innovative technology (Embajada de Israel en Argentina, 2011).

The case of Mobileye provides a look at the change in Latin America's attitude toward Israel. The developer of advanced driver assistance systems was acquired in 2017 by Intel for $15.3 billion, in the largest acquisition ever of an Israeli company. The unprecedented deal opened up a lively debate on the role of higher education in advancing economic modernization and on the future needs of the region through the development of scientific, technological, and innovation capabilities. This development was seen not only as an opportunity for the future of the region but also as a way to cope with the socioeconomic challenges of the immediate future. For example, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) published a report in 2010 that recommended cooperation between the business sector and academia (universities and research centers) in order to improve economic performance in the region while at the same time building new opportunities (CEPAL, 2010). Thus, in this context, concepts such as "technology transfer" and "ecosystem" began to reverberate. In 2011, for example, an article was published in the Chilean press on the success of Israeli academia, how it influenced the economy, and in what way it could be emulated in order to create new paths for economic growth in Latin America (Rojas, 2011).

Even though Israel had started publicizing the country's technological developments in Latin America as early as the 1960s—mainly in the fields of defense, agriculture, and medicine (Oded, 2009)—the case of Mobileye was different. It was seen as an example of a trend that began at that time in Latin America, namely, entrepreneurship that was the result of an innovative means of solving an existing problem relevant to the entire population that is unrelated to the defense industry and is derived from academic research. The example also generated considerable interest among various circles in Latin America where Israel receives little notice, such as university graduates who were starting to develop professional careers during the period when Silicon Valley became a euphemism for success (Clarín Mundo, 2013). From 2011 onwards, following the buzz created by the book *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle* (Senor and Singer, 2009), there were articles in the Latin American media that began to use terms like start-up and hi-tech with regard to Israel. That year there was also increasing concern about the impact of the BDS movement in Latin America, and here too the book's rationale became more attractive in Israel's dialogue with Latin American society.[7]

The case of Mobileye provides a look at the change in Latin America's attitude toward Israel and opened up a lively debate on the role of higher education in advancing economic modernization and the future needs of the region through the development of scientific, technological, and innovation capabilities.

The first Mashav course on the topic of start-ups was only held in 2014—Innovative Entrepreneurship: From Idea to Business (MASHAV, 2014). But already three years prior to that, Israel slowly started to become a popular destination for new players from Latin America who were interested in entrepreneurship, innovation, and hi-tech. 2014 was problematic

for Israel's relations with Latin America due to Operation Protective Edge (July 8-August 26), and led five Latin American countries (Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Peru) to recall their ambassadors for consultations (AFP, 2014). Nevertheless, in contrast to 2009, Latin American countries took steps to strengthen their economic relations with Israel. Thus, articles in the Latin American press dealt not only with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also with the "Silicon Valley of the Middle East" (Fernández, 2014).

At this stage, Latin American businesspeople, politicians, public opinion leaders, and academics started to take notice of a veteran Israeli product (namely, original technological innovation) in a new way and that was not directly connected to the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, the arms industry, or US policy. This in turn influenced and strengthened the development of relations between Latin American countries and Israel. The emphasis on concepts such as start-up, hi-tech, and innovation ultimately contributed to the "Asianization"[8] of Israel in the eyes of Latin American public opinion. Israel gradually became part of the "Asian path" to economic modernization and worthy of emulation. This was not only for the sake of increasing the export market, but mainly for creating new opportunities related to innovative technologies. This concept was almost completely separated from the political situation in the Middle East.[9]

The Technology Dream in Latin America: The Change in UN Voting (2009-2019)

In 2009 there were four UN General Assembly votes regarding the rights of the Palestinians.[10] The results were especially harsh for Israel, as reflected by how the 15 Latin American countries that in 2019 had embassies in Israel voted. There were 46 votes against Israel, nine abstentions, and five absences (four by Honduras, which was in the midst of a political crisis that ended with a military coup that year, and one by Panama). No Latin American government supported Israel on this issue. The countries in the region that voted in the manner perceived as most friendly to Israel were Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru. All of them voted against Israel twice and abstained twice.

A decade later, in an identical vote, the results were significantly different: 37 votes against Israel, 14 abstentions, and nine votes in support of Israel.[11] In 2019, Guatemala, for example, voted in support of Israel three times and abstained once. Guatemala was not alone: most of the Latin American countries changed the way they voted regarding Israel, especially the largest countries in the region—Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.

The five votes held in 2009 on the "Palestinian territories" were based on the work of the committees connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Looking back, we can discern a significant change. In 2009 there were 61 votes opposed to Israel's position, 11 abstentions, and only Panama's three votes were in favor of Israel.[12] Ten years later, the number of votes against Israel dropped to 49, with five votes in favor of Israel's position and 25 abstentions.[13]

The justifications for the changes in voting at the UN and/or in attitudes toward Israel, as they are expressed in the media in Latin America, allow us to identify a transformation in the approach of the region's countries, a change that is shared by both sides of the political map. In 2009, the President of Panama, Ricardo Martinelli, who began his term (2009-2014) that year, justified the UN vote in the local media as supporting the position of the US government in the conflict in the Middle East, without indicating a specific rationale directly connected to Israel (EFE, 2010). In other words, not only did only one country in Latin America support Israel's position in a debate on the Palestinian issue; the President of that country did not even publicly indicate the desirability of relations with Israel as a reason for the support. Panama's support was not reflected in a preferential approach in Mashav programs. In 2009 only 15 people from

Panama participated in Mashav programs in Israel (MASHAV, 2009), while 65 participants came from Ecuador, a country that voted decisively against Israel that year.[14]

A year later (2010), the positions of Latin American governments against Israel at the UN were harsher. In votes held on the Palestinian issue there were 48 votes against Israel (compared to 46 in 2009) and 12 abstentions.[15] In the debates in 2010, Israeli policy regarding the conflict with the Palestinians was severely criticized, and the governments that voted in a friendlier manner towards Israel on this issue were Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, and Peru; all of them voted against Israel twice and abstained twice. As for debates on the Palestinian territories, there were 61 votes against Israel (no change from 2009), 11 abstentions, and only two votes in favor of Israel (Panama, which was absent from voting on one occasion).[16] The President of Panama explained to the Spanish media after his visit to Israel in March 2010 that his support for Israel at international forums stemmed mainly from the shared democratic values of the two countries—an ineffectual message in the region (Benarroch, 2010).

Nor was Israel attractive enough to the opposition in Panama in 2010 to tip the scales toward voting in its favor. The opposition's message in the media was that Panama's foreign policy stemmed mainly from the pressure of conservative circles in the US Republican Party, which, according to opposition figures, influenced not only the decisions regarding Israel but especially its relations with the rest of the Latin American countries, especially Cuba and Venezuela (Alvarado, 2010). Panama's support for Israel at UN debates was not reflected in Mashav programs. Even with a total lack of any advocacy activity in Panama, there were only 27 participants from the sole country that supported Israel in 2010 (MASHAV, 2010). More participants came from countries antagonistic toward Israel, such as Uruguay,[17] with 44 participants (MASHAV, 2010).

However, in 2011 there was a slight decline in the number of votes against Israel regarding the conflict with the Palestinians. The Latin America media began to relate to Israel in a different manner and also addressed issues connected to its technological capabilities. In UN votes on the Palestinian territories, the number of votes against Israel went down to 60 (instead of 61 during the previous two years), following El Salvador's decision to change its position. That year it voted against Israel three times and abstained twice, unlike four times and once, respectively, in 2009 and 2010.[18]

El Salvador's Foreign Minister at that time, Hugo Martinez, explained in the local media that he met with Israel's new ambassador and with the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Latin America and Caribbean Department in order to hear about "Israel's point of view regarding the conflict with the Palestinians" (Cancillería El Salvador, 2012). In addition, Martinez publicly thanked the State of Israel for the aid it provided following the serious flooding that occurred in Central America that year, and highlighted the importance of Israel's technological capabilities, even though the aid was part of a larger international effort that included other countries, such as Japan and South Korea (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). This change in Israel's favor in El Salvador's vote at the UN coincided with San Salvador's recognition of the Palestinian state, after the visit of representatives of the Palestinian Authority in Latin America (Cancillería El Salvador, 2012). After that visit, El Salvador hardened its position: instead of voting against Israel twice and abstaining twice as in previous years, it voted against Israel four times.

In the votes on the "Palestinian question" that year, Honduras also changed the way it voted, not voting against Israel even once, but choosing to abstain (three times) and be absent from voting once.[19] However, this decision took place in parallel with its recognition of the Palestinian state that same year, in

accordance with the decisions of the rest of the Latin American countries (EFE bis, 2011). The change in Honduras's position was explained by its desire to contribute to dialogue between the sides (Redacción El Heraldo, 2014).

In 2011, Israel expanded its aid to Latin America through Mashav (MASHAV, 2011). The number of participants in Mashav programs from Latin America grew from 603 participants from 20 countries in 2010 to 702 participants from 23 countries in 2011. In this context, 46 participants came from Honduras instead of the 15 that had participated in 2010. The country with the largest number of participants in Mashav courses in Israel was Ecuador, with 115 participants (MASHAV, 2011). Nevertheless, the government of Ecuador voted against Israel at UN debates, both on the Palestinian question and at debates about the territories. While it could not be expected that participation in Mashav courses would change Ecuador's votes (at that time Ecuador was a member of the Bolivar bloc), it was expected that there would be some connection between participation in the Mashav program and policy towards Israel.

The year 2012 was especially complicated for Israel at the UN, as not only was the Palestinian status at the UN decided then (Redacción BBC, 2012), but Israel also carried out a military operation in the Gaza Strip (Operation Pillar of Defense, November 14-21, 2012). In this context, Honduras significantly changed the way it voted at the UN regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and instead of voting against Israel four times and abstaining once at a debate on the Palestinian territories, it abstained four times and voted against Israel only once. Consequently, the votes of 15 Latin American countries against Israel in the vote on the Palestinian territories declined from 61 in 2009 to 57 in 2012, and the number of abstentions rose from 11 to 15.[20] Despite Israel's military operations in Gaza (Cast Lead in 2009 and Pillar of Defense in 2012), the number of Latin American countries that voted against Israel decreased instead of increasing, as might have been expected.

Despite Israel's military operations in Gaza (Cast Lead in 2009 and Pillar of Defense in 2012), the number of Latin American countries that voted against Israel decreased instead of increasing, as might have been expected.

In the local media, there were not many references to Honduras's foreign policy that could explain the change in its voting, especially given the political, economic, and military crisis that many Central American countries experienced, Honduras in particular. Nonetheless, regarding relations with Israel, Honduran President Porfirio Lobo Sosa (2010-2014) insisted on the importance of relations with Israel, which aided Honduras in various instances through its technological knowledge and experience, such as the Israeli ambassador's offer of assistance from Israeli companies in constructing modern, fire-proof prisons, in order to cope with the crisis experienced that year by Honduras in general, and its prison system in particular (Notimex, 2012).[21]

Along with the aid to Honduras, Israel again increased the number of participants from Latin America at Mashav programs in Israel: 753 participants from 27 countries—including even Venezuela (three), Bolivia (two), and Nicaragua (two)—countries that had cut off their relations with Israel a few years earlier (MASHAV, 2012). The country with the largest number of participants in Mashav courses in Israel was Colombia with 108 participants, followed by Ecuador (83), whose government unfailingly voted against Israel in votes on the Palestinian question and debates on the territories, without abstaining or being absent even once.

In 2013 there was an additional decline in the number of votes against Israel on the Palestinian issue. In voting on the situation in the territories, there were 54 votes against Israel instead of 57 the previous year, with 18 abstentions and two votes in favor—both by

Panama, which again was absent from one vote.[22] There was a marked change in how the government of Paraguay voted. Throughout the presidency of Horácio Cartes (2013-2018), the government of Paraguay abstained in votes on both the Palestinian question and that of the territories.

However, the most significant change in the case of Paraguay, similar to that of Panama in 2013, was the way the local media covered relations with Israel, in part in order to explain the foreign policy—irrespective of the conflict with the Palestinians or the situation in the Middle East, while emphasizing Israel as a relevant model for technological-economic modernization, especially given the success of its hi-tech industry and the connections to that industry. Gustavo Leite, Paraguay's Minister of Industry and Commerce, emphasized in his visit to Israel following the reopening of the embassy in Tel Aviv that "the delegation was also received by the Hebrew University's center for technology and business incubators" (Morán, 2013).

The discourse on Israel in the Latin American press in 2013 shows that this public reference to Israel was a combination of the results of the Foreign Ministry's work with Latin America and various developments in the world of hi-tech itself. Articles were published on Facebook's decision to open a development center in Tel Aviv (AP, 2013) and on Google's purchase of Waze from Israel (ABC Tecnología, 2013). At the same time, articles of a political-commercial nature were published, such as on the technological cooperation agreement signed between Mexico and Israel (REDACCIÓN SIPSE, 2013) and the free trade agreement between Colombia and Israel. The local press in Colombia interpreted this agreement as an opportunity for Colombia, because "the Jewish state stands out in the global context thanks to its technological innovations, productive alliances and technological cooperation" (Redacción Semana, 2013). Despite the continued centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the press and in various circles in Latin American countries, the media spotlight on Israel was increasingly directed toward its hi-tech industry.

The year 2013 was also one of political-diplomatic changes in Latin America, in part due to the death of Hugo Chavez and the beginning of Maduro's presidency in Venezuela (Ellner, 2015). This change was made clear in several issues related to regional decisions in Latin America, such as the cessation of various integration projects with Arab countries and projects that Chavez pursued (for example, the cancellation of the program for academic exchanges between the regions, the cessation of talks on free trade, and more).[23]

Coinciding with the period of weakened relations between Latin America and Arab countries, Israel's international aid agency offered for the first time the field of innovation and entrepreneurship at its center for training programs. Latin American countries received a new official message from Mashav that made clear that "in Israel there are more start-ups per capita than any other country, an achievement that is the result of close cooperation between businesses and government, a culture that rewards risk-taking, embraces innovation and entrepreneurship, and encourages imagination" (MASHAV, 2013). There were courses on subjects such as entrepreneurship for small and medium-sized business; innovative entrepreneurship—from idea to the opening of a business; support systems for entrepreneurs, and more (MASHAV, 2013). In 2013, there were participants from more Latin American countries (20), although there were fewer participants in total (565), with broad participation surprisingly from the Caribbean countries. Once again the country with the largest number of participants was Colombia (117), and almost all of the countries sent participants to programs related to science and technology.

The following year, which included Israel's extended military operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, tested the trend of improved attitudes of Latin America toward Israel. Only Honduras and Panama changed the way they

voted at UN debates on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but in debates on the "Palestinian question," Honduras was the only country that voted in favor of Israel.[24] This was a new government whose President was the first Latin American president to have also been a graduate of a Mashav program—a fact that the President himself made sure to publicize on his official website (Cancillería Honduras). In these debates, Honduras abstained four times, instead of abstaining twice and voting against Israel twice as in the previous years. In votes on the Palestinian territories, Honduras abstained three times and voted against Israel twice (instead of opposing once as in the previous years). The international relations of the new Honduran government that year, especially with Israel, did not receive much public attention. Nonetheless, in the local press, there are mentions of the importance of the technological aspect of relations with Israel, such as in the case of acquiring radar for the war against drug cartels (see for example Baide, 2014).

In debates on the Palestinian territories, Panama also changed the way it voted, but in this case, against Israel. It voted twice against Israel, instead of once as in the previous years.[25] Nonetheless, in the local media the government of Panama emphasized its intention to work toward a free trade agreement with Israel, despite the seemingly serious damage to Israel's image following Operation Protective Edge. Why was Panama interested in this agreement that year? Meliton Arrocha, Panama's Minister of Commerce and Industry, clarified that it was because "a strategic alliance with Israel could strengthen Panama in terms of innovation, information technologies, and agricultural technologies" (Redacción Capital, 2014). These two decisions by Panama's government—more voting against Israel at the UN with attempts to strengthen economic relations—did not constitute an ostensible contradiction. That year, Panama voted in a manner friendlier to Israel than Colombia, a country that had signed a free trade agreement with Israel a year earlier.

Surprisingly, in a period when technological issues became more central in the public discourse between Israel and Latin American countries, and Mashav programs began to emphasize heavily technological innovation and thus also the importance of an entrepreneurial culture in Israeli aid programs, the number of candidates for the program from the region declined significantly. In 2014, only 393 participants came to Israel from 24 Latin American countries (MASHAV, 2014). This time too, the country with the largest number of participants from the region was Colombia (78), even though it was not the country that voted at the UN in the manner closest to the Israeli position on the conflict with the Palestinians.

The following year, Panama, which had a conservative government that advanced a liberal economic agenda, was the only country that significantly changed its UN voting regarding Israel. It voted against Israel four times (instead of once as in the previous years), and supported Israel only once, in a debate on the situation in the territories.[26] While Panama publicly discussed the possibility of recognizing the Palestinian state due to international pressure, it ultimately became one of the only Latin American countries that did not recognize the Palestinian state.[27] The statements by Panama's Foreign Minister in the local media about the Middle East, in which she made a clear distinction between relations with Israel and relations with the Palestinians, demonstrate the new tone in Latin America regarding the connection with Israel. When it came to relations with the Palestinians, she commented on moral and ethical issues related to discussions on human rights (EFE, 2015), but as for Israel, she mentioned economic interests related to strategic fields for Panama's future. In her visit to Israel in 2015, she emphasized the need for cooperation between universities in the two countries (EFE bis, 2015).

In other words, after 2014, the perception of Israel's technological leadership and entrepreneurial culture constituted a substantial portion of the discourse in Latin America regarding relations with Israel, and also facilitated a response to criticism of strengthening the relations with Israel during times of intensified conflict with the Palestinians. Starting in 2015, there is a discernable process whereby businesspeople and academics in Latin America and Israel started to take advantage of interest in technological-economic issues and to organize private delegations and visits dedicated to these fields. This was assisted by the Foreign Ministry's work in Latin American in the areas of innovation and hi-tech. Programs were organized that to a certain extent supplemented (sometimes intentionally) Mashav's work in Latin America as in previous years, both in terms of the nature of the programs and the number of participants (Consejo Interamericano de Comercio y Producción, Capítulo Argentino, 2018).

The political changes in Latin America in 2015 contributed to the strengthening of the trend of referring to Israel in the context of economic interests and business possibilities due to its technological innovation. This was underscored by the opposition victories in Argentina and Brazil and growing disagreements between Latin American governments over issues such as the crisis in Venezuela.

In 2016, the Israeli government decided for budgetary reasons to close several embassies and consulates in different regions of the world. This included the embassy in El Salvador, a country whose votes against Israel at the UN became more vocal under President Salvador Cerén (2014-2019). Despite negotiations that attempted to prevent the closure (inter alia, the government of El Salvador emphasized to the Israeli government that the offices of the SICA bloc are located within its territory), El Salvador announced that it would keep its embassy in Tel Aviv. However, it later lowered its level of representation to that of minister-counselor (until 2020). Here too, the need for continued relations with Israel was emphasized, especially on economic matters related to technological innovation (Cancillería El Salvador, 2016).

In May 2016, Costa Rica opened an official office for promoting trade relations (PROCOMER) in Israel, even though a free trade agreement was not signed between the countries. This is the only case in the history of Costa Rica of opening such an office under these conditions (Rodríguez, 2016). Along with exporting various products, such as coffee and pineapples, the director-general of PROCOMER declared that Costa Rica seeks to use the office in Tel Aviv to expand its connections with Israeli technological innovation, thus expanding its presence in the Israeli economic system (PROCOMER, 2016). While Costa Rica voted decidedly against Israel at the UN on the Palestinian issue and only abstained once in voting at debates on the territories, the office in Tel Aviv aimed at expanding trade relations with Israel and even to expand its activities to include overseeing trade relations between Costa Rica and the Palestinian Authority.

Brazil, the largest economy and one of the most important countries in Latin America, has also expressed increasing interest in Israel. On December 29, 2018, the first joint press conference took place between President-elect Jair Bolsonaro and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who attended Bolsonaro's inauguration. This was the first visit to Brazil by an Israeli prime minister since Israel's establishment. At this symbolic event, Bolsonaro referred to the possibility of moving Brazil's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and described how a strategic alliance with Israel could contribute to economic modernization in Brazil due to its hi-tech industry (Few, 2019; Guliano, 2018).[28] The image of technological leadership and entrepreneurial culture in Israel has played a central role in attitudes toward Brazil-Israel relations (and especially changes in them) and has also enabled other governments in Latin America to offer or present possibilities

for a better economic future by adopting work processes developed in Israel. This is without ignoring the religious and political-ideological elements of the Bolsonaro government—a government that comprises a complex coalition of evangelical groups (especially those who define themselves as pro-Zionist) and has the support of the Brazilian defense forces. The government was also established at the height of a crisis experienced by the traditional parties from both the left and the right.

Israel's image as a technological leader has encouraged the process of its Asianization in Latin America not only in relation to political decisions. This is clear in Latin American countries' coping with the coronavirus crisis.

Israel-Latin America relations are seen in Latin American countries as mutually complementary, where both sides have shared interests in maintaining the relations. The purpose of the "Shmita program" by the Guatemalan embassy in Jerusalem was to become a strategic partner for Israel in the years where according to Jewish law the land must remain fallow every seventh year. The aim was to strengthen the agricultural sector in Central America technologically. The program's attractiveness was twofold. Guatemala increased its export of agricultural produce and took advantage of opportunities for the technological development of its agriculture. Israel for its part benefited from the supply of agricultural produce during a period of low domestic agricultural production and the sale of its agricultural technology in Guatemala. Guatemala's ambassador to Israel explicitly connected the considerable growth in his country's agricultural exports to the Middle East to his embassy's move to Jerusalem (Iton Gadol, 2019).

Israel's image as a technological leader has encouraged the process of its Asianization in Latin America not only in relation to political decisions. This is clear in Latin American countries' coping with the coronavirus crisis. On March 30, 2020, the President of Argentina announced at a press conference that in light of the spread of the coronavirus, he had begun a round of consultations with China, South Korea, and Israel (Jastreblansky, 2020), and on May 5, he announced to the media that his government is learning from the example of South Korea and Israel in exiting the lockdown (Perfil, 2020).

Conclusion

Israel's technological development has become a strategic issue in Latin America-Israel relations in recent years, and is underscored by the possibilities inherent in relations with the start-up nation. This image has allowed Latin American countries to manage their relations with Israel according to a new paradigm, which separates relations with Israel from the political debate on the Middle East (especially the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also other issues such as the civil war in Syria, Iran's increasing influence in the Middle East, and more). Israel's technological attractiveness and its image as "an Asian hi-tech power" have actually strengthened certain ideological attitudes—such as those of several evangelical groups—and provided legitimacy for changes in other cases. But they have mainly had an impact on the way the future of relations with Israel is perceived, and this has led to a change in Israel's standing on the international stage. Israel's technological image and notions on the future role of technology have led to changes in the thinking about future relations. Latin American governments have succeeded in justifying political decisions that are supportive of Israel, both on the international stage and in the field of bilateral economic relations.

However, these developments raise new and complex challenges. First and foremost, the technological image directs Latin American-Israel relations mainly along business and economic considerations. However, the

technology sector has its own interests and dynamics that are not necessarily political. Second, this image provides Latin American governments with greater latitude: they can strengthen economic-technological relations with Israel while politically maintaining significant distance.

The development of this image provides Latin America with the perceived appeal for strengthening relations with Israel; it also provides a limited window of opportunity for complementary bilateral relations. A rapid development of technology will complicate any future cooperation, as the result of an expanding gap in the way the ecosystem operates in each country and how the different players handle technological innovation. Only recently in Latin America, unlike Israel, have institutions been established that will be capable of utilizing and implementing the knowledge accumulated at universities toward commercializing technological innovations. The perceived value in improving relations with Israel could strengthen the connection in the short term but lead to crises due to unrealistic expectations on the part of Latin American countries regarding the results from their relationships with Israel. Furthermore, the challenges of Israel-Latin America relations will not only be connected with current political or defense issues in the Middle East—the annexation of territories, military conflicts, and more—but will also be closely tied to Latin America's expectations regarding its future in Asia. Thus, Latin America's path to Asia also runs through Israel.

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Table 1. Participants in the Mashav program in Israel, 2009-2019

	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Dominican Republic	Ecuador	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Mexico	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay
2009	35	35	18	90	19	6	65	40	116	3	52	15	14	54	18
2010	27	40	21	100	18	2	76	21	51	15	58	27	20	67	44
2011	33	30	32	92	36	7	115	28	85	46	50	25	23	62	18
2012	55	29	29	108	63	26	83	36	82	32	46	14	25	61	32
2013	14	12	16	117	55	8	49	48	50	21	20	25	15	44	27
2014	1	0	1	78	46	20	37	30	43	11	1	22	19	41	25
2015	2	46	2	84	26	17	36	25	33	10	5	23	21	45	14
2016	17	5	5	73	41	17	40	24	34	15	9	40	56	59	11
2017	22	1	9	85	35	14	32	20	30	18	5	31	47	50	16
2018	31	5	11	82	39	19	27	21	113	52	8	42	55	51	20
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Mashav, annual reports 2009-2019

Tables 2-4. Votes at the UN on the "Palestinian question," 2009-2019

Year	Argentina				Brazil				Chile				Colombia				Costa Rica			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2010	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2011	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2012	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	2	--	3	--	5	--	--	--
2013	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2014	4	--	--	--	4	--			4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2015	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2016	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2017	3	--	1	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2018	3	--	1	--	3	--	1	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2019	3	--	1	--	1	2	1	--	4	--	--	--	2	2	--	--	4	--	--	--

Year	Dominican Republic				Ecuador				El Salvador				Guatemala				Honduras			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	--	4
2010	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	2	--	2	--	3	--	1	--
2011	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--		--	3	1
2012	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	2	--	3	--	2	--	3	--	1	--	4	--
2013	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	2	--	2	--
2014	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--
2015	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--
2016	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	2	--	--	--	--	4	--
2017	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	2	2	--	--	--	2	2	--
2018	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	3	1	--	--	2	2	--
2019	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	3	1	--	--	2	2	--

Year	Mexico				Panama				Paraguay				Peru				Uruguay			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	4	--	--	--	3	--		1	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	3	--	1	--
2010	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	3	--	1	--
2011	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2012	5	--	--	--	2	1	2	--	4	--	1	--	3	--	2	--	5	--	--	--
2013	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2014	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2015	4	--	--	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2016	3	--	1	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2017	1	--	3	--	2	--	2	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2018	1	--	3	--	2	--	2	--	2		2	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--
2019	1	--	3	--	2	--	2	--	2		2	--	2	--	2	--	4	--	--	--

Source: General Assembly. ResolutionA/RES, 2009-2019

Tables 5-7. Votes at the UN on the "Palestinian territories," 2009-2019

Year	Argentina				Brazil				Chile				Colombia				Costa Rica			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2010	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2011	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2012	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2013	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2014	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2015	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2016	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2017	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2018	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2019	4	--	1	--	1	1	3	--	5	--	--	--	2	1	2	--	5	--	--	--

Year	Dominican Republic				Ecuador				El Salvador				Guatemala				Honduras			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2010	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2011	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	3	--	2	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2012	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	3	--	2	--	4	--	1	--	1	--	4	--
2013	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	1	--	4	--
2014	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	2	--	3	--
2015	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	--	1	--	1	--	4	--
2016	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	4	1	--	--	1	1	3	--
2017	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	--	1	4	--	1	1	3	--
2018	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	5	--	--	--	--	1	4	--	1	1	3	--
2019	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	5	--	--	--	--	2	3	--		1	4	--

Year	Mexico				Panama				Paraguay				Peru				Uruguay			
	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent	Against	In favor	Abstained	Absent
2009	4	--	1	--	1	3	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2010	4	--	1	--	1	2	1	1	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2011	4	--	1	--	1	2	1	1	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2012	4	--	1	--	1	2	1	1	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2013	4	--	1	--	1	2	1	1	--	--	5	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2014	4	--	1	--	2	1	2	--	--	--	5	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2015	4	--	1	--	4	1	--	--	--	--	5	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2016	4	--	1	--	3	--	2	--	--	--	5	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2017	3	--	2	--	3	--	2	--	--	--	5	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2018	3	--	2	--	3	--	2	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--
2019	4	--	1	--	3	--	2	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--	4	--	1	--

Source: General Assembly. ResolutionA/RES, 2009-2019

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Notes

1 The article discusses the multinational blocs in Latin America that were the most relevant to Latin America-Israel relations during the past decade, and not the more marginal ones.

2 UN General Assembly resolutions 64/91 to 64/95, 2009, See https://www.un.org/en/ga/64/resolutions.shtml.

3 Latin American countries saw and still see themselves as part of the Third World-Global South, and their position derives in part from this.

4 These two blocs, which were established in order to promote regional interests and cooperation, emphasize the limits of the US government's influence during that period on decision makers in the region.

5 The Israeli Foreign Ministry's attempt to market Israel to Latin American public opinion irrespective of the conflict with the Palestinians is familiar, as in the case of the musical video "How Beautiful Is Israel" (La Tigresa del Oriente, 2010).

6 During that period there were visits by the Emir of Qatar (Hamad al-Thani) to Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, and by the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. In addition, there was considerable interest in the local media in light of the visit of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

7 The book raises the question: how does Israel—a country with 7.1 million people, only 60 years old, surrounded by enemies, since its establishment in a state of constant war, without natural resources—create more start-up companies than large nations? See the book's description at https://bit.ly/2DPkLft. Questions that the Foreign Ministry previously tried to raise were, for example: what would you do if people said these things about your country?

8 This term is included in a larger-scale study on the technological relations between the two regions.

9 Such as in the case of the conflict between North Korea and South Korea—attitudes towards South Korea are not connected to this conflict.

10 UN General Assembly resolutions 64/16 to 64/19, 2009. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/64/resolutions.shtml.

11 UN General Assembly resolutions 74/10 to 74/13, 2019. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/74/resolutions.shtml.

12 See note 2.

13 UN General Assembly resolutions 74/87 to 74/90; 74/243, 2019. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/74/resolutions.shtml.

14 The Latin American country with the largest number of participants in Mashav courses was Guatemala with 116 participants. That year 614 people from 22 Latin American countries participated in programs in Israel.

15 UN General Assembly resolutions 65/13 to 65/16, 2010. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/65/resolutions.shtml.

16 Ibid, resolutions 65/102 to 65/106.

17 See in particular in the tables above the voting pattern against Israel starting in 2011, which was also reflected in the harsh tone against it in the written media.

18 Resolutions 65/102 to 65/106. The change in the voting of the government of El Salvador (which was in power during the years 2009-2014) took place regarding resolution 65/105—"Israeli practices on the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem," regarding which the government decided to abstain, a voting pattern that continued in 2012.

19 UN General Assembly Resolutions 66/14 to 66/14, 2011. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/66/resolutions.shtml.

20 UN General Assembly Resolutions 67/118 to 67/122, 2012.See https://www.un.org/en/ga/67/resolutions.shtml.

21 The offer by the Israeli ambassador to Honduras came after a fire broke out at a prison in the city of Comayagua February 14-15, 2012, which took the lives of over 350 prisoners.

22 UN General Assembly Resolutions 68/80 to 68/84, 2013. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/68/resolutions.shtml.

23 Inter alia, the cancellation of RIMAAL: The Research Network on Latin America and the MENA region.

24 UN General Assembly Resolutions 69/20 to 69/23, 2014. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/69/resolutions.shtml.

25 Ibid, Resolutions 69/90 to 69/94.

26 UN General Assembly Resolutions 70/87 to 70/91, 2015. See https://www.un.org/en/ga/70/resolutions.shtml.

27 This occurred during the year when the Vatican, headed by a Pope from Latin America, recognized the Palestinian state, while Panama only discussed the option of recognition.

28 On March 31, 2019, another joint press conference was held, but in this case in Israel, during the first official visit to Israel by Brazil's president. Bolsonaro and Netanyahu explained that Brazil's embassy would not move to Jerusalem in the near term, only a Brazilian trade office. Israel's Prime Minister explained that this decision is part of a new agenda between the countries that includes various objectives in a wide variety of areas in the field of technology and innovation, from cybersecurity to agrotech.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem. Photo: State of Israel – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Israel's Foreign Policy in the Test of 2020

Oded Eran and Shimon Stein

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

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

Introduction

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

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

The Internal Theater and Israel's Foreign Policy

Following three election campaigns in Israel in 2019-2020, a government was formed comprising the traditional right wing bloc (the Likud and the ultra-Orthodox parties) and half of the center bloc. The coalition agreement between the blocs is for a three-year period, with changes of prime minister and ministers of defense and foreign affairs after 18 months. These circumstances could generate disruption and confusion in Israel's defense and foreign policy that will be affected by differences in ideological and personal attitudes toward fundamental issues affecting Israel's foreign policy. Even if current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi share a common view of the danger to Israel of Iran's nuclear program, they have disagreed, and may continue to disagree, on the correct and preferred responses to this threat. These disagreements are significant; they concern Israel's overall security concept and its political relations, especially with the United States.

Gantz and Ashkenazi do not share the ideological drive of the right wing, led by Netanyahu. Their experience in defense and their current ministerial positions lend them a view of annexation and its consequences that is different from Netanyahu's.

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

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

The Regional Theater

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The International Theater

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

Weakening of the International Order

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

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

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

Globalization

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

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

The declared strategies of the Chinese leadership leaves no room for doubt about its underlying long-term goal—to turn its demographic and economic size into political and military power in order to achieve a status equal to that of the other powers, i.e., the United States. Almost all means are justified in the Chinese view in this campaign. From the very beginning, the Obama administration recognized the Chinese strategy and the need to combat it and devote resources to this purpose, even at the expense of other strategic missions. The Trump administration, whether because of its emphasis on rebuilding the economic power of the United States or because China under the Xi Jinping government has become more aggressive in an effort to conquer more economic strongholds, finds itself in a tough struggle against China, with many countries, including Israel, hard-pressed to find the golden mean between cooperating economically with China and maintaining close cooperation with the US.

Loss of Leadership in the West

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

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

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

Implications for Israel

Israel-United States Relations

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

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

The demographic and political weight of the ethnic minorities in the United States is growing. The interest of these minorities in the Jewish minority and the relations between the United States and Israel ranges from indifferent to hostile. The Afro-American minority is more interested in the Palestinian issue than in the Jewish leaders who marched at Martin Luther King's side over half a century ago. If there is one foreign policy issue on the agenda of the Black Lives Matter movement that has gained greater momentum in the United States in recent weeks, it is the Palestinian issue. The dimensions of the Afro-American minority's influence, as well as that of other minorities, will emerge primarily if the Democratic candidate enters the White House in January 2021, and even more if the Democratic Party wins a majority in both houses of Congress.

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

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

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

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

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

Israel-United States-China Triangular Relations

Israel's exclusive reliance on the United States is also liable to create dilemmas in foreign policy in other areas, mostly in relations with China. Prime Minister Netanyahu has cultivated the two countries' relations on the basis of a correct assumption that China's status as a rising economic power and Israel's renown as a startup nation and hi-tech incubator is a winning combination. On the face of it, Israel does not face the risks that other countries have experienced in their relations with China; as a financially sound country, Israel is not indentured to China's economic power and its collateral effects, such as compliance in political issues of importance to China. On the other hand, the escalating friction between the United States and China has caused Washington to intervene and force Israel to adopt measures for supervising involvement by Chinese concerns in the Israeli economy. The establishment of these processes and mechanisms may have been essential in any case, but it is clear that this was done under American pressure. Moreover, the attitude of the United States to China is perhaps one of the few issues on which there is no disagreement between the Democrats and the Republicans. Even if the Democratic Party adopts a different style, the substance of relations between the United States and China will not change. Escalation in the confrontation between the two powers is liable to lead to an American demand that its allies withdraw from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or disengage from the Belt and Road Initiative—two economic levers that have helped China label itself as a global economic power. The two major areas of Chinese–Israeli economic engagement, infrastructure (ports, railways, power stations) and hi-tech (5G communications) and artificial intelligence), have become problematic. Yielding to American pressure may result in rising costs of infrastructure projects and hi-tech research and development. Disregarding Washington's "advice" entail risks and costs as well.

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

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

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

Israel-European Union Relations

The coronavirus crisis has so far not generated exceptional political changes in the European Union, but has furthered those that were already visible. The coronavirus contributed to the processes of weakening the central institutions, as well as strengthening nation states against the integration process and the tension between southern countries and northern countries. The European Union's fundamental economic problems were aggravated, and the question of who will replace German Chancellor Angela Merkel when she steps off the political stage was highlighted. These questions also affect Israel's considerations with respect to its interests and need to repair relations with the European Union's political and economic institutions.

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

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

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

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

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

Renewal of the dialogue with the European Union is also important with respect to Turkish policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. It challenges EU members even more than it challenges Israel, Greece, and Cyprus. Turkey poses stark dilemmas to the European Union and NATO, for example with its military activity in Libya. The delineation of the maritime border between Turkey and Libya is liable to harm freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean Sea, and Turkey's threats against Cyprus, accompanied by the beefing up of the Turkish fleet, are liable to affect Israel's security as well. The dialogue with Greece and Cyprus on this question cannot replace a dialogue with the ministers of defense and foreign affairs in the European Union, who in this framework are free of the constraints resulting from the presence of Turkish representatives in dialogues in the NATO framework.

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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L-r: President Nicos Anastasiade of Cyprus, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Alexis Tsipras, then-Prime Minister of Greece, in Beer Sheva, December 20, 2018. Photo: GPO/Kobi Gideon

Israel's Policy in its Triangular Relations with Greece and Cyprus

Orna Mizrahi

The Israel-Greece-Cyprus triangular framework constitutes a new element in Israeli foreign policy, and since the framework was inaugurated in January 2016, cooperation between the three countries has expanded. The initiative in creating the triangle came from Greece and Cyprus, but Israeli policymakers were quick to spot the opportunity and boost the tripartite framework with content and activity. The approach by the Israeli establishment is a positive example of inter-organizational cooperation, especially between the National Security Council (NSC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which jointly advanced the matter with the cooperation of all the government ministries to form an overall integrated policy with their counterparts in Greece and Cyprus. The triangle is capable of changing the regional architecture in a way that contributes to Israel's national strength if the partners succeed in expanding cooperation between them, adding more countries to the new bloc, and jointly addressing the main challenge from Turkey, which regards the bloc as a threat to its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Keywords: foreign policy, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Eastern Mediterranean, regional cooperation, energy

Background: The Failure of Previous Efforts to Form a Regional Framework

Since its establishment, Israel's aspiration to develop relations with neighboring countries from its second circle has been a key element in its national security strategy, given Israel's hostile relations with its closest Arab neighbors. This approach, which was adopted by Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, was called the "periphery doctrine." At that time, Israel hoped for a secret alliance between Israel and the large Islamic powers: Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. In a confidential letter (July 1958) to United States President Dwight Eisenhower, Ben-Gurion wrote, "We have begun to strengthen our ties with four neighboring countries in the external circle of the Middle East: Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Turkey."[1] Over the years, Israel managed to develop bilateral, if not permanent, relations with some of these countries, and the dream of a regional alliance faded.

Another opportunity to advance regional cooperation emerged years later, this time in the near circle, following the interim agreements with the Palestinians (1993-1995) and the peace agreement with Jordan (1994). Israel regarded relations with the surrounding Arab countries as a key element in its regional strategy, and subsequent progress in the process of recognition of Israel by part of the Arab world planted hope for expanded regional cooperation and the creation of a "new Middle East," grounded primarily in the Israel-Palestinian-Egypt-Jordan quadrangle. During these years, the possibility of a regional alliance was explored. These hopes, however, were dashed very quickly by the familiar disputes: the absence of a solution to the Palestinian issue and a lack of desire for internal reasons on the part of the regimes in Egypt and Jordan to upgrade their political and economic relations with Israel, given the deep hostility in large parts of the population of these countries to Israel and the opposition to normalization, which was regarded as a negative development that should be condemned. Also contributing to difficulties in developing Israel's relations with its neighbors were the existing differences between Israel's cohesion, military power, and economic and technological achievements as a Western democracy and the inherent problems in these states.

During these years, Israel was also partner to the attempt by the European Union to establish a broad framework for cooperation aimed at reinforcing stability and economic development in the region. In 1995, the European Union launched an initiative for a partnership between Europe and the Mediterranean countries. The partners in this initiative, known as the Barcelona Process, included the European Union countries and 12 parties from the Mediterranean region (Israel, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and the Palestinian Authority as an observer). This framework led to a bilateral dialogue between Israel and the European Union and some of the participants, as well as multilateral meetings, but the attempt to promote joint activity failed. The efforts to rejuvenate this process and institute other frameworks for cooperation continued over the years, and a new follow-up framework to the Barcelona Process that includes 43 countries, the Union for the Mediterranean (UFM), was formed in Paris in 2008 and continued ever since. Its aim is to advance cooperation for the sake of stability and security in the region, but its achievements to date have been very limited.

The Israeli Turn to the Eastern Mediterranean

Starting in 2010, following the improvement in bilateral relations with Greece and Cyprus, the idea arose of forming a new framework in the Eastern Mediterranean area. The idea gained momentum following the discoveries of natural gas in the region.

Tripartite cooperation with Greece and Cyprus was not originally an Israeli initiative,

although the idea was raised frequently by diplomats in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The tripartite framework is a format initiated by Greece and Cyprus with additional countries in the area (Egypt and Jordan). A propitious opportunity came when Israel adopted a proactive foreign policy for developing new relations in the regional and international theaters. Israel's interests, particularly following the deterioration in relations with Turkey, dovetailed with the searches by leaders of Greece and Cyprus for partners in the southeastern Mediterranean area. The two countries recognized Israel's ability to contribute to Greece, which suffered from internal distress, and Cyprus, which sought closeness to Israel following the discoveries of gas at sea and because of the Turkish threat.

Israel's interests, particularly following the deterioration in relations with Turkey, dovetailed with the searches by leaders of Greece and Cyprus for partners in the southeastern Mediterranean area.

Israel's policymakers identified the opportunity to formalize a tripartite framework, and professional staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council (NSC) promoted the idea and pushed for its implementation. At the same time, Prime Minister Netanyahu adopted the proposal, which suited his approach that Israel should strive to develop its political, economic, and security relations, especially in new near and remote theaters (Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America). This came at a time when Israel was experiencing difficulties in developing its standing and ties in the regional and international systems, especially in the European Union, primarily because of lack of progress toward a resolution of the Palestinian issue. The westward turn and the creation of a new cooperation framework on Israel's doorstep fit in well with the overall foreign policy that was designed at the time.

The decision to formalize the triangle with Greece and Cyprus led to a systemic effort, led by the NSC and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to establish a new framework. The idea was to devise a format for meetings and areas of cooperation. All of Israel's government ministries lent a hand, and an intensive dialogue was conducted with their counterparts in Athens and Nicosia. At the same time, it was agreed that biannual summit meetings would be held, in which trilateral and bilateral meetings of ministers would take place to discuss a broad range of topics: defense (in peacetime and in an emergency), internal security, energy, economics, trade, tourism, environment, culture, health, and education. Over the past two years, the tripartite framework has been upgraded further, following a decision to include the United States in its activity as a party providing support and assistance.

Toward the Establishment of a Tripartite Framework with Greece and Cyprus

The rapid progress in developing cooperation between the three countries was possible because of their shared values as liberal democracies in the Eastern Mediterranean area. Another factor was the commitment of the three leaders who became strategic partners: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Cypriot President Anastasiades, and Greek Prime Minister Tsipras, replaced in July 2019 by newly elected Prime Minister Mitsotakis, another enthusiastic supporter of Israel. At the same time, from Israel's standpoint, the timing of the consolidation of the framework was no coincidence, and was due primarily to the following developments:

a. The discovery of gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin was an important motive for cooperation, especially with Cyprus, given its common maritime border with Israel. In 2010, the two countries signed

an agreement delimiting the maritime border, and the need for cooperation grew with the discovery of the Aphrodite gas field, most of which is within Cypriot economic waters but spills over into Israel's jurisdiction. The discovery of the natural gas fields created an opportunity and a need for cooperation in the production and export of the gas reserves, and in security for the gas facilities and shipping in the Mediterranean Sea.

b. The upheaval in the Middle East over the past decade, which exposed the weaknesses and instability of the proximate regional order, also contributed to Israel's westward turn. At the same time, the threat mounted from Iran, which as the leader of the Shiite axis took advantage of the civil war in Syria to approach the border with Israel, therefore generating a more concrete threat to Israel from Lebanon and Syria than in the past. The regional upheaval also created an opportunity to develop Israel's relations with the pragmatic Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, but it was clear that the Palestinian question still constituted a barrier to any substantial progress on this track. In this situation, Israel had to seek out new spheres to the west in the Eastern Mediterranean for more natural partners. Greece and Cyprus also shared concern about the impact of events in the Middle East (the wave of immigration that swept Europe via Greece, and the rise of the terrorist threat on the continent).
c. The deterioration of relations between Israel and Turkey since the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by Erdogan (Prime Minister starting in March 2003 and President starting in August 2014), a party with a conservative Islamic ideology. Relations deteriorated further over the past decade following the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla incident in 2010. Israel's efforts to preserve its relations with Turkey were of no avail, and even after Israeli apologized for the outcome of the incident, Erdogan pursued a hostile policy toward Israel, accompanied by provocative statements. Relations with Turkey were therefore no longer a barrier to the advancement of cooperation between the triangle members.
d. Cooperation between the triangle members is also likely to help Israel, given the difficulty of furthering its relations with the European Union in recent years. Despite Israel's good bilateral relations with most European countries, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become a major stumbling block to cooperation with Israel in the formal EU frameworks. The Association Council, the framework for the annual dialogue between Israel and the EU, has not convened for a decade. Furthermore, the EU frequently discusses the Israeli-Palestinian issue and regularly criticizes Israeli policy. This difficulty in the broad European Union framework has led Israel to concentrate on bilateral relations with partners in the European theater, among them Greece and Cyprus, in part in order to improve Israel's stand in the EU framework.

The new framework creates a ring of support in dealing with threats to Israel. At the fifth summit (in December 2018), Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, "And these bonds are not merely based on shared interests and geographic proximity—they are based on shared values in a very volatile region, very violent region."

Israel's Interests in the Tripartite Framework

The tripartite cooperation with Greece and Cyprus, which has resulted in seven summits since January 2016 (the most recent in January 2020) and joint activity in many spheres, serves Israel's political, security, and economic interests.

The new framework creates a ring of support in dealing with threats to Israel. At

the fifth summit (in December 2018), Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, "And these bonds are not merely based on shared interests and geographic proximity—they are based on shared values in a very volatile region, very violent region. We share deep histories and rich culture. We are all vibrant democracies. We all value pluralism, freedom, and peace. *And we are all threatened by forces of terror and religious radicalism*. Our alliance is an anchor of stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean (emphasis added)." In almost all of Netanyahu's public statements in his summit meetings with the leaders of Cyprus and Greece, he also mentioned the Iranian threat, which is at the top of the Israeli agenda. These comments were welcomed by his partners. For example, in a May 8, 2018 interview with i24 News before the fourth summit, and against the background of information on Iran's intention to establish a base in the Mediterranean, the Cypriot President said that the threat to Israel from Iran was also a threat to Cyprus.

Israel's interest in energy cooperation is clear: ensuring continued production of the gas in Israel's economic waters, guaranteeing Israel's rights to some of the gas produced from the Aphrodite gas field, and finding a joint solution for exporting gas outside the region.

Two main possibilities for exporting gas are under consideration. One is transferring gas to liquefaction facilities in Egypt. The other is laying a pipeline to Europe via Cyprus and Greece, and from there to Italy. The latter, the EastMed Pipeline, is the more ambitious project; it includes construction of 1,300 kilometers of pipeline under the sea and 600 kilometers on land, at an estimated cost of $6-7 billion. An agreement to lay the pipeline was signed at the most recent tripartite summit and plans for the project are proceeding, despite its complexity, cost, and the difficulties created by Turkey, all of which question the feasibility of the agreement. The agreement was ratified only recently by the Greek parliament. At the same time, the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing fall in oil prices have also reduced the feasibility of energy-related projects in the region.

Cooperation among the three countries in the energy sector creates possibilities for expanding it to additional countries in the region. Besides Israel, Cyprus, Greece, and Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), announced in January 2019, includes Egypt and representatives from Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. After the opening conference of the framework, representatives of the member countries met again in July 2019. At the same time, a major joint project to establish a shared electrical grid connecting Israel, Cyprus, Crete, and Greece—the EuroAsia Interconnector—is progressing, and cooperative efforts in renewable energy are underway.

In the security sphere, there is extensive cooperation between the three countries. This cooperation serves Israel's interests in a number of dimensions:

a. One is the formulation of a joint response to naval threats against freedom of the seas and maritime commerce (most of Israel's foreign trade, especially with Europe, goes through the Eastern Mediterranean), ports, and marine energy facilities. This cooperation, under American sponsorship, is especially important because of the expanded Russian presence in the Mediterranean; hostile measures against Israel, Cyprus, and Greece by Turkey; and the dispute between Israel and Lebanon on the maritime border between them.
b. The second is the creation of strategic depth in a war. This consists mainly of possible use by Israel of airports and seaports in Greece and Cyprus in wartime and the placement of emergency warehouses outside the range of the long range missiles possessed by the Shiite axis.
c. The third is joint military training and exercises, in some cases with the participation of forces from other countries (the US and other European states). There are joint naval exercises, and the Israeli air

force has trained in Greece for a number of years. For example, in May 2019, a large-scale joint exercise took place in Cyprus, with the participation of infantry and air forces.

d. The fourth dimension concerns agreements between the three countries on internal security and anti-terrorism warfare, which are useful to Israel in both preventing terrorism (for example, exposing Hezbollah operatives in Cyprus) and in joint action in combating crime.

Cooperation likewise extends to aid following natural disasters. Israel was in need of help from Greece and Cyprus in combating uncontrolled fires. Greece and Cyprus helped extinguish the Carmel mountain range fire in 2010, and this cooperation was formalized and used to help extinguish additional waves of fires in 2016 and 2019. Cooperation is also underway in rescue and evacuation, with joint exercises conducted in this sphere. A joint war room for emergencies (fires, earthquakes, and floods) is on the agenda, with the aim of adding additional countries.

At the same time there are economic opportunities for Israel, for example, increasing the volume of incoming tourism from these countries (religious and medical tourism and cruises). Also notable are the possibility of increased commercial activity and the developing ties in communications, health, and the environment (agreements for preventing sea pollution and the protection of beaches, sewage management, and development of environmentally friendly technology), as well as cultural cooperation.

Another interest is the benefit from Israel's contributions to its partners in innovation and technology, including in cybersecurity. In this framework, Israel hosted the fifth summit in December 2018 in Beer Sheva, at which the Israeli National Cyber Directorate and Cyber Emergency Response Team (CERT) were launched.

As the ties grow stronger, a regional geopolitical bloc is emerging, which can aid Israel in the political arena. Greece and Cyprus support Israel, especially in discussions about Israel in the European Union framework. Although their ability to contribute there is limited, given that EU decisions are made by consensus, they can sometimes block decisions against Israel. For example, Greece, with the support of Cyprus, headed those opposed to marking products made in Jewish communities in the West Bank.

The three countries also constitute a core for the development of Israel's cooperation with additional parties in the Mediterranean region and Europe. This has already contributed to Israel's relations with Egypt and Jordan, at least in the energy sector, within the framework of the EMGF. In the future, this may also contribute to agreement between Israel and Lebanon on delimiting their maritime border and sharing the profits from gas production in the disputed gas prospects.

Israel's success in making the United States a part of the trilateral activity serves Israel's interests in obtaining the superpower's sponsorship in ensuring security in the Eastern Mediterranean. Although this involvement is also motivated by US interests (primarily against Russia), this sponsorship fortifies the strategic ties between the countries. It can likewise contribute to the materialization of some of the ambitious projects on the agenda, especially the EastMed gas pipeline, which includes United States involvement. Referring to this in the sixth tripartite summit in March 2019, which was also attended by the US Secretary of State, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Pompeo's presence showed American support for this regional effort, and signaled the vitality of the framework.

The Challenges Facing the Tripartite Framework

Turkey, under Erdogan, constitutes the main challenge to cooperation between the three countries. Turkey regards the consolidation of the Israel-Greece-Cyprus axis as a threat to its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean,

and a barrier to Erdogan's ambitions as a regional power. Turkey has poor relations with all three of the triangle's participants. It does not recognize Cyprus, and no progress has been made toward a settlement of the Turkish-Cypriot territorial dispute. There is ongoing friction between Greece and Turkey, and relations between Turkey and Israel have deteriorated since Erdogan gained power. It appears that this realization led Turkey to undertake countermeasures in the Eastern Mediterranean. As part of its efforts to thwart the three countries' joint activity, Turkey signed an agreement with the Government of National Accord in Tripoli in November 2019 to delimit the maritime border. This agreement, which was condemned by the three countries and other parties in the region, draws a line between southwestern Turkey and northeastern Libya, while ignoring the interests of Greece and Cyprus. It also poses a significant threat to the three countries' ability to proceed with the construction of the EastMed gas pipeline. Turkey has likewise staged other provocations, such as oil and gas exploration in Cypriot territorial waters and hostile land and sea actions against Greece.

The existing and future friction between Israel and Arab countries in the Eastern Mediterranean can also have a negative impact on the relations between the three countries. At issue is friction with parties on the Mediterranean coast with whom Israel has an active conflict: Lebanon, Syria, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Negative effects are likewise possible from instability in Egypt or a change in the regime that damages relations with Israel. Negative developments in the Palestinian theater are also liable to cast a shadow on the tripartite partnership (the collapse of the Palestinian Authority or Israeli measures to change the status quo, such as annexation), given the commitment of Greece and Cyprus to the official positions of the European Union on the Palestinian question. Cooperation by Greece and Cyprus with Israel is based on shared interests and values, but these can also change as a result of internal developments in the respective countries, or following possible changes in the balance of power in the region and in Europe. Furthermore, disagreements about the pace of progress in cooperation already agreed to by the triangular partners are possible, with an emphasis on security measures and energy, as well as possible future disagreements stemming from efforts by Greece and Cyprus to achieve progress in their relations with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon in tandem with their tripartite relations with Israel.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The formalization of the tripartite framework constitutes an achievement for Israel's regional foreign policy. Cooperation between the three countries has made rapid progress, and since the triangle was formed in 2016, spheres of joint activity have expanded. This is actually the first time that Israel has been part of a tripartite strategic alliance, thereby substantially altering the regional architecture and enhancing Israel's national power. It can also consolidate Israel's affiliation with this region and deepen its identity as a Mediterranean country.

At the same time, it appears that the full potential in cooperation between the three countries has not yet been realized. The new government in Israel will have to take action to intensify and expand cooperation in order to realize this potential, for example by motivating these countries to join Germany in classifying Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, separate from the European Union's position on this question.

The possibility of expanding the framework to include Italy and possibly other European countries should be considered, as well as the consolidation of American involvement and support, in order to promote the old idea of a broad regional alliance that will add to Israel's security and to regional stability. It is recommended to take care to avoid alienating Turkey, because in the post-Erdogan era, Turkey

is likely to again become an important partner of Israel. Care should also be taken to avoid giving Eastern Mediterranean players the impression that strategic cooperation with countries in Europe constitutes an alliance against Muslim countries, or that it comes at the expense of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors.

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Notes

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Syrian President Basahr al-Assad with Russian President Vladimir Putin (c), January 7, 2020. Photo: kremlin.ru

Truly a Paper Tiger? Russia as a Challenge to Israeli National Security

Daniel Rakov

Russian policy in the Middle East poses a challenge to Israeli national security interests, and this will not change as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the other hand, dialogue with Moscow and political maneuvering between Moscow and the West has proven successful in offsetting the dangers to Israel and cultivating new possibilities. Israel should continue its dialogue with Moscow, strengthen the lateral communication channels (beneath the leadership echelon), and exercise caution to avoid injury to Russian soldiers and assets in Syria. The coming months may witness a new window of opportunity to promote Israeli positions vis-à-vis Syria and Iran in the event that Moscow tries to reach "interim arrangements" with the Trump administration and with Europe prior to the upcoming US presidential elections. In the long term, Israel should prepare itself for heightened great power competition in the region and improve state and academic mechanisms for learning about Russia and developing policy tools to contend with it.

Keywords: Israel, Russia, national security, United States, Iran, Syria, oil, civilian nuclear program, arms sales, campaign between wars

Russia's return to a leading role in the Middle East, which has accelerated since the onset of its military intervention in Syria in September 2015, has made Israel's strategic environment more complex, and has posed a mixture of threats and opportunities for Jerusalem on the regional, international, and bilateral levels. The main challenge to Israel in the Russian context is the tension between preserving the strategic partnership with the United States and the desire to actualize concrete regional interests requiring closer relations with Moscow, which Washington views as a bitter adversary.

At the same time, the Israeli policy and security community is hard-pressed to determine whether Russia is a "paper tiger" or a "neighborhood bully" that should not raise concern (an assessment supported primarily by a comparison between the Russian economy and that of the United States, China, and the European Union, each of which is larger in scale than that of Russia), or rather a global power with the ability to challenge Israel's national security in a significant way. In recent months, another question has arisen: following the Covid-19 pandemic, will Russia's role in the Middle East intensify or grow weaker, and how will this affect Israel?

Israel and the Great Power Imbroglio

Israel's heightened political and security dialogue with Russia occurs at a time when Moscow's relations with the West in general, and with the United States in particular, continue to move from bad to worse. Russia is classified as a primary challenge to US security (second only to China), and the sanctions on Russia continue to expand. Both countries are finding it difficult to maintain open channels of communication (not to mention cooperation) in almost all realms. Relations with Russia are also at the focal point of burning political disagreements between Congress and the US President, who is accused of being overly fond of Moscow.

This surging rivalry has likewise been manifested in the Middle East, as both powers find it difficult to cooperate in the context of concrete shared interests in the region due to a fundamental lack of mutual trust, and the American fear that a regional arrangement will give Russia undesirable additional strength in the global realm.

Israel's close relations with Russia have been the subject of criticism by Jerusalem's allies in the United States and Europe, who question why Israel, and Prime Minister Netanyahu personally, legitimize Russia through phone conversations and frequent meetings with President Putin. Israel is grateful to the (Soviet) Red Army for liberating concentration camps in Poland during WWII, and it expresses this sentiment publicly by recognizing Russia and its military as the heir to the legacy of the Red Army. Still, Israel is criticized for helping Russia promote a political narrative that is perceived by East European countries as undermining their sovereignty. This criticism intensified especially after Netanyahu's appearance at a "Victory Parade" in Red Square in Moscow (2018) and Putin's visit to Israel as part of the World Holocaust Forum (2020).

Many Russians believe that Israel has decisive influence over US strategy in Syria and with regard to Iran; they strive to receive Jerusalem's assistance in developing political arrangements with Washington (as reflected in the June 2019 meeting of national security advisers in Jerusalem). They seek to bring about a full withdrawal of American forces from Syria, have the world come to terms with Assad remaining in power, and raise money for Syria's reconstruction. In exchange, the Russians propose security guarantees for the Kurds and a graduated process for the Iranians' removal from Syria.

On the other hand, many in the West doubt whether there is a viable formula for Israel to bridge the divisions between Moscow and Washington, even in the narrow regional context. The mistrust that prevails between the Americans and the Russians in general, and the gaps between the different positions regarding the Syrian context in particular, runs deep.

There is currently no identifiable willingness on the part of the United States to grant Russia anything significant in return for promises to assist in an Iranian withdrawal in the future, and it is difficult to imagine a breakthrough toward a settlement in the Syrian context before the end of Trump's current presidential term. Even if a settlement of some kind is reached prior to the end of 2020, it will be difficult to launch a significant change on the ground in Syria before 2021.

It appears that despite the mounting pressure on Jerusalem to "pick a side," it can still blaze a middle-ground path in the confrontation between Russia and the West. It is widely evident that its relationship with the United States and the West is deeper than the relations that have taken shape with Russia. Indeed, in Israel's eyes, its extensive security and economic ties with the United States and with the European Union are more important than its ties with Moscow. Thus, the strengthening of Jerusalem-Moscow relations in recent years has been reflected primarily in the symbolic and economic realm, and serious obstacles still hinder security and technological cooperation between the two countries.

The case of the extradition of Russian hacker Aleksei Burkov to the United States in late 2019 (despite heavy Russian pressure on Israel to prevent this) attests to the fact that when Israel is forced into a corner and must choose between Moscow and Washington, it chooses the latter. Moscow also understands this and seeks to minimize putting Israel in such a position, which may publicly demonstrate the limits of its influence.

China currently plays a secondary military-political role in the region and refrains from competing with the United States and with Russia. Moscow and Beijing do not maintain close cooperation in the Middle East, and they strive to refrain from situations that may drive a wedge between them, and especially from voting against one another in UN Security Council discussions. Still, the United States policy of double pressure on China and Russia, and the grouping of these two powers, together with Iran, as "reactionary regimes," may, in the medium and long terms, force them into more active cooperation against American influence in the region. Such a scenario would not help preserve Israel's political freedom of action.

Russia on the Regional Level: The Age of Frenemies

Nearly five years after its intervention in Syria, Russia can be satisfied with its improved regional standing. It has leveraged its tactical military successes in Syria (ensuring the survival of the Assad regime, the return of most of the state's territory to Damascus control, and the leasing of two permanent military bases in Syria for half a century and more) into the image of a proactive actor in regional matters. Moscow has formulated a positive agenda vis-à-vis every state in the region by means of political support, strategic cooperative economic efforts, joint fighting, and coordination of the price of oil, and has maintained diverse leverage. Countering predictions, the Russian army did not sink in the Syrian quagmire: Russia's military presence in Syria is limited to a few thousand troops, and the Russian declarations that its cost has been limited in relation to its accomplishments should not be disregarded.

The actors in the region watch Russia with suspicion but recognize its determination to remain part of the Middle East landscape over time and deepen its involvement, as opposed to the United States, which according to statements by President Trump seeks a reduced military presence. Even if the reality differs from the rhetoric, the perception in the region is the end of the era of Pax Americana and the strengthening of Russia. As such, relations with Moscow increase the bargaining power of regional actors vis-à-vis Washington.

The most pressing issues for Israel with regard to the Russian presence in Syria are its freedom of military operation in the northern arena and the possibility of Moscow helping

remove the Iranian entrenchment. Israel has found it difficult to ignore Russia's emergence as a new neighbor. It has chosen to strengthen dialogue and create a military mechanism for de-confliction with Moscow, despite concern that Russia's entry into Syria will strengthen Israel's enemies, with Iran at the head of the list. In fact, Russia and Israel have agreed to disagree about Iran and Syria, but have expressed a commitment to prevent a direct military conflict between them.

With the perspective of nearly five years, it is evident that the approach of dialogue with Moscow has been worthwhile for Israel. Despite ups and downs, the IDF's freedom of operation in Syria has been preserved, and Russia is trying hard to refrain from a direct clash with Israel. Moscow does not view Israel as an opponent; it assesses its relations with Israel beyond the Syrian arena and does not wish to pick a side in the confrontation between Israel and Iran. On the other hand, Moscow is keen on preventing Israel from disregarding Russian interests, led by building legitimacy for Russian hegemony in Syria as a basis for strengthening its regional standing as a global power and for defending Russian troops and assets. Russia frequently voices severe criticism of Israeli actions in Syria against the following background:

a. The Russian Ministry of Defense's dissatisfaction with the level of coordination of IDF attacks and concern regarding the possibility of operational errors resulting in injury to Russian soldiers, as occurred in the case of the downing of the Russian plane by Syria (September 2018).
b. Ongoing Russian embarrassment facing Iran, their partner in the Syrian campaign (and beyond), which perceives Moscow as enabling Israeli strikes at pro-Iranian forces in Syria.
c. Detrimental impact to the reputation of the Russian weapon systems possessed by the Syrians, which are frequently destroyed by the IDF.

In circumstances where is an increased risk that Israeli attacks in Syria could escalate quickly to the point of war, Israel needs to ask itself: What role will Russia will play during an emergency? Whereas Moscow may have great interest in bringing about a quick resolution to the escalation, it is also liable to challenge Israel in circumstances of severe conflict of interest between the two states—within the framework of a campaign, or as a result of unintentional harm to Russia by Israel.

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Russia, positioned between the different opposing camps in Syria (Turkey, the Iranian regime, Israel, the United States, and others), has not succeeded, on its own, in bringing about a fundamental change in the strategic deadlock in Syria, especially as long as the United States maintains a military presence in the Kurdish region. On the other hand, at the same time that the United States is signing an agreement with the Taliban for a gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan, US partners in the region, including Israel, are compelled to prepare themselves more vigorously for the contingency of US unilateral withdrawal from Syria, which would make it easier for Iran to solidify its position but also increase Russia's role.

Russian-Iranian relations are complicated: although both countries share an interest in limiting US influence in the region and preserving Assad's rule in Syria, the relations between them also include historical suspicion and cultural differences. Russian support of the nuclear agreement (2015) with Iran did not stem from naivete but rather from an assessment that the agreement was the least of all possible evils,

and that foregoing it would increase the risk that Iran would pursue a military nuclear program. It is clear to the Kremlin that Russian-Iranian relations are intrinsically linked to Russia's relations with the Sunni countries and with Israel. Russia is interested in maintaining its close relationship with Iran, but major gaps between these two actors leave Israel with significant freedom of political action vis-à-vis Moscow.

The model for Russia's influence in the Middle East must contend with the limitations of its economic power. The Russians choose competitive asymmetric approaches. They seek to establish ties with each country in the region through large inter-governmental contracts in a number of realms that are of national strategic importance, which would also serve Moscow as future leverage.

The model for Russia's influence in the Middle East must contend with the limitations of its economic power. The Russians choose competitive asymmetric approaches. They seek to establish ties with each country in the region through large inter-governmental contracts in a number of realms that are of national strategic importance, which would also serve Moscow as future leverage. In doing so, Russia is trying to make the most of its relative advantages: arms sales, construction of nuclear power plants, involvement in energy projects (with an emphasis on oil and natural gas), and the supply of agricultural products. All of these aspects have implications for Israel's security interests:

a. Arms sales: Russia may provide Israel's adversaries in the region with capabilities that undermine Israel's military superiority. In the coming years, the Russians will play a central role in rebuilding the Syrian military and seek to sign significant contracts with Iran, after the arms embargo against it expires in October 2020. The Russians play an important role in Egypt's military acquisitions, and the Russian-American competition over the Middle East weapons market creates the risk of erosion of the self-restraints in American exports to the region, as well as of Washington's commitment to maintain Israel's Quality Military Edge (QME).
b. The Russians are currently building ten nuclear reactors in the Middle East (two in Iran, four in Egypt, and four in Turkey), and their intentional position of not selling them dual-use technology that could serve a military nuclear program, such as the nuclear fuel cycle, is noteworthy. This approach could provide Russia with an important future role in attempts to steer the region away from a nuclear arms race. At the same time, the existence of a Russian alternative helps Saudi Arabia's bargaining with the United States on Washington's demand from Riyadh to commit itself to the "golden standard" of nuclear non-proliferation, that could limit it in the future, in the event that it seeks to pursue a military nuclear program.
c. Energy: The potential for a conflict of interest with Russia with regard to the Israeli export of natural gas to Europe could intensify in light of Moscow's interest in maintaining its status as one of Europe's major natural gas suppliers. Along with Turkey, Russia operates natural gas export pipelines to Southern Europe and strives to become a partner in natural gas production projects in the region (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Egypt). Although the Russians do not address this issue publicly, they might perceive the emerging gas consortium of Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, and Italy as a threat to their interests.
d. Agricultural produce: One impact of the Western economic sanctions against Russia has been the growth of the agricultural sector in Russia and its transformation into the world's largest exporter of wheat and other grains. Countries in the Middle East, including Israel, are among Russia's major customers in this area, which provide

Moscow with influence over food security in some of the countries in the region. On the other hand, for Israel, which specializes in agricultural knowledge and cooperates with Russia in this field, opportunities may arise in this context.

Bilateral Relations

As Israelis went to the Knesset elections on September 17, 2019, President Putin spoke at the annual conference of Keren Hayesod (the United Israel Appeal) in Moscow. There, he articulated his view of Israel as a Russian speaking country, due to the almost two million Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union who live there, and he praised Prime Minister Netanyahu for his personal contribution to the relations between the two countries.

Putin exaggerated the size of the "Russian community" in Israel: the number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union living in the country is closer to one million, some of whom live their lives in Hebrew more than in Russian, while others, from the younger generations, do not know Russian at all. Their percentage of the overall Israeli population stands at 11-15 percent. It is not a homogenous community, including as to their political preferences, although the older population does indeed maintain cultural ties with Russia.

Putin's attempt to rehabilitate Russia's standing as a global power has also involved the nurturing of relations with the Russian-speaking diaspora around the world. In the post-Soviet space, Moscow is trying to extend its protection to members of the Russian minorities in a manner that undermines the sovereignty of the new states that were established on the ruins of the Soviet Union. Until the past few years, the "Russians" in Israel have served as a bridge between the two countries by consuming Russian-language shows, books, television, and media; purchasing food products from Russia; traveling to Russia; and doing business with Russia. Israel's cherishing of the Red Army veterans, who are present either physically or in the memory of almost every family of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, has further strengthened this bond.

Tackling the bilateral relations issues creates many problems and opportunities that both governments can resolve or exploit, for example, reducing the difficulties of movement between countries, easing commercial investments and projects, and resolving issues of double military service or the normalization of pension rights for people with dual citizenship.

Putin's many summit meetings with Netanyahu between 2019 and 2020, including during the three recent election campaigns in Israel, have given him an image of someone who has the potential to exercise political influence in Israel. Putin enjoys this image of influence, especially as exercising it through official engagement with Israel puts him above any would-be accusation of illegitimate intervention in the democratic process. The two leaders met before each of the recent elections:

a. Before the April 2019 elections: The two met in Russia in February 2019, approximately a month and a half before the election (this meeting signaled the end of the crisis surrounding the downing of the Russian plane in September 2018), and again five days before the election (the Russian-assisted return of the remains of missing soldier Zacharia Baumel, who was killed in the Battle of Sultan Yacoub in 1982).
b. Before the elections of September 2019: The two met in Russia approximately one week before Israelis went to the polls.
c. Before the elections of March 2020: The leaders met in Israel on January 23, 2020 (at the World Holocaust Forum), and in Russia on January 30, 2020 (the return of Naama Issachar), approximately one month before the election.

Putin leads Russian policy vis-à-vis Israel, and his personal relationship with the Israeli Prime Minister plays a prominent role. This is not unique to Israel: Putin is known for nurturing personal relationships with other leaders. It is

also not unique with regard to Netanyahu, as Putin maintained good relations with Ehud Olmert and Ariel Sharon. Still, Putin presumably believes that 11 years of ongoing cooperative work with Netanyahu has enabled him to bring Israeli-Russian relations to their current historical high point.

This level of personal relations had decisive importance in recent years in the ability to resolve problematic issues. This dynamic found prominent expression in Putin's approach to the crisis surrounding the downing of the Russian plane by the Syrians, in which the Russian Ministry of Defense assigned responsibility for the deaths of twelve Russian officers to Israel. Although Putin backed the Russian military, he also determined that it was not an intentional act by Israel, which contained the crisis in time and limited it solely to the security realm (unlike the Russian-Turkish crisis in November 2015, when a military incident led to across-the-board damage to all realms of the bilateral relations).

The episode of Naama Issachar's arrest in Russia was also resolved only through Netanyahu's intensive involvement with Putin (although dealing with it on this level had a price, as the episode cast a shadow over the Israeli-Russian agenda for a four-month period). In this way, Putin has succeeded in using this relationship to advance the issues that appeal to him personally, with an emphasis on restoring to Moscow control over the Christian religious sites in Jerusalem that were built during the Czarist era.

In comparison to the Russian past, Putin's friendliness toward the Jews and his appreciation of Israel's successes is noteworthy. He praises Israel's accomplishments in the fight against terrorism, its resolve in defending its security interests, and its technological accomplishments. The Russians are interested in benefiting from Israel's defense and civilian technological assistance, as in their purchase of UAVs in 2009, which even today serve as work horses of the Russian army. Nonetheless, the American-Russian competition makes it extremely difficult for Israel to cooperate with Russia in the realms of science and technology due to a desire to avoid doing damage to cooperative efforts with the West. In any event, Russia and Israel compete on the global arms market and are suspicious of one another regarding the intelligence and offensive potential of the cyber arsenal at their disposal.

Moreover, under Putin, criticism of Israel has decreased regarding disagreements between the countries that have no solution on the horizon. It has become less public and less automatic on the Israeli-Russian dispute regarding the Iranian nuclear program, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the issue of Israel's nuclear posture. Both countries have found ways to limit the impact of these disagreements on the existing areas of cooperation. They have also discovered that ongoing dialogue on these matters may result in significant pragmatic understandings (for example, freezing the sale to Iran of the S300 air defense system in 2010).

Nonetheless, disagreements could return to the limelight if conflicts of interest between the states increase, or if Russia identifies in them potential excess profit for itself. For example, the Russians are expected to oppose the annexation of the West Bank according to the "deal of the century." They may play a leading role in providing assistance to Palestinians in international organizations in order to delegitimize the Israeli effort, as this would provide them with the image of a global power and deepen the gap between the United States and the European Union, which is likely, along with the Russians, to oppose annexation. Yet if Moscow identifies the potential for political quid pro quo or pragmatic propositions in Jerusalem or Washington, it might be responsive, at the expense of the Palestinians.

The Covid-19 Pandemic and Russia's Status in the Middle East

At the time of this writing, the total number of people in Russia who have been infected by Covid-19 continues to grow. It is difficult to

understand the immediate impact of the crisis, let alone anticipate its long term implications. The market volatility stemming from the oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia and the renewed agreement to reduce the supply of oil within the framework of OPEC+ that was achieved with US assistance serve to demonstrate the profound strategic instability of the period. There is a serious possibility that the Russian economy will suffer a long economic recession following the pandemic.

This caveat notwithstanding, it appears that as long as Putin continues at the helm in Moscow, the most likely scenario is that Russian priorities with regard to the Middle East will remain unchanged. Although Russia tends to be hit harder by economic crises than Western countries, it is precisely for this reason that it prepared itself better than most countries in the world, from a macro-economic perspective, to absorb the shocks. Its economy's major dependence on the price of oil and natural gas will only push it more forcefully toward engaging in regional matters on the day after Covid-19. The region's proximity to Russia spells high cost-benefit effectiveness of its dealings with the Middle East.

Looking Ahead

The Middle East will continue to be a comfortable arena for Russia's attempt to demonstrate that it is a global power. Its geographic proximity, the American trend of reducing its involvement in the region, and the construction of a network of shared interests with each of the countries in the region facilitates fertile ground for Moscow's proactive policy, despite the economic limitations and the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The great power competition is reminiscent of the Cold War and Russia's hostility toward Israel in the last century. However, it is also essential to understand the difference inherent in the current reality. Russian-American competition is not ideological, and Russia does not view Israel as an adversary, but as a partner.

In recent years (and particularly during the crisis following the downing of the plane in 2018), Russia has demonstrated that it has the ability to pose significant challenges to Israeli interests. On the other hand, it has also been proven that dialogue with Moscow and political maneuvering between Russia and the West can offset the risks to Israel and plant the seeds of new opportunities. Israel has no better strategic alternative to its alliance with the United States. However, in circumstances of regional security challenges, it should:

a. Maintain its successes of recent years through the existing dialogue with Moscow, which enables it to limit Russia's ability to inflict damage, and to promote cooperative efforts with Moscow, especially vis-à-vis the Iranian entrenchment in Syria.
b. Strengthen the mechanisms for across-the-board dialogue with Moscow, below the leadership echelon, in order to make the relationship less dependent on the fate of specific individuals and reduce the prices that may need to be paid in resolving disagreements at the senior level (as illustrated in the Naama Issachar affair).
c. Demonstrate sensitivity in the coming year regarding symbolic gestures pertaining to the historical memory in the Israeli-American-Russian triangle (due to the US presidential elections and the marking of the 75th anniversary of the victory over the Nazis).
d. Prepare to promote its interests vis-à-vis the emerging scenario regarding Moscow's aspirations to reach "interim arrangements" on a wide agenda with the Trump administration and the EU countries prior to the presidential election in the United States. From the perspective of the Kremlin leadership, these "interim arrangements" might halt the erosion in relations between Moscow and Washington in the event that Biden is elected president and are likely to include the pressing issues in the Middle East (Syria, Iran, Libya).

e. Continue exercising caution in its military activity in Syria, to avoid hurting Russian interests, such as injury to its soldiers and assets or actions that are perceived as an attempt to topple the Assad regime. Such actions would erode Russia's ability to turn a blind eye on Israeli strikes in Syria with a potential for a graver crisis than during the downing of the Russian plane by the Syrians in 2018.

f. In the long term, prepare for scenarios of more severe manifestations of great power competition in the Middle East, especially if, as a result of the double pressure on Beijing and Moscow, China is forced into a more active role in the region and cooperates with Russia to weaken the American influence.

g. Strengthen the governmental and academic capacities for learning about Russia and developing policy tools for contending with it. Such improved mechanisms might help to offset Russian means of coercion and strengthen Israel's ability to mobilize Moscow for Israeli needs and interests.

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Between Intelligence and Diplomacy: The Information Revolution as a Platform for Upgrading Diplomacy

Itzhak Oren

The subject of this article is the new opportunity facing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the intelligence community to upgrade the work of Israel diplomatic missions and staff, through closer and more effective connection to the work process of the intelligence community. It focuses on the opportunity to transform the reality whereby the intelligence arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is engaged in the work of intelligence as an accompanying body, and promote it as a vital body that receives and contributes information in its areas of expertise as equals. Diplomats in the field have significant relative advantages of years of hands-on service in the field, better understanding of the local mentality, and close acquaintance with the local players: politicians, interlocutors, and analysis bodies. The new rules of the game present diplomacy with new systemic opportunities to better express its capabilities and address frustrations and limitations on access to information and decision makers.

Keywords: diplomacy, intelligence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, decision making, information revolution

Background

Intelligence is part of the diplomatic effort that aims to promote the strategic goals of the state through both contacts behind closed doors and public contacts. This definition contains a structural impediment stemming from the definition of the national interest. The various arms of the security establishment, intelligence included, view the existential needs of the state and the struggle against military threats as the supreme national interest and the top priority dominating all other state interests. In contrast, and in addition to the overall aims of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the foreign service highlights the need to build foreign relations based on Israel's image as a legitimate member of the family of nations, and to consolidate its power as the nation state of the Jewish people that, like other nations, is committed to international law and justice.

The aims of intelligence are typically perceived as gathering information and engaging in analysis for the consumers of intelligence, and covert work outside the borders of the state to promote strategic goals and thwart subversive internal threats. In times of peacemaking, intelligence must have the ability to know and assess everything that can help decision makers identify factors that promote peace and identify factors that endanger peace (Hareven, 1998).

In 1949, early in Israel's existence, the Military Intelligence Department (which subsequently became the Intelligence Directorate of the IDF) viewed itself as a body aimed at providing intelligence only on military matters, whereas the required surrounding strategic intelligence was provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, the Military Intelligence Department began to expand its activity to include strategic political issues. This occurred in part due to its mastery of signals intelligence (SIGINT), which gave it a great advantage over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in gathering intelligence and formulating intelligence assessments in this realm.

At the same time, the Department had a prominent interest in bolstering its own status and prestige by establishing closer direct relations with the state leadership. With its consolidation during the 1950s, and its transformation into an independent directorate of the General Staff in 1953 (the Intelligence Directorate), it assumed senior standing vis-à-vis the other bodies in Israel's intelligence community. Its direct connection with state leaders was established, and it became the state's major assessment body and a body with major influence over decision making, not only in the military realm but in the strategic realm as well.

The Intelligence Research Center in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established after the Yom Kippur War following the report by the Agranat Commission (1974), which recommended that Israel strive toward intelligence research pluralism and strengthen the political research department by organizing it as an independent body within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The decision to establish the Intelligence and Planning Research Center also included structural and geographic divisions with an emphasis on the Middle East, intelligence gathering roles, planning, and warning. In 1976, Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz decided not to implement the second stage of establishing the Political Research Center due to financial constraints. In late 1977, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, who sought to rid himself of responsibility for warning, appointed a commission headed by Aharon Yariv, which recommended removing the responsibility for political planning, i.e., including warning, from the Center. A notice to this effect, which also announced the change in name to the Political Research Center, was issued to the government secretariat. In 1992, Foreign Minister Peres resolved to establish a political planning division that was separate from the Political Research Center.[1]

The Situation Today: Diplomacy's Goals, Limitations, and Frustrations

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for formulating recommendations in the realm of foreign relations. The test of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is its ability to screen and analyze problems when they appear, to recommend courses of action, and in particular, to implement decisions that were made by others outside the Ministry. In practice, it is required to deal on its own with all the other aspects of implementing foreign policy, such as cultural and economic relations and the implementation of existing agreements (Gazit, 2002).

Today, the official responsibilities of the Political Research Center include, inter alia: research and analysis of countries, issues, trends, and processes in the Middle East and the international arena; regular updating and dissemination of information to the staff and the headquarter units and diplomatic missions abroad, while addressing their needs and their requests; meetings and dialogues with peer bodies in foreign ministries around the world; political briefings for the decision making echelon and for international and other parties (such as foreign diplomats, academics, and the media); management of the interface between the intelligence community and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Ministry in Israel and abroad; and presentation of the annual intelligence assessment within the political-security cabinet.

The establishment regards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a marginal partner in strategic consultations, due primarily to a number of images and claims, specifically: the Ministry's professional orientation is to talk, rather than to do; and the correspondences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic missions around the world deal mostly with insignificant and boring reports. In addition, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials do not tend to take responsibility or adopt daring stances in their meetings. They will always prefer to take the official approach, recite Israel's formal position, and incur no risk. Rather, they will always look for the common denominator, similar worldviews, and values—not points of contention. In doing so, they become irrelevant for problems solving (Drori & Oren, interview with Giora Eiland, 2016).

There is a tendency in Israel to view the security-military component as a dominant and almost exclusive factor in the realm of national security and decision making, dwarfing the diplomatic component input in a way that has no parallel in the modern world. Israel pays a heavy price for this.

In addition, there is a tendency in Israel to view the security-military component as a dominant and almost exclusive factor in the realm of national security and decision making, dwarfing the diplomatic component input in a way that has no parallel in the modern world. Israel pays a heavy price for this.

For these reasons, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly, and at different intensities, suffers from under-estimation among those making strategic decisions. At the same, the security and intelligence system has become increasingly involved in the diplomatic realm.

Former head of the Intelligence Directorate Aharon Ze'evi Farkash has explained the importance of intelligence in the realm of diplomacy, with its integration into the struggle against global threats and Israeli foreign relations.

Ze'evi Farkash highlighted two major realms in which it is imperative for Israeli intelligence to cooperate with other intelligence agencies around the world: global terrorism and the realm of nuclear weapons in general; and the Iranian nuclear program in particular. He regards intelligence as making a meaningful contribution to the diplomatic arena (Ze'evi, 2007)—an observation that no one disputes.

Former head of the Mossad Ambassador Efraim Halevy has stated that the military

echelon plays an important role in Israeli foreign policy, in its responsibility for Israel's relations with many different Arab states. He described cases in which Israel's prime minister acted contrary to the opinion of the professional political echelon, and emphasized that this has usually resulted in the failure of the effort. Such was the experience of the Oslo Accords that did not receive support of the professional political echelon, and for this reason (among others) it was not successful. On the other hand, Halevy has depicted the military leadership as a powerful echelon that has had a significant impact on the course of events. In addition to influence on the decisions of the political echelon, the military echelon maintains contact and work relations with Israel's adversaries (Halevy, 2006).

Erez Meisel , who until recently headed the army's foreign relations department within the Planning Directorate, has explained the military's increasing involvement in the diplomatic realm as a result of the regional and global changes of recent decades. From his perspective, the activity of the IDF's foreign relations department is part of Israel's "foreign relations community." That is, foreign relations are no longer a diplomatic service but rather a decentralized national effort, with the IDF's foreign relations system playing an important role in Israeli political diplomacy and the efforts of the state to expand its relations with other countries. In this context, Meisel refers to a future plan for empowering the IDF foreign relations system, which in part is intended to project Israel's power and preserve and expand its strategic depth.

In contrast to this approach is the voice of the diplomat Ronit Ben-Dor, who recommends qualifying Meisel's vision of "military diplomacy" and reducing its scope to a less threatening definition of "security diplomacy," as part of the national strategic effort. In her view, this framework should take advantage of the ability of the IDF's foreign relations system to convey messages quickly and reliably to adversaries and enemies in order to prevent escalation and a downward spiral into war. These efforts according to Ben-Dor will not be able to replace the diplomatic practices added value of presenting non-military ways of thinking about complex political-security problems.

The question of the asymmetric cooperation between intelligence officials and diplomats also surfaces in Israel's diplomatic missions. Within the most important Israeli embassy, in Washington, DC, intelligence enjoys an advantage in access to decision makers. The chief Mossad representative in Washington has direct access to the director of the CIA and his associates, who brief the US President on a daily basis (Drori & Oren, interview with Yoram Hessel, 2016). The communication room in the Washington embassy is managed by the Mossad, whose chief representative is not subordinate to the ambassador. As a result, the chief Mossad, representative reads all the reports sent from the embassy, while no one is allowed to read his reports, unless he chooses to share them with relevant officers inside the embassy (Hessel, 2016).

The heavy workload of the ambassador and his staff usually leaves very often room for intervention in "grey areas." In cases such as the unit responsible for liaison with the US Congress, which plays an essential diplomatic role for the entire Israeli establishment, the Israeli Defense Ministry strives to create—within the security establishment and detached from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—a parallel and independent liaison with Congress.

The bolstered abilities and insights within Israel's security establishment sometimes lead to an effort by defense officials to blur the boundaries through meetings with State Department officials, while at the same time they prevent Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials from entering the Pentagon. The boundaries are not sufficiently clear, and reason dictates that they should be made clearer and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should insist on them,

to the extent that this is required for orderly staff work.

Joint military-diplomatic staff meetings are undoubtedly recommended. They allow transparency within the system, but only as long as it is clear who is in charge of access and content. Access to the US Congress and State Department, for example, should be the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while access to the Pentagon and the US army would naturally be in the hands of Israel's Ministry of Defense. Elsewhere, work procedures in other major missions likewise have no regular open intelligence briefings for diplomats, despite the sometimes essential need to provide representatives with appropriate background in preparation for their political talks, and in some cases in preparation for tours on the ground. The recurring feedback from the intelligence community regarding reports of the diplomatic representatives is provided sparingly and not on a regular basis, and in most cases only after screening at the administrative level.[2]

The Political Research Center, which is charged with updating the intelligence and assessments for all missions, which in turn provide it with updated assessments, remains of modest means and a lean budget. In light of the recommendation for intelligence analysis pluralism, and despite its fluctuating status, the Center struggles for its proper recognition and rightful share as a body contributing to the national situation assessment. It is generally agreed that prior to war, leaders do not take action without hearing its intelligence. In peacetime, however, the situation is completely different, in part because peace, unlike war, requires greater attention to the internal sphere and to political considerations. Most statesmen feel that they understand the overall context just as well as the professional echelon, especially when some of the study has been conducted directly vis-à-vis the other side (Barak, 1988). This approach is also reflected in the words of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir: "I need intelligence to warn me of war, not to teach me how to make peace" (Barnea & Shiffer, 2002).

Whereas most of the world's foreign affairs ministries receive internal information or rely on research institutes, the Political Research Center operates on its own intelligence gathering and research, with the effective integration of policy recommendations, both inside and outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As examples of successful results, former Political Research Center head Benny Dagan has mentioned promoting the application of sanctions against Iran and placing Hezbollah on the list of terrorist organizations. Similarly, the refusal to lament Bashar al-Assad and the warnings of possible deterioration in Gaza before Operation Protective Edge were important components of the assessment. The intensive analysis of energy as a strategic factor is considered a major success. Another relative advantage is the researchers, who have been in their positions for many years, which is more than others in similar positions within the intelligence community, and so is the Center's access to foreign ministries all over the world.

The intelligence gathering apparatuses are inundated with information that obligates and enables diplomats on the ground, who deal with it in any event, to become efficient "gathering officers" of immense importance, thanks to their access, training, and experience.

According to Dagan, until 2006 most of the Center's employees were diplomats and the scope of its activities was limited. Following the Second Lebanon War and the implementation of the Winograd Commission's conclusions, the number of Center employees doubled and the volume of inter-system summaries shared with it grew significantly. The Center became a partner to more discussions, and it enjoys better relations with other agencies of the intelligence communities. However, there is still room for

improvement in the intelligence community's attitude towards the Center as an equal partner.

The Information Revolution and the Future of Intelligence Analysis

Over the past few decades, the information world has undergone a revolution characterized largely by the flood of political, social, and economic information of the utmost intelligence value, in quantities and quality that could not have been gathered in the past. The intelligence gathering apparatuses are inundated with information that obligates and enables diplomats on the ground, who deal with it in any event, to become efficient "gathering officers" of immense importance, thanks to their access, training, and experience.

Data gathering of that kind obviously requires analysis and evaluation. The information revolution leads to the ongoing undermining of the traditional separation between the realms of gathering and analysis. Itai Brun, former head of the Intelligence analysis division of the Israel Defense Forces, pointed that while the direct access of analysts to the ocean of information is expanding, the logic of collaborating with the gathering branch in the analysis process is increasing (Brun, 2015). Hence the relative importance of diplomats' reports may increase, since their potential contribution to this process is the core of their occupation—updates, evaluation, and analysis.

Intelligence experts recommend establishing a network-based "joint space," which enables the development of shared knowledge in continuous discourse, crossing the organizational boundaries of gathering arrays and becoming a fundamental component of analysis work (Brun, 2015). The contact between the realms of research and gathering in a joint space of this kind affords research personnel a better understanding of information whose importance and value is not always recognized by intelligence gathering personnel. Moreover, the intelligence gathering personnel have in this case immediate feedback and a deeper understanding how to channel better their activities.

According to Brun, the information revolution also requires a change in the way intelligence is disseminated to the various consumers. Intelligence analysis bodies are required to provide "analysis products" at a faster pace than in the past and in a different, more accessible, and clearer configuration. The "iNet" system, developed by the Intelligence Directorate's Research Division, makes it possible to present a continuous integrative intelligence picture in a new intelligence language, including the integration of text and pictures, video clips, audio, and infographics, and invites the presentation of other, different opinions. It obviously requires intelligent integration at the appropriate level of classification of the diplomatic system including most of its branches and missions. (Brun, 2015).

Opportunity and Recommendations

The information revolution has resulted in a situation in which the intelligence services in Israel, which are responsible for the gathering and analysis of information, can barely shoulder the load. Consequently, there is an opportunity to take full advantage of the capabilities of the MFA Research Center and accept it as an equal partner in the intelligence community. This junction also provides an opportunity to upgrade the work of the missions, and may add further depth and value to their political work. The way to realize this value change and increase influence and contribution necessarily runs through the Center for Political Analysis. It requires changes in thinking mode and perceptions of the intelligence community.

The main necessary measures include:

a. The establishment and incorporation of the Political Research Center personnel and relevant headquarter elements in the proposed cross-organization "research analysis," which will also include representatives of the intelligence community and the different bodies on the ground. The

rise of the internet-based communications networks as an ongoing process, and with greater intensity during the current period of the Covid19- pandemic, enables the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to expand the circles of internet-based consultation significantly. These circles of periodic consultation, which will include representatives of the intelligence communities on a regular basis with an emphasis on the analysis branches and external research bodies, will be documented, their summaries and conclusions disseminated, and the writing of research papers designated. Clearly, the more the other research bodies, i.e., the Mossad and the Intelligence Directorate, initiate such circles with the necessary coordination, the more the product will improve and its benefit will increase. The dividers between the intelligence attachés and IDF attachés will be removed in the regular work of the missions in key countries around the world, and joint EEI (essential elements of information), updating, and situation assessment meetings will be held. The process proposed here is a product of today's reality and an understanding that the more compartmentalization is removed, especially with regard to gathering and assessment from open sources, the more the benefit to all the systems will increase. In this case, emphasis will be placed on fieldwork, in which diplomatic representatives enjoy a marked advantage due to their direct relationships with local elements and the fact that they know the local language, culture, and mood better than any analysis personnel working from the staff headquarters.

b. As opposed to the claims that diplomats' shallow reporting and the failure to take a position constitute a "professional illness," political reporting must be more central in the work of diplomats—including in the case of diplomats who are not political advisors or Middle East experts. Political reports must be a regular part of all diplomats' duties and a basis to the appraisal of their role.
c. The possibility of the Political Research Center and designated missions entering two different levels of iNet networks should be considered as soon as possible, in two levels: the field level and the level of bureaus and leaders, which are updated regularly and at the appropriate security clearance in all realms of EEI, gathering reports, and analysis. Such a measure would set regular and binding work procedures that will significantly help ensure the flow of the raw material, the processed information, and the assessment material in all directions.
d. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs is advised to regard the implementation of this measure as part of his responsibility and requirements vis-à-vis the Prime Minister.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to generate substantial changes to the world order. Although the scope and significance of the pandemic are still not fully clear, it has already resulted in a dramatic increase in the scope of digital communication in its various forms as a relatively effective substitute for personal meetings, work meetings, and professional discussions. This trend serves to reinforce the assumptions underlying the opportunity that is presenting itself to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today—to change and adapt the method of work of the diplomatic missions around the world with regard to intelligence gathering and analysis. The information revolution, and the mounting importance of the social networks for intelligence gathering and the creation of joint networks for analysis, has endowed the diplomatic corps with the ability to undertake reorganization in which the missions are instructed to operate according to EEI, alongside the regular work based on the political agenda and the work schedule in the realms of public diplomacy.

The opportunity presented to the diplomatic missions—updating with the main points of intelligence gathering and analysis that are on the agenda and contribute directly to their efforts—stands to improve the work of the missions in their other realms of activity, increase the standing of the Political Research Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the eyes of the intelligence community, and contribute directly to the national security of the state and the promotion of its strategic goals.

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Notes

1 Personal interview with Harry Kney-Tal, former head of the security services, 2020.

2 Ibid.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel Katz with the incoming minister, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Gabi Ashkenazi, at the Foreign Ministry, May 18, 2020. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Discussion of Israel's Foreign Policy

Moderated by Kobi Michael and Yaron Salman

The July 2020 issue of *Strategic Assessment* focuses on the theme of Israeli foreign policy and national security. To complement the articles in this issue, we held a discussion with former senior figures from the Foreign Ministry and researchers on foreign policy. Our goal was to shed light on a number of issues relating to the status of the Foreign Ministry from a historical and contemporary perspective, the contribution of foreign policy to national security, and the challenges facing the Foreign Ministry in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis and the future. Participants were Ron Prosor, former Director General of the Foreign Ministry, Israeli Ambassador to the UK and to the UN; Dr. Alon Liel, former Director General of the Foreign Ministry, Israeli Ambassador to South Africa and to Turkey; Dr. Haim Koren, former Israeli Ambassador to Egypt and South Sudan; Dr. Nimrod Goren, head of Mitvim—the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies; Leah Landman, head of the 2030 Diplomacy Program; and Adv. Yaniv Cohen, CEO of the Abba Eban Institute at the Interdisciplinary Center. This summary of the discussion presents the main insights raised by the participants, without attributing the words to a specific speaker, except in cases where we felt exact words were warranted.

Status of the Foreign Ministry

Participants agreed that the Foreign Ministry has always suffered from a structural weakness, which has been particularly blatant in the last four years. In this period, the Ministry operated without a full time minister engaged solely in this position, with a limited budget that does not meet the Ministry's needs, and while systematically and regularly excluded from important decision making processes. This was in part due to the prominent role played by the Prime Minister's Office and its responsibility for relations with the superpowers, and due to the transfer of some of the Ministry's authorities to other ministries, such as the Ministry for Strategic Affairs.

There was agreement among the parties regarding the Ministry's structural problems, which are at the base of its weakness. For example, Ron Prosor argued that the Foreign Ministry is absent from the decision making table "both de facto and de jure" against a background of a strong security establishment, close and direct relationships among leaders, a dominant and centralist Prime Minister, who according to Nimrod Goren even promotes "deliberate moves to weaken the Foreign Ministry," and a strong National Security Council. In Prosor's estimation, even when the Foreign Ministry was involved in decision making, it had difficulty meeting the "decision makers' timetables" and providing the policy insights required for decision making process in real time, and so the decision makers preferred other tools and other actors. The recurrence of such processes reinforces the erosion of the Foreign Ministry's status among decision makers, who have become used to working with substitutes whom they consider more effective and relevant: for example, the direct link between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Prime Minister Modi of India; the use of the Mossad in countries with which Israel has no open relations, and in some cases, also in countries with which Israel maintains diplomatic relations; and others.

Apart from these and other procedural difficulties, Alon Liel mentioned two structural problems that have an adverse effect on the Ministry's status and its ability to affect decision making processes. One relates to "the structural conflict between politics and diplomacy," where politics is conducted according to party ideology and government/cabinet decisions, while diplomacy is conducted according to law, protocols, and international treaties. The second derives from the sectorial dimension of the Foreign Ministry, which is influenced by the homogeneity of its personnel. This is the result of processes of locating, assigning, and training the members of the professional echelon who replicate the organizational DNA and give it a political hue that is identified with liberal approaches labeled as political tendencies, leading to reservations about the Foreign Ministry professionals, or as Liel put it, "the body rejects this organ." In his understanding, the Ministry must change the way it recruits in order to make its professional staff more diverse and representative.

Although the Ministry is perceived as extremely homogeneous, decision makers tend to perceive it as old fashioned, out of date, lacking initiative, or as Haim Koren put it, "not connected to the world" in a constantly changing reality. Since in Koren's view the structural weakness of the Ministry "has become much worse in recent years," people in the Ministry should look for niches where, as individuals and as groups, they can draw on their relative advantages and promote issues that will encourage the decision makers to seek their help.

In many cases there is an inherent difficulty in proving the link between diplomatic activity and any economic, political, social, or informational contribution or outcome. In the absence of a systematic methodology for measuring and assessing diplomatic activity, it is often hard for the Ministry to prove an actual contribution. Referring to this problem, Leah Landman said that if the Ministry fails to convey "why we

have to send emissaries to a country instead of adding beds," this is a failure on its part.

Some of the structural weaknesses attributed to the Israeli Foreign Ministry are shared by other foreign ministries in the West, but in the Israeli case the securitization of the debate and the attitude that diplomacy must serve security weakens the Foreign Ministry's status and casts a shadow over it. These are joined by the weakness of the Knesset, which spends little time on foreign affairs, even in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, whose time is largely devoted to security matters. Nimrod Goren, head of the Mitvim Institute that studies Israeli foreign policy, advises the Foreign Ministry to adopt the principles from the model used by other foreign ministries, such as those of Australia and Germany, that have invested thought, initiative, and effort in persuading the public of their necessity and importance.

While the traditional focus of power has changed in recent years, and economic, academic, and international cooperation in the spirit of globalization have become the centers of activity and influence, according to Yaniv Cohen, the Foreign Ministry staff have failed to internalize the changes and the potential for leveraging them in order to increase their involvement and influence on decision making processes. "Economic diplomacy and academic and other partnerships can be the bread and butter, and they should be at the heart of the Foreign Ministry's work."

On the other hand, in spite of the Ministry's structural weaknesses and its exclusion from decision making, participants pointed out its striking achievements during the Covid-19 crisis. The Ministry took action to bring 8,000 Israelis home on fifty special flights, and helped to import ventilators, thanks to its personal contacts all over the world. In addition to this contribution to the national effort to fight the coronavirus, the participants also mentioned the Ministry's achievements in constructing a niche of civilian activity in Arab countries where Israel still has no diplomatic relations, in reinforcing relations in the Mediterranean arena, and in adjusting structurally and organizationally to the changing reality by establishing the role of emissaries on special tasks (such as energy matters, climate matters, and contact with new communities in the United States).

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Diplomacy and National Security

Since the establishment of the State of Israel there has been tension between diplomacy and security, with diplomacy and the Foreign Ministry perceived as secondary in the service of security. Over the years, notwithstanding the understanding that national security is best achieved through a combination of military elements, foreign relations, economy, social resilience, and other dimensions that must be seen as important, necessary, and complementary to military security, the Foreign Ministry has largely remained weak. This is in spite of its potential and actual contribution, even if it does not realize its full potential for the Israeli economy, security, and society.

The explanations for the Ministry's weakness and its limited contribution to national security, at least in the eyes of decision makers, can be attributed to a number of factors:

a. Structural reasons in the Ministry itself, which in Ron Prosor's words should be able to show its contribution, "but is unable to demonstrate its relevance to the public." Another explanation for this failure, according to Haim Koren, lies in the secrecy involved in certain types of diplomatic work, which prevents the public exposure of its achievements. This is frustrating for

politicians who serve as Foreign Minister and who want to publicize what they have achieved. Although future challenges are likely to be political no less than military, the Foreign Ministry uses too few political tools. For example, Nimrod Goren claimed that the Foreign Ministry does not make enough use of its overseas emissaries to promote aspects of national security from a regional viewpoint, although diplomacy and international mediation prevent escalation, and Israel's overseas representatives can try to develop contacts with diplomats from other countries in the region who are also stationed there. The Foreign Ministry is not sufficiently involved, and does not express its opinions forcefully and persuasively in order to challenge the decision makers.

b. The security element in the Israeli discourse, and the "over-securitization" of decision making processes, according to Alon Liel. He argued that security is seen as existential, while the political dimension is not. The Foreign Ministry has not persuaded the public that foreign relations are a "super important" element of national security, notwithstanding impressive achievements in the field and the successful branding of Israel as a start-up nation, in a way that distracts from focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These achievements are not necessarily identified with the Ministry, but rather with the Prime Minister. A very important achievement that the Ministry has managed to retain is its outstanding performance in the area of "disaster diplomacy," with no real competition from other ministries or at all.
c. Activity on social networks and adjustment to the digital world. In spite of improvements and initiatives by the Ministry relating to social media activity, in Haim Koren's view there is a need for an effort to develop an infrastructure of relationships in the regional arena, including by means of a more prominent presence in the discourse on social media in the Arab world and exposure of the effort to the Israeli public.
d. Leveraging relative advantages: In spite of Israel's striking advantages and its proven abilities to deal with weakened populations, partly against the background of its production in hi-tech, economy, and civil society, the Foreign Ministry has still not managed to establish these advantages as another significant export sector for Israel. Yaniv Cohen believes that this is a global export market that the Foreign Ministry must develop as a unique and vital contribution to Israel's national security.

Renewal of Israel-Africa and Israel-Latin America Relations

Over the past fifteen years, Israel has widened its foreign relations, and Prime Minister Netanyahu has defined recent years as a "political renaissance." In this period Israel has formed, renewed, and strengthened diplomatic ties in Africa and Latin America, while forging closer ties with the rising powers of India and China, as well as with Putin and with the United States in the Trump era.

African countries have special needs in the fields of communications, health, agriculture, and infrastructures, as well as security, intelligence, and cyber needs. African countries need "everything—communications, agriculture, health, technology; they want to receive and Israel is the source," said Alon Liel, stressing their admiration for Israel at the economic-technological level. At the same time, Israel enjoys the image of an entity that can help to open doors in Washington. Ron Prosor believes that Israel offers responses to many of these needs, and the benefits are mutual. For Israel, they reinforce the economy and help it in the international arena. "The best ambassadors for Israel are the ones we have touched," said Prosor. As for the common perception among many African leaders that good relations with Israel "open doors in Washington," "the

significance is the expectation of promoting broad interests in the international arena."

On the other hand, Alon Liel believes that "Israel's soft power also has a soft underbelly in areas of morality, human rights, foreign workers, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," although what actually interests African countries is "survival." They make a clear distinction between civilian relations and political relations, and therefore have no problem with the duality of developing economic and security ties with Israel, while identifying with the Palestinians and the Arab world, and not supporting Israel in international institutions, particularly the UN. In this context, Leah Landman maintains that Israel must understand the needs and priorities of African countries: fewer values, more needs. As she sees it, the Covid-19 crisis could lead to an increase in the numbers of failed states, thus creating "many opportunities for Israel, which knows how to make the desert bloom" and provide a solution for the new problems and challenges created by Covid-19, on top of the existing ones.

In the opinion of Yaniv Cohen, the time has come to establish an external Israeli aid agency within the Foreign Ministry, similar to USAID, which can express Israel's relative advantages and maximize its potential to help African countries, other Third World countries, and even developed countries that will be happy to cooperate on the subject of international technological development.

Nimrod Goren disagrees with the distinction, largely accepted by the other participants, regarding the duality of African countries, claiming that relations with Africa actually highlight the Foreign Ministry's weaknesses. Although there is bilateral work, he argues that it encounters a "glass ceiling on the Palestinian issue," which was demonstrated by Israel's recent attempts to obtain observer status in the African Union. Not only that, the budgetary limitations of the Foreign Ministry make it very hard for the Ministry's Agency for International Development Cooperation to realize political objectives in Africa. He claims that relations with many African countries rely more on weapons deals and foreign workers, and less on aspects of developing democracy. For example, the Ethiopian-Eritrean peace process, in which the leadership succeeded in changing policy, did not lead Israel to a re-examination of its potential on the continent or what it can learn from African leaders.

It is important not to see Africa as an undifferentiated whole. Haim Koren, who served as Israeli Ambassador in South Sudan, distinguished between countries like South Sudan whose "attitude toward us borders on love" and other countries whose attitude toward Israel is more instrumental. From his experience, Israel has a relative advantage over competitors in Africa, reflected in its ability to establish relationships on a personal basis. That is important and bears fruit.

Israel's Relations with India and China

In recent years, Prime Minister Netanyahu himself has managed Israel's relations with the superpowers (the US and Russia), while the role of the Foreign Ministry was marginal. The Prime Minister also increased his personal involvement in developing and managing relations with the two rising powers in the East: China and India. The structural changes in the international system and the rising status and influence of Asian countries require a change in Israeli perceptions. According to Yaniv Cohen, Israel must grasp the significance of "the Asian century" and focus on the need for political gains in return for the investment in developing economic and security relations with countries in Asia.

Alongside Israel's obligation to balance its relations with China and with the United States, and avoid damaging its relations to its American ally, Nimrod Goren believes that it is possible to recruit China, as an active and strengthening player, to invest in economic incentives to promote the peace process and

thus compensate for what Europe is no longer able to give. In his opinion, in its relations with China, and in view of the Chinese focus on extensive infrastructure projects, Israel must develop a more regional approach that can create links through a network of ports and railways.

The challenge for the Foreign Ministry, according to Haim Koren, is to identify Israel's relative advantages and how they can be harnessed in global terms. China has ambitions in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa as part of a modern Silk Road, and Israel must understand where it can leverage its technological solutions in a way that coincides with Chinese interests in the region. In India, Israel has been perceived as an ally after many years of pro-Arab tendencies, and in this case too, it must act to reinforce mutual interests.

The reliance on the "deal of the century" and Israeli involvement behind the scenes in shaping it restrict Israel's ability to promote regional relations, "and if Israel goes for annexation, [then] at the end of the Trump era this will create a crisis," said Nimrod Goren.

The Covid-19 crisis could increase the number of failed states in the context of the powers, and Alon Liel believes that China could emerge from the crisis economically stronger than the United States, and certainly stronger than Europe: "We too have no idea how long we will remain economically handicapped after the coronavirus, and foreign aid will receive a mortal blow, because charity begins at home." Nevertheless, Ron Prosor believes that this is in fact the time to examine where we can create a relative advantage and offer solutions, even for huge countries like China. The opportunity is even more relevant now, because the Covid-19 crisis will likely accelerate the trend of weakened multi-national frameworks and the rising importance of the nation state.

But in spite of the coronavirus impact on the international arena and the potential for changes following the crisis, the Ministry's weaknesses are striking. Liel pointed to the lack of assertiveness and the inability of Ministry personnel to make their voices heard and fight views such as those of the Directors General of the Ministry of Health and the Treasury, for example.

Shaping Israel's Foreign Policy toward the United States after the Trump Era

The high level of ideological overlap and strong intimacy that developed between Israel and the United States in the Trump era has, according to Yaniv Cohen, made it hard "to maintain the lifeline with the Democratic Party." This is also true, as Nimrod Goren sees it, with respect to Israel's relations with the Jewish community and liberal and other communities in the United States, which were damaged by Israel's close ties with the Trump administration, the closeness to the President, and its absolute identification with him. The reliance on the "deal of the century" and Israeli involvement behind the scenes in shaping it restrict Israel's ability to promote regional relations, "and if Israel goes for annexation, [then] at the end of the Trump era this will create a crisis," said Goren. Therefore Israel must invest efforts in thinking how to promote the peace process and how to restart a dialogue with other elements in the US that have been neglected in the Trump era. Haim Koren concurred, and stated that "the composition of the US population is changing and we have to renew our ties with the Democrats and American Jews—the situation demands it." Koren added that the Covid-19 crisis requires a rethinking of Israeli policy toward the United States, but it is hard to plan at this moment. In this context, Ron Prosor stressed the need for the Foreign Ministry to address other communities in the US, including in their language and on matters that interest them, for example, the Hispanic community.

Leah Landman agreed with the need to rehabilitate relations with the Democratic Party, but she argued that the "deal of the century" is in fact "an opportunity that reflects what is actually happening. There are relations with Arab countries in spite of the Palestinian situation, and it would be a pity to stop that." Ron Prosor took a similar view of the "deal of the century" because "it sends a message to the Palestinians that time is not necessarily on their side; you aren't moving but the dynamics on the ground are moving." However, Alon Liel sees annexation, a move deriving from the plan, as a strategic danger of the first order, and is convinced that the Foreign Ministry must present this danger. In his view, the Ministry must "fight back where politicians don't let you talk on matters that you see as a long term disaster. If the Ministry doesn't see the annexation as a red line, to be fought professionally rather than politically, it will poison Israel's foreign relations."

Foreign Policy in the Covid-19 Period and After

The global coronavirus crisis once again highlights the argument between the supporters of realism, self-reliance, and isolation, and the supporters of liberalism, globalization, and cooperation, and renews the debate over the relevance of the Foreign Ministry.

In spite of the weaknesses of international and supra-national institutions, and in spite of the strengthening of national feeling, it will not be possible to stop globalization, said Leah Landman. The nation state has become stronger, but the role of international institutions has not ended and the nation states will need their help to mediate between the international system and the nation states. Organizations such as the World Health Organization must reinvent themselves, change their patterns of operating, and set aside the political dimension. Landman claimed that the idea of "the nation state in the center alongside the global system" requires thinking about global coalitions and needs.

According to Ron Prosor, the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the fact that some democratic countries "are not sufficiently effective." It is not possible to ignore the question about the role of the state vis-à-vis international frameworks. He added that "Israel has a prominent relative advantage in sustainability" that must be realized following the crisis, although this demands an improvement in Israel's ability to measure its diplomatic activity—"If you don't measure, you can't manage"—and to allocate budgets for proven ability to act and measure that will make the Foreign Service relevant and influential.

It is too early to eulogize diplomacy, said Haim Koren, arguing that the Covid-19 crisis offers opportunities. Yaniv Cohen agreed with this assessment, adding that "paradoxically, the coronavirus is a big gift for Israel's Foreign Service, giving it a sense of action and awakening." He stressed the need to introduce innovation into Israeli diplomacy. Israel must harness technological solutions and adapt them to diplomatic and consular work (such as issuing passports).

According to Nimrod Goren, the crisis requires Israel to shape its foreign policy "while looking at the world." In his view, this period is an opportunity to work with international organizations, to retain and develop cooperation and solidarity, and to connect with global trends, while preserving Israel's place in the family of democratic countries.

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For the first time, the Israeli national anthem is played in the United Arab Emirates, November 1, 2018.. Photo: Courtesy of IJF – International Judo Federation

The Unrealized Potential of Israel's Relations with Arab States: Regional Cooperation Hindered by the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Roee Kibrik

Israel's relations with Middle East states have undergone many significant upheavals, and over the years have fluctuated between bitter, bloody wars and covert cooperation. The peace agreement with Egypt widened the spectrum even further and opened the door to official civil and economic partnerships. Advances in peace negotiations with Palestinians in the 1990s brought about a peace treaty with Jordan, and even led to a short blossoming of relations between Israel and other Arab states. This period ended with the second intifada and the wars in Gaza.

In the past decade, the region has gone through significant changes. Popular uprisings throughout the Middle East led to destabilization and regime changes, and made it clear to rulers that did remain in power that they would need to calculate their steps carefully in light of public demands. In addition, Tehran's support of terrorist organizations throughout the Middle East and efforts to attain nuclear capability position Iran as a common enemy of Israel and Sunni Muslim states. Joining this are Islamic terrorism and the threat of the Islamic State (ISIS), as these too became a common enemy of Sunni Muslim states and Israel. Furthermore, there have been changes in the involvement of world powers in the region—while the US has

signaled an intended exit from the region, Russia and China have increased their involvement.

Against the background of these broad geopolitical changes, there is also a change in Israeli policy and in public discourse. Netanyahu and his governments, which avoided advancing peace negotiations with the Palestinians, began to claim it was possible to move toward normalization with the Arab states without moving forward in the political process with the Palestinians. Yuval Benziman (2018) describes the changes in the Israeli public discourse and how this claim has become a prominent political instrument. The idea of regional cooperation has become central to Israel's foreign policy and Israel's internal politics, and as such has become a subject for research. The review that follows presents some of the research that deals with regional cooperation, as well as the central insights that arise from this research.

Covert Military and Intelligence Cooperation, and its Limits

Many studies show that the geopolitical changes in the Middle East in the last ten years have greatly affected Israel's relationship with various Arab states. The increasing Iranian threat, the instability brought about by the so-called Arab spring, the Islamic State, and extremist Islamic terror, along with the changes in the involvement of foreign powers, have all positioned Israel and the Arab states in the region on the same side of the geopolitical map (Rabi & Mueller, 2017). Michal Yaari and Jonathan Rynhold describe how the struggle against Iran's nuclearization brought Israel and Saudi Arabia together (Yaari, 2018; Rynhold & Yaari, 2019). Moran Zaga describes a similar process whereby Israel and the UAE drew closer (Zaga, 2018), and Yoel Guzansky describes how alongside their loyalty to the general Arab discourse about Israel, the Arab Gulf states are advancing covert cooperation with Israel against the Iranian threat (Guzansky, 2015).

Shared security threats served as a catalyst for strengthening Israel's political relations with Egypt and Jordan as well (Schweitzer & Winter, 2017; Kramer, 2018). Yitzhak Gal describes how Israel and Jordan's shared interest in the stability of the Hashemite regime against the threats from Iraq, Syria, and the Islamic State strengthened their political cooperation (Gal, 2018). Haim Koren presents a similar situation in his description of the increased political closeness between Israel and Egypt in light of shared security threats in Sinai, the strengthening of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, and the challenge of the Gaza region (Koren, 2018). As studies indicate (Yaari, 2018; Zaga, 2018; Levi, 2018), most of the cooperation against security threats is focused on intelligence, technology, and military equipment; prominent examples are arms and technology deals between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Morocco.

Covert military and intelligence cooperation is not without its problems and limits. Researchers note the danger in exposing intelligence and transferring military technology to states with which Israel does not have official relations, and that if circumstances change, these assets could be used against Israel. More importantly, the widespread criticism of Israel's policy in the region, from the establishment and from the Arab public, and especially criticism of Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians, creates a political and social line that casts all cooperation or relations with Israel as illegitimate. This is the main reason that the sides make an effort to maintain secrecy. As Elie Podeh (2020) argues, the secrecy allows Israel and the Arab states an area for cooperation that the public cannot criticize. However, this kind of cooperation is characterized by transience, and is based on changing circumstances and interests. Podeh aptly labels this the "mistress syndrome."

The Road to Washington Runs through Israel

Among the entanglement of geopolitical considerations in face of the Iranian threat, Sunni Muslim states seek to strengthen their relations with the United States, even as the

US cuts back on its involvement in the region. Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states put their hope in the US as the power that would support them in security matters. Even Qatar, which is in the throes of conflict with the other Gulf States, takes shelter under the security umbrella of the US (Yaari, 2020). Researchers point to the dominant view in these states that one of the ways to get closer to Washington is through Israel and through a tolerant attitude toward Jews.

Researchers describe how in Arab states it is possible to identify an increasing interest in the Hebrew language—in literature and poetry—and in the Jewish religion. In Saudi Arabia, it is possible to identify a growing civil discourse that includes exchanging opinions on relations with Jews and with Israel (Yaari, 2018). In the UAE, Jewish heritage items are displayed in museums, and synagogues have opened (Zaga, 2018). In Egypt, synagogues are under renovation, and Judaism has a place in Egyptian heritage (Koren, 2018). Muslim religious scholars are expressing favorable views toward relations with Jews, and even participate in memorial delegations to death camps in Poland. Delegations led by American rabbis are welcomed in capital cities of Gulf states. All this shows tolerance and openness toward Judaism, though not necessarily toward Israel. As Svetlova (2020) emphasizes, it seems that the Arab states, and especially those in the Gulf that are without Jewish roots, have identified that through Judaism, they can build a self-image of liberalism and tolerance, and distance themselves from the image of extreme Islam, while strengthening their communication with the halls of Washington.

Limited Business, Out of the Spotlight

Efforts at regional cooperation are not limited to the realm of security and intelligence, and Israel is also building shared economic projects with other states in the region. Indeed, Israel has something to offer these states. It is possible to see that economic cooperation with Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Morocco is advancing in traditional economic areas, including consulting on agriculture and trade of agricultural equipment, raw materials, industry, equipment, machines, and more (Zeidel, 2018; Levi, 2018). In contrast, economic cooperation with the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia focuses on Israeli exports of technology and advanced military equipment. Various publications report deals with Saudi Arabia in cyber security and the battle against terrorism, and deals in the realm of electronic monitoring and security with states that are courting Israeli technology (see for example the survey in Ferziger & Waldman, 2017). The focus on modern economies in the connections with these states is possible due to their economic capabilities and processes of modernization. One of the salient advantages of this kind of commerce is its ability to be tailored to suit the limited relationship between the states, such that these deals are often immediate, and for the most part do not involve ongoing trade.

Given the prohibitions on importing Israeli products, trade between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Qatar, and the UAE occurs on a minor scale when compared to trade with Jordan and Egypt. Koren (2018) and Gal (2018) describe the economic measures taken with Egypt and Jordan. The geographic proximity between them and Israel offers many opportunities for cooperation across various economic fields, including the Israel-Egypt maritime realm, which creates an infrastructure for deals in natural gas and maritime trade between Israel and Egypt; the gas deal with Jordan; the environmental issues that Israel and Jordan have in common, such as management of water sources; and overland trade routes between Israel and Jordan that also serve as infrastructure for a wider trade route with the Arab world and the East. Although Egypt and Jordan are considered smaller economies than the Gulf states, their importance stems from their geographic proximity to Israel and the fruits borne from the

peace treaties. Jordan's economic growth that began in the 2000s led to an improvement in transportation infrastructure, and a connection with shipping routes from the Mediterranean and from Israel to the East. These could aid Israel in connecting to the Arab world and the East via trade on China's New Silk Road (Gal, 2018). In April 2017, then-Minister of Transportation and Minister of Intelligence Israel Katz presented his "Tracks for Peace" plan, which proposed a system of railway tracks that would connect Israel to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states (Bendar, 2017). According to Yaari (2018), the goal of the program was to strengthen and create a transit hub in Jordan. In addition, it would connect the Palestinian areas to the Arab world and allow Arab states land access to the Mediterranean Sea. The three-way Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) agreements signed between Israel, Jordan, and the US, and between Israel, Egypt, and the US (Kessler, 2015) improved the economic cooperation and led to a sharp increase in Egyptian and Jordanian exports. At the same time, the normalization obstacle in these countries greatly limited these connections, and ideas of developing commerce and the transportation system are in the meantime confined to words.

Ultimately, when examining the economic sector, the anomaly of Israel belonging to the Middle East is apparent and reflected in the very limited trade between Israel and the Arab states. The ban on Israelis entering some of the states greatly restricts the ability to conduct business and develop business relations, in spite of the exceptions to the bans in certain cases. The economy is the central interest, and for businesspeople, there are ways to find loopholes and contend with the obstacles that the political realm places in front of them. Economic cooperation can be kept more secret than political cooperation, which is in the media spotlight, and usually as part of trade with Arab states there is the need to hide the tracks of the origin of the goods, either by sending them via a third party state, or by eliminating identifying national signs on the goods themselves. Ferziger and Waldman (2017) describe this and offer examples on how business is done under these conditions. Furthermore, the business sector offers connections between private parties who, in contrast to political actors, can operate with a low signature and in direct cooperation, irrespective of the political reality between the states (Gal, 2018; Yaari, 2018). But this indirect commerce that involves eliminating signs of "Israeliness" from goods requires an effort that many companies cannot afford to make, although in reality, the potential for economic connections is practically unlimited. According to Yitzhak Gal (2018), opening these Arab markets to Israel, as part of a policy arrangement with the Arab world, would create a growth engine that would allow Israel to increase production per capita by 25-33 percent of the expected growth as projected today. An increase in growth of this magnitude could be expected to bring Israel into the ranks of the 15 richest countries in the world within a decade, and would create an almost 75 percent increase in workplaces, as compared to the number of workplaces the Israeli economy creates yearly. This would turn the Arab market into the most important market for Israel, alongside the European market.

Civil Relations Far from Normalization

Compared to economic and security-related cooperation, civil society cooperation between Israel and Arab states is more limited. At the same time, even in the civil sector, changes have taken place over the last ten years. In the past few years, traditional barriers have been broken in terms of the openness of Arab states toward Israel, thanks to social media, the influence of other sectors, and a desire on the part of some of the states in the region to join the international community and host international events that include Israeli representation.

Zeidel (2018) describes how Iraq stands out for the unique social media connection between Iraqis and Iraqi Israelis, especially

around the Jewish heritage in Iraq. Sometimes, he claims, the Jewish issue even serves as a justification for encounters between Iraqis and Israelis of Iraqi descent. Furthermore, he points to the prominent trend whereby many Iraqis, as well as popular Iraqi websites, express openly pro-Israeli stances, and inter alia call for full diplomatic relations between Israel and Iraq (for instance, Abu Zeed, 2017). This special topic has also led to the translation of Israeli literature and the distribution of these works in Iraqi bookstores. Fattal Kuperwasser's book *The Pictures on the Wall* (2015) is an example of this.

Levi (2018) describes how the connection with Morocco was built around Jewish heritage in the country and the nostalgia for the days of shared existence in the country. She brings a variety of examples that reflect this, most prominently the example of Israeli tourism to Morocco, and the many efforts to rehabilitate Jewish heritage sights around Morocco. Every year 25-45,000 Israelis visit Morocco, although the number of Moroccans visiting Israel is much lower (about 3,200 in 2015). Levi points to the fact that the connection between Israelis of Moroccan descent and Moroccans has led to broader efforts in cooperation, including exchange delegations and shared cultural activities around music and cinema. Khaleila describes the Tunisian playing field—how the tourism sector allows Jews to visit the country, especially the island of Djerba, and how Israel is trying to recruit Tunisian influencers to build a positive image for Israel (Khaleila, 2019; Friedman, 2019). All of these researchers note that these civil connections are exceptions and are built in spite of strong movements that attempt to delegitimize cooperation, movements that often succeed in preventing additional connections.

Can the Palestinian Issue be Bypassed? No!

Extensive geopolitical and social changes in the Middle East over the last decade have presented new opportunities for cooperation between Israel and Arab states in various fields, and even more such cooperation than in the past. Israel and the Arab states have found ways to work together and to a certain extent circumvent obstacles to such cooperation. For instance, they worked in multi-national frameworks or with international organizations or events that would allow the sides to cooperate without being exposed to sharp criticism, and without Arab states having to change their official relations with the State of Israel. Zaga (2018) describes how even military cooperation was possible under international sponsorship, with the example of the Israeli and UAE air forces taking part in the same international training exercise.

Arab states that apply to host many international events and conferences, as part of their efforts to build their liberal images and position themselves on the global playing field, supply additional opportunities for encounters and cooperation. Qatar's anticipated hosting of the World Cup and the planned Dubai Expo are prominent examples of a wide variety of international encounters of this kind. In order for the Gulf states to enjoy this kind of hosting, they will need to accustom themselves to Israeli participation in such events. The same is true of sporting events. In earlier years, Israel was forced to keep a modest presence and even participate without national symbols, but international organizations have ended these practices, and the Israeli national anthem can be heard in Morocco and in the UAE. Saudi Arabia and Iraq still avoid this kind of cooperation.

Nonetheless, even with the increase and strengthening of cooperation between Israel and Arab states, and despite attempts to work around limitations, cooperation is stopped far before it reaches its potential. Researchers emphasize the transient nature of security cooperation, the operation of such efforts under the cover of secrecy, and their dependence on frequently-changing external circumstances (Pardo, 2017). In the economic

and civil sectors, studies show that there are ever-growing connections, but there too, the great potential for cooperation is far from reached. These sectors tend to be more affected by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and meaningful progress in the peace process is a necessary condition (even if not sufficient) for reaching much greater potential than what exists today.

The level of solidarity, interest, and active support for the Palestinian struggle varies from state to state. In the region, Egypt and Jordan are considered the most involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in advancing Palestinian interests, while Iraq is the least involved and the least interested. Qatar has become more involved, specifically in acting as a mediator between Israel and Hamas in Gaza (Zaga, 2019). The UAE is considered a country with a high level of interest in the conflict, but with a limited level of involvement. At the same time, in recent years, the UAE has become more involved with internal processes within the Palestinian Authority and in Gaza (Ben-Menachem, 2017). One of the consequences of such involvement is a more active role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even if only in a behind-the-scenes capacity and to a lesser degree than that of Qatar. Saudi Arabia is central to the support of the Palestinian national struggle, and the importance of its role is reflected in the peace efforts Saudi Arabia led with the full support of the Arab League, and in the aid to the Palestinian Authority (Rynhold & Yaari, 2019). Morocco's level of involvement in the conflict and general relationship to the Palestinian issue was low in the past two decades, after previously having played the role of facilitator in negotiations, and even hosting talks between the sides. For the most part, Morocco's involvement became more significant only after the previous conditions were conducive to a peace process (Levi, 2018).

Despite the political claim, it is not possible to bypass the Palestinian issue and move toward full normalization with the Arab states. Reaching the enormous potential latent in the close relations between Israel and the Arab states depends on significant advances in the Palestinian issue (Gordon, 2017). Rynhold and Yaari (2019) clearly note this in everything relating to Saudi Arabia; former Mossad Chief Tamir Pardo noted the same point at the lobbying conference for regional cooperation in the Knesset (Pardo, 2017); Ferziger and Waldman (2017) describe how the great interest Saudis have in Israeli technology does not translate to full business relations because of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Gal (2018) describes this in relation to Jordan, and Koren (2018) in relation to Egypt. Overall, researchers agree that conditions have created an opportunity for Israel to advance normalization with the Arab states, conditions that are riper than ever for such a process. The Arab states are even now ready to advance to a certain extent, and are demanding and waiting for Israel to come to a solution with the Palestinians so that the great potential can be fully realized.

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War and Peace, Israel-Style

Israeli Foreign Policy:
A People Shall Not Dwell Alone
by Uri Bialer
Indiana University Press, 2020
356 pages

Ehud Eiran

The book by Prof. (emeritus) Uri Bialer about Israel's foreign policy opens by closing a circle. Bialer reports that one of the experiences that sparked his interest in the history of Israeli foreign policy was a course he took in 1970 with Prof. Michael Brecher at the Hebrew University. Brecher, a famous and prolific political scientist from McGill University in Canada, who at age 95 is still active in the field, published in 1972 the most important academic study on Israeli foreign policy: *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (Brecher, 1972). Three years later he followed with another important work the topic, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (Brecher, 1975). The two books, writes Bialer, "laid the foundations for the discipline, and these foundations are still standing today" (p. 1).

This is perhaps a subtle way of saying what Prof. Dov Waxman wrote in 2003: "Given the vast, some would say inordinate, amount of media attention that Israel receives, one would expect scholars of International Relations (IR) to have devoted considerable attention to studying Israeli foreign policy. Surprisingly, they have not" (Waxman, 2003).

Bialer attributes this state of affairs to the paucity of primary sources. The clandestine nature of diplomacy during the pre-state period, Bialer suggests, carried over into the statehood era, due in part to the sense of threat from surrounding nations. The result was that not much was recorded, a tradition of internal reporting was not established, and later, legal mechanisms were used to hide discussions of sensitive issues such as the Palestinian refugees or energy procurement. The difficulties, writes Bialer, continue into the present: important actors in the Israeli foreign policymaking process, such as the Ministry of Defense, the IDF, and the Mossad make it difficult to access their documents, or simply do not allow such access. In the IDF archive, some 50,000 documents have been fully declassified out of approximately one million. Documents in the state archive are also only partially accessible: only one-sixth of the documents are available for viewing.

This may also be a result of developments in the scholarly community. Traditional diplomatic history is in decline in the ivory tower. One study found that the percentage of history departments that employ at least one diplomacy historian declined from 74.8 percent in 1975 to 45.9 percent in 2005 (Nickles, 2011). Departments of political science and international relations add to the challenge with their current intellectual incentive structure, which gives preference to comparative work and not in-depth research of a particular state, with the goal of extracting broad principles valid beyond a specific time or place. As Michael Barnett has shown, the use of the Israeli case in comparative politics research is also uncommon, given that Israel does not fit comfortably into familiar categories such as developed/developing, Western/non-Western, post-colonial/non-post-colonial (Barnett, 1996). Bialer reviews some of the works in this field (including sources published in the excellent

series of the State Archives volumes *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*) as background for his effort to fill this vacuum.

Unlike Bialer's other work, this book does not deal with a specific era or issue on the basis of primary sources, but rather gives a broad overview of Israeli foreign policy, based particularly on secondary sources. The book's central thesis is that the overarching goal of Israeli foreign policy "from the outset and to this day has been to build a state and to ensure its existence; its political, economic, and social fortitude; and its security."

Unlike Bialer's other work (Bialer 1990, 2005), this book does not deal with a specific era or issue on the basis of primary sources, but rather gives a broad overview of Israeli foreign policy, based particularly on secondary sources. The book's central thesis is that the overarching goal of Israeli foreign policy "from the outset and to this day has been to build a state and to ensure its existence; its political, economic, and social fortitude; and its security" (p. 5). The book infuses a historic approach with analytic rigor and stretches primarily from the era of the Jewish lobby in the 18th century until the 1990s (in certain areas there is coverage of later years, such as immigration statistics, which continue until 2014). Bialer emphasizes that the book does not seek to give a full picture of the field, but rather to focus on "particularly interesting" issues and "to offer subsequent researchers a new and complementary analytical approach" to the subject (p. 6). Among the components of this approach are research into the Jewish and Zionist roots of Israeli foreign policy, and a conscious decision not to "focus on issues of war and peace" (p. 321), but rather on the role of foreign policy in developing and building the State of Israel in the fields of economy, demography, arms procurement, energy supply, and *aliya* (Jewish immigration.)

The book includes eleven chapters that are organized in four sections. The first section is dedicated to the roots of Israeli foreign policy. Bialer locates the first layer of the "historical mound" (p. 9) that is the basis of Israeli foreign policy in the Jewish lobby in Europe in the 18th and especially the 19th century. This lobby, such as the efforts by Sir Moses Montefiore to assist the Jews of Damascus in coping with the blood libel of 1840, derived from a sense of Jewish solidarity in structural circumstances of weakness and reliance on others to provide personal and communal safety. The result of this legacy, notes Bialer, is twofold. On the one hand it served as fuel for antisemitic claims about Jewish global power; on the other, it was a source of strength for Zionist and Israeli diplomatic activity, to the extent that over the years "Israel's foreign ministers regularly instructed their diplomats not to correct this [the] impression" of many states, especially in the Third World, that the path to Washington goes through Jerusalem (p. 324).

Sporadic intercessions on behalf of Jewish communities were transformed by Benjamin Zeev Herzl into a concentrated political effort to create a permanent solution to Jewish existential weakness. He sought to do so by gaining international recognition that would lead to the granting of a charter to Jews to establish a national home. The struggle for international recognition continues in some senses until the present day, such as the efforts by Prime Minister Netanyahu to secure American recognition of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and parts of the West Bank.

Bialer then moves onto the British Mandate era, which he calls "the most important formative period for Israeli diplomacy and foreign policy" (p. 20). In this chapter he analyzes the importance of relations with the British, and afterwards with the United States and the Soviet Union, particularly regarding the UN General Assembly vote in 1947 on the future of the territory. He also discusses relations with the Palestinians, specifically around an assessment

formulated during the 1940s that there was nothing to be expected from diplomatic contacts with the Palestinians and with most Arab states. Alongside this approach Bialer looks at the dialogue established with the Hashemites, which was considered the preferred avenue for dealing with the Palestinian issue. Both geography and demography suggest that eight decades later, the Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian triangle remains at the center of the various future territorial scenarios for the State of Israel.

Two additional chapters in the "deep" historical portion of the book concern the period of the state-in-the making—the efforts to establish the state, and the legacy of the War of Independence. Here emphasis is placed on the political department of the Jewish Agency, the institutional basis from which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mossad later emerged. The chapter makes it clear that current claims that too many different bodies are involved in Israeli foreign policy have a long history: alongside the political department, this early period also saw a long list of other private and institutional actors, including the JNF and other Jewish Agency departments, such as the *aliya* department and the economic department.

The second section of the book deals with three strategic aims of Israeli foreign policy: international recognition, energy supply (a subject on which Bialer wrote a separate book [Bialer, 1999]), and *aliya* to Israel. In his analysis of international recognition (including recognition by Arab states) he points to lesser-known episodes such as Israel's relations with the People's Republic of China during the 1950s, when Israel had to balance its desire to be recognized by as many states as possible with its need to maintain its relations with the United States. The balance led to a cautious Israeli recognition of the People's Republic of China, without diplomatic relations. Similarly, Bialer analyzes Spanish courtship of Israel and the decision in Jerusalem to conduct a dual policy: on the one hand, to reject formal relations with Spain (which was still ruled by Hitler's former ally, Francisco Franco); on the other hand to station representatives in Madrid to deal with trade, culture, tourism, and intelligence. Bialer shows that in all three fields—recognition, energy, and *aliya*—Israel worked to achieve strategic goals, even when it was forced to make tactical compromises.

The book's third section deals with three strategic relationships that Israel has conducted over the years: with France, with African states, and with the US. In this section Bialer also sheds light on forgotten niches of history that make broader trends more clear, such as the way in which Paris tied recognition of Israel in 1948, to its desire to safeguard rights that French institutions (monasteries, hospitals, and schools) in the land enjoyed since the Ottoman era. He effectively describes these arrangements, which were tested during forgotten crises, such as when Israeli pressure to stop breeding swine in the French monastery in Ein Karem in 1963 generated real tension in the relations between the two countries.

In the second chapter of this section, Bialer discusses the singularity of Israeli-African relations from the 1950s to the 1970s. Unlike Israel's relations with many other states, the relations with Africa were particularly motivated by ideological and humanitarian reasons. Subsequently the relations changed dramatically from significant closeness in the 1960s to the "fiasco" (p. 243) of the 1970s, when dozens of states across the continent cut off diplomatic relations with Israel.

In the chapter on Israel-US relations, Bialer admits that these relations have a "rich historiography" (p. 254). He gives an overview of central questions that have occupied researchers, including the special relationship, ethical vs. material components, and the role of American Jews in the equation. Israeli-American dynamics regarding the Israeli nuclear project in the 1960s are also surveyed. The welding of these two different parts somewhat weakens the sharpness of the claims made in this chapter

and its contribution to a unified and coherent thesis for this section of the book.

The fourth and final section, which deals with peace processes, has two chapters: one about the peace agreement made with Egypt in 1979, and the other an epilogue, which presents a broad overview and summary of some of the book's claims, while also relating to other topics. In the chapter on the peace agreement with Egypt, much attention is paid to the Egyptian stance on the strategic need to end the fighting with Israel, while showing reluctance to move forward with normalization. The chapter highlights the difficulty in separating political from security issues, as Bialer seeks to do. For example, he writes that Israel's major aim in making peace with Egypt was and remains to "eliminate Egypt's role in the cycle of war" (p. 307), and quotes Amos Gilad, who said that peace with Egypt is "a cornerstone of Israeli national security" (p. 314). The chapter relates briefly to events over the last few decades, such as the storming of the Israeli embassy in Egypt in 2011, but does not reach conclusions on the influence of Egypt's current domestic and international challenges on the questions of recognition and normalization.

The short epilogue discusses various issues, including Israel's efforts to join the European Common Market in the late 1950s, the Oslo Accords, and a review of some of the book's central theses. After the major effort invested in the preceding chapters, the reader is left wishing for a more comprehensive and focused conclusion that would further sharpen the components of the new analytic approach promised at the beginning of the book.

This is an important book in two respects. First, it makes clear the importance of the "civilian" components of Israel's foreign relations and their place in the strategic aim of building and developing the state. The military threats against the State of Israel and the strength of its security establishment (including in the field of foreign policy) have over the years blurred the boundary between foreign and security affairs, in practice and in research. Inter alia, senior military figures have been appointed over the years to influential foreign policy positions. from the appointment of outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin as ambassador to Washington in 1968 up until the appointment of former Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi as foreign minister in May 2020. Even in the Knesset, foreign policy and security are overseen by the same committee, which in the past was headed by retired senior security personnel such as generals (including two former Chiefs of Staff), and the heads of the Israel Security Agency. Similarly, much of the research on Israeli foreign policy is organized around wars and the agreements reached in their aftermath. Bialer's book reminds us that physical defense is just one dimension of the ultimate aim of building the state, and the ways in which foreign policy has helped serve that aim.

Second, the genealogical research of the roots of Israel's foreign policy allows a deeper understanding, not only of the historic development of the aims and institutions of Israeli foreign policy, but of the structural reality that shaped them, and especially the significance of the relative weakness of Jews and of the Zionist movement in shaping the aims and patterns of its diplomacy. Bialer thus lays out intellectual groundwork for analyzing the way in which changes in Israeli strength then influenced the theoretical and institutional dimensions of Israeli foreign policy.

The tectonic movement of global power relations and the dramatic changes in the Mideast over the past decade will also lead to changes in Israeli foreign policy and the challenges it faces. As these lines are written (in May 2020), we are perhaps given a taste of things to come, as Israel is facing American pressure Israel to reduce Chinese involvement in infrastructure projects. Bialer's book is an important compass for those standing on deck during this time of change, and a most useful theoretical framework for those who follow it from the ivory tower.

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War and Peace, Israel-Style

War over Peace: One Hundred Years of Nationalism and Militarism in Israel

by Uri Ben-Eliezer
Tel Aviv: Modan, 2019
686 pp. [in Hebrew]

Meir Elran and Gabi Sheffer

Sociologist Uri Ben-Eliezer has written an important and interesting work, challenging in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The book is quantitatively demanding because of its length and the broad historical ground that it covers—from the period of Hashomer and the Jewish Brigades, to recent hostilities with Hamas in Gaza. The result is a wealth of details regarding the events that Ben-Eliezer has chosen to examine. The book is qualitatively challenging because it draws on more than one hundred years of dynamic Jewish history in the land of Israel that have unfolded in conditions of far-reaching systemic changes, and packages the insights in a rigid conceptual framework. This is done in a defiant, indicting political tone while singling out the cultural / ideological nexus between ethno-nationalism and militarism as the defining axis of the Israeli approach. This essay seeks to engage with the qualitative challenge posed by Ben-Eliezer.

The opening theoretical chapter is of particular importance and includes a number of formative arguments. First, it claims that from the outset, it was clear that Zionism represented "nationalism based on ethnicity that emphasized particular cultural attributive principles"; second, and consequently, "there is a unique Zionist-Israeli perception that holds a large degree of permanency and uniformity with respect to the conflict [with the Arabs]" that is perceived with a binary outlook of "us" (the chosen people) and "them." Third, this perception derives from two combined phenomena: ethno-nationalism, which "is not only a worldview that preserves cultural uniqueness based on the past, but also serves as the defining ideology that defines reality in terms of exclusion, control, and supervision," and militarism, defined as "a tendency to solve political problems by legitimizing military means…and turning them into routine." The fourth argument is that the combination of ethno-nationalism and militarism creates a serious risk of war. The fifth and concluding argument proposes that Israeli nationalism, combined with militaristic ideology and a religious component, constitutes "the central factor that has led Israel into conflict and wars for 100 years and made it hard to achieve peace whenever a chance has arisen."

On the face of it, the chapters that survey the period before the establishment of the state, the period of conventional wars, and the period of "the new wars" are designed to substantiate Ben-Eliezer's polemical argument. However, the very detailed analysis raises fundamental questions, some of which are raised with much clarity in the June 6, 2019 review by Adam Raz in *Haaretz*. What follows is a discussion of other issues that emerge from the book.

Proportionality and objectivity: Clearly Ben-Eliezer has an unequivocal position regarding the harmful centrality of the combination of Israeli ethno-nationalism and militarism on

the fundamental issues of war and peace. This opinion is clearly and repeatedly presented in a highly critical tone. However, the author is less than convincing to what extent this combination by itself affects the highly heterogeneous Israeli socio-political fabric, or has influenced Israel's decisions throughout its history on questions of foreign relations and security, and above all, how important it has been compared to other formative elements.

The singularity of the Israeli case: In the introductory chapter Ben-Eliezer refers in depth to universal theories regarding the causes of war (rationality versus emotion), while considering the role of culture and ideology in the emergence of wars. However, in order to understand the balance between war and peace in the evolving Israeli perception, any reasonable analysis must relate to the changing Israeli reality as an extraordinary case, decisively shaped by its dynamic internal and external environment. Indeed, the fundamental assumption that shaped the Arab and Palestinian conflict with Israel from its inception was that Israel was identified as an ethnic nation-state with a distinct religious frame, whose resurgence took place in a hostile Arab space. This is the cornerstone of Israel's basic identity as well as the emergence of the Palestinian political entity. The ongoing Palestinian and Arab opposition to this fundamental principle helps shape and preserve the conflict as a multilateral and multifaceted dynamic phenomenon. The author's decision to explore only the Israeli side in his book, while effectively ignoring the other parties, creates an imbalance that makes it hard to decipher the complex picture. War, like peace, is always associated with more than one side, even if one party may be deemed more responsible for its occurrence and consequences than the other.

The disappearance of peace and the political process: It is Ben-Eliezer who decided to highlight the Israeli tendency to grant war predominance over peace in the title of his book. More unsettling is his decision to exclude a discussion of the background and consequences of the defining peace with Egypt. This omission applies also to the historic Oslo Accords with the Palestinians and the peace with Jordan. These three significant events represent decisive developments in the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors, as they placed the conflict on a different trajectory. Israel played and still plays a central role in these developments.

Between war, peace, and ongoing occupation: Ben-Eliezer does not hide his sharp criticism of the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, and ascribes considerable responsibility for the absence of any political process in recent years to the Israeli approach, which he claims will lead to the collapse of democracy in Israel. His arguments on this sensitive subject are thought provoking. However, with reference to the backbone of the book's allegations, it would have been wiser to separate the discussion concerning wars from the analysis of their consequences. For example, is occupation by itself a war situation? Since signing the Oslo Accords has Israel been in a state of war with the Palestinian Authority? Does the fact that Israel has refrained from annexing the West Bank on the one hand, and decided to withdraw from the Gaza Strip on the other hand not allude to the presence of important nuances in Israel's concept of war and peace? The lack of this critical discussion prevents a deeper understanding of the full picture.

The "new wars": Ben-Eliezer rightly grants ample space to a discussion of the "new wars," but here too clings to his previous assertions about Israel's ethno-national militarism, which attributes the contrasts between the parties to the conflict to the "hierarchical relationship between rulers and ruled, conquerors and conquered." For him, "such a war accords violent expression to an ethnic, religious, or ethnic-national conflict, and does not reflect any desire [on the Israeli side] to terminate it." Consequently, he chooses to describe the Israeli approach to the second intifada as "a method

of perpetuating the occupation and control… through an organized war doctrine, which led the IDF to transform the al-Aqsa intifada into a war." In fact, here and in the analysis of the Second Lebanon War and the rounds of hostilities with Hamas in Gaza, it would have be advisable to include a thorough discussion of the limitations of Israel's military power, which have repeatedly affected its security doctrine and its actual implementation (see, for example, the "IDF Strategy" from 2015.)

Recently there has been a great deal of evidence that the security establishment also expresses pragmatic and restraining positions on a range of issues concerning the use of military force. A one-sided presentation of the subject casts a shadow over the entire work, which lacks the needed nuanced analysis of fundamental issues in the field of national security.

Civil-military relations: Throughout the book, the author repeatedly suggests that the military represents in an extreme manner Israel's ethno-nationalist militarism, as "what doesn't work with force, works with more force." In the conclusion of the book it is even stated that "militaristic nationalism has had many spokespersons and carriers…at times the military served this approach both conceptually and through instrumental militarism." This display calls for a focused examination, not served by anecdotal references to specific individuals (such as Rehavam "Gandhi" Ze'evi) who were hardly representative of the IDF. The fact that senior officers wielded influence over decision makers and in the public discourse for many years has been documented in numerous studies. However, recently there has been a great deal of evidence that the security establishment also expresses pragmatic and restraining positions on a range of issues concerning the use of military force. A one-sided presentation of the subject casts a shadow over the entire work, which lacks the needed nuanced analysis of fundamental issues in the field of national security.

Toward the end of the book the author indeed clarifies that "he has not raised all the reasons why Israel has been involved in endless wars since its establishment, and that he does not pretend to reduce such a long conflict into a single factor." "Certainly," he suggests, "there has been no intention to disregard the share and contribution of the Arab states and the Palestinians in particular to the ongoing national conflict." Possibly this important comment could have been the appropriate opening remark to a book that examines the range of factors shaping Israel's wars, one that does not ignore the Arab contribution to the conflict, and does not disregard the controversies that took shape within the Israeli political leadership and in the public sphere on the issues of war and peace. Still, although Ben-Eliezer decided otherwise, his book is indeed an important contribution to the public discourse on Israel's role in marginalizing the political process for promoting peace with its neighbors—an issue of dramatic importance on the Israeli scene.

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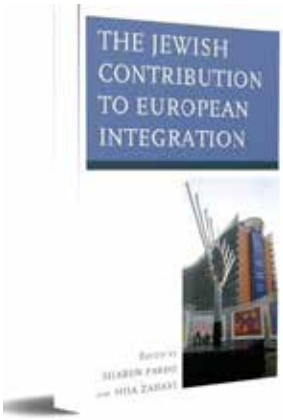

Israel-EU Relations from a European Domestic Perspective

The Jewish Contribution to European Integration
edited by Sharon Pardo & Hila Zahavi
Lexington Books, 2020
196 pages

Yuval Reinfeld

European Jewish communities afford researchers a perspective on complex communities that influence Israel and other communities—within and beyond the European arena, and in the global arena. European Jewish communities prior to the Second World War comprised almost 60 percent of the Jewish population worldwide, and today comprise a mere 10 percent (around 1.3 million) (Lipka, 2015). These communities are primarily located in Western and central Europe in member states of the EU, which constitutes a global power with ethical and normative components (Manners, 2002) and extensive international influence, including on Israel.

Historically Israel-EU relations have seen ups and downs, some relating to the continent's gruesome history and some to political disputes in the Mideast, including the issue of Israel's borders (Pardo & Peters, 2010). The history of these relations is multifaceted. Alongside the economic facet, which includes trade and cooperation agreements such as the Open Skies agreement, the agriculture agreement, the Horizon 2020 program, and others is the political facet, which includes the dispute regarding Israel's post-1967 territory (Pardo & Zemer, 2011), and the legal facet, which includes adoption of European legislation by Israel, alongside European rulings that relate to Israeli jurisprudence (Brita ruling, 2010; Psagot wine ruling, 2019).

But does this research include an in-depth look at the importance of the role of European Jewish communities to the overall project of European integration, and for relations with Israel in particular? Jews in the 20th century represented the essence of the cosmopolitan principle in Western Europe and its intellectual basis—a concentrated version of communal spirituality (Kundera, 1984.) The iconic nature of European Jewry is a part of the EU narrative. Do these Jewish communities have a strategic advantage in improving and changing Israeli-European relations?

The volume edited by Prof. Sharon Pardo and Dr. Hila Zahavi about the contribution of Jewish communities to European integration seeks to offer an additional perspective on the essence of the Jewish community in this regard, which has thus far not been explored in depth and institutionally through the prism of EU policy. The book is a collection of articles by researchers from Israel and researchers and diplomats from Europe. The editors believe that the Jews in contemporary Europe are the quintessence of the cosmopolitan principle and serve as intellectual glue in Europe—an integrative component of the essence of the European Union that must be used strategically. The Jewish communities are considered the new European essence after the Second World War: a Europe that symbolized an era of globalism, anti-nationalism, and the establishment of a new liberal world order.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section analyzes the challenges of the current reality and discusses the impact of the Jewish communities on various components

of the domestic and foreign arenas, including demography, antisemitism, and modern populism. In the opening article of this section, Prof. Sergio DellaPergola, a renowned expert on Jewish demography worldwide and statistics, relates to the demographic importance of European Jews over recent decades and points to growth and stability in West European Jewish communities (whose population today is larger than that of nations such as Malta, Cyprus, or Luxembourg) and to significant decreases in the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. These changes originate in the extreme transitions in the European political framework, in particular the establishment of the EU and the disbanding of the Soviet Union. These political changes not only deeply influenced the identity of Jewish communities, but also blurred the segregation between Jews and the broader population.

In the article that follows, Prof. Dani Filc presents an examination of populism as it relates to European minorities, as over the last three decades there has been a rise and expansion of populist parties. Prof. Filc believes that minorities have been part of the European narrative since the 16th century, the French Revolution, the Second World War, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 20th century, up until the recent wave of populism that has reinvigorated hostility toward minorities that appeared to have been forgotten. He contends that the radical right is a prominent political reaction to the fear of Jews and other minorities.

The last chapter of this section, written by Andras Baneth, relates to the issue of antisemitism from an institutional perspective. Recent decades have witnessed an increase in EU policy designed to fight and eradicate antisemitism in Europe, which aims to implement a stubborn battle against historic tendencies, including by eliminating prejudice and discrimination. EU member states today have a framework of legislation that fits the EU charter and seeks to promote tolerance, equality, and the defense of minorities. Nevertheless, Baneth believes that antisemitism is alive and well and the eradication of antisemitism is dependent not only on EU institutions. Indeed, there is difficulty in eliminating this worldview among the public, particularly during times of crisis; the current global pandemic, for example, has increased antisemitism and prejudice toward minorities.

The second section includes a multifaceted analysis of Jews as part of the European identity: what Europe represents for the Jewish communities and what the Jewish communities represent for Europe. The essays here demonstrate the importance of the Jewish communities for the European integration project, examining French, Spanish, and Hungarian Jewry closely. They also demonstrate the importance of the Jewish communities to integration projects on a global and historic scale. Dr. Dov Maimon claims in his article that since the emancipation of minorities in France in the late 18th century, when the Jews in France were granted full civic and political equality with no legal restrictions, Jews began to contribute more and more to wider society, while embedding themselves in the liberal-secular European ethos. Maimon proposes a model that allows the Jewish community of Europe to maintain communal values while integrating into wider society.

Former ambassador Alvaro Albacete, a Spanish diplomat, discusses Spanish Jewry. His article presents an analysis of the descendants of the Jews of Spain and Portugal as an example of territorial coexistence, and discusses the evolution of Spanish Jewry with regard to Europe as a whole, while relating to key events in Spanish history. Spanish Jewry supplies a vantage point on how institutional Europe perceives European Jewry.

Historian Janet Kerekes examines the changes in the assimilation of Hungarian Jewry over two periods: the period of Austro-Hungarian emancipation from 1920-1867, and the communist period in Hungary. Hungarian Jews present a serious challenge for the entire

EU and for Israel, both because most live in Budapest (which has the highest concentration of Jews in central and Eastern Europe), and because they symbolize European integration as a microcosm in which Jews move about freely and without fear (synagogues are open to the general public without security).

Michael Mertes, former director of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Israel, discusses the Holocaust in a modern perspective. The impact of the Holocaust on the European Union narrative is both direct and indirect; he relates to two periods: post-war (post-1945) and post-1989. The impact of the Holocaust is essential to political and ethical decisions made by European officials. Mertes adds that the EU is still discussing how to deal with Holocaust denial. In many places in Europe, the Holocaust is seen as exaggerated and/or as a myth. In Poland, 35 percent of the public believe that the Holocaust is a myth; in Germany, 26 percent, and in Denmark, 15 percent (the average across the EU is 24 percent.) In the modern era, with the rise of the radical right, populism influences the phenomenon of Holocaust denial.

In the final chapter of the section, Dr. Diana Pinto discusses the opaque approach by Jews toward the integration project. Pinto believes that the Jewish contribution is actually limited, because European Jews no longer have substantial and well-established faith in this project.

The third section is dedicated to the pioneering Jews who contributed to the integration project from within—a section referred to as the "unsung heroes": Jews who each in their own way contributed to European cosmopolitanism, including Walter Rathenau, the only Jewish foreign minister of Germany, who served during the Weimer Republic; and Fritz Bauer, a jurist and German Jewish immigrant who on his own defended the rule of law and human rights when he demanded the right to oppose a government that violates human rights, and whose work made the Holocaust became a part of the collective memory of the German public and the entire European community. At the end there is also a chapter dedicated to one of the Jewish women who most influenced the history of the European Union, Simone Veil. The first woman to serve as the president of the European Union Parliament, Veil had Jewish roots that contributed significantly to European normative values, to European integration, and the promotion of peace, democracy, and morality. The chapter dedicated to her is taken from a speech given in her honor by French President Emmanuel Macron in July 2017.

The fact that Israel has in recent years moved closer to countries with a radical-right political orientation that have raised the banner of undermining core liberal values and sought to exclude minorities is a failure that originates in the communication mechanism between the Jewish communities and the EU.

Many obstacles lie ahead for the EU, including radical populism, the weakening of its internal foundations due to Brexit, increasing immigration, illiberal force, and a crisis of identity. This book presents the importance of the Jewish communities' contribution to European integration, showing their direct and indirect involvement. It offers an important look at the role of European Jewish communities in the European arena and their impact on EU policy toward Israel.

The European Jewish communities on the whole are organized in an outdated manner. The editors posit that this reflects an inconsistency between the communities and the EU itself, a supranational body built in a complex and innovative fashion, with many officials and a substantial bureaucracy. There has been a failure to connect the Jewish communities directly to EU institutions thus far; doing so could strategically improve EU policy towards Israel. The fact that Israel has in recent years moved closer to countries with a radical-right

political orientation that have raised the banner of undermining core liberal values and sought to exclude minorities is a failure that originates in the communication mechanism between the Jewish communities and the EU.

The editors believe that the communities must be the ones to initiate and plan a strategy of cooperation, which will lead to changes for both sides, so that Europe can strengthen its relations with Israel and its foothold in the Mideast, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Strengthening relations with Israel will help improve the relations between Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe, in a manner that would then influence the Mideast arena. The Jewish communities can assist in enhancing the struggle against antisemitism, which has risen sharply in recent years; they can also influence other Jewish communities around the world and promote community values. The editors believe that in order to become more efficient, the communities must establish a political organization that corresponds with EU institutions; the task of the Jewish communal institutions will be to connect EU institutions to the Jewish communities.

Closer relations between Israel and right wing governments in the EU are evident, such as the warm relations with the Hungarian government led by Viktor Orban that harms minorities and has implemented legislation to limit free expression by the press. A further example is Benjamin Netanyahu's warm relations with Czech President Miloš Zeman, who in 2017 held a press conference against freedom of speech during which he was photographed with a fake Kalashnikov rifle on which the words "for journalists" was inscribed (Oppenheim, 2017). This propensity is troubling for Israel, and violates the values and foundations on which it was established, foremost among them the defense of minorities. Right wing radical populism tends to defend Israel and adopt it as an ally, particularly when it is discussing the "Islamization of Europe." Ironically, right wing parties in Israel are cooperating fully with countries that are increasingly hostile to minorities, where Holocaust denial is among the world's highest (Mautner, 2018). It is thus no surprise that right wing European governments are likely to pick a fight with Israel, such as we have already seen with the Polish Holocaust law, in which Mateusz Morawiecki's government denied all responsibility of the Polish people for the horrors of the Holocaust (Aderet, 2018.) This fragility demonstrates exactly why the European Jewish communities are so important, and the significance of their potential to challenge the limits of European integration for the international arena and Israel.

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Call for Papers for *Strategic Assessment*

The editorial board of the INSS journal *Strategic Assessment* invites authors to submit articles to be published in the journal's updated format. Proposals for special themed issues are also welcome.

Strategic Assessment, a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal on national security, cyber, and intelligence, was launched in 1998 and is published quarterly in Hebrew and English by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University. *Strategic Assessment* serves as a platform for original research on a spectrum of issues relating to the discipline of national security, cyber, and intelligence. The purpose of the journal is to spark and enhance an informed, constructive debate of fundamental questions in national security studies, using an approach that integrates a theoretical dimension with policy-oriented research. Articles on topics relating to Israel, the Middle East, the international arena, and global trends are published with the goal of enriching and challenging the national security knowledge base.

The current era has seen many changes in fundamental conventions relating to national security and how it is perceived at various levels. As national security research evolves, it seeks to adjust to new paradigms and to innovations in the facets involved, be they technological, political, cultural, military, or socio-economic. Moreover, the challenge of fully grasping reality has become even more acute with the regular emergence of competing narratives, and this is precisely why factual and data-based research studies are essential to revised and relevant assessments.

The editorial board encourages researchers to submit articles that have not been previously published that propose an original and innovative thesis on national security with a broad disciplinary approach rooted in international relations, political science, history, economics, law, communications, geography and environmental studies, Israel studies, Middle East and Islamic studies, sociology and anthropology, strategy and security studies, technology, cyber, conflict resolution, or additional disciplines.

In the spirit of the times, *Strategic Assessment* is shifting its center of gravity to an online presence and availability. While INSS will continue to prepare issues on a quarterly basis, articles approved for publication, following the review and editing process, will be published in an online version on the journal's website in the format of "published first online," and subsequently included in the particular quarterly issues.

Strategic Assessment publishes articles in five categories:

Research Forum – academic articles of a theoretical and research nature on a wide range of topics related to national security, of up to 7000 words in Hebrew or 9000 words in English (with APA-style documentation). Articles should be researched-based and include a theoretical perspective, and address a range of subjects related to national security. All articles are submitted for double blind peer review. Submissions must include an abstract of 100-120 words; keywords (no more than ten); and a short author biography.

Policy Analysis – articles of 1500-2000 in Hebrew words and up to 2500 words in English that analyze policies in national security contexts. These articles will be without footnotes and bibliography and use hyperlinks to refer to sources, as necessary. Recommended reading and additional source material can be included. Submissions must include an abstract of 100-120 words; keywords (no more than ten); and a short author biography.

Book Reviews – book reviews of 800-1300 words (up to 1500 words in English) including source material (APA-style) on a wide range of books relating to national security. Submissions must include a short author biography.

Professional Forum – panel discussions on a particular topic, or in-depth interview, of 2000-3000 words (up to 3500 words in English) including source material (APA-style). Submissions must include a short author biography.

Academic Survey – a survey of 1800-2500 words (up to 3000 words in English) including references and recommended reading (APA-style) of the latest professional literature on a specific topic relating to national security. Submissions must include a short author biography.

Articles should be submitted electronically to editors-sa@inss.org.il indicating the category of the attached article. You may also use this e-mail address for questions or additional information about the journal.

Kobi Michael and Carmit Valensi
Editors, *Strategic Assessment*