

Executive Report
Annual Assessment No. 8

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT 2011-2012

JPPI's New Dashboard

Geopolitical Turmoil in the Middle East

Creating Jewish Meaning in the U.S. and Europe

Israeli Democracy: Politics and Society



המכון למדיניות העם היהודי (מיסודה של הסוכנות היהודית לא"י) בע"מ

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Our thanks to UJA Federation of New York,
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Israeli Democracy: Politics and Society**

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Jerusalem 2012/5772

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Printed and Distributed by the Jewish People Policy Institute

Graphic Design: Lotte Design

Cover Design: Shlomit Wolf, Lotte Design

ISBN 978-965-7549-06-3

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Foreword

One of the signal achievements of the JPPI has been the production of the Annual Assessment of the Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People. If all it provided were a snapshot of the state of the Jewish People in Israel and the Diaspora worldwide, it would represent a major contribution. Indeed, even on this limited basis, it would provide a foundation for making annual comparisons about directions, trends, problem areas and potential opportunities, and these annual comparisons would provide insight for developing priorities and programs. From its inauguration, the Annual Assessment has met this standard and offered recommendations for addressing critical needs.

The 2011-12 Annual Assessment once again meets this standard. In truth, however, it goes above and beyond only offering a snapshot for annual comparison. The 2011-12 Assessment offers a clear framework for judging whether world Jewry and Israel are thriving, maintaining, or declining. Using five key dimensions—geopolitical developments, demography, identity formation and expression, intra and inter-community bonds, and material resources—the Assessment provides a penetrating

analysis and set of conclusions about the state of world Jewry. In an interesting innovation, it compares the state of the Jewish People over time, using these key dimensions and evaluating how each looked in 1945, 1970, 1999, and 2011.

Obviously, in 1945, after the Shoah and before the emergence of the State of Israel, world Jewry was at a nadir. But the 1970, 1999, and 2011 comparisons are noteworthy. In both 1970 and 1999, Israel's standing internationally was clearly higher, Israel faced fewer and less direct threats than today, and the bonds within the Diaspora and with Israel were very strong. Jewish identity and demographic trends did not seem to be under stress in 1970. But by 1999 the issue was clearer and responses to it were not yet being developed.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the Jewish People enjoyed—for the first time in its history—significant "hard power," mainly due to Israel's strong army, strong emerging economy, and rapidly developing, creative high-technology sector. The Jewish People's "soft power" too, was impressive, a result largely of the recognition widely accorded to Diaspora Jewry's multiple contributions to humanity, and the cultural,

economic, and intellectual prominence Jews had achieved in countries around the world, particularly in North America.

By 2011, however, it became clear that the geopolitical threats may be as great as at any time since Israel's founding in 1948—with upheaval in the Arab Middle East and the rising tide of the Muslim Brotherhood, which ideologically remains fundamentally hostile to Israel; with the stockpiling of hundreds of thousands of rockets near Israel's northern and southern borders, and the uncertainty of what will emerge in Syria; and with the question of whether force will be needed to resolve the potentially existential threat from Iran.

While the Annual Assessment identifies the difficult geopolitical dilemmas and challenges our people faces, other measures may look more hopeful this year. Statistics show an increase of 600,000 in the global Jewish population over the past several years, from 12.9 million to 13.6 million. But the underlying picture is more complex. While Israel's Jewish birthrates are healthy and promising, they are still exceeded by Palestinian population growth. And in the Diaspora, JPPI's gauge shows consistent demographic decline.

In the areas of Jewish identity and inter-community bonds, the Annual Assessment finds some slight improvement this year: more trips to Israel; greater participation in internal Jewish debates; more Jewish social networks and self-initiated activities by young people.

The Jewish People's resources are growing too. The recent discovery of major proven natural

gas fields in Israel's territorial waters provided a major boost. In the Diaspora, Jewish financial resources are also recovering. Although the decreasing proportion of Jewish philanthropy going to Jewish causes is a matter of concern, the "soft-power" value of Jewish contributions to the general community is extraordinary.

This Annual Assessment also dramatizes that we are at a critical inflection point in Jewish history. We can manage the external threats with a strong sovereign Jewish state, an enduring alliance with the most powerful nation on earth, the United States, and a well-integrated Diaspora, at least half of which is strongly identified with Jewish religious or cultural activities.

But internal challenges are troubling, such as demographic decline and assimilation in the Diaspora; a lack of consensus in Israel on basic issues including where the country wants its eventual borders to be; its relationship with its Arab citizens and the Palestinians under its control; the impact of a growing Haredi population on democratic norms, the economy, and women's rights; and the small radical elements in its society.

Once again the recommendations that are made in the Assessment are thoughtful and offer a guide to action. On the geopolitical level, the call for improving global and community crisis management becomes especially important if sanctions and diplomacy fail in dealing with the Iranian nuclear program. The suggestions on enhancing identity are innovative and useful, particularly the ideas on promoting and funding

Jewish cultural start-ups as a way of giving young Jews an entirely new means of identifying with Jewish life.

Similarly, given the demographic trends arising from the scale of inter-marriage in the Diaspora, the recommendations on outreach to non-Jewish spouses and the children in inter-marriage families are increasingly necessary. In addition, the suggestion that global Jewish organizations promote a friendlier approach to conversion to promote greater pluralism in Israel

may also be crucial, not only for Israel but for the demographic trends within the Diaspora itself.

The 2011-12 Assessment is a remarkable statement on the direction of world Jewry and what needs to be done to foster its well-being. The question, of course, is whether those in a position to act on its recommendations will do so.

Ambassadors Dennis Ross and Stuart Eizenstat
Co-Chairs, The Jewish People Policy Institute



2011-12 Integrated "Net" Assessment

How did the Jewish People fare in 2011? Table 1. provides one way of answering by providing an

assessment of the short-term balance of trends seen as drivers of Jewish People outcomes.

Table 1. Assessment of Trends Affecting the Jewish People at Year End 2011

	STRONGLY PROBLEMATIC	PROBLEMATIC	STATUS QUO	IMPROVED	STRONGLY IMPROVED
GEOPOLITICS					
DEMOGRAPHY					
IDENTITY FORMATION & EXPRESSION					
INTER- & INTRA-COMMUNITY BONDS					
MATERIAL RESOURCES					

Five Key Dimensions:

It seems natural to root both an annual assessment and a longer-term perspective in the observed trends in external conditions and key internal dimensions affecting Jewish People interests and affairs.¹ JPPI has focused on five key dimensions, Geopolitics, Demography, Identity Formation and Expression, Bonds within and between Communities, and Material Resources.

- **Geopolitics.** What is the “net” power of the Jewish People in comparison to the threats it

Five Key Dimensions:

- **Geopolitics**
- **Demography**
- **Identity Formation & Expression**
- **Bonds within and between Communities**
- **Material Resources**

faces? Outside of Israel the Jewish People faces little collective physical threat, but what are the trends? Israel is still subject to existential threats by avowed enemies as well as intense anti-Israel efforts by a variety of groups. An important factor is the political and economic power and influence of the American Jewish

community and, to a lesser degree, other Jewish communities.

- **Demography.** In parallel with the major factors of quality and influence, numbers matter for sustaining communities and culture, generating political power, fostering in-marriage, and maintaining excellence in education. The location of Jewish communities and the attitudes and nature of the surrounding culture also affect demographic trends and effects.

- **Identity Formation and Expression.** There are various ways in which identification with the Jewish collectivity may be affirmed and expressed. This dimension focuses on the extent to which individuals do so.
- **Bonds Within and Between Communities.** Strong Diaspora communities are now also regarded even by Israel as important aspects of Jewish People welfare. This dimension examines the nature of the fundamental bonds between Israel and other Jewish communities as well as the state of bonds within those communities themselves.
- **Material Resources.** This dimension examines wealth accumulation and its availability for Jewish causes², Jewish involvement in science and technology as key sources of future economic power, and economic growth in Israel. This latter is important not only for Israel but for the prospect of government investment in the Jewish future abroad.

These dimensions represent complex aggregates that subsume such important values as influence, quality of life, and others. Each could be parsed further but their broadness can also serve a purpose. They provide a framework that allows for a comprehensive integration of many factors. In application, this can direct attention to important details that may then be developed further within an integrated context.

Table 1. shows net assessments because they are intended to reflect changes in the balance between challenges or opportunities and responses in each year. As annual assessments they measures changes

on the margin rather than a longer average.³ Brief evaluations are presented below.⁴

Net Assessment of the Five Key Dimensions 2011-2012

GEOPOLITICS

The year ahead could bring the maturation of critical developments, necessitating unequivocal decisions with potentially critical impacts on the fate of Israel and the Jewish People. The dramatic upheavals in the Arab world, which have, so far, led to the overthrow of the rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, also threaten the stability of other regimes.

Iran's continued progress toward achieving a nuclear weapon sharpens the dilemma facing Israel: either to risk having a country ruled by religious zealots, who declare that Israel has no right to exist, possess a doomsday weapon; or, alternatively, to attack Iran's nuclear facilities risking a severe and ongoing security deterioration and boosting Iran's motivation to obtain a nuclear weapon and to take revenge against Israel (and perhaps against Jewish targets in the Diaspora). An Israeli attack could create a crisis with the United States if it led to a loss of American lives and if it were interpreted as Israeli interference with the policy of negotiations and sanctions against Iran, and/or as an attempt by Israel to drag Washington into another Middle East war.

Israel is facing numerous threatening scenarios:

Security deterioration, which in the extreme case could develop into an all-out war, in

which Israel is forced to defend itself against a combined offensive on multiple fronts, including its home front (for instance, following an Israeli or American operation against Iran; following a violent deterioration in Gaza, or in Lebanon, etc.).

Damage to Israel's international stature, if Israel were viewed as the party responsible for the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the erosion of the international standing of Israel's American ally, the collapse of the strategic axes of Jerusalem-Cairo and Jerusalem-Ankara, or the rise of political Islam in the Middle East.

Economic downturn, as a result of deterioration in the security situation, and/or as part of the "de-legitimization" campaign waged against Israel (the global economic crisis is obviously exacerbating such scenarios).

Damage to Israel-U.S. relations, in light of a perception in some US circles that the price of the US friendship with Israel is increasing steadily (this potential damage will probably be suppressed until after the November 2012 elections).

While the upheavals in the Arab world could go on for years, certain developments are already discernible and should be taken into account in shaping any policy vis-à-vis the roiling Middle East arena:

The year ahead could bring the maturation of critical developments, necessitating unequivocal decisions

The flourishing of political Islam: Political Islam is emerging as the major victor of the Arab revolt. It remains to be seen whether the entry of the Muslim Brotherhood into the political game in Arab countries will mitigate their positions, lead them into coexistence with secular parties in ruling coalitions, or engender dark theocracies. Would they work toward the abrogation of the peace accords with Israel or respect them (as some of their leaders vaguely declare), thereby paradoxically

Israel's actual and perceived power is correlated with the prevalent view of U.S. power

conferring popular and religious legitimacy to the accords, and perhaps even resulting in the moderation of Hamas hostility? Since Israel is incapable of affecting the growth of political Islam, can we enhance the likelihood that, once in power, it would be as minimally hostile to Israel as possible?

The increased power of the "Arab Street": It seems safe to assume that future rulers of Arab states will have to be much more attuned to popular sentiment. To what extent will public opinion, which is saturated with hatred of Israel and gives priority to the Palestinian issue, be reflected in the respective Arab governments' foreign policies and in their stances on Israel in particular? Are Israel and the Jewish People capable of mitigating the animosity of the Arab Street?

The worsening economic crisis: The deteriorated economic situation, which helped fuel the

Arab uprisings, has worsened in their wake. The economic crisis may force Arab governments to focus their efforts on economic recovery and domestic affairs, but it could also create a temptation to redirect internal frustrations against "the Zionist arch-enemy." Does the economic crisis in the Arab world also offer an opportunity and a context for a proactive policy by Israel and the Jewish People?

Breakout of ethnic conflicts: The compromised power of the central governments in Arab countries, the economic crisis, and the sense that the US is weakening and providing less and less order in the region, could combine to trigger serious breakouts of ethnic and religious conflict.

The Perception of US decline and disengagement: Based on the US decision to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan; its unsuccessful efforts (yet) to curb Iran; the failure to advance an Israeli-Palestinian agreement; the regional perception that US response to the Arab revolts has been inconsistent; and obviously, the American economic crisis and its implications. Since Israel's actual and perceived power is correlated with the prevalent view of US power and the intensity of its friendship with Israel, can Israel, for its own good, help the United States to restore its standing in the Middle East?

The decline of traditional regional strategic alignments: The pro-American "Moderate Axis" was shaken: Mubarak's ouster and the deterioration in Israel's relations with Turkey exacerbate its strategic isolation. Will Israeli decision-makers face this strategic reality promptly and creatively, especially vis-à-vis Egypt and Turkey?

These dilemmas necessitate choosing between two polarized approaches: one prefers to watch and wait, while the other opts for spotting and pursuing opportunities proactively. The clash between these two approaches will continue to play out in the strategic and political discourse in Israel and the Diaspora in the year ahead.

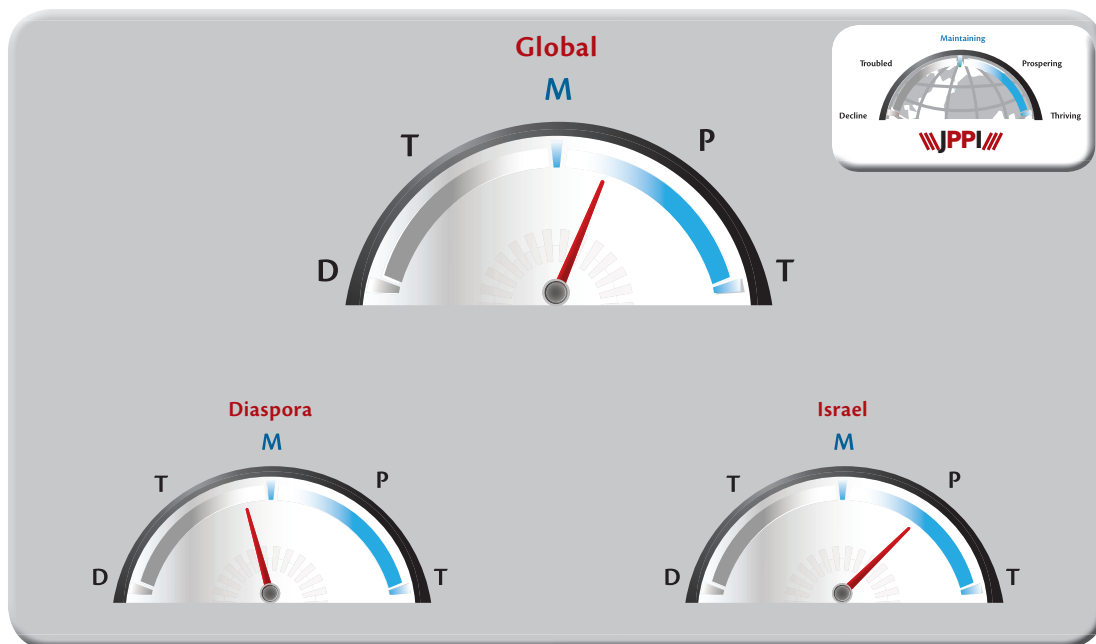
DEMOGRAPHY

The demography of Israel differs from that of the Diaspora. The overall direction is toward continued concentration in Israel and the US, especially in a few urban centers, with an increasing share of especially young Jews residing in Israel. In 2011, out of a global Jewish population of approximately 13.6 million, Israel accounted for about 42% with the

second largest concentration in the US accounting for a further 40% (see Figure 1. below).

In October 2011, Israel's population was 7.8 million, of which 5.9 million were Jews and 1.6 million Arab Muslims and Christians.⁵ The Jewish population is relatively young: 26% are 14 and under, with the proportion in the ultra-Orthodox population larger still. Recent years have seen an increase in Jewish Israeli births with a decline in the rate of Israeli Arabs.⁶ Arabs are still likely to comprise about 25% of Israel's expected population of nearly 9 million by 2025 with the ultra-Orthodox, becoming more than 10% of the population.

Figure 1. Demographic Differences between Israel and Diaspora Communities: 2011-12



A negative balance of births and deaths now prevails in most Jewish communities across the Diaspora. More frequent out-marriage is associated with growing percentages of children not raised Jewish. This contributes to the steady process of Jewish population aging and population decrease. It took 13 years to increase the number of Jews from 11 million in 1945 to 12 million in 1958, but it took 50 more years to add another million. Since 1970, world

The spectrum of Jewish identity is becoming broader with increasing distance between the polar extremes

Jewish population has increased little compared to an increase of global population of over 73%.

The rate of Jews marrying non-Jews is above 50% in the United States, above 40% in the main Western European countries, and above 75% in the former Soviet Union. Diaspora fertility is below the level necessary for generational replacement. Yet, Jewish

numbers are related to their geographical composition. In the Diaspora, ongoing family and cultural changes blur identification boundaries and raise complexities in defining the Jewish collective. The world's 13.6 million Jews are intimately connected to several more millions. Some have Jewish origins or family connections but are not currently Jewish, because they changed their own identification, or are non-Jewish children of intermarried parents, or are non-Jewish partners in intermarried households. The key issue that

may affect numbers is change in the definitions of Jewish belonging. New definitions may expand the ranks, but without changes in how they may become engaged this may not actually change the reality of Jewish life.

At the end of 2011, we detect a slight improvement largely due to Israeli trends.

IDENTITY FORMATION AND EXPRESSION

Identity reflects how individuals think and feel about particular aspects of themselves. The overall trend in Jewish identity construction, especially among the young, is toward more diverse and pluralistic forms. There is a shift from the ethnic to the cultural, and from community-oriented to individualistic and universal. Jewish identity is increasingly less something imposed but rather something that one chooses and shapes. This less frequently involves membership in classical Jewish organizations. Jewish identity, excluding Orthodox and Haredi Jews, is decreasingly about an agreed set of concepts and symbols.

The spectrum of Jewish identity is becoming broader with increasing distance between the polar extremes. Thus, there is intensification of Jewish identity among the strongly identifying group that sends its children to Jewish day schools and whose college students enroll in courses with Jewish content. The polarity is accentuated by the high correlation between these various patterns: those high (or low) on one factor are most often high (or low) on most or all other factors. Thus, Jewish communities have individuals with "high Jewish social capital," i.e., Jewish social connections, friends and networks, educational

and communal activities. This group experiences a mutual reinforcing of Jewish identity. A second group has low Jewish social capital. Weak Jewish identification often gets worse with each generation. A strong Jewish social network in the teen years is a predictor of college friendships and choice of Jewish marriage partner.

In this area, despite countervailing trends, there appear signs of an increase in the number of potential entry points during the Jewish life cycle. There is also some evidence of greater support for and awareness of the importance of social networks in the accumulation of Jewish social capital. This leads to a more hopeful assessment of the balance of forces than past history might suggest.

It's never a trivial matter to say one is a Jew in Europe. There is poor public support for faith-based social and educational initiatives, and the pursuit of religious and ethnic ties is perceived as out of step with contemporary society. With the exception of some urban areas, we observe a distancing of a majority of Jews from Jewish organizational life. Arresting this trend will require more substantial communal resources to be invested in supporting grassroots initiatives, leadership programs, youth cultural empowerment programs, outreach on campuses and the establishment of diverse and attractive activities for young adults.

Within Israel, the polarity takes a different form. The conflict between secular and religious does not allow for the pluralism typical in the Diaspora. However, in response to this polarity there has been recent interest in retrieving the feeling of

"ownership" of Jewish culture and tradition. For Israeli Jews, 92% feel being part of the Jewish People is an important guiding principle, and as many feel themselves to be part of world Jewry. At the same time, Israeli Jews also feel that they are "different from Jews in the Diaspora."⁷

Orthodox groups have, however, increased public demands for stricter adherence to their interpretation of Jewish tradition. The contrast between the Diaspora and what appears to be a counter-trend among Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox circles in Israel has potential for greater distancing.

BONDS BETWEEN AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Israel-Diaspora bonds show opposing trends. Ties between Israel and the largest Diaspora communities remain strong but are changing. Uneasiness about and criticisms of Israel have grown in North America. The young have greater exposure to negative views while being more removed from formative events (the Holocaust, Israel's birth, Six Day War, etc.), which once served as touchstones for unity. This makes inherent gaps between Israel and North America (wealth, education, culture, political beliefs, religious attitudes, perceptions of burden sharing) potentially more prejudicial to mutual understanding.

Ties between Israel and the largest Diaspora communities remain strong, but are changing

Yet, the younger generation travels more to Israel, accesses Israeli web sites, and is more prone to integrate components of Israeli culture into its own. The easing of travel and communication seem to be compensating for other difficulties. The major institutions mediating Israel-Diaspora relations have yet to translate the opportunity represented by emergent personal networks into a vehicle for collective belonging and action. Yet, participation in pro-Israel activities in the US—e.g.,

The U.S. and Israel, with eighty percent of world Jewry and most soft and hard power, are perceived as the key poles of the Jewish future

the growth of AIPAC Policy Conference attendance—is still intensive.

A considerable majority of French, British, and Russian Jews have visited Israel, have first-degree family there, and claim Israel plays a central role in their Jewish identities. But they find the relationship to be asymmetric. While Europe's Jews face direct consequences of Israeli

state actions, Israel engages European Jewry almost solely on anti-Semitism and anti-Israel activity, making statements (e.g., calls for mass *aliyah*) without consultation or considering their effects.

The US and Israel, with eighty percent of world Jewry and most soft and hard power, are perceived as the key poles of the Jewish future and set the agenda for European Jewry. Many expect that the most vital of the 1.3 million European Jews will resettle in Israel or North America while the rest assimilate. A concrete consequence of this US-Israel

focus is to strain the bonds between those two great communities and the European Diaspora.

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Before the current global economic crisis, world Jewry was at a zenith of wealth creation. Most Jews live in countries that are among the richest, and the majority belongs to the middle and upper socioeconomic strata. Jews contribute to technological and economic know-how and take senior positions in the global business system. Urban skilled occupations remain the hallmark of this workforce.

Israel's occupational structure is like that of OECD, the "club" of developed economies. Only 14% of Jews have jobs requiring advanced degrees. Therefore, while the Israeli GDP per capita is about 55-60% of the US, the ratio of per capita Jewish income is lower.

The global spread of education might reduce the comparative advantage the Jews have had in literacy, social attitudes and basic knowledge, as well as in the new knowledge-based economies. Yet, despite increased competition, there seems little evidence of this yet. Israeli high technology prowess remains among the world's most advanced.

The cost of Jewish living in the Diaspora—synagogue membership, Jewish community centers, day-school tuition, and even Jewish burial costs—can pose a barrier to many Jews who wish to belong but cannot afford to do so. In the US, a family with several children in Jewish day school requires an amount equal to the national median income just

for sustaining its Jewish participation. This has been exacerbated by the financial crisis to which the Jews are sensitive because of professional status and capital accumulation. Donations to Jewish Federations of North America were down from \$938 million in 2009 to \$925 million in 2010.⁸ This continues the trend seen since the onset of the financial crisis. Yet, donations to Israel started to rebound in 2010 and continued to do so through 2011.⁹

Israel fared well in the “Great Recession,” exhibited 5% growth and 5.5% unemployment in 2011, experienced low inflation, and recently discovered massive natural gas fields in territorial waters.¹⁰ While Israel escaped the travails of most OECD countries, low unemployment goes together with by far the lowest rate of labor participation (57%).¹¹ The uneven ability to participate in Israel’s wealth-creating sectors has created a polarizing income inequality surpassed by only four countries in the OECD (US, Turkey, Mexico, Chile).¹² The protests of the summer of 2011 called attention to fundamental issues regarding distribution of wealth and burden sharing among Israelis, suggesting fault lines not visible in the aggregate performance of the national economy. In recent years there has been a significant rise in the cost of living. In the past four years, the prices of food and other essentials such as electricity and housing rose,¹³ some by as much as 25-33%, while real incomes remained

static.¹⁴ The price of housing relative to earnings is greater than in London or New York.¹⁵ These trends contrast with Israel’s egalitarian past and early Zionist culture. It is this that brought demonstrators into the streets in 2011.

LEADERSHIP

Table 1. shows a slightly improving situation on balance in most dimensions. It should be noted, however, that while leadership is not included because of quantitative measurement difficulties over the short term, the trans-generational renewal of high quality leadership is a Jewish People concern. Some of the trends noted above may mean a mismatch between the need for individuals who have the capacity, creativity and deep understanding to meet the challenges facing the Jewish People and the numbers available. Despite some beginnings, a systematic and coordinated effort to attract and prepare the best and the brightest for top-level leadership positions in the Jewish community, politics, civil service, business, and academia is lacking.

Trans-generational renewal of high quality leadership is a Jewish People concern

Table 2. Indicators Characterizing the State of External and Internal Drivers Affecting Jewish People

	Declining	Troubled	Maintaining	Progressing	Thriving
Geopolitics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rising radical Islam; -Little hard power; -Proliferation to terror groups; -Israel as pariah; -Wide anti-Semitism; -Oil supports terrorism; petro-power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rising new powers result in instability; -Waning hard power; -Growing proliferation; -Delegitimation of Israel; -Growing anti-Semitism; -Oil works against Israel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engaged US; -Static hard power; -Concern by powers over proliferation; -Israel retains its friends; -Manageable anti-Semitism; -Oil is secondary political factor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strong US; -Growing hard power; -Arrested proliferation; -Delegitimation wanes in force; -Waning anti-Semitism; -Oil dependence declines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sustained regional peace; -Preponderant hard power; -De-proliferation; -High regard for Israel; -Fringe anti-Semitism; -Plummeting oil dependence.
Jewish Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diaspora communities in demographic decline; -Negative growth in Israel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diaspora communities see significant out-marriage & assimilation; -Low net growth in Israel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diaspora communities static; -Israel grows at rate no more than OECD average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diaspora communities increasing; -Israel grows at rate above OECD average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diaspora communities increasing; -Israel grows at rate equal to global average.

Identity Formation and Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jewish cultural literacy is relevant to a declining minority; -Youth largely unaware of Jewish social network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jewish cultural literacy is in decline; -Youth have limited entry points into Jewish social network experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jewish cultural literacy is relevant to a majority; -Youth have multiple entry points into Jewish social network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jewish cultural literacy is relevant to a growing majority; -Multiple entry points into Jewish social network widely-used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jewish cultural literacy is widely shared; -Youth involved in dense Jewish social network experience.
Inter-/Intra-Community Bonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strained Israel-Diaspora bonds; -Diaspora communities exhibit patchy and declining social networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Drifting Israel-Diaspora bonds; -Diaspora communities exhibit patchy social networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Close Israel-Diaspora bonds; -Static Diaspora community social networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Close Israel-Diaspora and Diaspora-Diaspora bonds; -Diaspora communities exhibit dense social networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Meaningful Israel-Diaspora cooperation; -Diaspora communities have dense and growing social networks.
Material Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No economic growth in Israel; -Wealth in Diaspora declines absolutely & relatively; -Little presence in technical fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Low economic growth in Israel; -Diaspora wealth declines relatively; -Nominal presence in technical fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Moderate economic growth in Israel; -Diaspora wealth static; -Important presence in technical fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Moderate economic growth in Israel; -Diaspora wealth increases relatively; -Leadership in technical fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High economic growth in Israel; -Wealth in Diaspora increases absolutely & relatively; -Leadership in technical fields.

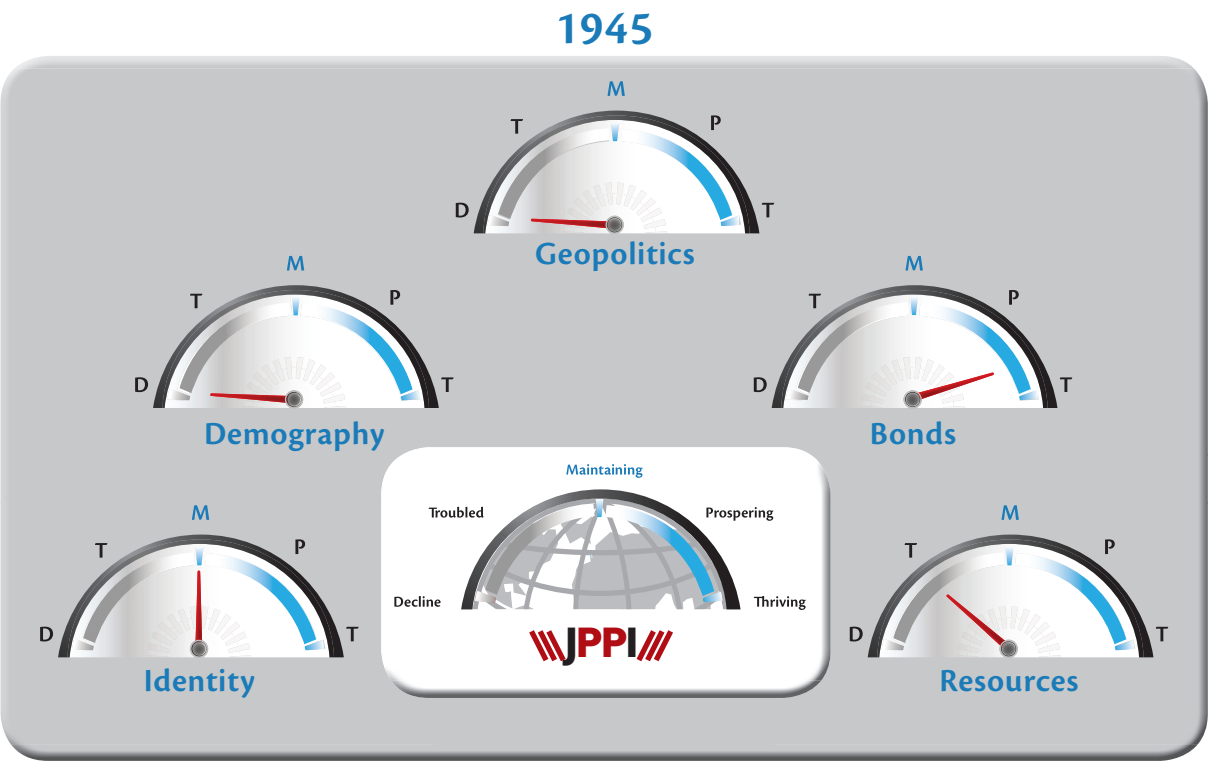
BRIDGING THE SHORT AND LONG TERMS

An assessment of the state of the Jewish People at any one point in time requires both a long and short view. Some changes during one year may deeply affect the lives of generations to come. Yet, in other dimensions the processes of change may require a generation to have an effect. Taking solely a short view may mean that several years of slight changes could be missed until their cumulative effect takes hold. Only a longer view can apply the necessary corrective as well as to allow for reassessment if, as is natural, a current perspective on real-time events misses their deeper meaning.

Prior work of JPPI provides a reference point for understanding trends.¹⁶ Table 2 (pp 18-19). provides a qualitative scale for determining what are positive or negative trends in light of five distinct Jewish People futures based upon specific indicators.

We can apply these dimensions to several historical reference points. In 1945, the year that determined many aspects of our modern world, the Jewish People also had come as close to destruction as they had since Roman times. This is indicated in Figure 2. where the central gauge provides a key to the scale derived from Table 1. and the other five evaluate the key dimensions accordingly.

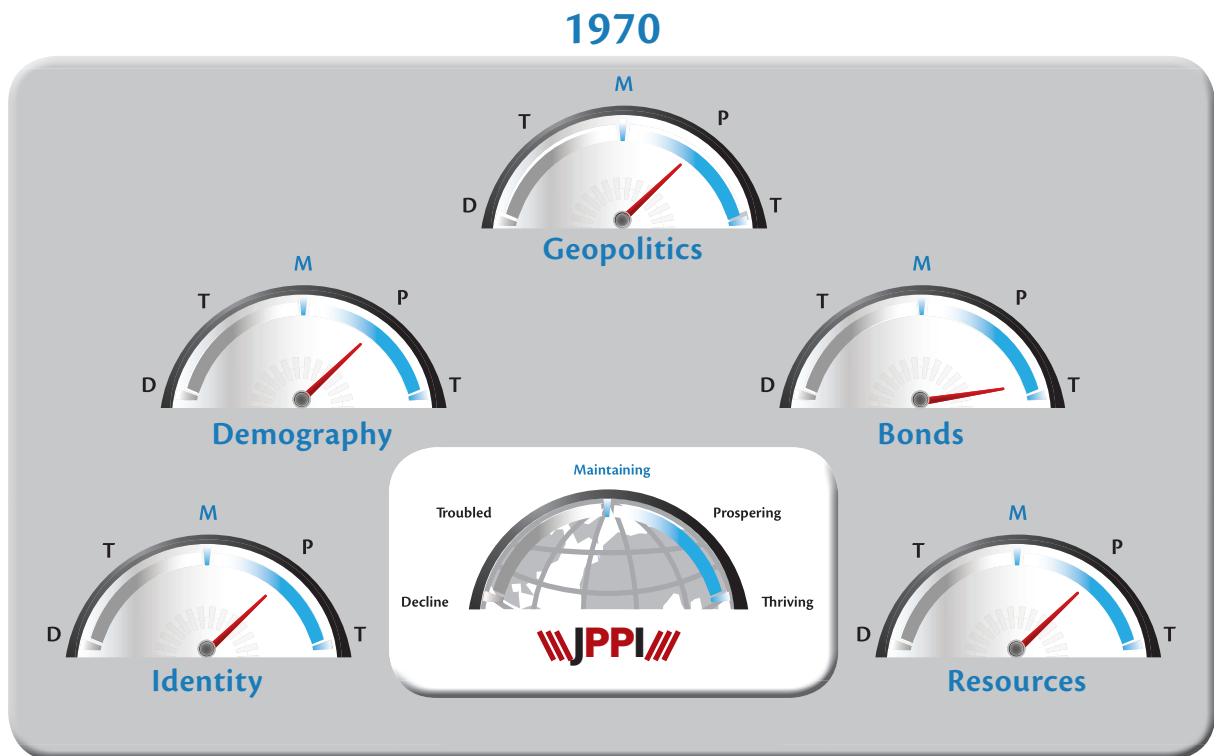
Figure 2. Characterization of Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in the Year 1945



In 1970, there was a different portrait. Israel had smashed the armies of its main antagonists, enjoyed high world regard, and had not yet been subjected to the crises of 1973. Jewish communities in the West were widely accepted by the larger society, had growing resources, and pressures from out-marriage and assimilation were not yet fully

apparent. There was little distance between these communities and Israel, the major institutions of Jewish life were functioning well, and concern largely focused on the communities in the Soviet-dominated world with which the communities in the West manifested solidarity.

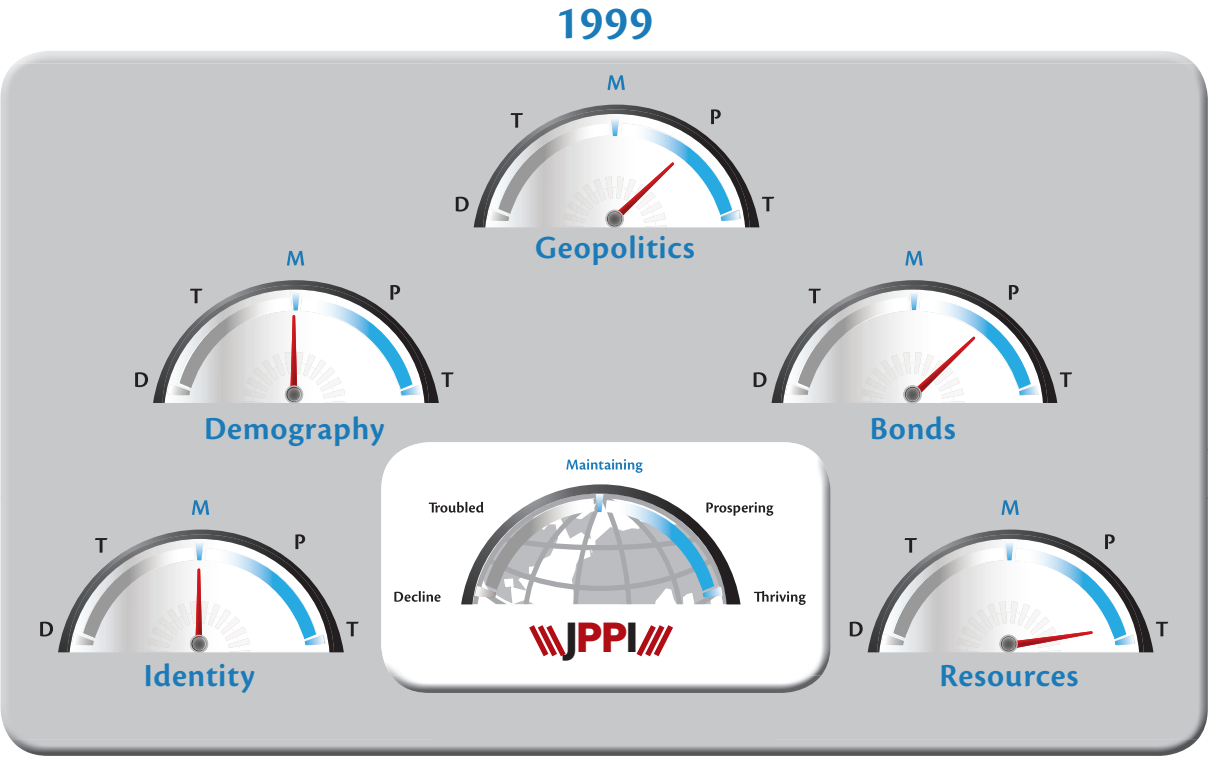
Figure 3. Characterization of Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in the Year 1970



Before the Second Intifada, 1999 represented a high water mark in several respects. One of the drivers was thriving. Yet, the demographic trends of recent decades were becoming clearer while

adaptations to these changes were not yet widely in place to support the formation and expression of identity.

Figure 4. Characterization of Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in the Year 1999



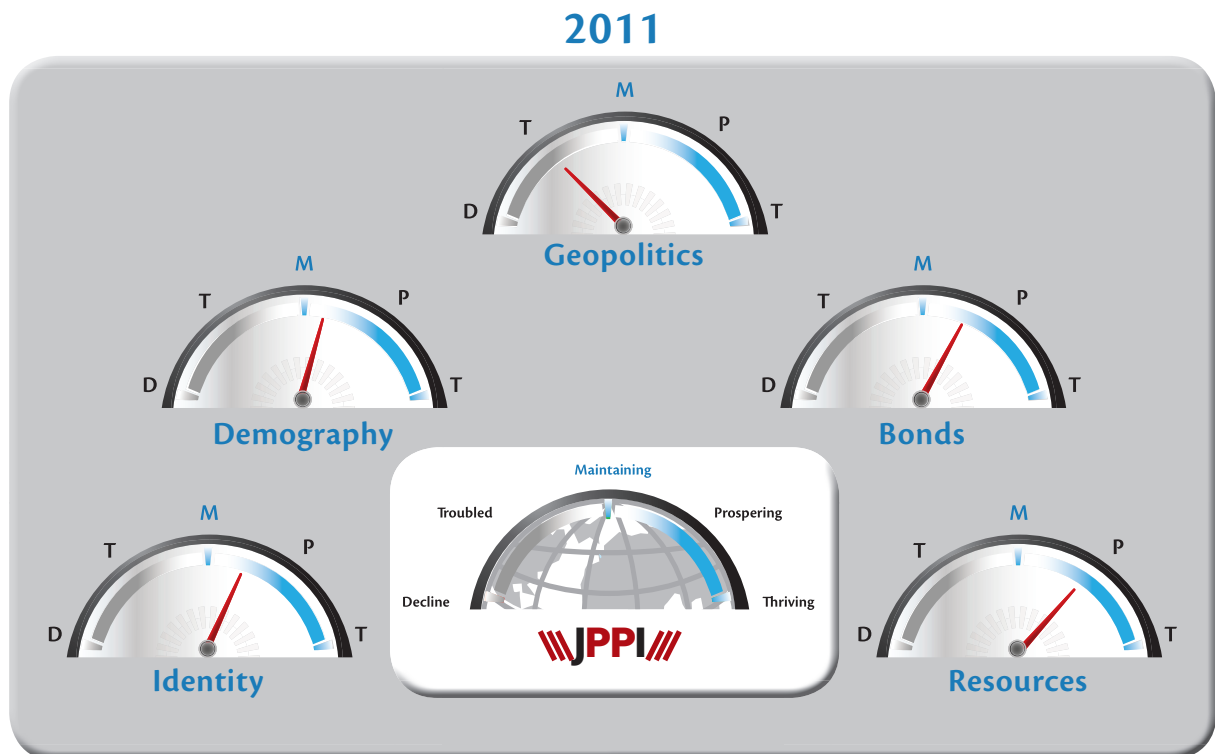
How would the same assessment look at the end of 2011? The time since 1945 has seen an upward trend in Jewish fortune unparalleled both in magnitude and rapidity of change. Yet Figure 5. suggests that more recent times show reason for cautious concern when compared to earlier benchmarks. Do these constitute a transitory dip in an otherwise ascending trend or might they be signaling the beginning of yet another larger turn of the wheel?

Recent decades have seen tumultuous change in the very fabric of the world. It would be

remarkable if this did not affect the key drivers of Jewish People interests. None has passed into true crisis. It is true that the geopolitical dimension appears to be moving in unwelcome directions. The material base has suffered reverses and questions remain over the capacity of Jewish institutions and leadership. Yet, despite recent events, resources are available and a strong core sense of identity remains.

In the end, Figure 5. should be viewed neither as prophecy nor fate. Rather, it is a spur to action.

Figure 5. Characterization of Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in the Year 2011



Notes

1. For greater detail on Jewish People interests, see pages 26-30 in "A System of Indicators for Measuring the Well-Being of the Jewish People," Annual Assessment 2010, Jewish People Policy Institute, 2011.
2. It is quite possible for Jews to accumulate greater wealth individually while distributing a smaller share, relatively and absolutely, to Jewish causes.
3. This is similar to viewing a sports team's performance during one game. This represents only a marginal change on its overall season performance. The significance of that short-term change will depend on what has gone before and will come after.
4. In subsequent years this assessment will focus more on the recent "deltas" or changes. However, in this initial assessment we look at somewhat broader trends.
5. The balance of 0.3 million represent non-Arab Christians or people whose religion is not classified by the national registry. Many are associated with Jewish families.
6. In 2011, 130,000 births were recorded for Jews and non-Arab others.
7. Guttman Survey, "A Portrait of Israeli Jews, Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews" (2009), published in January 2012.
8. <http://www.jpost.com/JewishWorld/JewishNews/Article.aspx?id=218451>.
9. Eric Fleisch and Ted Sasson, "The New Philanthropy: American Jewish Giving to Israeli Organisations," The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis university, 2012.
10. According to a report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published on February 13, 2012.
11. http://laborsta.ilo.org/sti/DATA_FILES/TABLE_PDF/ISR_EN.pdf.
12. <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-most-unequal-countries-in-the-developed-world-2011-4?op=1>.
13. *The Marker*, 14/03/12. P. 2.
14. See Summer 2011 in Israel: The Revolt of the 'Undeprived' — What it was, How it was, and What's Left, this Annual Assessment (2011-2012).
15. <http://taubcenter.org.il/index.php/publications/discussion-papers/economic/the-land-of-milk-and-honey/lang/en>.
16. For a detailed discussion see Gil, Avi and EinatWilf (2010). 2030: Alternative Futures for the Jewish People. Jewish People Policy Institute, January.



Selected Indicators of World Jewry – 2011-2012

Country	Jewish Population Core Definition			GDP per capita, PPP US \$	Index Of Human Development – World Rank	Jewish Day-school Attendance Rate (%)	Recent Out-marriage Rate (%)	Ever Visited Israel, % of Jew. Pop.	Aliyah
	1970 ^b	2010 ^c	Projected 2020 ^d						
World	12,633,000	13,647,500	13,917,000	-	-	-	-	-	2011 ^f
Israel	2,582,000	^h 5,912,600	6,543,000	30,255	17	97	5	100	16,845 ^g
North America	5,686,000	5,650,000	5,581,000	-	-	-	-	-	2,551
United States	5,400,000	5,275,000	5,200,000	48,387	4	25 ^k	54	>35	2,339
Canada	286,000	375,000	381,000	40,107	6	55	35	>65	212
Latin America	514,000	389,600	364,000	-	-	-	-	-	894
Argentina	282,000	182,300	ⁱ 162,000	16,289	45	50-55	45	>50	220
Brazil	90,000	95,600	ⁱ 90,000	11,805	84	71	45	>50	157
Mexico	35,000	39,400	42,000	14,856	57	85	10	>70	-
Other	107,000	72,300	ⁱ 70,000	-	-	75	15-95	>50	-
Europe non-FSU	1,331,000	1,158,800	1,070,000	-	-	-	-	-	2,910
France	530,000	483,500	482,000	34,945	20	40	40-45	>70	1,619
UK	390,000	292,000	ⁱ 278,000	35,982	28	60	40-45	>75	464
Germany	30,000	119,000	108,000	37,208	9	>20	>60	>50	97
Romania	-	9,700	-	12,127	50	-	-	-	41
Bulgaria	-	2,000	-	12,516	55	-	-	-	33
Hungary	70,000	48,600	34,000	19,477	38	>15	60	-	128
Other EU ^j	171,000	163,200	134,000	80,000	-	10-25	33-75	>50	-
Other non-EU ^m	140,000	40,800	34,000	6,000-50,000	-	5-20	50-80	-	-

FSU	2,151,000	330,000	173,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,225
Russia	808,000	205,000	ⁱ 130,000	16,750	66	>15	80	-	-	3,678
Ukraine	777,000	71,500	ⁱ 25,000	7,076	76	>15	80	-	-	2,051
Rest FSU Europe ⁿ	312,000	34,900	ⁱ 15,000	2,000-20,000	-	>15	65-75	-	-	625
FSU Asia	254,000	18,600	3,000	2,000-11,000	-	>15	50-75	-	-	871
Asia (rest) ^o	104,000	19,200	21,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	233
Africa	195,000	76,200	60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,933
Ethiopia	-	100	-	1,088	174	-	-	-	-	2,666
South Africa	118,000	70,800	57,000	10,880	123	85	20	>75	-	173
Morocco	-	2,700	-	5,001	130	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	2,600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	94
Oceania	70,000	115,100	ⁱ 105,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	97
Australia	65,000	107,500	ⁱ 97,000	41,089	2	65	22	>65	-	-
New Zealand and other	5,000	7,600	ⁱ 8,000	28,344	-	-	-	-	-	-

a. Source: Website for the IMF, projection for 2011- Gross domestic product based on Purchasing-power-parity (PPP) per capita GDP (Current international dollar) | b. Source: Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics, The A. Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. | c. Source: DellaPergola, Sergio, (2010), "World Jewish Population," Current Jewish Population Reports, Jewish Data Bank | d. Source: adapted from DellaPergola, Rebhun, Tolts (2000), medium variant. | e. A measure of a country's development based on health, educational attainment, and real income. Source: United Nations Development Program (2011). | f. Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract Of Israel 2012/1. The data on continents are not sums of mentioned countries but of general Aliyah figures from the continent. | g. Including country not specified. | h. Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. The population is defined on the basis of the permanent (de jure) population, and consists of permanent residents - Israeli citizens and permanent residents without Israeli citizenship (including those who had been out of the country less than one year at the time of the estimate). The data here are according to segmentation of the population by religion and refer only to the number of Jewish residents | i. Revised population projections for 2020. | j. Based on adjusted response NJPS 2001. | k. After downward reduction following NJPS 2001. | l. Without Baltic States. m. Including Turkey. | n. With Baltic States. | o. Without Israel, FSU and Turkey. |

4

The Jewish People's Agenda: Dilemmas and Suggested Policy Directions

Basic Principle: Policy initiatives should be redirected to future-oriented projects and priority given to investing in the next generation.

Geopolitical Policy Dilemmas:

- **Iran:** Iran's continued progress in achieving a nuclear weapon sharpens the dilemma facing Israel: either to risk the reality of a state ruled by religious zealots who possess a doomsday weapon and regularly declare that Israel has no right to exist, or, alternately, to attack Iran's nuclear facilities and risk a severe and ongoing security deterioration, including acts of revenge against Jewish targets in Israel and the Diaspora, and a likely redoubling of Iranian nuclear efforts. This possible scenario demands strengthening the preparedness of potential targets, not only in Israel, but also throughout the Diaspora.

While the Arab upheavals could go on for years, certain geopolitical developments and the policy dilemmas they present are already discernible and

should be taken into account in shaping any policy vis-à-vis the roiling region:

- **Political Islam is Flourishing:** Political Islam is emerging as the major beneficiary of the Arab revolt. It remains to be seen whether the entry of the Muslim Brotherhood into the political arena in Arab states will moderate their positions, lead to coexistence with secular parties in ruling coalitions, or engender dark theocracies. Will they work toward the abrogation of peace accords with Israel or respect them as some of their leaders vaguely declare? If existing accords with Israel are upheld, it might paradoxically confer popular and religious legitimacy to them, and perhaps even result in a toning down of Hamas hostility. **Since Israel holds no sway in the growth of political Islam, can we enhance the likelihood that, once it is in power, it would be as minimally hostile to Israel as possible?**
- **The Increased Power of the "Arab Street":** It is reasonable to assume that Arab rulers will have to be much better attuned to popular sentiment. To what extent will Arab public opinion—often saturated with Israel hatred

and outrage over the Palestinian issue—be reflected in the new Arab governments' foreign policies and in their positions on Israel in particular? **Are Israel and the Jewish People capable of mitigating the Arab Street's animosity?**

- **Worsening Economic Crisis:** The severe economic situation, which partly fueled the Arab uprisings, has worsened in their wake. The economic crisis may force Arab governments to focus their attention on economic recovery and domestic affairs, but it could also create a temptation to redirect internal frustrations against the "Zionist arch-enemy." **Does the economic crisis in the Arab world also offer an opportunity and a context for proactive policy-making by Israel and the Jewish People?**
- **Perceived US Decline and Disengagement:** Based on the US decision to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan; its unsuccessful efforts (yet) to curb Iran; the failure to advance an Israeli-Palestinian agreement; the regional perception that the US response to the Arab revolts has been inconsistent (and obviously, the American economic crisis and its implications). As Israel's actual and perceived power is correlated to prevalent views of US power and the intensity of its friendship with Israel, **can Israel, for its own good, help the US to restore its standing in the Middle East?**
- **Unstable Traditional Regional Strategic Alignments:** The pro-American "Moderate Axis" was shaken: Mubarak's ouster and the

deterioration in Israel's relations with Turkey exacerbate its strategic isolation. **Will this new strategic reality be faced promptly and creatively by Israeli decision-makers, especially vis-à-vis Egypt and Turkey?**

The dilemmas outlined above necessitate choosing between two polarized approaches; one that prefers to **watch and wait**, while the other opts for **proactively spotting and pursuing opportunities**. The clash between these two approaches will continue to play out in the strategic and political discourse in Israel and the Diaspora in the year ahead.

Action-Oriented Policy Recommendations

Leadership

Over the next ten years, a significant number of top-level Jewish professionals will retire. Highest quality leadership is of critical importance. JPPI views the trans-generational renewal of top professionals, political leaders, civil servants, etc. as a major challenge that demands action.

1. Initiate a Trans-Generational Leadership Project to:
 - a) Map the senior positions in the global Jewish community and major Jewish organizations to be filled in the next three to five years.
 - b) Create a set of practices designed to locate the most suitable candidates to move into these senior positions and develop an orientation program for them.

c) Provide training and support for career progression. This support program should contain special components for women in order to assist them in entering leadership positions. Part of this program should have an Israeli focus to strengthen the bond between the communities.

2. Encourage entry of the young generation into politics and public service in their countries while involving the best and most inspiring facilitators from different fields from the academic and practical worlds.

3. A Jewish People Leadership Academy, with a course of study of six weeks to three months duration, should be established, preferably in Jerusalem, to provide discourse, learning, and networking opportunities for leaders. Candidates for the leadership academy should have the following general characteristics:

- Commitment to the long-term thriving of the Jewish People broadly;
- Deeply rooted knowledge of Jewish history and its dynamic interaction with a changing environment;
- Orientation toward pluralistic Jewish continuity.

Geopolitics

While meeting the geopolitical challenges of the State of Israel is the responsibility of the Government of Israel (GOI), global Jewish organizations should engage in the following efforts while at the same time understanding the implications of confrontation with Iran for soft

targets in the Jewish communities all over the world and attack upon the Israeli home front.

1. Global Crisis Management System:

- a) Improve global and community-based crisis management systems to direct, coordinate and oversee preparedness for potential crises, supervise crisis management activities, and work toward restoring normal daily life as soon as possible (see JPPI's training manual).¹
- b) Design an action plan to best prepare against a public opinion backlash in case of general war in the Middle East.

2. Support citizens in Israel under attack (such a deployment is likely to contribute to strengthening the ties between Israel and the Diaspora):

- a) Jewish communities should be mobilized together with local elements and Israeli experts to prepare concrete plans to support Israeli citizens in case of a protracted military confrontation, including "life as usual" initiatives and traditional and e-learning programs for Israeli children during war.
- b) While physical security is the GOI's responsibility, Jewish communities can contribute by upgrading equipment and digital connectivity in shelters.

3. Jerusalem-Washington-US Jewry Triangle: The community should engage in an effort to avoid making Israel a partisan issue in domestic US politics.

4. Israel and the Jewish People should reach out to Asia, particularly China and India, focusing on cultural and information exchanges, science and technology policies, Judaism and Israel studies in Asia, Asian studies in Israel and more. Israel and world Jewry can and should find ways to help Asia's rising powers to address their most urgent challenges, including, in particular, energy security, fighting poverty, and rural development.

Identity

1. Lifecycle Vouchers – Expanding the Scope of Taglit-Birthright: Based on points of intervention along the Jewish life cycle, JPPI recommends gradually extending Taglit-Birthright's ("birth-right") scope and brand by granting each Jewish newborn and his/her parents a portfolio of vouchers redeemable for education/identity building experiences at key lifecycle junctures. These vouchers would enable:

- a) Enhancing post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah learning, including Israel-related education and subsidized Israel experiences for teenagers such as summer camps;
- b) Expanding and improving access to preschool and elementary-school programs;
- c) Coaching new parents.

The **Voucher System** should be a flagship and be funded through a supplementary budget based on contributions from Israel and Jewish philanthropy. Participation in this program should not preclude later eligibility for Taglit-Birthright's program.

2. Making Jewish Service a Rite of Passage:

- a) Provide Taglit-Birthright and Masa graduates with a follow-up program of 2-5 months' international and Israel experience consisting of service, study and personal growth.
- b) Jewish service program graduates should be granted a "Jewish Benefits Package" engaging them further in community life (such as free JCC memberships, one-year scholarships to Jewish kindergarten, etc.).
- c) Consider expanding successful North American identity programs to include Jewish European counterparts.
- d) The GOI should provide clear policy guidance to the IDF regarding religious observance for orthodox soldiers and their integration.³

3. Promote Cultural, Religious, and Social Creativity and Entrepreneurship in the United States and Europe:

- a) Encourage and fund Jewish cultural startups, which represent an alternative, nontraditional yet increasingly effective means for young Jews to affiliate with Jewish life.
- b) Global private philanthropists and Jewish organizations should establish a venture fund to provide financial and mentoring support for non-establishment Jewish startups in Jewish communities worldwide.⁴

Bonds within and between Jewish Communities

- 1. **Encourage "people-to-people" programs** and strengthen partnerships between

communities, professionals, academics, and Jewish politicians around the world.

2. **Create a professional advocacy mechanism:** Establish a comprehensive global strategy in partnership with Israel to support Jewish organizational efforts to fight delegitimization. This mechanism should foster transparency and coordination, and encourage non-institutional and non-traditional efforts.

Aliyah from the West

The GOI should facilitate the recognition of foreign academic and professional degrees of new immigrants; enhance the job placement system; and better assist the social integration of schoolchildren. This activity assumes critical importance in light of developments in Europe.

Resources

1. Philanthropic efforts should be redirected to future-oriented projects and give greater priority to investing in the next generation.
2. The GOI should allocate more funds to ensure the Jewish future globally.⁵
3. Jewish organizations should engage together in a best-practices effort to enhance the proportion of philanthropic dollars directed to Jewish causes.
4. Israeli science and technology policymakers should include an international "Jewish People component" in Israel's national Science and technology policy. The policy should be "network-based" and thus remain open to appropriate foreign contributions.⁶
5. **Replenish the pool of soon-to-retire technicians and technical engineers who came to Israel in the post-Soviet immigration of the 1990s.** The Government of Israel should fund and expand training and recruitment programs for these new personnel. These programs should also include re-training of older technicians and encourage the entrance into the technical labor force of populations who are under-represented (e.g., peripheral populations, minorities, and women).

Demography

Even though quality counts for much in terms of Jewish influence, numbers are still important and any decline in them could have negative consequences, both internally and on Jewish soft power. This suggests a need to maintain current levels while crafting demographic policies to facilitate increased birth rates.

1. **Reduce obstacles that interfere with Jewish marriage and family formation.** Lesser family formation has a reducing impact on Jewish fertility. Additionally, marriage remains the normative framework for procreation among most Jews.
2. **Reduce obstacles that interfere with growth in family size.** The State of Israel should enhance social services and increase financial support that would lead to the decision to have a third and fourth child.
3. **Networking society:** Encourage and invest in frameworks for virtual encounters among

young Jewish singles to facilitate chances of interaction and marriage.

4. **Outreach:** Multiply efforts to encourage non-Jewish spouses and the children of inter-marriage to enter and identify with the Jewish fold.
5. **Conversion:** Global Jewish organizations should promote a friendlier Israeli approach to conversion and encourage pluralism in Israel.⁷

As Israel becomes the largest and most powerful Jewish community, it should support the initiatives in this assessment, emphasizing North American, Latin American, and European Jewish

communities. New approaches may foster new ways of attracting the younger generation; the more the younger generation identifies with Israel, the more it will likely increase its Jewish identity, and also look for ways of building bonds between communities. The more bonds between communities, the greater the ability to fight de-legitimization. If Israel and the Jewish world are so interdependent, Israel should make every effort to become more attractive as a focal point; and if reciprocity is important, we need to find ways for the Diaspora to have more of an impact on Israel's policies that may affect world Jewry. This is not a new problem, but it bears a fresh look.

Notes

1. See "Crisis Management in the Community: Preparedness, Coping, Reconstruction. A Training Manual," JPPI, 2008.
2. See "The People's Army: Orthodox Soldiers and Religious Dilemmas in the IDF," (this Assessment).
3. See "Creating Jewish Meaning: Emerging Adults, Cultural Creativity, and the Jewish Future in the US and Europe," (this Assessment).
4. This recommendation takes note of Israel's growing economic prosperity as well as anticipated new sources of revenue from recently discovered natural gas reserves, etc.
5. See "Science and Technology Policy in a Jewish People Context," (this Assessment).
6. See also "Jewish Demographic Policies," Sergio DellaPergola, JPPI 2011.

PART 2

Geopolitical Developments

5

Developments in the Geopolitical Arena and their Possible Implications for Israel and the Jewish People (2011-2012)

The shockwaves reverberating throughout the Arab world over the last year pose significant challenges to Israel and the Jewish People. The uncertainty that traditionally characterizes the Middle East is exacerbated by the current anxiety and air of crisis permeating the entire geopolitical arena. The number of “moving parts” within the international system and the diversity of its components make orchestrating a sound foreign policy difficult.

The dramatic upheavals in the Arab world, which have, so far, led to the overthrow of the rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, also threaten the stability of other regimes. The dust has not yet settled, and any attempt to draw fast conclusions about the “new face” of the Middle East would be presumptuous. Even the term “Arab Spring” that has labeled the tumultuous and still unfolding events, is more wishful thinking than a true portrayal of their possible consequences.

In such a dynamic reality, indecision is as much a decision as any other and, therefore, decision-makers in Israel and the Diaspora are not exempted from making difficult choices. Such resolutions are imperative in light of geopolitical developments in the following four major complexes:

1. **The Global Complex**, in which the “World Order,” that prevailed during the Cold War era and the “American Moment” that followed the collapse of the USSR have been supplanted by a “World Dis-Order” that has yet to consolidate into a stable and functioning system. The United States—whose friendship is so critical to Israel, and which is home to an exceptionally thriving half of the Jewish People—continues to witness a steady diminution of its power and international stature.
2. **The Middle East Complex**, in which the anchors that long provided relative strategic stability in the region are tottering, and chances are slim that stabilization and a resulting semblance of calm will take hold in the near future. To this, one should add the ouster of Egypt’s President Mubarak, the uncertainty regarding Assad’s reign in Syria, the ongoing crisis in Israel-Turkey relations and, above all, the dramatic achievements of political Islam. All of this is happening as Iran continues to make progress toward obtaining nuclear weapons, challenging Israel (and the US) with the dilemma of whether to launch a preemptive military attack, or not.

3. **The Israeli-Arab Conflict Complex**, in which the stalemate continues to threaten both the security and the Jewish-democratic character of the State of Israel, which in turn helps to fuel the phenomena of de-legitimization against it. The ongoing failure of the model of "direct talks with US mediation" drives the Palestinian side to prefer an alternative course—an enforced solution under an international diktat.
4. **The Jerusalem-Washington-U.S. Jewry Triangle complex**, which constitutes a critical strategic resource for the power of Israel and the Jewish People, and in which the past year has **revealed** both the strength of Israel and of the Jewish People (mainly in preventing steps by the American administration in contradiction with the Israeli government's stance on the Israeli-Palestinian issue), and the danger involved in exercising this power, as in turning Israel into a wedge issue between Republicans and Democrats.

These complexes are of course intertwined and interdependent. Many of the trends within them are not amenable to intervention by Israel or the Jewish People, but in a limited number of cases the policy chosen could have a significant effect. The year ahead could witness the maturation of critical developments, necessitating unequivocal decisions with potentially critical impacts on the fate of Israel and the Jewish People.

The Global Complex

The passing year has thrown the transformation of the international system into sharper focus. Conventional power configurations—a bi-polar or uni-polar world order—are being replaced by one in which power is distributed among relatively numerous actors. The "World Order" is being subsumed by what currently seems to be a "World Dis-Order." The central actors in the international arena are plagued by their own urgent domestic problems. The US is enduring a severe and protracted economic crisis; the European Union is fraying as a result of the financial crisis; China is struggling to provide sufficient economic growth to quash social unrest within a gigantic, rapidly aging population (about a quarter of a billion Chinese are expected to be 65 or older in 2030); despite impressive growth rates, India is poverty-stricken and plagued by entrenched corruption; Russia's population is declining, it is heavily dependent on oil and gas prices, and is experiencing a surge of protest against government incompetence, mounting corruption, human rights violations, and Putin's controversial decision to retake the presidency. (Following claims that the parliamentary elections of early December 2011 were falsified in favor of Putin's party—which still lost 77 seats—a protest rally near the Kremlin drew some 40,000 people, the largest since the early 1990s).

Threats to world peace abound: in the nuclear arena, the threat posed by Iran and North Korea (where the young and untested Kim Jong Un succeeded his late father, a development that intensifies the

unpredictability of his country's future course. Other countries are struggling to maintain domestic control (Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, and more). Bin Laden's annihilation was a severe blow to Al Qaeda, but not enough to crush Islamic terror altogether. The global economic crisis continues, and there are fears for the fate of the international monetary system. Globalization creates interdependence and reciprocal influences not just in prosperous times, but also in times of crisis when the failures and deficiencies of the international bodies charged with guiding the world order become all too apparent. Professor Kishore Mahbubani from Singapore nailed it when he said: "Today the world's seven billion citizens no longer live in separate boats. They live in more than 190 cabins on the same boat. Each cabin has a government to manage its affairs. And the boat as a whole moves along without a captain or a crew. The world is adrift."¹

The critical global reality is the backdrop for the ongoing debate whether the US—like other world civilizations throughout history, which have declined and fallen after thriving to record heights—has entered its period of decline, or is US power just at a temporary ebb from which it will rebound? Alongside those quick to lament its demise there are others who regard the current crisis as temporary, even if only because the other contenders for global supremacy are troubled with internal problems and are ill-equipped to succeed the US as the world's leader. After all, the United States is still the world's largest economy and the international arena's most significant military and diplomatic power. Even today, in the throes of a

testing crisis, the US boasts huge advantages: more than half of the world's top-rated universities are in the US; out of a total \$1.2 trillion invested in R&D globally, \$400 billion was invested in the US alone (although its population comprises just 5% of the world's total population). The US continues to lead in the nano-technology and biotechnology based industries of the future; waves of immigrants continue to flock to its gates, providing productive and entrepreneurial human resources. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report

2011-2012, which rates the competitiveness of the world's economies, the US is rated fifth (following Switzerland, Sweden, Finland and Singapore—none of which could be a strategic competitor of the US), whereas BRIC countries lag far behind (China—26; Brazil—53; India—56; Russia—66). In addition, the US defense budget

equals the combined total of the defense budgets of all the next 15 rated nations. Without taking a position on the yes or no "decline debate," the erosion of Washington's power, at least in the short term, is currently demonstrated in the context of the economic crisis—both in its reluctance to encumber itself with further commitments in the international arena, and in the growing perception of other states regarding an erosion of US power.

Despite the relative erosion of U.S. power, it is still the world's largest economy and the international arena's most significant military and diplomatic power

The gradual shifting of the global economic center of gravity from the West to the East is also a factor in the financial crisis afflicting Europe, which has worsened in the last year. The crisis has intensified the impact of long-term trends: aging populations and improvident welfare systems. It is also fueling resentment toward the entire EU enterprise. Surveys show that 63% of the German public does not trust the European Union, and 53% does not see a future for Germany within the Union. At the December 9, 2011 emergency summit of European leaders in Brussels it was decided that a new treaty expanding budgetary regulation of EU members would be formulated to mitigate the debt crisis, causing a severe dispute with Britain, which refused to accept revisions to existing treaties. The economic crisis exposed an unbalanced reality in which a single currency is expected to unify a continent that is otherwise extremely fragmented both fiscally and politically. Individual countries are subject to a single monetary policy that limits their ability to act independently and with flexibility in crisis situations.

Last year's events have increased doubts about the future of the Euro and the very concept of the European Union. The Lisbon Treaty, which was meant to yield an effective pan-European foreign policy, is unable to face that task vis-à-vis the dramatic upheavals in the Arab world. Europe's ability to intervene militarily is limited not only by its difficulty in consolidating a cohesive foreign policy but also by the ongoing erosion of the military power of continental states. As the Cold War and the Soviet threat are increasingly perceived as a thing of the past, the political will to allocate

resources to defense is dwindling. This reality turns NATO into an organization whose *raison d'être* is increasingly in question. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned, on June 10, 2011, that NATO could become irrelevant given its members' reluctance to invest in its development. During the Cold War, the US covered roughly 50% of NATO's military expenditures, whereas it now covers about 75%. Even when NATO forces take part in military operations (in Afghanistan this year there were 40,000 soldiers from non-US NATO members, along with 90,000 American soldiers), their capabilities are constrained by rigid regulations and a lack of basic combat equipment. NATO's operation in Libya exposed this reality: although Libya is Europe's own "backyard," less than half of NATO member nations took part in the operation, which was carried out mainly by France and Britain. The fighting laid bare NATO's state of military unpreparedness (in ammunition, intelligence, training and maintenance) and hence the necessity of relying on American aid, even against an inferior adversary such as Libya. (All this raises disheartening questions about a situation where these forces would have to face a real enemy.).

The United States and the Middle East

The US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, its failures to curb Iran's nuclearization and to advance an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, its reaction to the Arab uprising, which was perceived in the region as hesitant and inconsistent, along with its severe domestic economic situation combine to portray the US in the eyes of Middle Eastern actors as a

declining superpower that fails to achieve its goals, is increasingly preoccupied with its own woes and, thus, less willing to assume responsibilities in the region. The observation that “the US is leading from behind” with respect to American foreign policy doctrine, made by a source within the Obama administration in an April 2011 interview in *The New Yorker*, created a storm of controversy (and while administration officials strongly criticized this observation, it did capture the view held by many experts on Obama’s foreign policy). Libya was a test case for this thesis as the US let France and Britain lead the operation. Proponents of this policy maintain that it is a wise approach that takes into account shrinking US resources and its preference for operating in the international arena within multi-lateral frameworks (after all, the US achieved its goal to overthrow Gaddafi without a single American soldier setting foot on Libyan soil); opponents see this as an abandonment of the international arena jeopardizing vital American interests, as well as conveying a dangerous message of American passivity, an unwillingness to fight for its own interests (for instance, against Iran and Syria). The US attitude was clearly expressed in President Obama’s June 22, 2011 speech on Afghanistan: “My fellow Americans, this has been a difficult decade for our country. We have learned anew the profound cost of war—a cost that has been paid by the nearly 4,500 Americans who have given their lives in Iraq, and the over 1,500 who have done so in Afghanistan ... we must be as pragmatic as we are passionate ... When innocents are being slaughtered and global security endangered ... we must rally international action, which we are doing

in Libya, where we do not have a single soldier on the ground ... Over the last decade, we have spent a trillion dollars on war, at a time of rising debt and hard economic times. Now, we must invest in America’s greatest resource—our people ... America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home.”

It seems that the economic constraints and accumulated fatigue of remote, multi-casualty wars that do not end in an unequivocal victory combine to make Washington prioritize a strategy of focused warfare against terror elements using unmanned aircraft, commando troops and targeted killings of terrorist leaders (last year, the US excelled in this: Bin Laden was eliminated on May 1, 2011, in a commando operation in the heart of Pakistan, and other senior terrorists suffered a similar fate). The strategy of counterinsurgency revived during George W. Bush’s presidency and designed to provide sustained security to local inhabitants in order to win their trust, while at the same time cultivating a local government capable of providing services and security, necessitates too many resources and too long-term a commitment for the US to make at this time.

The exigencies of an election year—the need to respond to American voters’ priorities—reinforce the inclination to focus on domestic affairs. Encouraging American economy figures of late 2010 were soon replaced by harsh data during 2011. Although in December 2011-January 2012 a slight improvement was registered, it is still unclear whether this trend can continue. Talk of a “double dip” pervades in the punditry of economic experts. These trends were bluntly manifested in a process that led to a last-

minute deal in Congress, which prevented the US from reaching a state of insolvency (August 1, 2011). The deal between the Democrats and Republicans raised the authorized debt ceiling from \$14.3 trillion to \$16.4 trillion, and stipulated that \$2.5 trillion must be cut in government spending over the coming decade. In the wake of the deal, which also exposed the difficulties of the American political system in addressing the economic crisis, the credit-rating agency Standard & Poor's downgraded the

The dramatic upheavals in the Arab world pose complex dilemmas for the U.S. and the West; strategic and economic interests are in stark contradiction with fundamental democratic values

credit rating of the US government from AAA to AA, for the first time in its history (August 5, 2011). The budgetary cuts tied to the legislation authorizing the debt-ceiling increase are expected to impede the administration's ability to intervene in the international arena. A joint bipartisan congressional committee was unable to reach agreement on a spending cuts plan (for ten years, beginning in January 2013). The committee's

failure forces an automatic \$600 billion cut in the defense budget, with far-reaching implications for US military. (It is expected that efforts will be made to revise the decision later in 2012.) In this context, it is highly likely that the foreign aid budget would be significantly diminished, and there have been (relatively isolated) calls to cut assistance to Israel as well.² Ideas regarding a possible "Marshall Plan

for the Middle East" have been floated in light of the instability of the Arab world, but were rejected by Washington. American foreign aid will shrink, and many aid programs around the world will be curtailed at the same time that reality poses new challenges.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed her frustration by saying: "There is a democratic awakening in places that have never dreamed of democracy and it is unfortunate that it's happening at a historic time when our own government is facing so many serious economic challenges, because there's no way to have a Marshall Plan for the Middle East and North Africa" (September 30, 2011). Clinton went on to clarify that the Middle East is not going to be the focus of US foreign activity, but the Asian-Pacific region, which, she said, has become a major engine in world politics: "In a time of scarce resources, there's no question that we need to invest them wisely where they will yield the biggest returns, which is why the Asia-Pacific represents such a real 21st-century opportunity for us."³

The Arab Spring poses difficult policy dilemmas to Washington, and the price is double: in the eyes of the Arab masses out in the town squares, the US has done too little, too late, while in the eyes of the rulers still in power, the US has forsaken loyal allies, proving that it cannot be trusted. King Abdullah of Jordan diagnosed this sentiment in a *Washington Post* interview, when asked whether he and other leaders in the region thought the US can be relied upon. The King replied: "I think everybody is wary of dealing with the West ... Looking at how quickly people turned their backs on Mubarak, I would say

that most people are going to try and go their own way. I think there is going to be less coordination with the West and therefore a chance of more misunderstandings.”⁴

Criticizing the US administration for an inconsistent policy vis-à-vis the Arab uprising is easy enough. But according to this logic, should the US encourage a coup in Saudi Arabia? Is it right to ignore the harsh consequences of a military intervention in the name of democracy and human rights? (such as a dramatic rise in oil prices, which would lead to a global economic catastrophe should the Saudi monarchy be toppled). Obama’s dramatic call (in his Cairo Speech, June 4, 2009) to open a new page in the relationship between the US and the Islamic world gave rise to high hopes, only to end in great disappointment. The American image in the Middle East is at a low. A regional opinion poll carried out in October 2011⁵ surveyed 3,000 respondents in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. The results showed a slight improvement in the level of sympathy toward the US and its president compared to 2010, but still, a 59% majority expressed negative attitudes toward the US. In another poll taken in Egypt in March-April 2012, 79% expressed a negative attitude toward the United States and 69% expressed a lack of confidence that President Obama will “do the right thing” in the world’s eyes.⁶

Criticism is especially harsh regarding Washington’s conduct vis-à-vis the Arab Spring and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Indeed, the dramatic upheavals in the Arab world pose complex dilemmas for the

US and the West, when strategic and economic interests are in stark contradiction with the fundamental values of Western liberal democracy. The administration was criticized for not doing enough to encourage the Arab uprising and for acting in an immoral and discriminatory manner. According to critics, the administration was late to intervene in Egypt, avoided intervening in Syria to stop the killing of protestors, and used relatively feeble rhetoric to respond to the suppression of the revolt in Bahrain. Thus, on January 25, 2010, at the height of the mass rallies in Cairo (with the Tunisian ruler already ousted), US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated: “Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people.”⁷ Two days later, Vice-President Joe Biden declared that he “does not consider [Mubarak] to be a dictator,” and that dialogue was needed between Mubarak and the protestors.⁸ The US changed its position just four days later. Having spoken with Mubarak by telephone, President Obama publicly declared in a February 1, 2011 press conference that he had made it clear to him: “It is my belief that an orderly transition must be meaningful, it must be peaceful, and it must begin now.” Of course, such a tough message was never conveyed to Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Bahrain’s Sunni king.

The US consented to the entry of Saudi forces into Bahrain to defend the Sunni minority rule and to curb the surge of protest in a country where Shiites comprise 70% of the population. After all, Bahrain is a major naval base for the Fifth American Fleet and enjoys the status of a non-NATO ally. Saudi

Arabia shares US fears of an Iranian takeover of the island, which is depicted on Iranian maps as Iran's 14th district. These arguments are enough to usurp democracy and human rights considerations.

The US president was not in any hurry to dictate that Bashar Assad step down, even in light of the mass slaughter the Syrian tyrant has inflicted on protestors to protect his Alawite minority rule. Obama, in a May 19, 2011 speech on the Middle East, gave Assad the option of remaining in power on the condition that he consent to reforms: "President Assad now has a choice: He can lead that transition, or get out of the way." Later, when the US did demand Assad's removal, no military threat was made. The starkly different treatment of Gaddafi gives rise to a sense that US policy is selfish and inconsistent. In the Libyan case as well, Obama's course was cautious and conditioned on a multi-national intervention, one that would stand the test of international law and would not entail the physical presence of American troops on Libyan soil. On October 20, 2011, the day Gaddafi was killed, Obama boasted that Washington succeeded in upholding these principles (and indeed, the Arab League, the UN, and major European allies all urged international intervention to thwart the slaughter that Gaddafi promised his opponents in Benghazi).

The erosion of the US image prompts Middle Eastern leaders to act based on the premise that Washington can be opposed without a price tag. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki followed Tehran's lead by publicly supporting Assad, justifying Iran's right to develop nuclear technology, supporting the Shiite uprising in Bahrain, and

explaining (on August 18, 2011) that "The Zionists and Israel are the first to benefit" from the Arab riots. Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), whose UN application for Palestinian statehood, submitted on September 23, 2011 was made in direct defiance of President Obama, who had reiterated just one day earlier what he had declared in his May 22, 2011 AIPAC speech, that "No vote at the United Nations will ever create an independent Palestinian state."

Both al-Maliki and Abu Mazen, in these instances, have gone against the superpower that has helped them so greatly: The US endeavored to liberate and stabilize Iraq, a mission that carried a heavy price in human life and huge financial resources; the massive American aid to the Palestinian authority since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 amounts to \$4 billion, about \$600 million annually.

The American Withdrawal from Iraq

On December 14, 2011, President Obama congratulated US troops on their way back from Iraq by saying: "We are leaving behind a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people." The coming months will reveal whether—and to what extent—Obama was exaggerating in painting so rosy a picture of the outcome of nine years of war in Iraq (a war he had labeled "dumb" prior to his election). Indeed, a few days after this declaration and following the withdrawal of the last American troops, Baghdad was hit by a lethal wave of terror attacks that left about 70 dead (December 22, 2011). The coming months will tell whether the huge investment of the US and its partners in Iraq was made in vain, or

worse, caused more strategic damage than good (US losses in Iraq total 4,479 dead, 32,200 wounded, and over a \$1 trillion spent). The main beneficiary of this is of course Iran. Although the interests of Shiite Iran do not completely match those of the Shiite majority currently dominant in Iraq, this new situation will make it easier for Iran to broaden its influence and to meddle in Iraq's internal politics, so that Iraq continues to serve Iranian interests by continuing to be too weak and divided to pose a threat to Iran and its regional aspirations.

The withdrawal itself was highly controversial inside the US. Outgoing Defense Secretary Robert Gates spoke publicly, on May 25, 2011, in favor of keeping some American forces in Iraq and called upon Iraq to accept this position. He explained that retaining these forces would be "a powerful signal to the region that we're not leaving, that we will continue to play a part ... it would be reassuring to the Gulf States ... it would not be reassuring to Iran, and that's a good thing." American commanders on the ground recommended leaving 18,000 soldiers, but Washington's attempt to leave just 4,000 soldiers failed because the Iraqi government refused to grant the troops legal impunity. The optimistic scenario regarding Iraq's future portrays it as a stable state; led by a political system that manages to reconcile the ethnic blocs (Shiite, Sunni and Kurd); whose governmental and economic recovery is accelerating; remains a US ally; fights against Al Qaeda and Iranian subversion; and generally provides a positive model for Middle Eastern stability. But the possibility of an alternate, pessimistic scenario is highly disturbing. The withdrawal could ignite a civil war in Iraq

which would draw neighboring countries eager to both lay their hands on Iraq's energy resources and defend themselves against fears that Iraqi instability might leak into their own territories. A flare-up in Iraq would compound current surges of instability in the Gulf caused by the Arab uprising.

The US had planned to maintain a huge embassy in Iraq with 16,000 employees, with several thousand trainers and security personnel contracted by private American security companies. This American presence (which was later decided to reduce by half), is supposed to help in the recovery of Iraq, leaving the US with considerable leverage. The implementation of the massive arms deals signed with Iraq would necessitate the long-term presence of American instructors and trainers, and the US would probably keep an eye on the situation from the air, and from its base in neighboring Kuwait. The United States is augmenting its forces in the region and upgrading the armies of its Gulf region allies in order to fortify the anti-Iran line and to compensate for the strategic vacuum created by its withdrawal from Iraq. It is not surprising that Muqtada al-Sadr, the extremist Shiite leader and a close ally of the Iranians, declared that an extended US diplomatic presence in Iraq amounts to a continuation of the occupation: "They are all occupiers, and resisting them ... is an obligation."⁹ Nevertheless, the capability of this non-military presence to curb Iran's increasing influence in Iraq must not be overestimated (one manifestation of this influence is Iraq's objection to Arab League steps against Assad, who is Tehran's ally). The US could also face a difficult dilemma if its staff in Iraq is targeted for lethal terror attacks.

The potential for a flare-up in Iraq is very high. The country remains ethnically fragmented. Internal disputes around the division of power are still raging, the government's performance is inadequate, and corruption is deep-rooted (Iraq is rated 175 among 182 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2011). Displaced from power following the ousting of Saddam Hussein, the Sunnis may become even more marginalized in the wake of US withdrawal. They claim that Prime Minister al-Maliki is a tyrant who breaches the agreements designed to facilitate co-existence among the different factions. The Kurds in the north, who are resolved to defend oil resources in their territory, are wary of the consolidation of a strong central government in Baghdad, and will probably continue to try to thwart it. Iraq's position as a battleground between Saudi Arabia and Iran may become aggravated, and the upheavals in neighboring Syria, which are approaching civil war, will make efforts to keep Iraq stabilized even harder.

The Afghan-Pakistan (AfPak) Complex

The American invasion of Afghanistan and the overthrow of Taliban rule were intended to prevent it from becoming a base for Al Qaeda and the Islamic Jihad organizations that have found refuge there. During his election campaign, President Obama argued that unlike the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was vital for US security. What began as a limited mission has developed into a full-blown and ongoing war against the Taliban, whose combatants were moving freely back and forth from bases in neighboring Pakistan. In view

of the Taliban's gradual recovery and the failure of the Kabul government to effectively govern the country, Obama decided (in December 2009) to step up the troops by 30,000 soldiers, for a limited period of time (until July 2011). The objective was to crush Al Qaeda, curb Taliban momentum, and train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. In his June 2011 speech, Obama committed to bring the additional forces back home by September 2012 (i.e., the eve of the November 2012 elections), and to a complete withdrawal by the end of 2014. The actors in the arena are not oblivious to the transience of the American presence, which makes the attainment of American goals that much harder. The number of troops in Afghanistan grew during Obama's term to reach 100,000. In a decade of war, the US has lost 1,800 soldiers and \$400 billion in direct costs. A majority of the American public is of the opinion that the US should end its involvement in Afghanistan. In November 2001, a Gallup survey revealed that a massive majority [91%] was in favor of intervention. Ten years later, according to a CBS survey, the supporting camp had shrunk to 34%.¹⁰ Hamid Karzai's failing government is plagued by political instability, so there is no guarantee whatsoever that US investment of blood and treasure will ever bear fruit. The US is therefore faced with difficult dilemmas: Should some forces remain in Afghanistan after 2014? Should the US try to reach a compromise with the Taliban to gain stability and minimize damages? The Taliban certainly has an incentive to wait for the US to withdraw. Should the United States prepare for years of economic support and other assistance to

Afghanistan? With an unemployment rate of 40%, the country is rated near the bottom of the world GNP per capita index.

The difficulties in stabilizing Afghanistan and fighting effectively against terrorist elements are mounting in light of the long-standing training and support extended by the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's intelligence service) to Islamic terror groups operating in Afghanistan. This activity, which Pakistan continues to deny, is intended to allow Islamabad to exert influence in Afghanistan, against what is perceived as a strategic threat from India. Delhi is indeed cultivating ties with Kabul. In the last decade India has invested about \$2 billion in infrastructure projects and signed a strategic partnership agreement with Kabul (October 4, 2011), in which it committed to train and equip the Afghan army. The supreme commanders of the Pakistani military envision a nightmare scenario in which their country—wedged between India and Afghanistan—is attacked simultaneously by both. The anticipated US withdrawal from Afghanistan is certainly no incentive for Pakistan to abandon its leverage, which is based on its support of the Afghan Taliban. And indeed, in global terms, the real strategic "headache" is Pakistan, which possesses a nuclear arsenal that is rapidly expanding, and a reputation for having no qualms about proliferating nuclear technology. In Pakistan Islamic terrorist groups operate freely (Bin Laden found a haven in Pakistan for years before being killed by American commandos).

In a Senate hearing (September 22, 2011), then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral

Mike Mullen confirmed that Pakistan was actively supporting and harboring Afghan opposition fighters the US was trying to stop. The ISI, which is controlled by the military (and which is not effectively monitored by the civilian government), is not interested in the Taliban being defeated, and acts to thwart US efforts to stabilize a democratic central government in Kabul capable of governing the entire country. This is the background for the declaration made by US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on October 11, 2011, that the US "cannot resolve the issues of Afghanistan without resolving the issues of Pakistan." The American failure to crush the Taliban in Afghanistan and stabilize the situation in Pakistan becomes emblematic of an overall picture of American weakness and desertion.

The American failure to crush the Taliban in Afghanistan and to stabilize the situation in Pakistan is emblematic of an overall picture of American weakness and abandonment

The Arab Uprising

On December 17, 2010, a young Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi stood in front of the local governor's house in the town of Sidi-Bouazid and set himself on fire. That desperate act was triggered by a forceful confiscation of his vegetable cart, his livelihood, by local police. Broadcast on satellite TV and disseminated on the Internet through social networks, the event sparked a series of demonstrations across the Arab world.

In a month's time, the Tunisian Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali abdicated his throne and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia (January 14, 2011). The wave of revolt spread throughout the region from Libya to Syria, and to date has led to the ouster of rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. It threatens to topple others as well. The elections that have taken place in various Arab countries since the uprising began gave dramatic expression to the massive support enjoyed by political Islam in the Arab world. Parties representing the Muslim Brotherhood have won every election campaign held in the Arab world since then (in Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt), with the exception of Algeria—which did not see a significant citizen revolt—where the ruling FLN party won the elections held on May 12, 2012 (although the Islamic bloc claimed the election results had been tampered with).

Obviously, it is much too early to pretend to "recap" the outcomes of the Arab uprising. Events are still unfolding, but it seems that what had initially been termed the "Arab Spring" has turned into an "Islamic Spring." How this trend will develop, which is immensely significant from an Israeli perspective, is shrouded in uncertainty. Will their newfound governmental responsibility cause these movements to moderate their positions, or are their leaders' appeasing messages merely lip service masking their true intentions to impose the rigid laws of Islam and their original doctrine, which negates Israel's very existence?

The Middle Eastern picture on the eve of the upheavals was clear for all to see: ineffective governments, poverty, economic hardship, high unemployment rates (about 25%), myriads of

young people without any hope for a decent future (90% of the unemployed in Egypt are under 24), rampant corruption, revocation of basic freedoms and human rights violations. However, the best experts, including intelligence agencies, failed to foresee what was coming and could not imagine Arab crowds flooding the town squares risking their lives in the line of fire.

Western governments, also taken by surprise, were faced with difficult dilemmas: Should they help to oust tyrants—with whom the West has closely cooperated for years even though their regimes were rife with violations of democratic principles and basic human rights? Or should they favor protecting economic interests, the uninterrupted flow of oil, stability and the curbing of Islamic movements? The difficulty in formulating a consistent and cohesive policy led to what has been perceived as a vacillation—an incoherent line. The Libyan case was exceptional largely due to Gaddafi's personality, the relatively broad international support behind the intervention, and the Arab League's support of the insurgency. The Libyan intervention demonstrated some of the potential of an aggressive and well-coordinated international effort. It began with UN Security Council Resolution No. 1970 (February 26, 2011), which imposed sanctions on Gaddafi and referred the issue to the International Criminal Court. Resolution No. 1973 followed approving a "no-fly zone" over Libya (March 19, 2011). Gaddafi's assets were frozen, a naval siege and arms embargo imposed, and a host of countries quickly recognized the authority of the Libyan National Transitional Council. Injecting NATO forces into the military

campaign in Libya swayed the pendulum in favor of the rebels and afforded them time to organize and arm. Bombardment throughout March 2011 prevented Gaddafi's forces from storming Benghazi and slaughtering his opponents as he had promised. Although various observers predicted that the fighting would be long and frustrating, rebel forces soon overtook Gaddafi's palace forcing him to flee with his family (August 23, 2011). He was finally captured and executed on October 20, 2011. Gaddafi had been isolated in the Arab world, to the point that even the Arab League overcame its usual indecision and reached a resolution in support of the "no-fly zone." Qatar even dispatched 6 Mirage fighter aircraft to join the Western forces operating in Libya.

The Syrian case is totally different. The West is reluctant to intervene militarily and, due to Chinese and Russian objections, is struggling to impose further sanctions on Assad.

What will the Middle East look like when the dust of the Arab upheavals settles? The emerging reality does not promise a swift or peaceful breakout of regional democracies that uphold human rights and liberal principles. Western analysts were quick to christen the tumultuous events the "Arab Spring"—an enlightened and sweeping awakening to democracy, human rights, liberty, liberal values, religious freedom, equality for women, and modern economies. But the unfolding reality has been disappointing, and much of the optimism that attended the beginning of the uprising has been replaced by alarm. It is increasingly doubtful whether the revolt that succeeded in overthrowing rulers could also succeed in

gluing together a society burdened by poverty, illiteracy, tribalism, social division, radical Islam, oppression of women, corruption in government, discrimination against minorities, unemployment, poor educational systems, backward economies, and weakened, frustrated middle classes. The masses that risked their lives taking part in the uprisings demonstrated remarkable unity, dedication and spontaneous mobilization to remove the regimes that had made their lives so miserable for so long. The satellite networks, headed by Al Jazeera, along with Internet social networks, helped galvanize spirits by broadcasting the exhilarating events live to every corner of the Arab world. Facebook and Twitter facilitated the mass mobilization, coordination and the logistics of getting protesters to the demonstrations. The uprising was not led by any formal organization and had no popular, charismatic leader, nor was it based on a clear ideological platform. New communication technologies have played an invaluable supporting role in overthrowing incumbent rulers because they enable anonymous bloggers to organize demonstrations in the town squares from the safety of their own quarters (which could be anywhere on earth). This new, digital reality partly explains the conspicuous lack of a top-down leadership, a unifying organizational structure, and ideological platform—all hallmarks of revolution in pre-Internet times.

Questions also abound regarding the ability of the uprisings' leaders to successfully integrate into the new political landscape it engendered. The "powers of the past" have not vanished: the army, the old political parties, and, of course, the newly legal,

popular and well-organized Muslim Brotherhood. These forces are eager to preserve their power and exploit the new conditions to advance their own interests. From the perspective of frustrated protestors, the revolution is being "hijacked," and threatens to reach places they hadn't foreseen: an Islamic bloc takeover, military rule, the consolidation of coalitions that reserve political power for the military, traditional parties and Muslim factions. Moreover, the prospect of civil

The Arab monarchs have remained relatively stable because, among other things, their claim to be scions of the Prophet Muhammad reins in the clerics and trumps their authority

war and the disintegration of the state into rivaling tribes and ethnic groups must not be overlooked.

Tunisia, where the Arab revolt first erupted, was also the first country to hold elections to its National Assembly (October 23, 2011), which was charged with formulating a new constitution and setting the rules for parliamentary and presidential elections. Monitored by foreign observers, the elections

went smoothly and ended with a resounding victory (43%) for the Islamic party Ennahda. Until the revolution, the Tunisian constitution had been considered the most liberal of the Arab world. Will the new constitution, under the auspices of Ennahda, be regressive? Party leader Rachid Ghannushi promised while campaigning that his party's victory would secure an economic flowering "similar to Turkey's." Ghannushi, who had previously

praised Hamas suicide bombers and who signed a *fatwa* calling for "Jihad to liberate the Holy Land from the Zionist regime,"¹¹ along with Nassrallah, Ahmad Yassin, Kardawi and others, is now promising a liberal, enlightened Islamic government that upholds democracy and the separation of powers, respects human rights, allows freedom of the press and defends the rights of women and minorities. In an article published on the eve of the elections (October 17, 2011) in the *Guardian*, Ghannushi explained: "God says in the Qur'an that 'There is no compulsion in religion'; therefore we believe that neither the state nor any social actor has the right to interfere in society in order to impose a certain lifestyle, belief or idea. These should be matters of free personal choice." Will the actual reality be different, or will Tunisia prove to be the Arab pioneer of an Islam that peacefully coexists with democracy, human rights, pluralism and liberal values?

In neighboring Libya—torn by religious, tribal, and territorial disputes and lacking any real government institutions—the vision of Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the rebel leader, does not bode well. On October 23, 2011, he promised that Islamic Law would be the legal basis for Libyan legislation, and that all laws contradicting Sharia would be annulled, including the one that prohibited polygamy and revoked the Qur'anic right of men to take four wives.

Commentators are uncertain whether the Muslim Brotherhood's entry into the political arena in Arab states will moderate its positions, lead it to coalesce with secular political parties, perhaps even position it at the frontline of a confrontation with radical Salafist groups, or if, alternatively, dark theocracies will emerge.

The Arab uprising takes place in a region riddled with ethnic divisions. Sudan split into two states last year, Northern and Southern, and there have already been clashes between the respective armies, which threaten to deteriorate into all-out war. The impoverished Southern Sudan declared independence on July 9, 2011. It controls territory 31 times larger than Israel's, yet its paved roads total less than 60 kilometers. Yemen is torn between the Houthi tribes' uprising in the north and riots in the south, and the absence of any real government control allows Al Qaeda a safe haven there. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was wounded in an assassination attempt in June 2011, finally acquiesced to public pressure and abdicated, in return for a promise of impunity, on November 23, 2011. The Kurds in Iraq aspire to independence, and the pent up tension between the Shiite majority and the Sunni minority could erupt in the wake of US withdrawal. The riots in Syria may spiral into an all-out struggle between the Sunni, Alawite, Kurd and Druze factions. Lebanon could slide back into the trauma of a harrowing ethnic civil war (between Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, and Druze). The Palestinian majority in Jordan is being systematically denied access to positions of power and its national security agencies. And in Bahrain, a Sunni minority rules the Shiite majority (70%).

In this context, it is striking that, at least until now, the Arab monarchies have remained relatively stable, and their rulers appear to enjoy more popular legitimacy compared to the secular rulers who took power through coups or were endorsed by an incumbent military regime. The Arab monarchs claim to be scions of the dynasty

of the Prophet Muhammad, to rein in the clerics and trump their authority. Indeed, the commonly heard slogans in protests within Arab monarchies do not call for dethroning kings, but for replacing the government, and enacting reforms. The monarchs have responded with massive splurges of public spending, promises of reform and dismissals of standing premiers. The Saudi king even promised that, starting in 2015, women would be allowed to take part in municipal elections and could be appointed members of the King's Advisory Council. The King of Morocco, who so far seems to have managed to navigate the stormy seas of revolt, promised (in March 2011) changes to the constitution that would curtail his own powers. When asked by Lally Weymouth in an October 2011 *Washington Post* interview: "If you look five years down the line, do you see yourself relinquishing some power to the parliament?" King Abdullah of Jordan promptly replied, "Probably sooner."

We will have to wait and see whether a result of the regional uprisings will be the transformation of the absolute monarchies of the Arab world into constitutional monarchies, with real parliaments.

Powers that are threatened by the Arab uprising are forced to react in order to preserve their might. Saudi Arabia did not hesitate to dispatch troops to neighboring Bahrain (March 2011) to suppress the local protest, led by the Shiite majority and directed against the Sunni King Al Khalifa. Other oil-based Emirates are quick to forcefully suppress disobedience while simultaneously announcing the allocation of hefty sums for social causes, housing, and job creation. This financial largesse

is not possible in all Arab countries. Paradoxically, the deteriorated economic situation that helped ignite the riots has worsened in their wake. In the immediate term, a significant decrease in economic growth has been recorded, with growth in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia expected to decline to about zero, compared to 4% or more in 2010. Tourism and foreign investment have been hit hard, and local capitalists are transferring their money out of the region due to a sense of basic insecurity in the present, and uncertainty about the future. A report based on IMF data, published on October 15, 2011, suggested that the cost of the Arab uprising to the regional economy amounted to \$56 billion, with the main victims being Syria (\$23.3 billion), Libya (\$14.2 billion), and Egypt (\$9.79 billion). A solution to the economic breakdown cannot be reached in the near future; it is therefore expected that the dire economic situation will continue to fuel the unrest throughout the Arab world.

Without drawing any conclusions regarding the final outcome of the Arab revolt, it seems safe to assume Arab rulers will have to be much more attuned to popular sentiment from here on out. Fear of the government is no longer as paralyzing as it used to be, and taking to the streets has become a realistic option for redress. The fact that parliamentary election victories have granted real power to the Muslim Brotherhood, which is bound to translate into increasing influence over future governance and foreign policy. The upheavals are expected to undermine strategic alignments that had provided a semblance of stability in the region. The components of the pro-American "Moderate

Axis" states have been reconfigured and this is of key importance to Israel: Mubarak's ouster weakened a critical link in the Israeli strategic alignment. While the relationship with Egypt had never been warm, Mubarak kept the peace, was a constructive partner on security issues, and saw the danger posed by Iran and radical Islam eye to eye with Israel. The deteriorated relationship with Turkey has potentiated this new reality, and Israel's strategic isolation. At the same time the "Axis of Resistance," which is hostile to Israel—Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas—is also coming apart. The threat to Assad's regime may eliminate the strong Iranian link in this axis and restrict its maneuverability in the region, weaken Hezbollah, and increase Hamas dependence on Egypt. Syrian opposition leaders promise that the post-Assad Syria will have a chillier relationship with Iran and Hezbollah. To reiterate, the processes of change are still evolving, and they contain a great number of "moving parts." Because each element of the regional strategic alignment may take on various possible shapes, a matrix encompassing all the potential combinations, and their outcomes, is extremely complex and stymies decision-makers. The awakening of the Arab populace impacts all states in the region and they are responding accordingly, even if the uprising has skipped some of them altogether and is relatively weak in others.

The key players in the Middle Eastern arena with the greatest potential to affect Israel's national security are Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Each is discussed in detail below.

Egypt

"Egypt is not Tunisia." This was the reaction of many expert commentators and analysts when asked if the riots in Tunisia could eventually lead to the collapse of the Mubarak regime. Abdel Moneim Said, former chairman of the board of directors of the *Al-Ahram* newspaper and director of the Center for Strategic Studies, calmed his readers by saying that "the critical mass of Egyptians is, indeed, different from the critical mass of Tunisians. It has not yet abandoned the wisdom that tells them not to leave a place until they know where they are heading."¹² Much to the surprise of this Egyptian scholar, as well as many others, the riots that broke out in Cairo immediately after the Tunisian ruler, Bin Ali, fled his country and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011, led to Mubarak's fall of on February 11, 2011. Even Major General Aviv Kohavi, head of the Israeli Military Intelligence, failed to read the future, and a few days before Mubarak's ouster, in a discussion before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, announced that "government stability in Egypt is not in any danger."¹³ But Mubarak did not survive the massive riots. The police capitulated and retreated from the streets, and the army, which had taken positions in cities across Egypt, opted not to confront the protestors. On February 1 Mubarak announced that he intended to retire, and only remain in office for a few months to ensure a smooth transfer of power, but the masses in Cairo's Tahrir Square were enraged by this plan and called for Mubarak's immediate removal. The humiliating sight of the ailing Mubarak wheeled to trial in a hospital gurney and put in an iron cage

with his two sons beside him (August 3, 2011) signified more than anything else the earthquake that continues to confound and shake the Arab world.

The parliamentary election process in Egypt, which began on November 28, 2011 and which required three rounds of voting for the People's Assembly and the Shura Council, ended on January 11, 2012. The results turned the Islamic parties into the dominant force in the Egyptian parliament. The Freedom and Justice Party (the Islamic Brotherhood) won 38% of the parliamentary seats and the Al-Nour Party took 29%.

As a result of its sweeping victory, the Muslim Brotherhood now faces new dilemmas, ones reserved for those in power: How to address the ailing Egyptian economy? How to proceed vis-à-vis the Egyptian military, which does not seem willing to give up its authority and economic privileges easily? Should the government risk a severe clash with the military in order to keep it at bay during the formulation of the constitution and the appointment of government officials? How to address the surprising clout of the Salafists (cooperation or confrontation)? How to convince the world that Egypt is a stable state, lucrative for investors and attractive to tourists? And, of course, how to regard the peace agreement with Israel? In

Close scrutiny of the utterances of Islamic bloc leaders raises doubts regarding their commitment to the peace agreement with Israel

this context it bears mentioning that any discussion of the chances of a functioning democracy in Egypt must take into account its acute poverty, high illiteracy rates, and the extremist religious doctrines prevalent among large swathes of the Egyptian public. An April 2011 Pew survey found that 62% of respondents maintained that laws should be strictly consistent with the Qur'an, while an additional 27% maintained that the law must accord with the values and tenets of Islam. In a previous poll in December 2010, 82% of respondents supported the punishment of stoning for adultery, 77% were in favor of chopping off the hands of thieves, and 84% agreed that Islamic apostates should be put to death.

The firm religiosity of Egyptian society is not the sole explanation for the Islamic bloc's victory. During the long years of oppression, the mosques remained a relatively safe haven for disseminating Islamic doctrine (an advantage not enjoyed by other opposition movements, whose activities were forcefully suppressed). The intensive charity work and support networks for the needy the Islamists weaved across Egypt have won them many loyal supporters. Fed up with government corruption, many in the Egyptian public regard the Islamists' religious commitment as a guarantee for a government that is averse to corruption and adheres to the values of justice.

The rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) is expected to last at least until July 2012, when it was promised that Egypt would have a new president. Until then it remains unclear whether the military will return to its barracks and leave the political arena to a civilian and democratic

regime, or continue to control the country in one guise or another. Many of the Tahrir Square protestors do not sense a real change in the way their country is being run. The transitory military rule is no substitute for the democracy they envision, and they are increasingly suspicious that instead of handing control over to civilian bodies, the army intends to continue holding power for a while longer. (Since the fall of Mubarak, 12,000 civilians have been tried by military court). The army's attempt to ensure that the new constitution would grant it immunity to civilian control (especially its budget) provoked much anger. On November 19, 2011, the protestors were back in Tahrir Square demanding that the military regime make way for an elected civilian government. The protest deteriorated into severe violence; the government resigned, and an agreement was reached, according to which SCAF committed to transfer power to a civilian government and hold presidential elections by July 2012.

The economic situation in Egypt is grave and getting worse. Foreign currency reserves are down to \$20 billion mark and eroding at the rate of \$1 billion a month. About 40% of the population subsists on less than \$2 per day, and 34% of the adult population is illiterate (one of the highest rates in the Arab world). Mubarak had put Egypt on the tracks of a free economy, which yielded a 5% annual growth rate, but the instability and possible Muslim Brotherhood pressure to introduce a populist economic policy may drag the Egyptian economy even further down. A rigid religious climate and instability would deter tourists from returning to Egypt (tourism is 10% of

the Egyptian GNP and provides 6 million jobs). In order to prevent an increase in the unemployment rate (currently 12%), and given the population's current growth rate, Egypt must create 650,000 new jobs each year necessitating an annual growth rate of at least 6.5% (this year the growth rate is expected to be zero).

Violent eruptions over religious differences add to the instability. In severe riots that broke out in Cairo on October 9, 2011, the army was pitted against the Coptic minority, which was protesting the demolition of a Coptic church in the city. 25 protestors were killed and dozens more injured. The bloody event is just one in a host of hostilities against Egypt's Christian minority (the eight million Egyptian Copts comprise one of the oldest Christian communities anywhere), and presents the Military Council a double challenge: maintaining stability while also avoiding the creating a perception in the West that the Egyptian regime fails to protect minority rights.

The reformist forces that spurred on the revolution are struggling to organize politically, and the Muslim Brotherhood is now Egypt's best-organized political party. Its leaders, who in the spring of 2011 made a commitment not to run a presidential candidate, have not kept their promise. The Shura Council decided by a small majority (56 to 52) that Khairat el-Shater, deputy head of the movement, would run for the presidency. The Presidential Election Commission, however, disqualified his candidacy along with those of nine others (out of 23), including some who had been considered leading contenders: Omar Suleiman, Mubarak's intelligence chief, and Hazem Sala Abu Ismail, the

conservative Salafist Muslim preacher. Following the disqualification, the leading candidates were Amr Mussa (formerly the Arab League's secretary general and previously foreign minister under Mubarak), Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, (who had been ousted from the Muslim Brotherhood as a result of his desire to seek the presidency), and Mohamed Morsi, the representative of the Muslim Brotherhood who was nominated following the disqualification of Khairat El-Shater.

The presidential elections were held on May 23-24, 2012. As Egyptian law requires an absolute majority, the two leading contenders in the first round—Mohamed Morsi and Ahmed Shafik—will face off in a second of voting on June 16-17. Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, was nominated only after El-Shater was disqualified from running. Morsi holds conservative Muslim positions, and is remembered in Israel for having called Israelis "murderers and vampires." Shafik, a former head of the Egyptian Air Force who is identified with the Mubarak regime, has pledged to restore security and stability to Egypt.

The presidential contest reflects a primary rift in Egyptian society: political Islam on one hand, and the old regime on the other. The liberal forces that sparked the revolution have been left frustrated and alienated from both candidates. The coming months will show whether Egypt can embark on the road to recovery under a stable government or whether internal divisions will bring further turbulence. It is important to note that the presidential elections are taking place even though the work of drafting the new Egyptian constitution has yet to be completed, not

to mention the referendum that must be called to ratify it. This means that the presidential powers of office will likely be determined and codified only after the new president has been elected. It is unclear whether the drafting of its constitution will be completed before the general election, much less the referendum that is supposed to ratify it. Egyptian judicial authorities dissolved the constitutional commission in which the Islamic bloc held a decisive majority, and a new constitutional framing commission has not yet been appointed. The creation of a constitution is complicated by the tensions resulting from the differing political aspirations and agendas of the various players involved: the Islamic bloc, the military, and the liberal elements.

Analysts foresee a number of possible scenarios regarding the future Egyptian regime: in one, the generals currently in the temporary Military Council (all of whom served under Mubarak) continue to rule the country in one guise or another; in another, the Muslim Brotherhood becomes the dominant political power; in a third scenario, power is shared between the army and the Muslim Brotherhood; and a fourth envisions the elected Egyptian president ruling under parliamentary supervision.

From Israel's perspective, the immediate question is the danger involved in a possible Egypt breach of the peace agreement with Israel leading to a renewal of conflict. Egypt's rulers have been inconsistent on this issue. Leading presidential contender Amr Moussa was asked if, as president, he would honor the peace agreement, and responded: "[T]he treaty is a treaty. For us, the treaty has been signed and it

is for peace, but it depends also on the other side. ... If you asked me what kind of relations between the Arab world and Israel I would like to see, I would say that the Arab position—to which Egypt is a party—is based on the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002."¹⁴

SCAF chairman General Hussein Tantawi promised on July 23, 2011 that Egypt would honor all the agreements it had signed, and continue to pursue a stable and sustainable peace in the Middle East. In contrast, Nabil Alarabi, secretary general of the Arab League, said in an *Al Arabyia* interview on August 26, 2011, that the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt is not sacred, unlike the Qur'an or the New Testament. He said that "if one side breaches the agreement, the other side should warn it and keeps the right to revise or annul the agreement." When asked about the possibility that Egypt would annul the agreement with Israel, King Abdullah of Jordan alarmingly observed: "That is a very, very strong possibility."¹⁵

The positions of the Islamic bloc are especially pertinent. In the wake of the sweeping electoral victory, the international press was clearly relieved to report the Muslim Brothers' affirmation of its commitment to honor existing Egyptian agreements, including the Camp David Accords. This stance was also attributed to the Salafist party, whose spokesman, Nussri Hamad, said in an interview to the Kuwaiti newspaper *A-rai al-Am* on December 20, 2011, that there was no reason not to talk with Israel as long as it was endorsed by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and not conducted in secret. But closer scrutiny of the utterances of Islamic bloc leaders raises doubts regarding their

commitment to existing peace agreements. Shortly after Mubarak was ousted, Rashad al-Bayoumi, deputy head of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, said in *Asharq Al-Awsat* on February 27, 2011 that “We respect international agreements and major political issues, whatever they may be, however with regards to an objective and academic look [at this issue], it is the right of either side, or any one side, to review and discuss according to the circumstances and requirements. The Camp David Accords were never put to the people or even to the parliament in the proper manner, but rather these were enforced from above. One of the most important articles of this agreement was the establishment of a Palestinian state, very well, but let us ask: where is this [Palestinian] state? Secondly, where is this comprehensive peace in light of the daily massacres and brutal attacks that the Palestinians are subject to? Who has destroyed this agreement, in light of the genocidal plans against the Palestinian people, and the systematic move to Judaize Jerusalem and destroy the al-Aqsa Mosque? There is also the issue of the secret articles included in this accord, from selling Egyptian natural gas to Israel at a fifteenth of its real price. All of this must be put to the people, and it is the people’s right to reconsider these conventions. Of course, we do not accept the Camp David Accords at all, but re-evaluating and dealing with this must be done according to the law.” Even after the Muslim Brotherhood’s victory, al-Bayoumi adopts a hard line: “Under no circumstances would the Muslim Brotherhood recognize the State of Israel ... the accords were signed a long time ago, and the Egyptian people were not party to them, so the

people will express their opinion on the matter ... The accords will be honored by law, but each side is entitled to re-examine the treaty.”¹⁶ This double talk does nothing to allay the fears of those concerned about the fate of the Camp David Accords.

Surprisingly, the statements of Emad Abdel Ghafour, head of the Salafist Al Nour party, sound less disturbing. In an Al Jazeera interview on December 21, 2011, Ghafour was asked, “Do you support the two-state solution?” He replied, “We accept what Palestinians accepted and we will accept what they will accept.” When asked, “Will Al Nour seek to annul or amend the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty?” he responded, “When it comes to all the agreements that Egypt has signed, we have to respect them and demand that they be carried out. There are many articles in the peace treaty that have not been carried out, such as solving the Palestinian issue, giving Palestinians the right to self-determination, self-rule, and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the Palestinian land. These are many articles which, if implemented, will make the Palestinian people feel they benefitted from the peace process.”

The future of the peace agreement with Israel has not disappeared as an issue in the presidential election campaign. In the first televised debate of its kind in Egypt (May 11, 2012) between two of the candidates—Amr Moussa and Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh—the latter labeled Israel “an enemy” and promised to reexamine the treaty between the two countries. Moussa responded that, indeed, “Most of our people see it as an enemy but the responsibility of the president is to deal with such things responsibly and not run after hot-headed

slogans".¹⁷ The Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohamed Morsi, made clear in an article he published on January 8, 2012, that "The party also stresses that the Palestinian people have the right to liberate their land..."¹⁸

According to one interpretation, conditioning Egyptian commitment to the peace accords on the activation of heretofore unimplemented articles, and the demand to re-examine the Camp David Accords, are both pieces of double

Russia and China used their veto to block a Security Council resolution against Assad's regime to prevent a West-led military operation against Syria

talk designed to conceal the Islamic bloc's real objective: to abrogate the peace accords with Israel. Another interpretation conversely maintains that the Islamic bloc is gradually adapting to regional and international realities, and absorbing the fact that Egypt's economy cannot recover without Western aid.

The West insists on Egypt's continued commitment to its peace agreement with Israel. Indeed, the United States, which in current negotiations with the Muslim Brotherhood, has reiterated what it demands of the organization, including that it honor the peace treaty with Israel. American diplomats say that their Egyptian counterparts have repeatedly expressed their commitment to honor the agreement, and State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland, in a briefing, said that the administration has secured the commitment of the Muslim Brothers,

"[...] not only to universal human rights, but to the international obligations that the Government of Egypt has undertaken."¹⁹ The actual test of these promises will come when the elected Egyptian government takes charge. In operational terms, for Israel and the Jewish People this means one thing—keeping up the pressure on Western governments to insist in their dealings with the Islamic bloc that it keeps—in both its rhetoric and actions—the Egyptian commitment to the peace with Israel. At the same time, one cannot ignore a reality in which the US and the West regard it as a vital interest to cultivate connections with political Islam, which is poised to assume a dominant position in Middle Eastern affairs in the coming years.

Israel is thus faced with difficult conundrums regarding the future of its relationship with Egypt. Peace in Mubarak's time may have been cold, but the Egyptian president was a strategic partner. Will this continue to be the case when the Muslim Brotherhood plays a significant, indeed majority, role in Egyptian politics? Egyptian opinion polls give only a vague picture. The findings of an opinion poll taken on October 24, 2011 by Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies are relatively encouraging: 62% want the peace agreement with Israel to be honored, with certain security revisions; 23% support the agreement without change. However, in the 2011 Arab Public Opinion Poll, conducted by Shibley Telhami in conjunction with Zogby International, on November 21, 2011, only 37% supported the agreement, with 35% demanding its annulment. An April 2011 Pew poll found that 54% wanted the agreement annulled, compared to 36% in favor of keeping it in place.

Another Pew poll (March-April 2012) found that 61% of Egyptians are interested in revoking the peace treaty with Israel while 32% want to keep it.

In light of their conflicting results, the polls do little to allay concern. Many questions remain open: To what extent will Egyptian public opinion, which is deeply hostile to Israel and prioritizes the Palestinian issue, affect Egypt's foreign policy? How will revised attitudes toward Hamas become manifest? (On May 29, 2011, Egypt announced the opening of the Rafah Crossing to Gazans, but the Egyptians are enforcing relatively stringent restrictions on actual passage). How limited is Israel's ability to respond in case of aggressive Hamas provocations (by the fear, for instance, of Egypt being dragged back into the conflict)? Is a change expected in Iran-Egypt relations? (In February 2011, the new government allowed Iranian warships to cross the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean for the first time since 1979. The Egyptian Foreign Minister said on March 2011 that his country wished to open a new page in its relationship with Iran.) Will an Ankara-Cairo axis emerge to threaten Israel?

The answers to these difficult questions bear on a central and fundamental issue: Could Israel be forced to revise its security doctrine significantly in light of the changes in Egypt? An early indication of the new situation's gravity was revealed in the terror attack north of Eilat on August 18, 2011, in which eight Israelis were killed. During IDF attempts to pursue the perpetrators, who had retreated into Sinai territory, five Egyptian soldiers were accidentally killed. The masses in Cairo reacted with incensed demonstrations and attempted to break into the Israeli Embassy. The

attempt was repeated on September 9, and nearly cost the lives of Israeli security agents who were trapped inside the Embassy and only rescued after President Obama's intervention. According to reports, General Tantawi did not respond to telephone calls for help from Israeli leaders. The Eilat attack also cast light on the deteriorating security situation in Sinai. The Bedouin tribes, who have been complaining for years about discrimination by the central government in Cairo, are increasingly emboldened and do not hesitate to attack police posts with firearms, often joined by Islamic Jihad and terrorist groups from Gaza that have found shelter in the Sinai Peninsula. In view of the threat (the gas pipeline to Israel has been sabotaged 14 times since early 2011), Israel agreed to Egypt's deploying more troops in Sinai than stipulated in the peace agreement. However, defending the pipeline became irrelevant following the April 22 announcement by Egyptian national gas corporation that it was canceling its natural gas contract with the supplier of gas to Israel, EMG, which has joint Egyptian-Israeli ownership. Officials in Israel and in Egypt chose to explain the motive for the contract's cancellation as commercial and not political (Egypt supplied 37% of the Israel Electric Company's gas consumption in 2010, but only 18% in 2011 because of the attacks on the pipeline in northern Sinai). The interruption of the supply of Egyptian gas marked the end of one of the only significant expressions of economic ties between Egypt and Israel, reflecting the continued erosion of relations between the two countries. (The bleak outlook is somewhat brightened by Cairo's help in maintaining the ceasefire between

Hamas and Israel, as well as its fruitful mediation, which facilitated the agreement for the release of Gilad Shalit (on October 18, 2011)).

Another "pacifying" structural factor is Egypt's reliance on foreign aid. The grave economic situation necessitates external assistance, and, apparently, leaves no resources for military adventurism. Top Egyptian military brass, some of who were trained in the US, are reluctant to disturb Washington's friendship and support. The US gives Egypt \$1.3 billion annually in military aid (constituting about a third of the Egyptian army's budget) and another \$250 million for civilian purposes. To help out the new government, the US has agreed to forgive \$1 billion in Egyptian debt and grant an additional \$2 billion in loan guarantees. Thus, the US has substantial leverage over Cairo and has already proven (e.g. in the Israeli Embassy incident), that it will use that leverage to preserve the peace between Egypt and Israel. However, the arrests of the representatives of American organizations (who were active in Egypt promoting democracy and human rights) and the fact that 61% of Egyptian citizens consider American aid to their country "harmful" suggests that some surprises may lie ahead.

Syria

In interview in the *Wall Street Journal* on January 31, 2011, Syrian President Bashar Assad was asked about the Arab uprising. With extreme confidence, he explained why the riots in Tunisia and Egypt would skip his country. According to him, unlike other Arab countries, Syria's loyalty to the tenets of resistance secures popular support. "Syria is stable.

Why? Because you have to be very closely linked to the beliefs of the people. This is the core issue. When there is divergence between your policy and the people's beliefs and interests, you will have this vacuum that creates disturbance."

Assad was convinced that his adherence to the radical anti-Israeli axis (Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas) and the fact that—unlike other Arab rulers—he had not become Washington's ally ensured his popular support. But the riots that erupted in Syria in March 2011 proved him very wrong. Assad, who succeeded his father in 2000, failed to satisfy hopes that he would bring reform and modernization to Syria. Like his father before him, he has reacted brutally to his opponents, and has even sent tanks to attack protestors; around 10,000 have been killed to date. The extreme brutality Assad inflicted on Syrian citizens prompted the Saudi king to recall his ambassador from Damascus (on August 7, 2011) and to urge Assad to "stop the killing machine and end the bloodshed."

Assad continues to fight to retain power despite sanctions and explicit calls from US and Western leaders to step down. Unlike the Libyan case, no one—neither the West nor the Arab League—is prepared use military force against the Syrian ruler at this point. According to the *New York Times* on October 27, 2011, Turkey, where thousands of Syrians have flocked for refuge, allows the armed Syrian opposition—the Free Syrian Army—to operate from inside its territory. The Syrian opposition, after having established a body that is supposed to represent all the insurgent groups—the National Syrian Council—suffered a painful blow when a UN Security Council resolution

aimed at intensifying pressure on Assad further isolated him was rejected (on October 4, 2011). Russia and China do not often exercise their veto power, but they did so to undermine the resolution. The two sought to preclude a Western-led military operation against Syria (as happened in Libya), signaling their principled objection to foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, a practice they fear would legitimize similar intrusion in their own affairs. Russia and China are also seeking to protect the Syrian arms market (and in Moscow's case, a naval base in Tartus, which was visited in January 2012 by the aircraft carrier "Admiral Kuznetsov" and in which some 600 Russian technicians are currently building a modern dock for warships). The UN Security Council vote laid bare the difficulty of reaching the consensus needed for managing the international system and for effective coping with crisis (none of the BRIC countries voted in favor).

Having earlier (October 16, 2011) rejected an initiative by the Gulf States to suspend Syria's membership, the Arab League changed its mind in an emergency session held on November 12, 2011 when it decided to suspend Syria, impose economic sanctions on Assad, and open negotiations with Syrian opposition parties in order to agree on a unified vision for the transitional period. Assad had been unimpressed by the Arab Foreign Ministers' initiative, publicized ten days earlier, which had stipulated that the regime must withdraw tanks and armed forces from the streets, release detainees, desist from violent repression, allow Arab League observers to enter Syria, and begin a national dialogue leading to a new constitution

and elections. Damascus relented on December 5, 2011 and allowed Arab League observers into its territory following an Arab League ultimatum threatening further sanctions and calling for UN intervention. The observers are charged with monitoring Syrian compliance with the League's demands: withdrawal of tanks and troops from city streets, dialogue with opposition leaders, release of political prisoners, and opening the country to human rights activists and journalists. The observers' presence, however, has not made a difference.

Russian and China continue to protect Assad in the Security Council, casting a veto (February 4, 2012) against a resolution supporting the Arab peace initiative for Syria that passed by thirteen votes to two.

In light of the deadlock, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, appointed his predecessor, Kofi Annan, as his special representative on the crisis. Annan published a six-point plan (March 16, 2012) based on a cessation of the fighting, the army's withdrawal from cities, stationing of observers, release of prisoners, freedom of movement for journalists, and sanctioning gatherings and demonstrations (which should allow for a process of transition to free elections and the democratization of the government in Syria). This time, the plan won the support of China and Russia. There were, therefore, analysts who considered it the only possible way out of the crisis. The opposition took exception to the plan as it did not call directly for Assad's departure, while Assad—despite having agreed to the plan on March 27, 2012—has so far refrained from implementing certain elements of it.

From the perspective of Assad, his family and cronies, the regime's collapse would mean losing their power, or worse, their lives in revenge executions. The Alawite minority (about 12% of the population) has ruled Syria since Assad's father grabbed the reins of power in 1970, although the vast majority of Syrian citizens are Sunni (about 75%). Alawites occupy the top military and security service positions. This is a significantly different situation from the one that led the Egyptian military to abandon Mubarak and avoid confrontation with the demonstrating masses. The Syrian regime's resolve to continue head on in their struggle for survival found expression in statements by Rami Makhlouf, President Assad's first cousin (a tycoon who controls 60% of the Syrian economy). In a *New York Times* interview on May 9, 2011, Makhlouf warned: "If there is no stability here, there's no way there will be stability in Israel... When we go down, we will not go down alone." Indeed, the Syrian regime organized marches of Palestinian refugees to the border with Israel in the Golan Heights, and also behind the Lebanese border (May 15, 2011). Over a dozen demonstrators who crossed the border fence in the Golan Heights were killed, which signified both Damascus's determination and the dangerous potential of civilian marches confronting IDF forces. In fear of losing its Syrian ally, Iran is fanning the flames by threatening that Israel will pay the price for any external intervention aimed at toppling Assad. The Iranian News Agency reported that Assad has warned the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmad Davutoglu that if he is attacked by NATO, he will set the whole Middle East on fire, especially Israel:

"If a crazy measure is taken against Damascus, I will need not more than six hours to transfer hundreds of rockets and missiles to the Golan Heights to fire them at Tel Aviv."²⁰

Syria's future is unclear. Opposition factions promise to establish a democratic regime that will uphold the rule of law and minority rights. But that is obviously not the only possible scenario. Assad could defeat the rebels and survive. Syria could fall into the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood, and descent into a protracted ethnic and religious civil war is an equally realistic scenario. Assad himself articulated the dilemma posed by his regime's potential collapse. In a *Sunday Telegraph* interview on October 30, 2011, Assad warned that "Syria is the hub now in this region. It is the fault-line, and if you play with the ground you will cause an earthquake ... Do you want to see another Afghanistan, or tens of Afghanistsans?"

As of this writing, Assad has not been crushed, and the military remains mostly loyal to the regime. The opposition's use of firearms against Assad's army may escalate into a civil war, which many argue is already underway. A Lebanon-like scenario in Syria could attract foreign involvement (from Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iraq); the country might disintegrate into rival ethnic segments, turning Syria into a roiling cauldron of regional instability. (Syria has stockpiles of lethal chemical weapons, including the neurotoxic gas Sarin, along with launch capabilities for SCUD missiles and shells). The Israeli government has exercised caution and has refrained from taking a front-line role in the struggle to topple Assad (Foreign Minister Lieberman demurred from this approach

and called for a policy publicly favoring Assad's resignation).²¹ Israel is not interested in giving Assad an excuse to claim that "outside forces" are behind the violence. While Israel must refrain from providing any pretext for Assad to act against it, it cannot ignore the fact that the Syrian president's calculations may be made independently of Israel's actions, and could lead him to take desperate measures.

Lebanon

The danger to Assad's regime also threatens Lebanon's stability. The fall of Assad may change the precarious balance of power and the political calculus underpinning the inter-factional alliances that characterize local politics in the Land of Cedars. The Lebanese are divided in their attitudes toward events in Syria. The Western-aligned March 14 Coalition supports the rebels, whereas the Hezbollah-led March 8 camp supports Assad's regime.

On July 7, 2011, a change of power occurred in Lebanon when Nagib Mukati's government won a parliamentary majority. The March 14 Coalition, led by Saad al-Hariri, son of the slain Rafik al-Hariri, was forced from office following an orchestrated move by Syria and Hezbollah, which began when the Shiite organization withdrew its support for the coalition government on January 12, 2011, following Saad Hariri's rejection of the demand that Lebanon denounce the United Nations tribunal that investigated his father's February 2005 assassination.

On June 30, 2011, the tribunal submitted indictments to Lebanese law enforcement

authorities, which included four confidential arrest warrants, two of them naming members of Hezbollah. This development undermines Hezbollah's carefully cultivated image as the forefront of resistance to Israel and the US. Never convinced by Sheikh Nasrallah's allegations that Israel was responsible for Rafik Hariri's murder, the Sunni Lebanese public now has corroboration for suspicions that the Shiite Hezbollah was behind the assassination of the beloved Sunni leader. The unfolding legal process, along with the Syrian and Hezbollah sabotage efforts, could reopen old wounds in Lebanese society, which has yet to recover from its long years of civil war. Israel should be alert to the possibility that Hezbollah could try to divert public scrutiny through violent provocations against Israel. Nasrallah recently boasted that "[A]ny war that Israel decides to initiate in the future will start in Tel Aviv, not in the occupied northern areas."²² He also threatened an all-out war if Israel attacks Iran (November 11, 2011), and proudly claimed (May 11, 2012) that, "Today we are not only able to hit Tel Aviv as a city but, God willing, we can hit specific targets in Tel Aviv and anywhere in occupied Palestine."²³

Nasrallah's organization, which demonstrated its power by ousting the young Hariri, faces significant threats. Assad's overthrow, if it comes to pass, may block the arms supply line and fracture the

The danger to Assad's regime also threatens Lebanon's stability

Iran-Syria-Hezbollah-Hamas axis. In that case, Hezbollah stands to lose an ally that has been especially sympathetic to the organization and its leader. Hezbollah spokespersons' constant support of the brutal suppression of the Syria uprising places the organization in a tough position vis-à-vis the Arab world, and also clashes with positions Hezbollah has taken in support of popular revolts in other Arab countries.

The risk of losing its Syrian ally may also drive Iran to increase efforts to strengthen its presence in Lebanon. Indeed, in a meeting with the Lebanese defense minister, the Iranian ambassador to Beirut said that " ... [D]eveloping stronger defense cooperation was necessary given the daily violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli fighter jets."²⁴ This was reported a few days after the Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported that Lebanese President Suleiman approached Tehran with a request to train and arm the Lebanese army.²⁵ Hezbollah has plenty of excuses to attack Israel; the newest is the Lebanese claim to a territory of 430 nautical square miles of underwater gas fields. Lebanon has refused to recognize the maritime border with Israel (which was also the basis of the Israel-Cyprus Maritime Border Agreement). Thus, drilling facilities in Israel's recently discovered underwater gas fields could become a possible target should Iran and Hezbollah (and possibly Syria) decide that the benefits of a flare-up with Israel are worth the price tag.

Saudi Arabia

The Arab uprising raises anxiety in Riyadh. The Saudi king took precautionary measures by announcing the allocation of \$130 billion for wage

raises, housing projects, and generous grants to clerical institutions, the monarchy's mainstay. The Saudi mufti, the kingdom's top cleric, published a fatwa that was echoed by the clerics in their sermons at the mosques, according to which Islam forbids street rallies. The enormous financial resources, the alliance between the monarchy and the clerics, the absence of substantial American and Western pressure for change, and the relative popularity of King Abdullah (who has a reputation for promoting economic and social reform) combine to preserve Saudi Arabia's stability. Political freedom, human rights, women's equality and democracy are, however, still a pipe dream, so the power of subterranean insurgent forces, especially within the younger generation, is difficult to estimate.

The Saudi monarchy stands in direct contradiction with anything the protestors across the Arab world aspire to achieve. Despite its oil treasures, economic gaps are extremely wide, and the youth unemployment rate is around 25%. (In Saudi Arabia, whose leaders are over 70, half of the population is under 18). External threats make the Royal House of Saud increasingly nervous, particularly Iran's incessant subversive interference. The fear that Iran is agitating the Shiite minority that is concentrated in the eastern, oil-rich but deprived regions of Saudi Arabia. The functionality of the ailing 87-year-old monarch is limited. The death of Crown Prince Sultan, his heir apparent, on October 22, 2011, left Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud (age 78) first in line to the Saudi throne. Officiating as minister of the interior since 1975 and in charge of, among other things,

the notorious Mutaween, the religious police, Nayef is reputed to be a tenacious conservative adamantly opposed to reform. After September 11 he expressed skepticism about the involvement of Saudi terrorists in the attacks, claiming that the Zionists were actually behind these attacks.

The Arab uprising intensified tensions between Riyadh and Washington. The US is torn between strategic interests, i.e., wishing to secure the flow of oil and to block Iran on the one hand, and its ideological commitment to the values of freedom and human rights on the other. Indeed, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil-producer, with \$540 billion in foreign currency reserves, most of which is invested in US government bonds. The Saudis are championing the camp that seeks to quash the Arab uprising, fearing that Iran would exploit the upheavals to increase its regional clout. The Iranian threat is the main driver of Riyadh's foreign policy. It has motivated their vigorous opposition to Assad (who is pro-Iran and a member of the Alawite minority, a branch of Shiite Islam); recalling their ambassador in Damascus; and their support of the Sunni-majority Syrian opposition. It was the reason behind their decision to dispatch, in March 2011, more than 1,000 military troops through the 26-kilometer causeway to neighboring Bahrain to help suppress the (Shiite and allegedly pro-Iran) majority there. Saudi Arabia is convinced that Iran is inciting the Shiite revolt against the Sunni rule in Bahrain; that Iran is operating against Saudi Arabia from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen; and that Iran is attempting to undermine Riyadh's position in the Muslim world.

The Saudi regime watched anxiously as the US abandoned Mubarak, who had been its strategic ally for three decades. Cracks in the strategic partnership between Washington and Riyadh could widen if it turns out that the US does not prevent Iran's nuclearization. One way the Saudis have expressed their anger is by criticizing US conduct with respect to the Palestinian issue. Prince Turki al-Faisal, brother of the Saudi foreign affairs minister, and the kingdom's former intelligence chief and ambassador to both London and Washington, has used acerbic language in expressing Saudi anger in articles he has published in the US. In the *Washington Post* on June 10, 2011, he was adamant: "There will be disastrous consequences for U.S.-Saudi relations if the United States vetoes UN recognition of a Palestinian state. It would mark a nadir in the decades-long relationship... The ideological distance between the Muslim world and the West in general would widen—and opportunities for friendship and cooperation between the two could vanish." In the *New York Times* on September 11, 2011 (ironically, exactly ten years after fifteen Saudis took part in the horrendous 9/11 attacks), the prince threatened: "The United States must support the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations this month or risk losing the little credibility it has in the Arab world." He said that Saudi Arabia would pursue policies that are at odds with those of the United States, including opposing the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq—whom the Saudis regard as an Iranian puppet—and refusing to open an embassy there; as well as ignoring US interests in Afghanistan and Yemen. Turki forewarned that "[W]ith most of the Arab world in upheaval, the "special

relationship" between Saudi Arabia and the United States would increasingly be seen as toxic by the vast majority of Arabs and Muslims, who demand justice for the Palestinian people."

From the Saudi perspective, the long-standing relationship equation between Washington and Riyadh, which is contingent on the monarchy's security, on the one hand, and the uninterrupted flow of reasonably priced oil on the other, is tottering not just because of the US response to

Saudi Arabia is convinced that Iran is inciting the Shiite revolt against Sunni rule in Bahrain, and that Iran is trying to undermine Riyadh's position as leader of the Muslim world

the Arab uprising and its reluctance to coerce Israel into accepting an arrangement based on 1967 lines. The Saudis see the American invasion of Iraq as a severe strategic mistake that has strengthened the Shia and opened the door for an Iranian takeover of Iraq. With mounting concern, the Saudis are watching Iranian influence spreading

from neighboring Yemen to the far-off Morocco, and they will fight resolutely to retain their position. Thus, for instance, the Egyptian SCAF was promised \$4 billion in Saudi aid, and Riyadh invited the sister-monarchies—Jordan and Morocco—to join the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The massive \$60 billion arms deal signed on October 20, 2010 between Washington and Riyadh illustrates Saudi fear of things to come. While the Saudis are working to diversify their

strategic alliances by cultivating ties with Pakistan, China, India and Turkey, they certainly do not regard these powers as strategic equals of the US. After all, it was the US who in 1990 came to the rescue to stop Saddam Hussein's forces, which had invaded Kuwait and were threatening Saudi Arabia. And the US is still the only military actor that can curb Iran's aspirations and secure oil routes. The Iranian assassination attempt against the Saudi ambassador in Washington on October 10, 2011 indicates that, despite tensions, the common enemy in Tehran will continue to provide common ground for the Washington-Riyadh partnership.

Jordan

In the wake of several demonstrations in Amman expressing solidarity with the popular protests in Cairo and calling for the ousting of the Jordanian government, King Abdullah II of Jordan took several steps to forestall the Arab uprising's spread to his country. On January 1, 2012, he dismissed Prime Minister Samir Rifai's government and instructed his successor, Marouf Al Bakhit, "to take speedy practical and tangible steps to unleash a real political reform process that reflects [Jordan's] vision of comprehensive reform, modernization and development." At the same time, Abdullah announced the allocation of \$650 million for emergency social expenditures. Continuing demonstrations in Jordan and Al Bakhit's failure to implement substantial reform, and to fight the rampant corruption that enrages many Jordanians, led the king to dismiss him after ten months in office and appoint, in his stead, Justice Awn Khasawneh. Replacing the prime minister and incumbent

ministers is a routine tactic in which these officials are used as scapegoats to deflect public criticism away from the king. In a move designed to mollify the Muslim Brotherhood's oppositional spirit, Khasawneh invited them to join his government, which they declined. He went on to declare that the 1999 deportation of Hamas leadership from Jordan had been a legal and political mistake. This declaration sparked rumors that the Hamas leadership would soon visit Jordan.

King Abdullah boasts that no life was lost during the demonstrations in Jordan, but he is frustrated by the lack of progress in implementing reforms, and worried about the acute economic situation, which he regards as the main driver behind the protests. He maintained that the new prime minister was specifically appointed for his record of promoting reforms and upholding the rule of law. Jordanian public opinion polls indicate that Jordanians are primarily concerned with economic development and the eradication of corruption, and not necessarily after radical change in the political structure. As already mentioned, the Jordanian king enjoys a legitimacy that distinguishes him from the despots in neighboring Arab states: He is a scion of the Prophet Muhammad. Nonetheless, this is not the first time he has instructed his prime ministers to pursue reform; they usually fail to achieve his goals having run up against the obstructionist Jordanian elite, which benefits from the status quo. The Jordanian economic situation is grave: during the first half of 2011 alone, the kingdom suffered a 60% decline in investments, along with a significant decrease in Western tourism. Even before the Arab uprising,

the unemployment rate in Jordan was around 30%. Saudi Arabia's invitation to Jordan (and Morocco) to join the GCC, of May 10, 2011, reflected a Saudi effort to curb the damage triggered by the Arab uprising by stabilizing its sister-monarchies in the Middle East. Amman was also promised a \$2 billion aid grant, payable over five years, in addition to the \$400 million Riyadh has already transferred.

Like many of his predecessors, Khasawneh did not survive in his position for long and Fayez al-Tarawneh was appointed to take his place on April 26, 2012. The change apparently signals the king's preference to once again rely on his traditional base (the Bedouin tribes) and to abandon attempts to appease the Muslim Brotherhood (and the Palestinians who find political expression through it). The task of formulating the election law (along with pressing economic problems) will pose a significant challenge: how to elect a parliament democratically that reflects the diversity of political power while at the same time stemming the dominance of the Muslim bloc, retaining the power and support of the king's traditional bases of support, and ensuring that the Parliament will not extricate itself from palace control.

The demonstrations in Jordan had a distinct overtone of hostility toward Israel. On September 13, 2011, against the backdrop of the violent storming of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, the Israeli Embassy in Amman was closed off and its staff evacuated as a preemptive measure in anticipation of a demonstration scheduled the following day. In media interviews the Jordanian king expresses frustration with Israeli policy. In a *Wall Street Journal* Interview on September 20, 2011, he

explained that although he had been reassured by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's past public statements regarding the peace process, the Israeli leader has repeatedly failed to implement his rhetoric. "Everything we see on the ground has been completely the opposite ... [There is] increasing frustration because they're sticking their head in the sand and pretending that there's not a problem." In another interview Abdullah said, "[A] lot of us have come to the conclusion that this particular [Israeli] government is not interested in a two-state solution."²⁶

Against the backdrop of the upheavals in Egypt and its concerns over its own internal affairs, Jordan was able to exhibit greater activism in encouraging renewed contacts between Israel and the Palestinians, and thus, at the beginning of January 2012, Jordan hosted meetings between negotiators Isaac Molho and Saeb Erekat. The talks, which the Jordanian King called "baby steps,"²⁷ did not lead to a breakthrough.

The King is frustrated by the absence of any progress in solving the Palestinian problem. More than half of the kingdom's population is Palestinian, and any deterioration in the West Bank's security situation could easily spill over to the "East Bank" and shake the kingdom. The US withdrawal from Iraq, Jordan's neighbor to the east, creates a temptation for Iran to fill the vacuum. Such a scenario, if realized, would increase Amman's anxiety, and would, of course, concern Israel, which regards Jordan's stability as a fundamental principle in steering Israeli policy. In light of these concerns, Foreign Affairs Minister Lieberman clarified, on November 14, 2011, that claims that Jordan is the Palestinian state "harm

Israel's security interests ... Discussion about Jordan as a Palestinian state is against Israeli interest and against reality. Saying Jordan is Palestine opposes international borders as well as the peace accord we signed with them." He said that such talk severely harms Israel's security interests because a Palestinian state on both banks of the Jordan River would be "militant and extreme," undermine the region's stability, and create perpetual conflict with Israel.

Iran

The Arab uprising carries risks and opportunities for Iran. Iranian spokespersons were quick to describe the Middle East riots as a "religious Islamic awakening" against governmental tyranny and as an expression of the masses' identification with the ayatollahs' message. Elegantly omitted was the fact that it was the Iranian leadership that brutally suppressed the surge of civil disobedience in their own country in 2009. One positive result, from Tehran's perspective, is the fall of Mubarak, who was a pivotal actor in the US-led anti-Iranian alignment.

The imminent US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan opens the door for Tehran to exert and deepen its influence. However, Assad's possible overthrow could rob Iran of a vital base for connecting with the Arab world and its allies, Hezbollah, Hamas and their ilk. While Ahmadinejad did urge Assad to put an end to the brutal crackdown on protestors (September 8, 2011), his call was primarily a propaganda ploy meant for the ears of the Arab public—without actually shifting Iran's active engagement in Assad's survival, and

perhaps also was intended to pave the way for continued Iranian influence in Syria should Assad eventually be deposed. The Arab uprising, along with the recent attraction to the Turkish model by the region's inhabitants, is significantly eroding the appeal of the Iranian alternative.

As mentioned earlier, developments in the Middle East have also rekindled the strategic rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both countries aspire to lead the Muslim world; they represent the two major streams of the Muslim world, Sunni and Shiite, locked in a centuries-old struggle. Iran was recently forced to watch as its rival Saudi Arabia used military force to quell the Shiite-majority revolt in Bahrain.

The US evacuation from Iraq is expected to exacerbate the struggle for influence between Riyadh and Tehran in the oil-rich country. Confrontation between these two major oil producers could cause spiraling petrol prices. Riyadh may attempt to reduce oil prices by ramping up production levels to economically harm Iran, as well as persuade the US that a military attack on Iran would not necessarily result in oil shortages or dramatic price increases. Conversely, Iran could cause world oil prices to rise by blockading the Strait of Hormuz, or through other violent provocations such as attacking Saudi oil fields.

Intelligence agencies and think tanks continue to debate about the exact point in time at which Iran will finally possess a nuclear capability. Voices continuing to claim that the Iranian nuclear program is peaceful are increasingly marginalized. An International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

report, published on November 8, 2011, stated that Iran has been working toward producing nuclear weapons. The report stressed that Iran is suspected of carrying out secret experiments whose only purpose could be the development of a nuclear weapons. The prevailing assessment is that the Iranians possess enough uranium to produce three or four atomic bombs (after the uranium is processed to become highly-enriched).

The IAEA's report of February 24, 2012 determined that "there remain serious concerns over the military dimension of the Iranian nuclear program" and that Iran has significantly intensified the pace of uranium enrichment at the nuclear installations in Natanz and Fordow near the city of Qom. The report even cautioned that Iran is preventing IAEA inspectors from visiting the sites where, it is suspected, Iran is conducting experiments consistent with the development of nuclear weapons.

**IAEA:
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near Qom**

Israel's message on this issue is not uniform. Israeli spokespersons have expressed varying opinions over the last year concerning the pace of the progress the Iranians are making. Defense Minister Ehud Barak recently stated that Iran was probably less than a year away from achieving nuclear capability. Barak told CNN, on November 20, 2011, that it won't be long "before no one can do

anything practically about it because the Iranians are gradually, deliberately entering into what I call a "zone of immunity," by widening the redundancy of their plan, making it spread over many more sites, and adding hidden elements."

Major-General Aviv Kochavi, chief of military intelligence, said in a briefing to the Knesset's Defense Committee that "[B]ased on their infrastructure and the technical know-how and uranium they have, within a year or two after [Khomeini] makes that decision, they will have nuclear weapons." He went on to say that this timetable excludes a missile-launched atomic bomb, because Iran would need more time to develop an effective missile delivery system. However, he stressed that missiles were not a prerequisite for activating nuclear weapons. In a speech at the Herzliya Conference (February 2, 2012) Kochavi explained Iran's production of a nuclear weapon is now no longer dependent on acquiring capabilities but on a decision by the spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini. "If Khomeini gives an instruction to obtain a first nuclear explosive installation, we believe that it would take a year. If he gives an instruction to translate this capability into a nuclear warhead, this will, by our estimation, take a further year or two."²⁸

In contrast, former Mossad Chief Meir Dagan, who retired in early January 2011, estimated that Iran was a long way away from nuclear capability, among other reasons, as a result of a series of failures over the course of the project. He said that even in the worst-case scenario, Iran will probably not have nuclear arms before 2015.

Information regarding Iranian nuclearization is obviously riddled with half-truths and psychological warfare by all concerned. There is no telling what the Iranians have been able to conceal from IAEA observers, surveillance satellites and other intelligence gathering devices. On September 2, 2011, IAEA confirmed that Iran had begun to transfer some of its uranium-enrichment centrifuges from its nuclear facility near the city of Natanz to its Fordo plant, an underground facility near the holy city of Qom more able to withstand airstrikes. It reported that Iran has begun to experiment with more advanced centrifuges, and clarified that Iran possesses the basic knowhow to produce nuclear weapons.

As mentioned, assessment bodies have produced very different estimates regarding the time required for Iran to produce a sufficient amount of highly-enriched uranium, from its stores of low and medium enriched uranium, to build its first nuclear bomb. Some say the timeframe is eight weeks. (And next year, this timeframe is expected to shrink to a fortnight due to accelerated production of enriched uranium). Estimates regarding the time needed to produce the nuclear weapon itself range from one year to a few years. This suggests that the program of sanctions and political isolation imposed on Iran has not yielded the hoped-for outcome, although it has inflicted great damage on the Iranian economy (Russia and China have continued to prevent the adoption of sweeping sanctions, even after the latest IAEA report). The United States, which is leading the battle to intensify the sanctions against Iran, has succeeded in bringing the European Union into

the effort. The imposition of sanctions against the activity of the Iranian Central Bank, preventing Iranian banks from engaging in international transactions through the SWIFT network (March 15, 2012), and steps that limit the Iranian oil industry (Europe will implement the oil embargo beginning July 1, 2012) are having painful economic consequences: the local currency has lost 40% of its value since October 2011, and the prices of basic foodstuffs has risen 40% in just a few months. The unemployment rate stands at 15%, the annual inflation rate is 24%, and growth is non-existent.

It is likely that the fate of Libyan ruler Gaddafi spurs the ayatollahs' regime in Iran to continue their pursuit of an atomic bomb. After all, would the West have come to the rescue of the Libyan rebels against Gaddafi had he insisted on continuing Libya's nuclear program, and been in possession of nuclear weapons? It must be assumed that from Tehran's point of view, nuclear weapons are the regime's insurance policy. The example set by North Korea is a case in point.

As usual, Iran continues to try to tear holes in the international isolation it faces by suggesting various arrangements. In this vein, Ahmadinejad, in his latest speech before the UN Assembly, proposed that Iran would stop enriching uranium beyond the level needed for civilian nuclear power stations, if it were allowed to purchase 20%-enriched uranium for medical research and treatment. Most experts believe that Tehran's intentions are, as before, to deceive and play for time. Nevertheless, some maintain that the proposal should be accepted, and its validity put to the test in the belief that this would expose Iran's deception.

The US is clearly disturbed by Iran's pursuit of nuclear arms. The American president has made it clear that his country will not allow this danger to materialize. In his AIPAC speech on May 22, 2011, Obama reiterated his position: "We remain committed to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons." He did not, however, answer the main question: When all the non-military measures are exhausted, would he order the US military to finish the job? US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's speech at the Saban Conference on December 2, 2011, left many with a sense that the US does not consider a military offensive against Iran a feasible option. The text of Panetta's speech did state that it was his "department's responsibility to plan for all contingencies and to provide the president with a wide range of military options should they become necessary. ... That is a responsibility I take very seriously because when it comes to the threat posed by Iran, the president has made it very clear that we have not taken any options off the table."

But his responses to questions from the audience raised doubts regarding American determination. Panetta described the negative consequences of a military operation against Iran in great detail: it could strengthen the regime, fail to hit all the targets and cripple Iran's ability to quickly reinstate its nuclear program after the strike, cause severe damage to Western economies, inspire Iranian retaliation against US forces, and start a flare-up that would "consume the Middle East in a confrontation and a conflict that we would regret." The confusion created by Panetta's statements must have prompted his clarification a few weeks later. On December 21, 2011 he said,

"If they proceed and we get intelligence that they are proceeding in developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps necessary to stop them. There are no options that are off the table." On the same occasion, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said: "I'm satisfied that the options that we are developing are evolving to a point that they would be executable if necessary."²⁹

President Obama's ultimate decision, of course, remains a mystery. Indeed, Obama even went a step further in his speech at the AIPAC Conference (March 4, 2012) when he refuted the charge that the United States had chosen to "contain" the Iranian nuclear threat rather than to arrest it: "Iran's leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment. I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. ... I will not hesitate to use force when it is necessary to defend the United States and its interests."

The Americans are wary not only of the potential increase of Iranian influence in Middle Eastern affairs should it go nuclear, but also of the real danger of a downward spiral into a nuclear war between Israel and Iran. In this view, there is relatively little likelihood that a mutual and stable balance of deterrence can exist between the two countries: Israel, a tiny state, which according to many assessments has a large nuclear arsenal, versus the much-larger Iran with a small number of bombs. This situation exacerbates each side's fear that it will be attacked first, which in turn incentivizes a preemptive strike. Washington assumes that "containing" the Iranian nuclear threat is no simple task, and that a trigger-happy nuclear finger could

lead to a terrible war. The US also assumes that if Israel reaches the conclusion that the US intends to let Iran attain nuclear weapons, it would preemptively attack Iran's nuclear facilities. The Americans fear this scenario, because Israel's ability to achieve the desired outcome is much lower than their own, and there is the heightened risk that the US could be dragged into war under conditions and timing not of its choosing. Although there is no major disagreement between Washington and Jerusalem regarding Iran's progress toward nuclearization, differences in their military capabilities greatly diminishes the potential time horizon for an Israeli operation. This could, in turn, lead to a "moment of truth" in relations between the two countries, in which they are forced to reveal their intentions in a more overt and specific manner. (When Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Dempsey was asked whether Israel would warn the United States ahead of time if it decided to attack Iran, he said he had no idea.³⁰)

While the Israeli side is deeply skeptical about the sanctions' ability to stop the Iranian nuclear program, the Americans believe that Tehran is responding to the pressure, which is why it should be increased and also extended to curtail Iran's oil exports and the freedom of its central bank. Moreover, there is growing evidence of increasing internal tensions in Iran (between the ayatollahs' camp, Ahmedinejad's, and within the Revolutionary Guard), a process that opponents of a military strike believe will enhance the effectiveness of the sanctions policy. Tehran's willingness to return, after a year of deadlock, to talks on its nuclear program is an expression of the painful effects of

the increasingly stringent sanctions, as well as of the growing threat of a strike against Iran by Israel and the US. The first round of talks between Iran and the P5+1 group (the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) took place in Istanbul on April 14, 2012 and yielded different interpretations about the emergence of a possible agreement ahead of the next meeting (on May 23 in Baghdad). Iran is being required to cease uranium enrichment at the 20% level and to remove its stockpile of this uranium from its territory; to close the underground installation in Fordow, and to cooperate fully with IEAE inspectors. The United States and its allies are being required to lift sanctions immediately. Various commentators believe that there is a reasonable chance that the sides will reach a gradual "road map" formula based on reciprocal steps, such that each side incrementally relinquishes some of the "cards" it is holding.

Israel is likely to find itself isolated—and even on the brink of a crisis with the United States if an agreement is reached—which, in the Israeli view, is inadequate (and if it includes a clause with requirements of Israel in the nuclear area). Prime Minister Netanyahu strongly criticized the talks in Istanbul and stressed that setting a date for a second round would give Iran additional time to enrich uranium without constraint: "My first impression is that Iran received a gift... Iran must immediately cease all uranium enrichment, remove all enriched material from the country, and dismantle the nuclear facility in Qom."³¹

Tensions between Israel and Iran took form in various ways in the last year: On March 15, 2011,

the Israeli navy stopped the ship *Victoria* about 300 kilometers off the Israeli coast, with military equipment on board that originated in Iran and was intended to supply Hamas in the Gaza Strip. On April 16, 2011, the head of Iran's Civil Defense Administration, Reza Jalali, blamed Israel and the US for the Stuxnet computer worm attack on Iran's nuclear centrifuges. Recent explosions at missile and nuclear facilities in Iran, attributed by the press to secret Israeli and US operations, contributed to the mounting tension, which increased even further in early December 2011, when an American intelligence drone was intercepted by Iran. In recent years there has been a series of assassinations of Iranian scientists, engineers and army officers involved in its nuclear program. The killings are invariably attributed, by both Iran and the international media, to Israel.

The Iranians are not sitting on their hands. On October 10, 2011, an assassination attempt against the Saudi ambassador to Washington was uncovered, which, according to the US Department of Justice, was initiated by elements within the Iranian regime. While those behind the attack had made the Saudi ambassador their preferred target, the Israeli and Saudi embassies in Washington were also mentioned as possible bombing targets. The plotters were members of the Kuds Brigade of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, which was also responsible for the attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, and the Jewish Cultural Center in that city in 1994, in which more than a hundred people perished. The Israeli embassies in Georgia and India (February 13, 2012) were also targets of Iranian reprisals, and an

attempt in Azerbaijan was foiled (January 24, 2012). Not without reason, commentators dubbed the fighting that took place in Gaza in March 2012—at the provocation of the Islamic Jihad as the "general front" in the war with Iran. The Iron Dome system's success in intercepting over 80% of the rockets fired on Israel, which threatened to hit populated areas, strengthens, according to many analysts, those in Israel who favor a military attack on Iran.

Iran's continuing progress toward nuclearization

Various U.S. administration officials fear that Israel will try to drag the United States into a war against Iran

exacerbates Israel's dilemma: Should Israel risk a starkly re-aligned Middle Eastern reality, in which a country ruled by fanatic clerics, that declares Israel must be wiped off the map, gets hold of a doomsday weapon? Conversely, should Israel attack Iran's nuclear facilities and risk a long-term and wide-ranging deterioration in

its security situation, which could also place Jews in the Diaspora in jeopardy as targets of Iranian revenge? In reference to a possible Israeli attack, former Mossad chief Meir Dagan said, "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard" (May 6, 2011). Dagan explained that Iran possesses proven capabilities to move its nuclear infrastructures around in order to conceal them from international monitors or intelligence agencies. He stressed that it was not at all clear that the Israeli Air Force was even capable of performing the job to its completion, meeting

all its objectives. When asked what might happen after such an attack, Dagan replied, "There will be war with Iran. This is one of the things we know how to start, but not how to end." He noted that Iran could be expected to fire missiles into Israel for many months afterwards. It could be expected to engage Hezbollah with its tens of thousands of Grad rockets and hundreds of long distance SCUDs, some of which could reach Tel-Aviv and farther south. Concurrently, Tehran could also engage Hamas to attack Israeli cities on its behalf, and Syria might join the war as well.

The bitterest attack against Netanyahu and Barak's leadership on Iran came from the former head of the Shin Bet, Yuval Diskin (April 27, 2012): "I have no confidence in the current leadership that is going to bring us to an incident on the scale of war with Iran or a regional war. They are not people on a personal level whom I would depend to lead Israel into an incident of this scale, and also out of it.... They are presenting a false picture to the public on the subject of Iran. They tell the public that if Israel acts, then Iran won't have a nuclear bomb. That is a false picture. Many experts actually say that and Israeli attack will accelerate Iran's nuclear dash."³²

Speculation about disagreements within the top defense echelon regarding the efficacy of attacking Iran's nuclear facilities abounds in the Israeli press. Netanyahu and Barak are usually depicted as proponents of an attack, while the IDF chief of staff and the heads of Mossad and Shabak are portrayed as opposing such a move. President Shimon Peres has also been quoted as opposing an Israeli attack on Iran (February 23, 2012).³³ Publication of his comments drew a harsh

response from Defense Minister Barak: "This is the same Shimon Peres who in 1981 opposed the attack on the reactor in Iraq."³⁴ Barak even took the trouble to correct Chief of Staff Ganz, who described Iran's leadership as "moving one step at a time toward the point at which they will be able to decide whether to produce a nuclear weapon. They haven't yet decided whether to go the extra mile.... In my opinion, he (Khomeini) will be making a huge mistake if he does so and I don't think that he will want to go the extra mile. I think the Iranian leadership is made up of extremely rational people..."³⁵ Barak responded that Iran "is not rational in the Western meaning of the word."³⁶

An Israeli decision to attack Iran could seriously damage American interests, including possible Iranian retaliation against American soldiers and targets in the region. Since Iran has progressed significantly in all areas involved in acquiring a military nuclear capacity, there is a high probability that it will be necessary to attack Iran again and again, until it stops trying to rebuild its nuclear program. Against this background, various officials in the US administration fear that since, in their view, Israel does not have the capacity to wage an ongoing conflict of this kind against Iran, it is Israel's intention to "drag" the United States into a war against its will.

Indeed, when US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta was in Israel for a brief visit (October 3, 2011) he held a joint press conference with his host, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, in which he warned that any operation to stop Iran's nuclearization must be agreed upon and coordinated with

the international community. Thus, the Israeli decision carries fateful security and economic implications not only for Israel, but for its best friends as well. As it has been before, the Jewish community could become a target of both Iranian retaliation and charges that it "pushed" the US, "as in the Iraqi case," into a military operation "contrary to American interests."

The blunt manner in which Israel's leaders are warning of the Iranian threat has drawn various kinds of criticism, but there is no denying that this Israeli policy has captured the world's attention and has contributed to the adoption of substantial measures against Iran in a way that had not previously occurred.

Turkey

The Arab Spring took Turkey as much by surprise as it did the West. Otherwise, it is likely that Prime Minister Erdogan would have passed up the honor (and the \$250,000) of accepting the al-Gaddafi International Prize for Human Rights (November 29, 2010). Turkey was quick on its feet and took vigorous diplomatic steps to fulfill its role as a major force in shaping the Middle East, according to the tireless Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Davutoglu, who often boasts that his country is "right at the center of everything."³⁷

Turkey offers Arab countries in the midst of turmoil a model: a democracy that respects Islam and is developing a prosperous modern economy. Erdogan expressed Ankara's aspirations and vision of its regional position in his victory speech (June 13, 2011), his third in a row: "Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul. Beirut won as much as Izmir;

Damascus won as much as Ankara; Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir.” In a similar vein, which reflects Ankara’s awareness of its regional might and strategic importance, Davutoglu, during a visit to Cairo, described Ankara’s vision of establishing a Turkish-Egyptian axis: “This will not be an axis against any other country—not Israel, not Iran, not any other country, but this will be an axis of democracy, real democracy ... That will be an axis of democracy of the two biggest nations in our region, from the north to the south, from the Black Sea down to the Nile Valley in Sudan.”³⁸

Ankara endeavors to position itself on the winning side of the Arab uprising. As a regional superpower, Turkey offers Middle Eastern countries not only a governmental model, but also economic advantages. In September 2011, on a tour of three Arab countries that have undergone revolutions this year—Tunisia, Egypt and Libya—Erdogan was received by rapturous crowds. To underscore the benefits of economic cooperation for Ankara’s allies, Erdogan’s entourage was accompanied by a delegation of 280 businessmen. During the visit, Davutoglu promised that Turkey’s \$1.5 billion investment in Egypt would balloon to \$5 billion within two years. Turkey has realigned itself with the zeitgeist of the Arab world, and Erdogan spoke resolutely against Bashar Assad and Muammar Gaddafi’s brutal repression. The same Erdogan, who, in November 2009, justified the invitation of the Sudanese ruler to Ankara by saying, “It’s not possible for a Muslim to commit genocide,” now turned directly against Assad’s genocide of his own people, urging him to step down and even equating

him with Hitler: “If you want to see someone who has fought until death against his own people, just look at Nazi Germany, just look at Hitler, at Mussolini, at Nicolae Ceausescu in Romania.”³⁹

Turkey has an 885-kilometer-long border with Syria, and its concerns about the instability there are obvious. Thousands of Syrian refugees have already found shelter in Turkey, and Ankara is allowing Syrian opposition groups—including armed militants of the Free Syrian Army—a safe haven and an operational base in its territory. Ankara’s stance against Assad heightens tensions over Tehran, which is afraid to lose its Syrian ally to a real contender for regional hegemony. Combining democracy, modernity and Islam, the thriving Turkey provides a much more attractive model than Ahmadinejad, and is highly popular in the Arab world. Nevertheless, Erdogan’s condescending manner and his recommendation that Cairo favor the secular model, did little to win the hearts of Muslim Brotherhood leaders. That incident—and Cairo’s refusal to allow Erdogan to visit Gaza—reflected the limitations of the non-Arab Turkey in its quest for influence in the Arab world.

Since his appointment in 2003, Erdogan has led his country to impressive economic growth: Turkey is currently the world’s 16th largest economy. (Nevertheless, the IMF anticipates a decline in Turkish economic growth rates due to its swelling external debt.) Erdogan has taken vigorous action to decrease the military’s influence in the political sphere. According to the Turkish constitution and Ataturk’s doctrine, the army is charged with defending democracy, and has used this power

to oust four elected governments since 1960. Erdogan did not hesitate to file charges against some 200 army officers for conspiring to topple the government. He went on to prove that his government's stability was robust enough to survive even when the top echelons of the military tendered their collective resignation on July 29, 2011. Curbing the military's power in Turkey signals Erdogan's deviation from Ataturk's doctrine, which stipulated Turkey's Western orientation. Commentators are debating the impact France and Germany's objection to Turkey's acceptance into the European Union had on Erdogan's decision to consolidate a Middle-Eastern-oriented strategic alternative, labeled by some as "neo-Ottoman." According to the German Marshall Fund, in 2004 some 75% of Turkey's citizens wished to become members of the European Union, compared to only a third of them today.

Since its establishment, Erdogan's government has declared that it has a "zero problems" policy toward its neighbors. After long years of tensions and conflicts, Ankara has extended its hand in peace to Armenia, showed its willingness to reach an arrangement with Cyprus, entreated Syria to solve the border issues between the two countries and abolished the need for visas, tried to mediate between Iran and the West, and, of course, also between Jerusalem and Damascus. On the domestic front, Turkey has tried to implement reforms to appease its Kurdish minority. This reconciliatory mood, however, has not yielded any substantial results, and Erdogan is currently guided by a more hard-line doctrine. Concurrent with its deteriorated relations with Israel, Turkey's

friendship with Bashar Assad is in a state of collapse, tensions with Cyprus are mounting, and also with Greece and the European Union. Turkey is in conflict with Tehran over Syria's fate, as part of an emerging rivalry over regional hegemony, and the US withdrawal from Iraq has made Baghdad the spoils in yet another contest between Tehran and Ankara. Tehran's resentment has grown as a result of Ankara's agreement, in September 2011, to deploy a NATO anti-missile defense system in its territory—effectively an early warning system in case of an Iranian missile launch. The war against the Kurdish underground (PKK) has intensified, and following the killing of 20 Turkish soldiers on October 12, 2011, Erdogan vowed to fight terrorists to the bitter end, and ramped up Turkish army operations in Iraqi territory. With respect to France, on December 22, 2011 Turkey decided to recall its ambassador from Paris following ratification of a bill that makes Armenian genocide denial a criminal offense in France. Turkey has dealt with Cyprus with a belligerence that belies its "zero-problems" policy. For example, Ankara dispatched a research vessel, escorted by warships, to the island's coastal waters to signal its objection to undersea gas drilling operations planned by Nicosia.

Israel is a favorite target of Erdogan's belligerent rhetoric. Turkey has discovered a direct correlation between its increasingly acerbic attitude toward Israel and the sympathy it garners on the Arab Street. The tension between the two countries, which erupted at the 2009 World Economic Forum conference in Davos, in a verbal confrontation between Erdogan and President Peres

and culminated in the flotilla affair (May 31, 2010), in which nine Turkish citizens were killed. Ankara demanded an apology, compensation, and the lifting off the naval blockade of Gaza. The Palmer Committee, appointed by the UN in an attempt to reach a formula to reconcile the relationship between the two countries, published its findings on September 2, 2011. The Palmer Report asserted that the Israeli blockade of Gaza was legal, and that the Israeli soldiers did encounter organized violent resistance, but it also found that Israel used excessive and unreasonable force and should, therefore, express regret and make restitution. The Palmer Report stated that Turkey could have done more to persuade the Flotilla's organizers to avoid a confrontation with the Israeli navy. Turkey rejected the report's conclusions, and President Abdullah Gul declared it "null and void." The Israeli ambassador was expelled, and Ankara announced a moratorium on all military and economic ties with Israel until Jerusalem meets Turkey's original conditions (apology, compensation, end Gaza blockade). The Turkish foreign minister warned that his country would take all the necessary steps to ensure the safety of its ships in the Mediterranean. Israel, which accepted the report's conclusions, announced that it would not apologize (the Palmer Report recommended that Israel "express regret"). This failure was the culmination of a long period of attempts to strike a compromise between the two countries. Torn between two major allies, the US tried to advance a formula for compromise and encouraged Israel to apologize, but in vain. Erdogan exploits any opportunity to verbally attack Israel, whom he accused of being

"the West's spoiled child," and urged sanctions against it. In his tongue lashings Erdogan often refers to the sensitive nuclear issue; during a visit to South Africa on October 5, 2011, he defined Israel as a "threat for its region because it has the atomic bomb."

Israeli officials are usually reserved in their responses to Erdogan's barbs. But his accusation that Israel exploits the memory of the Holocaust in order to justify its actions against the Palestinians crossed the line and triggered a harsh Israeli response. In a CNN interview on September 25, 2011, Erdogan claimed that "[T]he Israeli people are only resorting back to the issue of genocide in history. And using that genocide, they are always acting as if they are the victims all the time. We said, for that, go ask Germany to pay its dues and they have. So Germany has paid and is still paying its dues to Israel. But neither Turkey nor the Muslims in the region have such a problem. They have never exerted such cruelty on Israel. But Israel is very cruel in that regard. It shows no mercy." On September 26, 2011, Netanyahu called Erdogan's charges "mendacious and scandalous," while Foreign Minister Lieberman said, "We don't have any problems with Turkey. We respect the Turkish people and Turkey as a state. Our problem is with the current leadership, which is radically Muslim, supports terror and nourishes terror."

It is difficult to separate the deterioration of Israel-Turkey relations, which took an especially sharp turn for the worse in the wake of the Flotilla incident, from the new, broader strategy guiding Erdogan's foreign policy, despite his assertion in a UN Assembly speech on September 22, 2011, that

Turkey has no problem with the Israeli people. “We have a problem with the Israeli government,” he said, adding that Turkey had good relationships with previous Israeli governments. Erdogan insisted on Ankara’s terms for restoring ties: “The Israeli government is not being honest at all. Right now, as long as they refuse to apologize for the nine people of Turkish descent who lost their lives on the flotilla, as long as they refuse to pay compensation to the families, and of course as long as the embargo on Gaza has not been lifted, the relations between the two countries will never become normalized.”⁴⁰ In an Al Jazeera interview, Erdogan promised that at the next opportunity he would send warships to escort convoys on humanitarian missions to Gaza. In light of these threats, the possibility of a flare-up with Turkey cannot be dismissed, especially against the backdrop of hasty management of tactical provocations. The discovery of natural gas reservoirs in the eastern Mediterranean has also provoked a sharp admonition from Turkey that it would block Israeli unilateral attempts to exploit these resources. In an Al Jazeera interview on September 8, 2011, Erdogan warned, “Israel has begun to declare that it has the right to act in exclusive economic areas in the Mediterranean... Israel will not be the owner of this right.” Erdogan described offshore drilling by Cyprus and Israel as “madness,” and went on to declare that Turkey is the guarantor of “the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [TRNC]” and will defend its rights. (Turkey is the only country to recognize the Turkish Cypriot state, and 30,000 Turkish soldiers are stationed there.) And indeed, Turkey has begun to search for oil and natural gas by drilling in Northern

Cyprus (April 26, 2012). The Turks are resentful of the fact that the (Greek) Cypriot government has signed maritime border agreements with Israel and Lebanon (thereby breaching, in their view, the rights of the Turkish Republic under their wing). The Cypriots, who are members of the European Union, are not about to budge, and tensions are expected to mount in July 2012 when Cyprus will assume the European Union presidency for a six-month term (Ankara has already announced that it will freeze its ties with the EU during this period). Turkey is expected to toughen its stance. The higher the potential of the underwater gas fields turns out to be, the more muscle Turkey is expected to flex. At the same time, Cyprian interest in cooperating with Israel to extract and market the gas, and defend the area, is expected to grow.

The Jerusalem-Ankara axis, which had been a strategic pillar for Israel, has collapsed—Israel-Egypt relations are also uncertain

The Israeli government faces a complex dilemma because Turkey plays an increasingly central role in the eastern Mediterranean. The Jerusalem-Ankara axis, which had been a significant strategic pillar for Israel, has collapsed. The level of Israel-Egypt relations is also uncertain. This reality forces Israel to examine ways to stem the deterioration of its relationship with Turkey. In addition, Turkey is increasingly perceived as pivotal in US Middle Eastern strategy, and despite major past disputes (examples include not allowing American forces

to cross Turkey on their way to Iraq, and Turkey's uncoordinated attempt to reach a "compromise" with Tehran on the nuclear issue), relations between Ankara and Washington—as well as Obama's relationship with Erdogan—are warming. As a result, Washington has openly expressed its displeasure with Israel's inflexible stance, which makes ending the crisis with Turkey even more difficult. Efforts to reach a compromise continue, but both sides remain entrenched in their positions. It is doubtful whether even complete Israeli compliance with Ankara's conditions would change the strategic rationale animating Turkey's hostility to Jerusalem, which has proven to be an endless source of sympathy and credibility for Turkey in the Arab world.

As Turkey's aspirations for regional hegemony grow, a radical shift in its attitude toward Israel is less likely. It could take a turn for the better if Israel were to engage in a process of achieving a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, thereby reducing regional hostility and neutralizing a key component of Turkish rhetoric against it. Israel's ability to compensate for the strategic damage caused by the collapse of its cooperation with Turkey is quite limited. One step in that direction, which was surely noticed by Ankara, is the tightening of Israel's security ties with Greece. The Israeli air force held joint training exercises with its Greek counterpart in early October 2010, again in late June 2011, and most recently, in March and April 2012. The Greeks also helped to prevent another flotilla from sailing out of Greek ports to Gaza. An opening for improving cooperation between Ankara and Jerusalem may turn up eventually in

light of the strategic issues faced by Turkey. Both countries are concerned about unfolding events in Syria, and both are interested in having stable neighbors in firm territorial control. In addition, both nations are obviously alarmed by Iran's interference, pretensions for regional hegemony, and efforts to obtain a nuclear military capability. As Turkey increasingly regards itself as a regional leader, tension increases between the model it provides for the region (democracy, separation of religion and state—while favoring expressions of Sunni Islam) and the ayatollahs' model (Shiite theocracy, hostility to the West and its values, and rule by clerics).

Even if no significant change in the relationship with Ankara is expected in the short term, efforts to find a compromise that would remove the flotilla affair from the agenda must continue in earnest. It serves no Israeli interest to deepen the estrangement with Turkey, so it must avoid any provocation. At times the dilemma is particularly poignant, as in the decision not to renew Elbit Corporation's export licenses, required for a \$90 million aerial photography system project, for fear that the system's secrets would be passed to hostile elements. Where possible, Israel's interest in improving the relationship should be declared (as in dispatching aid to the earthquake victims on October 23, 2011, following telephone calls from Peres and Netanyahu to their counterparts in Ankara). The economic arena could also help restore ties. Despite the political decline in the relationship, based on Export Institute data, Israel's trade with Turkey (commodities import and export, excluding diamonds) is on the rise

and in 2010 amounted to \$3.1 billion—a 26% increase compared to 2009. (In the first half of 2011, trade volume between the two countries grew by 27%.) This trend should be encouraged in order to strengthen non-political ties that are key to strengthening mutual interests, and which could help in preventing further deterioration and cultivating a basis for an eventual rehabilitation of the relationship.

Of course, Israel must also take into account the safety of some 25,000 Turkish Jews, and avoid supplying any unnecessary pretext that could kindle local hostility toward this community. In this context, there is some encouragement in Erdogan's gesture of extending New Year greetings to his country's Jews in September 2011, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, stressing Turkey's commitment to religious and cultural pluralism. Erdogan is careful to point out his positive attitude toward Jews and inter-faith co-existence, and has solemnly promised to return properties confiscated from Jews and Christians last century. While it is easy to be carried away in times of conflict into a pattern of Jewish escalation vis-à-vis Ankara (through activity in the US Congress, etc.), this would be a mistake. At this time, in particular, it is advisable to augment ties between Diaspora Jewry and Turkey (and the relevant Turkish Diaspora) in order to create an "inoculating layer" that could prevent further collapse, and perhaps even help in attempting to normalize relations between the two countries.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The direct Israeli-Palestinian talks that began in a celebratory summit in Washington on September 1, 2010 survived three rounds of meetings between Netanyahu and Abu Mazen. The Palestinians insisted that Israel continue to freeze settlement construction (after the end of a ten-month moratorium in late September 2010), but the Israeli side refused, and even rejected a generous incentive package offered by Washington, which included 20 F-35 Stealth fighter planes in return for extending the freeze for three months. Netanyahu offered a deal of his own at the Knesset: "If the Palestinian leadership will say unequivocally to its people that it recognizes Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People, I will be ready to convene my government and request a further suspension of settlement construction."⁴¹

The Palestinians rejected Netanyahu's offer. Abu Mazen claimed that in their three meetings Netanyahu had insisted on focusing exclusively on security issues and demanded an Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley for the next 40 years. The Palestinians, who submitted their positions in writing and enclosed a map representing land swaps amounting to 1.9%, complained that the Israelis ignored their positions and declined to present any of their own that might facilitate negotiations to bridge the gaps between the two sides. The Palestinians made it clear that they expected Israel to present a set of initial positions similar to those presented by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the eve of his resignation. These positions, which according to Olmert, "have never been officially rejected by Abu Mazen and should

be brought back to the table today,” were detailed in a September 31, 2011 article he published in the *New York Times*: “According to my offer, the territorial dispute would be solved by establishing a Palestinian state on territory equivalent in size to the pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza Strip with mutually agreed-upon land swaps that take into account the new realities on the ground. The city of Jerusalem would be shared. Its Jewish areas would be the capital of Israel and its Arab

The Palestinians demand that negotiations resume from where they were left by Abbas and Olmert; Netanyahu’s government is not committed to those proposals

neighborhoods would become the Palestinian capital. Neither side would declare sovereignty over the city’s holy places; they would be administered jointly with the assistance of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United States. The Palestinian refugee problem would be addressed within the framework of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. The new Palestinian state

would become the home of all the Palestinian refugees just as the state of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish People. Israel would, however, be prepared to absorb a small number of refugees on humanitarian grounds. Because ensuring Israel’s security is vital to the implementation of any agreement, the Palestinian state would be demilitarized and it would not form military alliances with other nations. Both states would cooperate to fight terrorism and violence.”

Earlier, in a June 22, 2009 *Newsweek* interview, Olmert revealed that he had offered the Palestinians a state on 93.7% of the Palestinian territories, along with a land swap of 5.8% of Israeli territory, and a safe-passage corridor from Gaza to the West Bank. Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was stunned by the boldness of Olmert’s proposals, described her feelings in her recently published book: “Am I really hearing this? I wondered. Is the Israeli prime minister saying that he’ll divide Jerusalem and put an international body in charge of the Holy sites?”⁴² As mentioned, the Palestinian demand that negotiations resume from where they had stopped in talks between Abbas and Olmert, but Netanyahu’s government made it clear that it did not regard itself as obligated or committed to those proposals.

Thus, the attempts to re-launch negotiations by first securing an extended settlement construction freeze failed. On December 7, 2010, Israel and the US announced that they were unable to reach an agreed-upon formula that called for a three-months settlement freeze extension and a stepped-up discussion of borders and security issues. The Americans believed that a relatively quick agreement on borders, along with new security arrangements, would put an end to the settlement construction controversy, as the precise amount of West Bank territory to be annexed to Israel or handed over to Palestinian sovereignty would be finally determined. Following the failure of these efforts, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced, on December 10, 2010, that it was now time to address the permanent settlement issues, and that the US would vigorously pursue that

course: "It is time to grapple with the core issues of the conflict on borders and security; settlements, water and refugees; and on Jerusalem itself ... The United States will not be a passive participant. We will push the parties to lay out their positions on the core issues without delay and with real specificity. We will work to narrow the gaps asking the tough questions and expecting substantive answers. And in the context of our private conversations with the parties, we will offer our own ideas and bridging proposals when appropriate."

In practice, however, this policy, so assertively outlined by Clinton, found no implementation, and the US failed to extract detailed positions from Israel. Efforts to find a formula for resuming the talks failed, including President Peres' attempts and secret meetings with Abu Mazen. Abu Mazen revealed that he had met the Israeli president three times during that year, in Amman, London and Rome, and that he was on his way to yet another meeting in Amman, on July 28, 2011, when he got a last-minute call from Peres asking to postpone their scheduled meeting because he did not have a mandate from the prime minister to proceed.

In light of the political stalemate, and in spite of President Obama's requests and warnings to avoid it, the Palestinians decided to take their efforts to the UN to gain recognition as a state according to the 1967 borders. Early last year, on February 18, the Palestinians demonstrated their ability to mobilize the UN and embarrass Israel and the US, when the UN Security Council was convened at their request in order to vote on a resolution condemning the settlements. Fourteen (out of fifteen) member states supported the resolution obliging the US to

exercise its veto to thwart what it considered a threat to the principle of direct talks. But US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice emphasized Washington's position: "We reject in the strongest terms the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity... [which] violates Israel's international commitments, devastates trust between the parties, and threatens the prospects for peace." The isolation of the US in the Security Council as a result of its support of Israel revealed a new Middle East reality, in which the US and Israel wield less diplomatic leverage in obtaining their goals in the international arena. In this case, Mubarak's absence and the transitional government's susceptibility to Egyptian public opinion jeopardized the political wherewithal to mobilize Egyptian support in dissuading the Palestinians from bringing their case to the Security Council.

Abu Mazen reiterated that negotiations were his preferred course of action, but his experience with the Israelis had taught him that there was no chance for serious negotiations unless Israel committed to freeze construction in the settlements and East Jerusalem, and agreed in principle that final borders would be based on the pre-June 1967 lines with agreed-upon land swaps. The Palestinian president vented his frustration with Obama, who had been adamant that Israel halt construction in the settlements, but then retreated. In an interview on April 24, 2011, Abbas explained his insistence on the freeze as a precondition for resuming talks: "We both went up the tree. After that, he came down with a ladder and he removed the ladder and said to me, jump." The Palestinians claimed that although Israel had accepted the Roadmap in

April 2003, it failed to meet the terms of its first phase, i.e., that “[Israel] immediately dismantles settlement outposts erected since March 2001 ... freezes all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements).”⁴³ In response, Israeli spokespersons argued that the Palestinians, too, had not met all the conditions stipulated in the Roadmap.

The American failure to bring the sides back to the negotiating table lurked in the phrasing of President Obama’s May 19, 2011 speech in which he promised to clarify US Middle East policy in light of the Arab uprising and the criticism of Washington for having lagged in its support for the masses in their revolt against their autocratic rulers.

The resignation of special Middle East Envoy George Mitchell, just a week before the planned speech, added a resounding chord to the US failure to move forward with a solution to the Palestinian problem. Obama, who defended his country’s overall Middle East policy, referred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and asserted that “permanent Palestinian borders with Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, and permanent Israeli borders with Palestine should be based on the ‘67 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states.” This speech was made a few days before Netanyahu’s scheduled address to a joint session of Congress. Netanyahu’s office, which learned about the speech’s expected content only shortly before the actual speech, was taken by surprise and reacted with blunt disapproval: “Prime Minister Netanyahu expects to hear a reaffirmation from President Obama of US commitments made to Israel in

2004, which were overwhelmingly supported by both houses of Congress. Among other things, those commitments relate to Israel not having to withdraw to the 1967 lines, which are both indefensible and which would leave major Israeli population centers in Judea and Samaria beyond those lines. Those commitments also ensure Israel’s well being as a Jewish state by making it clear that Palestinian refugees will settle in a future Palestinian state rather than in Israel. Without a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem outside the borders of Israel, no territorial concession will bring peace. Equally, the Palestinians, and not just the United States, must recognize Israel as the nation state of the Jewish People, and any peace agreement with them must end all claims against Israel.”

The two met on the day after Obama’s speech, and at the end of that meeting they held a joint press conference where the tension between them was obvious. Some American reporters described Netanyahu’s remarks as “a public lecture to his host President Obama.” For instance, *The Atlantic* journalist Jeffrey Goldberg began his account of the event by writing, “Like many of you, I watched the Prime Minister of Israel publicly lecture the President of the United States on Jewish history with a mixture of shock, amusement and bewilderment. (From the expression on the President’s face, I would assume he was mostly feeling annoyance.)”⁴⁴

The criticism hurled at Obama from the Israeli side was echoed by key American Jewish organizations and Republican Party spokespersons, who attacked the president at the onset of the election year. The sharp criticism forced Obama to clarify

his statements in another speech, which he gave at the AIPAC Policy Conference three days later: “‘67 lines with mutually agreed swaps means that the parties themselves... will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967 ... It allows the parties themselves to account for the changes that have taken place over the last 44 years, including the new demographic realities on the ground and the needs of both sides.” In both speeches Obama expressed fundamental American stances reflecting profound support of Israel. Thus, for instance, with respect to the security issue, the president asserted that, “Israel must be able to defend itself—by itself—against any threat.”

In fact, Obama’s first speech did not signal any shift in traditional US positions regarding the conflict’s resolution: strong support of Israel’s security, two states for two peoples, and secure borders based on the 1967 lines with land swaps. But the wording of the first speech triggered acute tensions because it was presented without prior coordination; because of Netanyahu’s reaction, which created the impression that Obama was demanding that Israel return to the 1967 borders exactly as they were, which Netanyahu rejected on the grounds that they were indefensible; and because of the reactions of senior Republicans who have turned the Israeli imbroglio into a wedge issue in time for the 2012 elections, and a vehicle for taking swipes at Obama. The presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, proclaimed, “Obama threw Israel under the bus.” Former Republican presidential hopeful and current Fox commentator Mike Huckabee asserted, “Obama

has betrayed Israel.” These comments amplified fears that the coming election campaign will drag the Middle East into the heart of the contest between the parties.

The American position that negotiations must refer to some kind of baseline (by implication, the 1967 borders) reflects a principled rejection of the Israeli position that the space beyond the Green Line is “disputed territory.” Accepting the notion that the ‘67 lines are the basis for discussions strengthens the Palestinian bargaining position because it means that Israel is the one who should “ask” the Palestinians to accept land swaps, i.e., to exchange territory that is ostensibly theirs to swap (and not territory to which both parties lay claim).

The failure to revive the talks was the impetus for the Palestinians’ formal resolution, announced on June 26, 2011, to apply to the UN for recognition as a state based on the 1967 lines. Abu Mazen and his staff ran a global diplomatic campaign to enlist maximum support for their application. In Israel, fears of the consequences of the Palestinian move mounted. Acceptance by the UN requires nine votes at the Security Council. The US committed to use its veto power in that case, which meant that in order to protect Israel, the US would have to be backed into a minority corner, potentially compounding the Islamic world’s hostility to Washington—which could, in turn, befoul the mood between Washington and Jerusalem. The Palestinian alternative—bringing their case to the General Assembly (where there is no veto possibility) in order to upgrade the Palestinian Authority to non-member observer state was perceived as being equally dangerous for Israel.

Such a status would allow the Palestinians to file suit against Israel at the International Court of Justice and to exert pressure on Israel through their activities in various UN agencies. For example, as a result of their admission to UNESCO (the vote passed with 107 votes in favor and 14 votes against, on October 31, 2011), the Palestinians could then petition UNESCO designation of historical, archaeological and religious sites beyond the 1967 lines (such as the Cave of the Patriarchs, Rachel's Tomb, the Temple Mount mosques, etc.) as Palestinian heritage sites meriting UNESCO protection. The UNESCO move also illustrated the "price" that the US is forced to pay in the international arena for its friendship with Israel. The US Funding Prohibition statute mandates immediate cessation of Washington's financial support of any UN agency that accepts Palestinian membership (the US covers 22% of UNESCO's total budget). Indeed, US State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland expressed concern that the funding cut could have damaging ramifications for the US. By not paying its dues, the US could severely inhibit its ability to influence UNESCO and act within it: "We are very concerned about it, which is why we didn't want it to happen in the first place and why we're concerned about this move being replicated in other UN agencies."⁴⁵ The isolation in the institutions of the UN in which Israel and the United States find themselves was also evident in the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva when it voted (March 22, 2012) to establish an international committee of inquiry into construction in the settlements and its effect on the rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and

East Jerusalem. Thirty-six countries supported the resolution, ten abstained and only two—Israel and the United States—rejected the resolution.

The Israeli leadership's reaction to the Palestinian UN initiatives has not been consistent. Defense Minister Barak warned that the Palestinian bid for statehood at the UN would cause a "diplomatic tsunami,"⁴⁶ and enhance de-legitimization trends, whereas Foreign Minister Lieberman dismissed the tsunami talk by saying that in reality, "[T]here isn't a diplomatic tsunami, not even rain on a cloudy day."⁴⁷

Cornered into unpopular positions in the international arena because of Israel, and reluctant to be isolated on the UN Security Council, Washington was spurred into making further efforts. And indeed, in the weeks preceding the General Assembly, a diplomatic endeavor to create a compromise formula—based on principles outlined in President Obama's speeches—for renewing the negotiations, and thereby thwarting the Palestinian UN quest. This attempt failed as well, and the Quartet session on July 11, 2011, in which the formula was to be announced, could not find agreement. Concurrently, Israel and the US tried to dissuade European countries from supporting the Palestinians at the UN, arguing that Israel was not to blame for the failure to re-start direct talks, since it had, in principle, accepted the Quartet's plan.

The Palestinian UN initiative was criticized within the Palestinian camp as well. It was argued that the move was nothing more than propaganda that made no difference on the ground; that it could jeopardize

the rights of the Palestinian diaspora; and that there was no advantage in clashing with the US. Abu Mazen was not deterred by the criticism from within (Hamás ridiculed the entire venture), Israeli threats, or President Obama's explicit September 22, 2011 warning that the US would veto the Security Council resolution. The very next day, Abu Mazen presented the formal application for Palestinian membership to the UN Secretary General. The Palestinian petition to the Security Council was transferred to a professional sub-committee, to buy time for attempts to reach agreement over resuming talks. (At the same time, American diplomacy managed to thwart the Palestinian attempt to secure nine votes at the Security Council, which would obviate the need for the US to exercise its veto power.) On September 23, 2011, the Quartet issued a statement that adhered to the tenets stipulated in Obama's speech. At the center was a preparatory meeting, scheduled to take place within a month, where the parties would be expected to agree on an agenda and methodology for proceeding, with the goal of achieving a final agreement by the end of 2012. Within three months, both parties were expected to present their detailed positions on territorial and security issues; within six months, they were expected to make substantial progress (to which end the Quartet would convene an international conference in Moscow, in consultation with the parties, at the appropriate time). The outline called upon the parties to refrain from provocative actions and reiterated their obligations under the Roadmap. (Although the Quartet's announcement did not refer specifically to the settlements, according to the Roadmap Israel is committed to freeze settlement

construction, including natural growth.)

On October 2, 2011 Israel accepted the Quartet's initiative. Its statement said that "[W]hile Israel has some concerns, it will raise them at the appropriate time." These concerns focused on the timeframe—Israel argued that three months was too short a time for negotiating territorial and security issues; and that core matters such as refugees and recognition of Israel as a Jewish state were postponed to a later stage. The Palestinians accepted the Quartet's

call as well, but in their response they argued for the inclusion of the Roadmap's stipulation that Israel freeze construction in territories beyond the 1967 line. On October 26, 2011, Quartet representatives met separately with both parties, and released a statement that said, "[T]

he parties agreed with the Quartet to come forward with comprehensive proposals on territory and security within three months (in effect, accepting the Quartet's outline). The Palestinians, however, stated that the talks would not be resumed as long as the Israeli government failed to freeze all settlement construction. And the Israelis replied that they would not present any proposals if the Palestinians did not agree to direct and secret bilateral talks without preconditions.

The Palestinians set January 26, 2012 as the

**American
diplomacy
managed to
thwart the
Palestinian
attempt to
secure nine
UN Security
Council votes**

deadline concluding the three months allotted by the Quartet. If there were no progress until then, they warned, they would take new measures against Israel—from renewing their UN application for statehood, to “returning the keys of the Palestinian Authority” to Israel, the occupying power. The time pressure helped reach an agreement to hold a meeting between the parties’ delegates to the talks—Isaac Molho and Saeb Erekat, who met in Amman on January 3, 2012, under Jordanian auspices, in an attempt to revive the Quartet’s outline and avoid a deterioration of the process, and an escalation of conflict. As expected, the rounds of talks in Amman did not yield substantial results, and in a speech to the Arab League foreign ministers (February 12, 2012) Abu Mazen responded by threatening that if Israel did not agree to negotiations on the basis of the 1967 borders and did not freeze settlement construction, the Palestinians would renew their attempt to be admitted to the United Nations. Abu Mazen claimed that Prime Minister Netanyahu did not present substantive positions on the core issues of a permanent settlement. He promised to send Netanyahu a letter in which he would detail all the Palestinian claims and, in the absence of a positive Israeli response, he would consider himself free to seek assistance from the international community and the UN. In briefings the Palestinians held with foreign diplomats, they made it clear that they have taken into account that the United States will cut off financial aid to the Palestinians, and that Israel will stop its tax payments. In such an eventuality, the Palestinians have promised to dismantle the Palestinian

Authority and transfer responsibility for the West Bank to the “occupying power.” According to them, the PA was established as a temporary, transitional body until the establishment of an independent state. Since Israel is not interested in this, they said, there is no point in the PA’s continued existence.

The possibility that Abu Mazen’s letter would mark a negative turning point in Israeli-Palestinian relations and perhaps even lead to a violent deterioration provided the backdrop for a telephone conversation between President Obama and Abu Mazen (March 20, 2012), in which Obama attempted to persuade Abu Mazen not to give ultimatums in his letter to Netanyahu. After some delays, Saeb Erekat handed the letter to Netanyahu on April 17, 2012 (PA Prime Minister Fayyad, who opposed the move, did not participate as planned in the meeting). As agreed, Netanyahu sent his letter of reply to Abu Mazan through his representative, Isaac Molho, on May 12, 2012. At the end of that meeting, the two sides agreed on a joint statement: “Israel and the Palestinian Authority are committed to achieving peace and the two sides hope that the exchange of letters between President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu will contribute to this.”⁴⁸ During the exchange of letters, it was clear that the two sides were trying to avoid ultimatums, and even attempting to express a willingness to return to the negotiating table.

Following the establishment of Israel’s broad national unity government (May 7, 2012), Secretary of State Clinton told Netanyahu that the American administration hopes that it would remove the coalition difficulties that had interfered in the past

and that Israel would take steps to advance the peace process with the Palestinians.⁴⁹ The coming months will show whether the establishment of the new Israeli coalition will in fact help bring a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The Palestinian attempt to move the conflict to the UN compels Israel to take stock. The longer the stalemate in negotiations, the more likely that the pattern of “direct talks” will lose its strategic position as the only acceptable format for reaching an arrangement between Israel and its neighbors—and, accordingly, international legitimacy for using multi-lateral measures to resolve the issue would increase accordingly. (One milestone along this problematic route was the format of indirect “proximity talks,” which the Americans tried to conduct in 2010 as a substitute for direct talks.) The trend toward internationalizing the process is gaining truck partly because of a growing international perception that the US is not a fair broker. Obama’s UN General Assembly speech on September 21, 2011 was heard, by Palestinians in particular and the Arab world in general, as a sweeping, one-sided declaration of support for Israel. Attempts to usurp US exclusivity in leading the peace process may also illustrate the notion, prevalent in the international arena, that the United States is in decline and now tends to lead better “from behind” as part of multi-national frameworks. In an extreme imagining, this trend could encourage support for a forced settlement by international diktat.

Commentators were quick to celebrate Abu Mazen’s 2011 UN speech as “the birth of a

Palestinian leader of historic stature.” Less than a month later, in the wake of the deal to release Gilad Shalit in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners struck with Hamas, other commentators predicted his imminent demise. According to this view, Hamas will now capture the hearts and minds of the entire Palestinian people as it can now claim that while Abu Mazen was wasting words in New York, Hamas was liberating Palestinian prisoners from Israeli confinement. As Abu Mazen loses international support, Hamas is fortifying its ties with pivotal regional actors: Post-Mubarak Egypt has become a friend of Hamas, Jordan has announced its intention to improve its ties with Hamas, Qatar has endorsed Hamas, and Turkey now openly supports Hamas.

Indeed, the Arab upheavals have created a new and complex geopolitical picture for Hamas. The organization is about to lose its support base in Damascus as a result of its reluctance to declare its loyalty to Assad as he struggles to preserve his rule. The slaughter Assad ordered against the protestors—mostly Sunni, including many members of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is close to Hamas—has made it impossible for Hamas leaders to support Assad. It has been reported that Iran has stopped funding Hamas as a result.

Conversely, there is new hope for Hamas in Cairo. Mubarak, the PLO’s long-standing ally, has been ousted, and the Muslim Brotherhood leaders, who are fast becoming top players in Egyptian politics, are the natural allies of Hamas. Its growing relationship with Egypt is fed by its fear of losing its Syrian patron and the expectation that post-Mubarak Egypt will be more hospitable to Hamas.

(These changes probably helped Hamas decide to accept Egypt's mediation and move forward with the Shalit deal). Against this backdrop, in a surprising move, on April 27, 2011 in Cairo, Hamas also agreed to sign a reconciliatory agreement with the PLO—the same document it had rejected when advanced by Mubarak. The agreement calls for holding presidential, parliamentary, and National Palestinian Council elections. Until then, a unified caretaker government would be

Palestinians advocating a one-state solution hold that it would focus the struggle against the “Israeli Apartheid State”

appointed, composed of independent figures. Its primary mandate includes rebuilding the Gaza Strip, preparing for elections, and establishing state institutions. It contains an agreement to release political prisoners held by both sides, and provides for the appointment of a joint political committee to pave the way for the historic integration of

Hamas into the PLO. Abu Mazen and Khaled Mashal met in Cairo on December 21, 2011, and engaged in a further series of PLO-Hamas talks. It was announced that the parties had formulated an outline that would lead to reconciliation, with elections by May 2012.

The Doha Agreement (February 6, 2012) was another step in the reconciliation efforts. Under the terms agreed, the sides committed to establish a unity government headed by Abu Mazen himself. The government would be composed of

technocrats, would deal with rebuilding, and make preparations for parliamentary and presidential elections. According to Abu Mazen's allies, Hamas leader, Khaled Mashal, agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and to limiting actions against the Israeli occupation to non-violent resistance (Israel rejected the initiative outright and Netanyahu made clear: “[T]he Palestinian Authority must choose either an alliance with Hamas or peace with Israel. The two cannot go together.”⁵⁰ The steps taken by Mashal exposed a deepening rift within Hamas and placed a question mark over his leadership. The heads of Hamas in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh chief among them, rejected the “concessions” Mashal made in his interactions with Abu Mazen. Mahmoud al-Zahar stated publicly that Mashal had made the agreement on his own, while Haniyeh himself wasted no time in leaving for Iran to meet with Khomeini (April 23, 2012) and, while there, to commit himself to continue the armed struggle against Israel until all the Palestinian lands are liberated. Mousa Abu Marzook, deputy head of Hamas’ Political Bureau, also came out against Mashal's actions and made clear in an interview with the American-Jewish newspaper, *The Forward* (April 19, 2012) that even if the Israeli-Palestinian agreement were endorsed in a referendum, Hamas would nonetheless regard it as a temporary cease-fire only (*hudna*) and not a permanent peace agreement: “We will not recognize Israel as a state.”⁵¹ Hamas has not yet completed the complicated set of institutional elections currently in progress. When they are complete, Mashal's standing—which, as stated, was weakened by his leaving Damascus and the

loss of support he had enjoyed from Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah—will become clearer.

Alongside the tough rhetoric, Hamas has generally taken care to observe the cease-fire with the IDF. The latest flare-up, during the first half of March 2012, was initiated and managed by the Islamic Jihad. Ismail Haniyeh even stated in an interview with Reuters that Hamas would not be dragged into a war should one break out between Iran and Israel. "Iran did not ask us for anything and we think that Iran is not in need of us... Hamas is a Palestinian movement that acts within the Palestinian arena and it carries out its political and field actions in a way that suits the interests of the Palestinian people."⁵²

Although the Palestinian public wishes to see its leadership overcome internal divisions, it must be noted that, in the past, both sides have invested most of their energies in maneuvers to hold each other responsible for the failure of reconciliation efforts. The coming months will tell whether the Arab Spring's shockwaves will change the calculations of the rivaling Palestinian factions, and bring about a true unification. One optimistic scenario foresees a chain of events that would lead Hamas to moderate its positions: The Muslim Brotherhood, whose leaders are expected to assume roles in Egypt's highest political echelons, would be forced to address Egypt's severe economic distress. For that they will need the West's support, foreign investors, and a thriving tourism industry. It won't be easy for them to endorse the violent terror organization, Hamas, which would not play at all well in the West. Hamas could also drag Egypt into a violent confrontation with Israel at

a time when Egypt's limited resources should be directed to addressing urgent domestic problems. All this informs the prediction that mounting Egyptian pressure will drive Hamas to moderate its stance. Indeed, some Hamas spokespersons have recently intimated that they are ready to lay down their arms, opting instead for a strategy of non-violent resistance to Israel. This would ease the way for Abu Mazen to continue to pursue reconciliation with them. As one might expect, other Hamas spokespersons continue to declare their endorsement of armed resistance to the Israeli occupation. If we do get to witness a more moderate Hamas, it would be a striking example of the irony of history. The greatest achievement of the movement that begat Hamas would, paradoxically, lead its moderation, possibly even its incorporation into the political process vis-à-vis Israel. Once again, it should be noted that there are alternative credible scenarios that do not necessarily lead to a more moderate Hamas. To a certain extent, Israeli policy could affect the direction and trajectory of such developments.

The process taking place in Egypt is likely to be relevant to a dilemma that should concern Israel in relation to the Hamas issue. If Egypt continues to honor its peace treaty with Israel and if the leaders of the Islamic bloc continue to profess that they will not violate an existing agreement (even though it is contrary to their ideology), then we will see a familiar historical pattern in which the necessity of accepting an existing reality (even one that is considered negative) helps bridge the dissonance that develops between ideological principles on the one hand, and real-world constraints on the

other. The policy lesson may be: It is better to confront Hamas with a new political reality than to demand that it agree to accept it in advance.

The possibility that no political settlement is on the horizon raises the question of potential violent eruptions in the West Bank. Some argue that the probability of violence is slim because Palestinian inhabitants would have much to lose. Fatigue lingers in the wake of the bloody Second Intifada, and West Bank Palestinians currently enjoy relative security and economic development (although it is heavily dependent on foreign resources). But less optimistic possibilities cannot be ignored, nor the inspiration the Arab uprising may provide. The Palestinian public and its leaders feel frustration at the fact that their situation is again not the world's top concern. The events that are galvanizing the Arab world, the global economic crisis, the issue of Iran, and despair over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are distracting world attention away from the Palestinian issue. This frustration can lead to acts of violence that would bring the Palestinian matter back to center stage. Such an outbreak might have occurred against the backdrop of the hunger strike by 1,600 Palestinian security prisoners (April 17 - May 15, 2012) held by Israel. The death of one of these prisoners could have been the spark that ignited a new conflagration. In the end, though, an agreement was reached that restored most of the prisoners' rights and a flare-up was avoided.

With the political process deadlocked, the IDF is preparing for different protest scenarios, including possible mass marches on road blockades, settlements, and even Jerusalem—events that

could easily spin out into extreme violence. Palestinians are also toying with the possibility of closing down the Palestinian Authority altogether, “handing in the keys” and the responsibility for running the territories back to the “occupying power.”

Another Palestinian political alternative has been gaining currency: relinquishing the two-state formula in favor of a “one-state solution.” In this scenario, the Palestinian struggle would radically transform, shifting the focus to equal rights within Israeli-controlled territory, including the right to elect and be elected to public office. Palestinians in favor of this approach believe that the world would be even more attuned to their struggle—no longer one of self-determination and the quest for independence, but rather a struggle for justice “against the Israeli apartheid regime.” This road ends with the establishment of one state between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, with an Arab majority and a Jewish minority.

An Israeli-Palestinian collision course, in legal, political and, possibly, security terms, would be detrimental to Israel in every respect. A possible, and oft-threatened, resignation by Abu Mazen, who frequently refers to his imminent retirement and promises to refrain from contending in the coming elections, must be factored into the equation. At 76, and rapidly losing hope of becoming the first president of an independent Palestine, Abu Mazen may be driven to secure a final biography of intransigence and defiance vis-à-vis Israel and the United States, and to vigorously pursue unification with Hamas in order to leave a patriot's legacy as one who did not concede his people's demands and achieved the yearned-for reconciliation of its factions.

In the international arena, the absence of any progress toward the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is increasingly attributed to Israel. This harms Israel's international standing, increases its isolation, and fuels de-legitimization trends. In this context, the issue of settlement construction continues to be the primary factor working against accepting the Israeli government's position. Thus, the approval of 1,100 new housing units to be built in the Giloh neighborhood of Jerusalem (on September 27, 2011), which is based on the distinction, prevalent in Israel but rejected by the rest of the world, between new neighborhoods on Jerusalem's periphery, beyond the Green Line, and settlements in the occupied territories, triggered severe international criticism including a harsh telephone call to Netanyahu from German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Merkel's office confirmed that she had told Netanyahu that his decision to green-light new Jewish housing units in East Jerusalem has "raised doubts that the Israeli government is interested in starting serious negotiations" with the Palestinians.⁵³

In another instance, an Israeli announcement of a plan to build 2,600 new housing units in the settlement of Givat Hamatos garnered particularly vehement reaction (as it is perceived as part of an Israeli scheme to encircle the city of Jerusalem with Jewish neighborhoods), and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton stated that "[A]ccording to international law, settlements are illegal, therefore, the Israeli decisions must be revoked."⁵⁴

The harsh criticism drives Israel to responses that often contribute to the impression that it is in

constant conflict with its best friends, which is corrosive to Israel's image and credibility. Thus, a sharp condemnation of Israeli settlement policy and the disturbing escalation of violence by settlers, issued by the EU members of the UN Security Council (UK, France, Germany, and Portugal), drove the Israeli Foreign Ministry to issue a stern, defiant response in which it declared that the four European countries would "lose their credibility and make themselves irrelevant," and that instead of condemning Israel, the EU should concentrate on the situation in Syria and Iran.

The position of foreign elements who blame Israel for the deadlock in the diplomatic process is backed up by the debate within Israel on this issue. The former Shin Bet chief, Yuval Diskin, spoke particularly bluntly in this vein: "We are not talking to the Palestinians because this government is not interested in talking to the Palestinians... This prime minister knows that if he takes even the smallest step forward in this direction, then his solid government and his coalition will come unraveled—it's very simple."⁵⁵ President Shimon Peres was less blunt, though contrary to the government's position that Abu Mazen is not interested in peace talks, Peres claims that Abu Mazen is a serious and fitting partner and that it is most certainly possible to reach a peace agreement with him: "I am aware of the other views. I don't accept them... I have had not a few conversations with Abu Mazen over the past three years. All of them were with the knowledge of the prime minister. He knows all the details. On the basis of these conversations, I have been convinced that it would be possible to achieve peace with Abu Mazen. He is a fitting partner, and he can deliver the goods."⁵⁶

The Jerusalem-Washington-American Jewish Community Triangle

Addressing the relationship between Washington and Jerusalem necessitates including an additional key ingredient: the American Jewish community. American Jewry is a highly significant factor of the triangular relationship, which affects its agenda and strongly influences its dynamics. The last year has shown the might of Israel and the Jewish People in the American arena as well as the dangers involved in exercising this power. Pundits are debating the extent to which current American policy toward Israel is a "voluntary" product of the long-standing friendship with Israel and the Jewish People (an attitude that is deeply rooted in American public opinion and prevalent in Congress), and to what extent it is the product of cold political campaign calculations in an election year (November 2012), Jewish influence and capital, and the competition with Republican rivals. It must be assumed that if American policy toward Israel becomes more the product of cold, calculated political interests and pressures, and less the product of friendship—a sense of shared destiny and mutual fraternity—the danger of the relationship taking a negative turn will become much more substantial.

In 2011, the United States was forced to face the challenge of mass protests and upheavals in the Arab world. While the dust has yet to settle, and there is no telling where the dramatic public awakening in Arab countries will ultimately lead, it is safe to assume that Arab rulers will have to be much better attuned to popular sentiment than in the past. One of the key issues affecting the Arab

public opinion of US is the Palestinian issue. The more the US position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is perceived as one-sided in Israel's favor, the harder it will be for the US to have the sympathy of the Arab world. Arab governments attuned to their publics, which are largely hostile to the US, may pursue policies that conflict with US interests. To the extent that Israel is identified as the primary cause of this, tensions between Israel and the US will grow stronger. General David H. Petraeus' (recently appointed CIA chief) testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, on March 16, 2010, reflects the mood prevailing among certain officials in the Obama administration as well as in the community of foreign affairs experts in academia and think tanks: "The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests ... Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of US partnerships with governments and peoples in the [region] and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world."

This argument was already voiced in a December 2006 paper submitted by the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Committee, appointed by Congress to suggest policy regarding the war in Iraq: "The United States cannot achieve its goals in the Middle East unless it deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict."⁵⁷

The five days between May 19 and May 24, 2011 were a culmination of the dynamics of the Washington-Jerusalem-American Jewry triangle. As already mentioned in a different context, on May 19, as part of his speech regarding the Arab

uprising, President Obama reiterated his view, that “[T]he borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps.” In response, the Prime Minister’s Office declared—in unequivocal terms—that such borders were indefensible and that Israel would never return to them. The administration was enraged by Israel’s response and argued that the Prime Minister’s Office deliberately ignored the fact that President Obama presented the 1967 lines and land swaps as a starting point for new negotiations, and certainly did not demand that Israel retreat to those lines. Moreover, he reiterated the need to safeguard Israel’s security a number of times in the speech. The discord between the two leaders was publicly evident in the joint Obama-Netanyahu press conference held after their meeting on May 20, 2011. In his speech at the AIPAC Policy Conference on May 22, 2011, Obama took pains to clarify that Israel’s future borders would be different than the one in place on June 4, 1967, and that the parties would be allowed to take account of new demographic realities on the ground in delineating final borders. Netanyahu gave a sweeping speech in front of both houses of Congress on May 24, 2011, which received sustained applause and repeated standing ovations. In fact, it has been pointed out that Netanyahu got 28 standing ovations in Congress, compared to the 26 standing ovations Obama received during his 2011 State of the Union address. The event helped fuel White House allegations that Netanyahu is manipulating the US domestic political scene, harnessing the Republican Party’s attack Obama strategy in the 2012 presidential race.

Although election year rules dictate that anger toward Israel must be curbed so as not to lose the Jewish vote, White House criticism did find expression in the media. In White House press briefings it was argued that Israel’s failure to advance the peace process makes it difficult for the administration to address the Arab uprising, manipulates domestic American politics, and aligns the American Jewish community against the president. In this context, former Defense Secretary Robert Gates was quoted as saying, not long before his retirement, that the US has received nothing from Israel in return for all the steps the administration has taken to guarantee its security—access to top-quality weapons, assistance in developing missile-defense systems, high-level intelligence sharing, diplomatic assistance, and more.

American editorials portray Israel as unacceptably interfering in U.S. domestic politics, buoyed by the organized Jewish community

Israel’s image as an arrogant, ungrateful country is reflected in the political, media driven discourse in the US, often accompanied by claims that Israel does not know what’s in its own good; that Israeli diplomacy is paralyzed by internal political constraints; and that it is acting passively against increasingly threatening adverse trends: mounting isolation, de-legitimization, and demographic processes that challenge its capability of remaining both democratic and Jewish. American editorials often air the argument that the price of friendship

with Israel is becoming too dear for Washington. It is in US interests to be perceived as a fair broker in the peace process, to maintain its position vis-à-vis a tumultuous, changing Arab world, and to cultivate strong ties with main regional actors: Egypt and Turkey, both currently in conflict with Israel. Israel is portrayed as unacceptably interfering in US domestic politics—buoyed by the organized Jewish community—to make candidates' support of Israel, or lack thereof, a major electoral consideration.

Various commentators were quick to attribute the 2010 defeat of David Weprin, the Democratic candidate for New York's ninth congressional district to the Jewish community's disappointment with President Obama's policy toward Israel. (The district has a large Jewish population and has been a Democrat stronghold for more than 90 straight years). Even though there were different reasons for the defeat, the line taken by Jewish former New York Mayor Ed Koch guided the media's interpretation of the Republican victory. "I like President Obama ... I helped get him elected," Koch said at the Republican winner's election night party, "but he threw Israel under the bus."⁵⁸

In the 2012 election cycle we have already seen maneuvers to position Israel as a wedge issue. Republican presidential hopefuls (with the notable exception of Ron Paul), early in the primary process, pledged their commitment to order military force in preventing Iran from going nuclear. Mitt Romney, the presumptive nominee, labeled Obama's Iran policy a failure. In a speech on November 12, 2011, Romney promised that if elected president, Iran would not have nuclear

weapons: "If there's nothing else we can do besides take military action, then of course you take military action." Romney repeated this in an article in the *Washington Post* (March 5, 2012), and even undertook: "I will make clear that America's commitment to Israel's security and survival is absolute. I will demonstrate our commitment to the world by making Jerusalem the destination of my first foreign trip."⁵⁹

Republican candidate Newt Gingrich, who has since dropped out of the race, caused an uproar when he called the Palestinians "an invented people" (December 9, 2011).

The Democratic administration is outraged that the Israeli side does little to inform American Jews about how much the president has done for Israel. Obama won the 2008 campaign with 77% of the Jewish American vote, and significant Jewish funding (according to the *Washington Post*, about 52% of the significant contributions made by individuals to the Democratic party are made by Jews). The 2012 results may show a decline in Jewish support. According to Gallup polls, Obama's approval rating among Jews is plummeting: 68% in May, 60% in July, and 54% in September. 2011 In the Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion (AJC, September 2011), respondents were asked: "Barack Obama is the Democratic candidate and Mitt Romney is the Republican candidate. Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, or neither?" Obama won 50% of the votes and Romney won 32%. (16% would vote for neither and 2% didn't know). Nevertheless, some commentators reject these assertions and argue that the decline of Jewish support for Obama simply reflects the rate of decline in the general American population.

Obama and his staff are frustrated by Jerusalem's lack of appreciation, along with parts of the Jewish community, of steps the administration has taken for Israel's sake. The Obama re-election campaign is deploying a kind of response team of well known and respected Jewish figures armed with position papers detailing how good Obama's administration has been for Israel and the Jews. President Obama's speech before the UN General Assembly on September 21, 2011 was an overt courting of Jewish support. He said, "America's commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable. Our friendship with Israel is deep and enduring. And so we believe that any lasting peace must acknowledge the very real security concerns that Israel faces every single day. Let us be honest with ourselves: Israel is surrounded by neighbors that have waged repeated wars against it ... Israel, a small country of less than eight million people, looks out at a world where leaders of much larger nations threaten to wipe it off of the map ... Those are facts. They cannot be denied. The Jewish People have forged a successful state in their historic homeland. Israel deserves recognition. It deserves normal relations with its neighbors. And friends of the Palestinians do them no favors by ignoring this truth."

Obama's re-election website details the president's actions on Israel's behalf. He is portrayed as one who "has worked tirelessly to ensure Israel's security, and in light of recent turmoil in the region, has dramatically increased America's support for Israel's security and qualitative military edge. The President has a deep understanding of the grave threats Israel faces and he has been steadfast in supporting Israel's right to defend itself".⁶⁰ The

section entitled *President Obama's Unwavering Commitment to the State of Israel and the US-Israel Relationship*, 2012 emphasizes that Obama demands that any peace agreement stipulate that Israel is a Jewish state, the homeland of the Jewish People, and describes in detail the administration's efforts to thwart de-legitimization steps against Israel; its assistance in fighting terrorism; its commitment to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear capability; the additional aid for the development and deployment of Iron Dome (\$205 million); its insistence on the conditions Hamas must meet in order to be a legitimate partner in the Palestinian government (recognize Israel, accept previous agreements, and reject violence); the assistance in rescuing besieged security agents in the Israeli Embassy in Cairo; and even the fact that Obama has met with Netanyahu eight times since his election. The document also details the financial aid to Israel: "President Obama sent Israel the largest-ever security assistance funding in 2010 (\$2.775 billion) and raised that to \$3 billion for 2011."⁶¹ It also quotes outgoing Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, in his testimony before Congress on March 2, 2011: "In terms of concrete steps to improve the security relationship between [the US and Israel], more has been done in the last two years than in any comparable period in my [45-year] career."⁶²

With this statement in mind, Gates' retirement eve complaint is even more resounding. As reported by Jeffrey Goldberg, Gates told the president that "Netanyahu is not only ungrateful, but also endangering his country by refusing to grapple with Israel's growing isolation and with the

demographic challenges it faces if it keeps control of the West Bank.”⁶³ Gates’ successor, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, also warns against the isolation into which Israel is backing: “It’s pretty clear, at this dramatic time in the Middle East when there have been so many changes, that it is not a good situation for Israel to become increasingly isolated. And that is what has happened.”⁶⁴

Israel’s increasing isolation creates discomfort in the US because it underscores America’s own isolation

The political reality of the 2012 U.S. election cycle may help postpone Israel’s “Hour of Truth”

in supporting Israel. It was quite apparent in the US diplomatic effort against the Palestinian UN bid for statehood. While President Obama did commit to veto the resolution, Washington maneuvered to avoid having to exercise its veto power by dissuading other Security Council members

from supporting it. (As mentioned, the US did manage to thwart the Palestinian attempt to secure nine votes, so, for now, there is no need for its veto.) Ongoing construction in the settlements is an especially blunt rebuff to the administration, as are other steps, such as Netanyahu’s decision to appoint a team of legal experts to legalize houses built on privately-owned Palestinian land, which triggered a particularly curt American response: “We oppose any effort to legalize settlement outposts, which is unhelpful to our peace efforts and would contradict Israeli commitments and obligations.” (October 12, 2011).

Israel’s standing in the United States is also eroding. An air of distrust surrounds Israeli sincerity in moving forward with a peace process that culminates in the establishment of a Palestinian state. An especially scathing September 14, 2011 *New York Times* editorial—criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu: “Mr. Netanyahu has been the most intractable, building settlements and blaming his inability to be more forthcoming on his conservative coalition. Egged on by Congressional Republicans, he has sought to embarrass Mr. Obama—astonishing behavior for so close an ally that does not serve his own country’s interest.” This sharp tone may not reflect the entire American media, but it does suggest a worrying trend. The *Wall Street Journal’s* editorial line, in contrast to the *Times’* frequent criticism of Israel, has directed most of its criticism at the Palestinians, and usually supports Israeli government’s positions. About the Palestinian UN initiative, the *Journal* had this to say: “What Palestinians seek out of a UN vote isn’t an affirmation of their right to a state, but rather another tool in their perpetual campaign to harass, delegitimize and ultimately destroy Israel.”⁶⁵

The political reality of the 2012 US election cycle may help postpone Israel’s “hour of truth,” the point at which its positions on the vexing issues of a permanent agreement must be presented. But such a postponement does not release Israel from the horns of its dilemma. Even if postponed until after the elections, it is bound to raise its head again insisting that Israel take painful decisions. A post-election United States may return to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process in earnest, guided by fundamental American interests and

free of internal political pressure, and could place heavy pressure on Israel to reach an agreement, and may even give rise to calls for a forced settlement. Under such circumstances, US Jewry might find itself between a rock and a hard place. The need for decisions regarding permanent core issues also raises tough questions for the Jewish People with respect to the future of Jerusalem and the Holy Sites (Cave of the Patriarchs, Rachel's Tomb, etc.). Such historic decisions are bound to raise the question, to what extent is Diaspora Jewry entitled to a say in matters close to the heart of every Jew, everywhere.

The Jewish dimension of a permanent settlement also explains Netanyahu's demand that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state and as the homeland of the Jewish People, a position upheld by the vast majority of American Jews. Netanyahu reiterated this demand in his UN General Assembly speech on September 24, 2011: "The core of the conflict is not the settlements. ... The core of the conflict has always been and unfortunately remains the refusal of the Palestinians to recognize a Jewish state in any border."

Abu Mazen, on his part, has vowed to never accept Netanyahu's demand. His officials have come up with various arguments to justify this rejection: accepting the demand would alienate the rights of the Arab minority in Israel; it would constitute an implied renunciation of the Palestinian demand for the right of return of refugees, and an acknowledgement of the claim's futility; it would constitute an admission that the Jews have a legitimate right to the Land of Israel, and that the Palestinian claim to the land was a brief historical

episode that is ultimately incompatible with justice. They regard recognition of Israel as a Jewish state as acceding to the argument that places moral responsibility for the conflict on the Palestinians, which would exempt Israel from any responsibility for Palestinian suffering and subvert the refugees' demands for reparations to compensate for lost property and suffering. In effect, the demand is perceived as expecting a Palestinian embrace of core Zionist doctrine. Abu Mazen only fanned the controversy when, in his UN speech, he referred to Palestine as the Holy Land for Muslims and Christians and omitted any mention of the Jews: "The Holy Land, the land of Palestine, [is] the land of divine messages, the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the birthplace of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him)."

Is recognition of Israel as a Jewish state a "Red Line" no Palestinian leader can cross? Ironically, the term "Jewish state" is mentioned in the Palestinian Declaration of Independence (Algiers, 1988), in relation to the UN partition resolution. It appears that a formulation taking into consideration Palestinian sensitivities around this issue could be accepted by them in the later stages of negotiations, but not at the start. For instance: The parties recognize the right of the two peoples, the Jewish People and the Palestinian People, to self-determination in the framework of an independent state.

Over the course of the last year, the power of Israel and the Jewish community in the US has manifested itself. With the help of organized Jewry and relying on support from the Republican Right and Christian-Evangelicals, Israel stood its ground

on the issues impeding negotiations with the Palestinians, including continued construction in the settlements, even though it was greatly resented by the White House. Israel's conduct was possible in the context of Obama's weakened position, the result of the continuing deep economic crisis, the exigencies of an election year, and the 2010 Republican takeover of the House of Representatives. Making support for Israel a wedge issue in the 2012 elections is dangerous for the future of the US-Israel relationship. In the past, Israel has been careful to keep the issue of its American support above partisan squabbles; this was, of course, a more comfortable position for American Jewry.

It is feared that short-term achievements based on transitory political conjunctures may carry a painful price tag, especially if the Obama administration remains in office after the 2012 elections, and if Israel continues to be perceived as an ally that encumbers US foreign policy, manipulates US domestic politics, and pushes for moves that are in direct opposition to US core interests—including a situation where Israel and the Jewish community would be blamed for “pushing” the US into war with Iran. Such conceptions in the United States should be understood as warning signs that must be heeded by the leaders of both Israel and the Jewish American community.

Conclusion

The last year has been fraught with significant geopolitical developments brought on by the dramatic upheavals in the Arab world. Any attempt to draw hard and fast conclusions about the “new face” of the Middle East would be presumptuous. Nevertheless, Israel and the Jewish People clearly have to navigate a new reality, which is riddled with dangers and weighty challenges. The great uncertainty that characterizes the Middle Eastern region is potentiated by the current anxiety and crisis atmosphere marking the entire global arena. The number of “moving parts” within the international system, and the diversity of these components, makes conducting a sound foreign policy more difficult.

Because every building block in the regional strategic alignment may take on various alternative shapes, a matrix encompassing all the potential combinations is extremely complicated and encumbers decision-makers. Moreover, although the Middle Eastern picture on the eve of the upheavals was clear for all to see: ineffective governments, poverty, economic hardships, high unemployment rates, myriads of young people who have lost any hope for a decent future, rampant corruption, revocation of basic freedoms and human rights violations. The best experts failed to foresee what was coming, and could not envision Arab crowds flooding town squares and risking their life in front of live fire from the armed forces.

Political expertise lies in tracing the movement and development of the trends and patterns that

define the reality we face. But when that reality becomes erratic and turns current theories on their head, it is no surprise that these experts' very commitment to the patterns they have cultivated is likely to betray them. One should be wary of unequivocal predictions; in fact, it would be rather surprising if there were no further surprises in the Middle East.

When reality is this fitful, the instinctive human response is to entrench, react tactically and refrain from initiating any fresh strategic moves until after "the dust settles." But against the backdrop of the past year's developments, Israel faces numerous categories of threatening scenarios, which a proactive Israeli initiative—despite the uncertain conditions—could possibly help contain, or at least mitigate their potential damage.

Security deterioration, which in the extreme case might devolve into all-out war, with Israel forced to defend itself against a combined offensive along multiple fronts, including its home front—for instance, as a result of an Israeli or American operation against Iran; a retaliatory operation in Gaza or in Lebanon; following a deterioration in the relationship with the Palestinians—should be factored into the regional calculus.

Further damage to Israel's international position is likely as a result of Israel's enduring image as the intransigent party in the deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the erosion of the international standing of Israel's American ally, the collapse of the strategic Jerusalem-Cairo and Jerusalem-Ankara axes, and the rise of political Islam in the Middle East.

An economic downturn in Israel, as a result of deterioration in the security situation, and/or as part of the "de-legitimization" campaign waged against it—sanctions, not necessarily by governments, enacted against Israeli products, tourism, investments, etc., which the global economic crisis complicates—is also a possibility.

Israel-US relations, have been strained in light of the growing American perception that Israel is ungrateful, and that the price of US friendship with Israel is increasing steadily. The US image in the Muslim world has also suffered. Washington faces isolation in international forums, and is harshly criticized for its support of Israel (It is reasonable to assume that this damaging potential in Israel-US relations, will be marginalized at least after the November 2011 elections.)

While the Arab upheavals could go on for years, certain observations and dilemmas are already discernible, which should be taken into account in policy planning vis-à-vis the seething Middle Eastern arena:

The flourishing of political Islam: Political Islam has emerged as the major winner of the Arab uprising. It remains to be seen whether the entry of the Muslim Brotherhood onto the political field in Arab countries will moderate their stances, lead them into peaceful coexistence with secular parties in governmental coalitions, or engender dark theocracies. Will they work toward the abrogation of peace accords, or will they (as some of their leaders vaguely declare) respect them, thereby, somewhat paradoxically, conferring popular and clerical legitimacy to these accords; even forcing

Hamas to tone down its rhetoric and positions? Since Israel is incapable of affecting the burgeoning of political Islam, do we have the wherewithal to ensure that (when in power) it would adopt a stance more consistent with Israeli interests?

The increased power of the "Arab Street":

Without drawing any premature conclusions about the final picture of the Arab uprising, it seems safe to assume that future rulers of Arab countries will have to be much more attuned to popular sentiment. To what extent will Arab public opinion, which is saturated with hatred of Israel and prioritizes the Palestinian issue, find expression in the respective Arab governments' foreign policy, and in their stance on Israel in particular? For instance, is Israel's ability to respond to violent provocations by Hamas limited by fears that it could drag Egypt back into the conflict, and if so, to what extent? Are Israel and the Jewish People capable of defusing the animosity of the Arab Street?

The worsening economic crisis: The deteriorated economic situation in the Arab world, which helped fuel the demonstrations, has worsened in their wake. In the immediate term, there is a considerable downturn in economic growth. Local tourism and foreign investment have suffered and local investors are transferring their money out of the region due to uncertainty about the future and the lack of a basic sense of security. The economic crisis may force Arab governments to focus their efforts on economic recovery and domestic affairs, but it could also create a temptation to divert internal frustrations against "the Zionist arch-enemy." Does the economic crisis in the Arab world also offer an

opportunity and a context for proactive policy-making by Israel and the Jewish People?

Breakout of ethnic conflicts: The compromised power of the central governments in Arab countries, the economic crisis, and the sense that a weakening US is providing less and less order in the region, could combine to trigger a serious outbreak of ethnic and religious conflicts. In Iraq, the pent up tension between the Shiite majority and the Sunni minority could burst in the aftermath of the US withdrawal—while the Kurds pursue their own dreams of independence. The riots in Syria could spiral into an all-out struggle between Sunni, Alawite, Kurd and Druze. Lebanon may slide back into the trauma of a harrowing ethnic civil war (between Shiite, Sunni, Christian and Druze). Jordan's Palestinian majority is being systematically deprived of access to positions of power and national security agencies. And in Bahrain, the Sunni minority rules over the Shiite majority.

The perception of US decline and abandonment:

The process of US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan is perceived in some quarters as abandonment; its failure to date to curb Iran's nuclearization efforts; its failure to advance an Israeli-Palestinian agreement; and its response to the Arab uprising, which was perceived as hesitant and inconsistent in the Middle East; along with a severe, protracted internal economic slump, all combine to paint a picture of a steadily weakening American superpower, unable to attain its goals, increasingly preoccupied with its own predicaments, and progressively less willing to assume intervening roles in the region. Israel's

power—both its actual strength and the way it is perceived—is directly correlated with the perception of US power, and the intensity of its friendship with Israel. Can Israel, for its own good, help the United States restore its standing in the Middle East?

The decline of traditional regional anchoring strategic arrangements: The shockwaves throughout the Arab world are toppling strategic alignments that have traditionally characterized the Middle East. The component countries of the pro-American "Moderate Axis" have changed. Mubarak's ousting and the deterioration in relations with Turkey intensify Israel's strategic isolation. At the same time, however, the "Axis of Resistance" hostile to Israel—Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas—is also being torn apart by the threat to Assad's regime. This strategic reality must be thoroughly comprehended by Israeli decision-makers, especially vis-à-vis Egypt and Turkey.

The dilemmas outlined above necessitate choosing between two diametrically opposed approaches: one prefers to watch and wait, while the other opts for proactively spotting opportunities and taking initiative.

The first approach argues that the threats facing Israel have grown considerably following the Arab upheavals, and that this is not the time to take risks based on wishful thinking and strategic naiveté. Political Islam, extremely hostile to Israel, will probably dictate the path of most Arab states in the foreseeable future, and this uncertainty calls for maximum caution because any territory given by Israel today may fall into the hands of a hostile

power tomorrow. Prime Minister Netanyahu articulated the spirit of this argument in his Knesset speech of Nov. 23, 2011:

"The Middle East is no place for the naïve ... Chances are that an Islamist wave will wash over the Arab countries, an anti-West, anti-liberal, anti-Israel and ultimately an anti-democratic wave ... [The Arabs] are moving, but they are not moving forward toward progress, they are going backwards ... I will not ignore reality, I will not ignore the dangers, I will not ignore history ... or give up on any of our security requirements that have increased because of the recent crises and not diminished. This is not the time to yield them."

This approach is closer to the "watch and wait" pole. Prime Minister Netanyahu explained its theory vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue: "I decided to determine our policy according to reality and not to wishful thinking... I remember that many of you called upon me to seize the opportunity and make hasty concessions, to rush into an agreement, that the time was right. It is the opportunity, the right time, you said. Don't miss the opportunity. But I do not base Israel's policy on illusion. The earth is shaking. We do not know who will take over any land that we give up, not tomorrow, this very afternoon. We see this reality everywhere. Whoever does not see it is burying their head in the sand. But that did not stand in the way of people suggesting that I give in. I said that we want to reach an agreement with the Palestinians because we do not want a bi-national state, but we must insist on having stable and secure foundations, we have always wanted that but now we need it more than ever

... [I]t is not the time to rush into things, it is the time to be cautious in our connections with the Palestinians.”⁶⁶

The alternative approach argues for taking a proactive initiative toward obtaining progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, and the broader Israeli-Arab conflict in general (as part of a comprehensive regional agreement) as the way to bring about a potential major realignment of Israel's strategic situation, and an answer, albeit only partial, to the new challenges born as a consequence of the Arab upheavals. They include: removing the Israeli issue from the agenda of the Arab Street, which is fast becoming a more significant factor in shaping its governments' policies toward Israel; reducing the temptation for Arab countries to resolve internal insurgencies by initiating a violent confrontation with Israel; a chance to dissolve some of the glue holding together the region's extreme opposition camp (Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Islamic terrorist groups); paving the way for normalization of Israel's relationship with the entire Arab and Islamic world; improving the ability to restore strategic partnerships that have been damaged (Egypt), threatened (Jordan), or destroyed (Turkey); and improving the ability to build a regional strategic coalition against Iran's ambition for hegemony in the Middle East.

Additionally, such an initiative has the potential of: boosting the Israel-US relationship by crediting Washington with an "historic achievement," as the sponsor of the agreement, which would, in turn, restore the US position in the Middle East and upgrade its ability to obtain its goals in the Arab world; substantially curbing the trend of delegitimizing Israel; strengthening Israel's economic growth potential and its ability to find new markets; improving Israel's diplomatic position and image around the world, and break Israel's isolation in international forums; alleviating the challenges of co-existence with the Arab minority in Israel; securing Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, and turning it into a more attractive country in foreign eyes, and a more attractive state for the majority of its citizens, and for Diaspora Jewry.

The clash between these two approaches will continue to resonate in the strategic and political discourse in Israel and the Diaspora in the year ahead. Is this a time for strategic passivity? Or do we still have the prerogative (or at least a part of it) in this matter? The dramatic turbulence of last year is expected to intensify, throwing these difficult dilemmas into sharper focus. The changes are still stirring beneath our feet, shaping the future of the Middle East and of Israel. Israel faces tough dilemmas that must not be ignored.

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PART 3

Creating Jewish Meaning in the United States and Europe



Creating Jewish Meaning: Emerging Adults, Cultural Creativity, and the Jewish Future in the U.S. and Europe

Introduction

Cultural Flowerings and Institutional Startups

The past few decades have witnessed a veritable explosion of Jewishly oriented cultural works produced by US Jewish writers, musicians, serious and popular artists and performers, as well as religious thinkers and social entrepreneurs. A century ago artists like Irving Berlin, Aaron Copland, the Gershwin brothers, and the great Jewish innovators of American musical theater articulated the voice of America—and arguably helped to shape tolerant American values—but kept connections to their Jewish musical roots private and out of the public eye. In contrast, today's young artists consciously and proudly incorporate Jewish materials into works that non-Jews as well as Jews find meaningful. Cynthia Ozick once remarked sardonically, "Whenever people mention humanity, they do not hesitate to omit the Jews." But today's young American Jewish artists believe Jews are part of humanity, and present Jews and Jewishness with pride and passion in their novels and performances, secure in their own Jewish identity.

Today's creative innovations by young American Jews range from the frankly religious—such as liturgically rigorous post-denominational egalitarian “independent” congregations, to the cosmopolitan and secular—such as rock concerts that attract Jews and non-Jews in equal numbers. They include groups that reinvent ritual and new ways of looking at ritual, consortiums of innovative young Jewish philanthropists, organizational startups that foster social justice efforts around the world, and new—and often critical—ways for American Jews to interact with Israel; phenomena such as the reclamation of classical Jewish texts through “Storah-telling”¹ and non-stereotypical Jewish fusion cuisine that is Kosher By Design²; and Jewish fiction with protagonists who are Jews of mixed racial or cultural background, merging religious and cultural traditions. Disproportionately, they are expressed through contemporary Jewish music that features the fusion of diverse ethnic musical traditions—for example, Aharit HaYamim, a band that has performed in New York at the Jewlicious Festival is billed as “Israeli reggae, dub and ska.”³

Not least, the majority of Jewish start-ups that draw younger American Jews have a strong component of global social justice, often regarded as the *raison d'être* of Jewishness. This is most pronounced in innovative Jewish social justice organizations, but also permeates much artistic and religious expressiveness as well.

Younger American Jews frequently embrace the particulars of Jewish culture, but reject “Us and Them” constructions of ethnicity

For many, these global, multicultural artistic, spiritual, and social activist expressions aren't “background music” to their Jewishness—they are a primary focus of their Jewishness. Moreover, the elements that comprised the core of Jewishness for earlier generations leave many of them cold. Younger American Jews frequently embrace the particulars of Jewish culture,

but reject “us and them” constructions of ethnicity. They say they seek meaning—but they want the freedom to find their own, idiosyncratic formation of what is *meaningful*. They seek community—but they vigorously reject pre-fabricated social groups and “don't want people and ideas forced down our throats.”

What do these creative flowerings and institutional developments mean for American Jewish life, now and in the future? Observers disagree dramatically. Recently, for example, JDub Records—which had promoted Jewish musical artists through album sales and concerts, had famously “discovered” the Hasidic rock-star Mattisyahu, and had served as a catalyst for the creation of the Six-Points fellowships

for artists and *Heeb Magazine*, among other initiatives, closed its doors due to lack of adequate funding. Reactions from the Jewish community were swift and conflicting. *Commentary* magazine blogger Matthew Ackerman advised concerned Jews to “Shed No Tears for the Death of JDub” and be grateful that funders were “directing their priorities elsewhere.”⁴ Responding to Jacob Berkman's detailed report in *The Forward* (July 20, 2011), an “Israeli Jew” commented:

There's been a tendency in recent Jewish philanthropy to fund the “next big thing” or the inspirational “bright spark” of young Jews' life. Money has been literally thrown at people and ideas purely based on the appearance of hip. Many of these are bound to fail as their founders have never had to deal with the self discipline inherent in bootstrapping an organization....⁵

But David A.M. Wilensky, a blogger for *New Voices: National Jewish Student Magazine* disagreed: “Perhaps the saddest thing about it is that the official Jews try so hard—and fail so spectacularly—to market Jewishness to us as the epitome of cool. But JDub doesn't try to be cool. JDub is just cool and we'll all be just less cool without it.”⁶ The subtext of the passionate argument that ensued in Jewish periodicals and the blogosphere could be unsobly paraphrased: Is the new Jewish creativity a viable source of revitalization for American Jews in their twenties and thirties, or a pretentious, unimportant, anemically-Jewish drain on scarce philanthropic resources? Many observers, especially those who devote considerable amounts of time and energy to conventional Jewish institutions, including

federations and defense organizations, synagogues and Jewish schools, wonder if cultural connections can really take the place of visceral tribalism: Can reading a witty novel or attending a JDub concert featuring North African Jewish musical motifs—along with many hundreds of Jewish and non-Jewish musical aficionados—really be considered to comprise ethnic identification, and is this kind of identification transmittable to the next generation?

This essay explores the social ramifications and policy implications of the fact that for many American Jews in their twenties and thirties these creative spiritual start-ups, new ways of approaching religious texts and ceremonies, a broad spectrum of artistic expressions, and global social justice enterprises are the most compelling and accurate reflection of their Jewish religious, spiritual, and/or ethnic connections. After discussing the interests and concerns of American Jews in their twenties and thirties, the discussion focuses on questions such as: What is the prognosis for the innovative, globalized Jewish multiculturalism that attracts younger American Jews—can this culture really sustain Jewish communities and be transmitted to the next generation? How can Jewish communal institutions respond to a younger generation that often regards their efforts with a profound hermeneutics of suspicion? How do Jewish philanthropic start-ups relate to more established Jewish charitable organizations? What interventions may plausibly revitalize a passion for Jewish Peoplehood among the diverse segments of the next generation of Jews? How can we understand and nurture the relationship to Israel among Jews in their twenties and thirties?

Generational Continuity and Discontinuity⁷

Today's American Jews in their twenties and thirties are not the first to be artistically creative and to be committed to practical social justice projects with the goal of transforming society's ills. However, their Jewish identity is differently related to their novels, plays, films, music, and visual arts than their grandparents' and parents'. In the grandparental generation, even those who had very little in the way of Jewish ethnic capital, who knew little or nothing of Jewish languages, written texts, and cultural expressions, had a sense of being linked—positively or negatively—to the Jewish People and Jewish destiny. Partially because of this sensitivity, assimilation was an important coping strategy for them. Ambitious American Jews were still dealing with anti-Semitic quotas in their schooling and professional careers. This generation's strategy was typically to compartmentalize their Jewishness and express it only when they were with other Jews. In "mixed company" they knew how to blend in. They engaged with other Jews in Jewish organizational life, they followed Jewish events in news publications (always scrutinizing articles anxiously to see if Jews were involved in developing scandals or tragedies—a potential catalyst for anti-Semitism—as well as swelling or *kvelling* (expressing delight) with pride at Jews who

Their grandparents' strategy was typically to compartmentalize their Jewishness and express it only with other Jews

achieved). Those who had religious leanings made Conservative Judaism the largest movement in American Judaism, preserving traditions within the synagogue and the rabbi's home—but not making too many demands on ordinary congregants. For these Jews, Israel, as "the Jewish State," made a profound difference. Their connections to Israel had their own ups and downs, of course, depending on many factors. Only a large minority actually spent time in Israel. But for many of these American Jews,

Young American Jews have not experienced their Jewishness as an impediment to educational, occupational, or social mobility

concern about Israel was experienced on a visceral level—in their *kishkes*—a personal identification.

Artistic expressions produced by American Jews in the middle of the 20th century by writers such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and especially the young Philip Roth eloquently illustrate the simultaneous hunger for acceptance—and

awareness of Jewish difference, as Jews engaged in an alternately painful and hilarious process of assimilation. In Roth's early writing, the characteristics of "us," the Jews, and "them," the Christians who owned America, were clearly conflicting, but seemed fixed and easily contrasted. Portrayals of upwardly mobile Jews caught in a love-hate relationship with white-bread America in Roth's novels and Woody Allen's films launched both artists, and others like them, into celebrated careers.⁸ American Jewish authors were read and celebrated by non-Jewish

as well as Jewish readers not only because of their literary excellence but also because their dual vision as Jews and Americans provided insights into American history, culture and life.

The "baby boomer generation" were the children of these strongly ethnic Jews and the parents of today's Gen-X, Y, Z. The baby boomers were a demographically large group that gained a reputation for participating in social movements in the 1960s, such as student protest movements, anti-Vietnam War protests, Civil Rights demonstrations, and Second Wave Feminist consciousness raising. Some of them dabbled in drugs and experimented with alternative lifestyles. An important minority among Jewish baby boomers attained extensive Jewish educations through the now growing Jewish day school movement—often enhanced by Jewish summer camps, especially Hebrew-speaking camps like Massad and Camp Ramah—and extended in the college Jewish studies programs and departments that had begun to be established. Some who received intensive Jewish education became founders of the *Havurah* movement,⁹ independent worship, study, and Jewish experiential groups that met at convenient times on Sabbaths and Jewish holidays and were more likely to be led by a psychologist or a professor than by an ordained rabbi. Those women with strong Jewish educations launched feminist movements within Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and then Orthodox wings of American Judaism, and changed the face of Jewish leadership by bringing women into positions of prominence such as the rabbinate and Jewish scholarship, and bringing Judaism to the center of women's lives.

Many baby boomers were attracted to aspects of Judaism that lent themselves to do-it-yourself projects, such as those described in *The First Jewish Catalog*¹⁰ and its subsequent editions. Sociologist Marshall Sklare charged that the *Catalog* and the generation that produced it sacrificed "the normative to the aesthetic," and blatantly exposed their "subordination to the youth culture"—significantly—because of its "downplaying" of "the entire social and ethical dimension of Judaism in particular."¹¹

Today's "emerging Jewish adults" are the children of these baby-boomers.¹² Unlike earlier generations, today's young American Jews typically have not experienced their Jewishness to be an impediment to their educational, occupational, or social mobility, having grown up in a world where Jewish words and humor are part of the cultural toolkit of television newsmen and urbane public figures. The arts they create, view, read, listen and dance to, and the organizations they create reflect those changed circumstances. Steven M. Cohen divides their innovative enterprises into three categories: "expressive, progressive, and protective." Unlike the "establishment camp—as embodied in federations, congregations, human service agencies, Jewish Community Centers (JCCs), and defense organizations," who "see great need to defend Jewish interests at home, in Israel, and around the world," many young innovators "see the establishment camp as overly concerned with threats to continuity...and excessively defensive":

Instead, leaders of the non-establishment sector consider it their mission to express

and deliver **genuine Jewish meaning**—to themselves or others—through enriching experience, be it in prayer, learning, culture, or social justice....Their more **universalist social justice interests**, bound with their sense of **Judaism's particular mission** in the world, lead them to value Jewish engagement in addressing society's greater ills.¹³

The leadership and cultural creators of this younger generation of American Jews depart from the ethos of the Havurah generation precisely in regard to Marshall Sklare's critiques: it is to a great extent "the social and ethical dimension of Judaism" that they explore in their novels, emphasize in their worship, and promote in their organizations.

The social and ethical dimension of Judaism is the focus of young American Jewish engagement

Cosmopolitan Cultural Creativity of Younger American Jews

The great Jewish creators of American musical theater articulated the voice of America—and arguably helped to shape American values—but kept connections to their Jewish musical roots private and out of the public eye. In the 1960s and 1970s, as in literature, film, theater and other art forms, ethnicity became newly attractive, and overtly Jewish music became popular on

every brow level. Theodore Bikel and Harry Belafonte gave way to Yitzhak Perlman playing Klezmer music in the streets of Warsaw and Israeli rock stars giving concerts at Masada on Public Television fundraisers. Adam Sandler sang endless variations on “The Hanukkah Song.” *Fiddler on the Roof*’s “Sunrise, Sunset” became a staple of lounges and elevator muzak sequences. Jewish music has become mainstream (at least in some geographical locations) and young Jews feel that they are mainstream as well.

Tribalism and assimilationism are replaced by individualistic and spiritual yearnings for personal rather than national redemption

Today, that excruciating awareness of “us and them,” and the hunger for assimilation that goes with it, are all but gone—except for first and second generation Jews from the Former Soviet Union, like Gary Shteyngart, who bemoans that he must “rehash the old immigrant narrative,” and admits, “We may very well be the

last immigrant Jews in this country who have a foot in both worlds.” Today’s Jewish immigrants want desperately to succeed, but do not measure success by their ability to disappear into the smooth, sweet world that Philip Roth would later subversively call the “American Pastoral.” Instead, their visions of success are themselves jaggedly dissonant. Today’s writing is not Portnoy with a Russian accent. Instead, it conveys a different idea of what it is to be an American, and thus what it is to be an American Jew. (Philip Roth himself, impressively, left the

story of assimilation behind many novels ago. Indeed, Roth’s 1986 masterpiece, *The Counterlife*, may be considered the exemplar of the motifs and concerns of much contemporary Jewish writing, which often portrays the kaleidoscopic glinting of counterlives available to Jews today.)

Like many mainstream, well-educated middle and upper middle class Americans in their age cohort, younger American Jews are attracted to cultural expressions with a multicultural, multi-flavored range. Graphic novels, becoming increasingly popular, are by their very nature episodic, with visible cellular boundaries, but even in prose fiction today pastiche prevails, quilting together dissonant experiences, revealing the seams and fault lines, and sometimes shining a spotlight on them.¹⁴

A fascination with Jews and Jewish societies in remote, far-flung corners of the world—the “planet of the Jews”—leaves the well-established comfort of self-reflexive American Judaism and crosses imaginative boundaries to explore new ways of thinking about Jews and Jewishness. Both tribalism and assimilationism are replaced in these novels by very individualistic and frequently spiritual yearnings toward personal, rather than national redemption, portraying Jews in settings less familiar to American readers: Argentina, Alaska, Asia, North Africa. The striking relocation of American Jewish fiction to international destinations has emerged partially because assimilation is now a stale story, and partially because there is little to struggle against in the familiar American urban setting, and thus a paucity of ready-made dramatic tension. In planet of the Jews novels,¹⁵ Jews travel

the world—and it is in many ways an unfamiliar world. By placing the performance of Jewishness in a setting unfamiliar to the writer and many of his/ her readers, the novelist de-centers the reader and creates fresh insights and analysis. Novels about Jews in unfamiliar places and times stretch the imaginative capacities of the reader as they illuminate contemporary Jewish existence.

Music Provides a "Neutral" Jewish Home for Many Young Jews

Neutral space—something different from what Jews in their twenties and thirties often charge is the contrived feel of the conventional Jewish singles scene—is intensely sought after by both Jewish musical performers and audiences, in cultural venues from rock clubs to book clubs. Both Jewishly knowledgeable but alienated and Jewishly ignorant young professionals may shy away from synagogues and other institutions in the Jewish community, but are drawn to venues that speak their language and don't feel threatening. For example, the *This Week* section in the June 9, 2011 issue of the widely read magazine *TimeOut New York* provides a plethora of "Rock, Pop, and Hip Hop" events and happenings going on in Williamsburg for that typical week including the following:

The Big Jewcy Party at the Brooklyn Winery on North 8th Street near Roebling (Jewcy describes itself as "a smart and fun curated platform for ideas that matter to young Jews today, including Culture, Social Justice, and Jewish Food")

Musician Dan Wolf eloquently described this new arena as "sacred space," elaborating that young people are "able to define sacred space as anything that we hold important in our lives and give weight and value to." Examples of such redefinitions of sacred, Jewish space, according to Wolf are "Purim parties in clubs," "[reading] the same novel, Jewish or not, and using it as sacred text," and "five hundred people or a thousand people dancing, sweaty, to a DJ from Tel Aviv in San Francisco, or Balkan Beat Box on tour."

Music, literature, and rock clubs become the new loci for this generation to explore their Jewishness in ways that transform these spaces and entities into the sacred. Wolf and other culture-shapers advocate for the legitimacy of cultural connections to Judaism that offer relevant access points for young adults.

Jewish musicians often express their Jewishness through art that fuses Jewish and international cultures. Many young Jewish musicians release CDs with non-Jewish bands, working with folk music, rap, a cappella, and alternative rock, before forming their own Jewish bands or creating Jewish-themed records. Those musical styles are then incorporated into their Jewish music as well. Young Jewish musical cultural leaders bring together musical motifs from Judeo-Arabic songs of North Africa, from the Latin rhythms

Many young Jewish musicians incorporate Biblical and liturgical materials into their music

of South American Jews, and from the musical trends of their generation. At the same time, they are confident and unselfconscious about using Jewish subjects and musical motifs within their multicultural mix. Many incorporate Hebrew biblical and liturgical materials into their eclectic music.

These young artists aim to produce universal music that reaches a population—both Jewish and non-Jewish—that has not experienced anything Jewish before.

Cultural connections create an entryway for this generation to connect not only to Jewish culture, but also to Judaism

Much as writers do, these musicians believe their work comments on humanity and translates to all audiences. Many younger Jews enjoy the option of listening to klezmer punk or indie rock music that is not trying to force a message on the audience—it is "about the music," expressing one's self, and

exploring one's identity. Cultural connections create an entryway for this generation to connect not only to Jewish culture, but also to Judaism, artists insist, asking the Jewish community to recognize the legitimacy of the sacred space they are creating. These creative spaces provide an outlet for the artists who use them to express themselves and their Jewishness, and also supply a unique arena for other young Jews to explore their Judaism **without pressure, no-strings-attached.**

Communal and Religious Expressions of Jewish Multiculturalism

Just as young Jewish artists use novels, films, and musical media to explore Judaism and push against conventional boundaries, young Jewish communal entrepreneurs and religious leaders express their social and spiritual goals and challenge conventional American Jewish models. According to the 2010 Survey of New Jewish Initiatives in North America,¹⁶ the most prevalent organizational areas of focus are: "Jewish education (53%), community building (31%), spirituality (28%), ritual (26%), and 20s/30s engagement/development (25%)."

Rabbi and author Danya Ruttenberg observes that "part of the move away from denominationalism is a move toward pluralism." This "realigning of the boundaries" is a primary characteristic of young Jewish leaders, says Rabbi Elie Kaunfer, co-founder and executive director of the Mechon Hadar Institute, especially when compared to earlier generations of American Jewish leaders who tended to locate themselves within denominational affiliations. Those affiliational categories—Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform—convey networks of meaning, particular religious attitudes, and styles. They explicitly signify not only (or even primarily) theological convictions, but of lived styles of Jewish practice and beliefs. In today's American Jewish communities, however, as rabbis and lay leaders within the different established American wings of Judaism battle to assert their boundaries and strengthen their denominational identities, young American religious leaders often reject these labels with their pre-packaged meanings and redefine

religious affiliations in their own terms, creatively shaping their Jewish practices to make them relevant to and resonant with their own visions and values.

The movement of young American Jews across wings of Judaism has been conditioned by the transdenominational environments and institutions many of them experienced in their teen and young adult years. Many report being active in BBYO in high school. Some had traveled to Israel with the Nesiya high school program, or had studied at the Genesis or Bima Brandeis summer teen programs, which have a similar approach, then becoming active in their college Hillels, where friendships crossed denominational boundaries.

An important segment of young Jewish religious leaders is breaking with the mold and providing alternatives to denominationalism. They have transformed the American Jewish landscape through the creation of Independent Minyanim, worship and study communities that exist independently of denominational movements. The leaders of the Independent Minyanim movement come from a variety of different backgrounds, but commonly say they are catalyzed by myriad non-denominational Jewish experiences, including Israel trips, day schools, and Hillels. The concept of independent worship communities has a strong recent precedent in the 1960s and 1970s, when groups of rebellious young Jewish leaders founded experimental worship communities called *Havurot* in reaction to what they then saw as an unspiritual and overly materialistic and pro-forma institutional Jewish world. *Havurot*, much

like the Independent Minyanim, emphasized an egalitarianism that expanded to include women, and urged innovative approaches to passionate prayer in a non-institutional structure with lay-led services.

Yet today, most Independent Minyan leaders are eager to draw a firm line between their creations and those of their predecessors. They emphasize critical differences between *Havurot* and Independent Minyanim, arguing that *Havurot* did not emphasize rigorous mastery of liturgical and textual materials, and "did not produce the next generation of minyan founders, even if some of the goals of these minyanim and the *Havurot* were the same," according to Elie Kaunfer in his new book depicting the creation of and rationale for *Mechon Hadar*.¹⁷

Leaders of the Independent Minyanim movement say they are catalyzed by non-denominational Jewish experiences

The ambiances of Independent Minyanim can be divided between those that are similar to Orthodox environments and those that have more in common with Reconstructionist or Reform values and mores. Although different experiences motivate the leaders of the Independent Minyanim movement, many perform traditional—some of them virtually Orthodox—services conducted with egalitarian principles. Indeed, Kaunfer explicitly says that their *davening* (prayer chanting) sounds "just like Orthodox if your eyes are closed,"

with the firm proviso that egalitarianism is a sacred principle in the Independent Minyanim movement. Rabbi Ethan Tucker, co-founder of Mechon Hadar, explains, “I think it boils down to gender, nothing more, nothing less.” Gender issues are handled differently in Partnership Minyanim, specialized, Modern Orthodox subsets of the Independent Minyanim movement. In about 15

The pursuit of social justice as the *raison d’être* of Jewish identification resonates for young American Jews

Partnership Minyanim in the United States, Israel and Australia, men and women are separated, usually by a halakhic *mekhitzah* divider, but girls and women are allowed to lead all parts of the service and Torah reading except for the Amidah and other prayers for which women’s leadership is explicitly proscribed by rabbinic law. Like fully egalitarian

Independent Minyanim, Partnership Minyanim are reported to provide intense worship experiences.

Global Focus for Social Justice

The international cultural scope that so appeals to American Jews in their twenties and thirties is a reflection of the moral compass that typifies their generation as well. The pursuit of social justice as the *raison d’être* of Jewish identification is echoed by young leaders and educators, writers and artists, across the wings of American Judaism. Many of our informants—with backgrounds in

all wings of Judaism—spoke about social justice in language virtually identical to classical Reform Jewish conceptions of the universalistic mission of Judaism to be an *ohr lagoyim* (a light unto the nations).

Fluidity is a condition of their lives, including Jewish mobility. Shmuly Yanklowitz, on the cusp of thirty, is the founder of the Orthodox social justice enterprise Uri L’Tzedek and graduate of the open Orthodox rabbinical seminary Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. He believes that the proliferation of social justice organizations for young American Jews has taken place partially because the attention of the community is so “fragmented.” Rather than being united around one great international or national social justice mission, he says, groups of young Jews are attracted to very different causes, and even a single individual may be attracted to many different causes. Rather than having a “holistic” sense of mission, they have multiple missions, “because they belong to many different communities. They don’t expect one community to fulfill all their needs—or to absorb all their social justice energy.”

They do not expect to have “a **life** of faith or a life of meaning.” Rather, they respond to “**moments** of faith or moments of meaning.” One of the jobs of a spiritual leader, according to Yanklowitz’s vision, is to “bring all these things into a conversation in a complex way: social community, text, lived experience, activism, and spirituality.”

For many young American Jewish leaders, social justice concerns become especially poignant in critical examinations of Israel’s policies. This is

especially true for a constellation of individuals and institutions that one leader called “the New Israel Fund, J-Street, Pro-Peace, Pro-Israel, Pro-Palestinian, Progressive, Post-Zionist elite.” It should be emphasized that these are not the only voices among young leaders. Young, innovative leaders also include many who are strongly “pro-Israel” in the conventional sense; however, these leaders are far more likely to locate themselves in conventional leadership positions in the major wings of American Judaism or within the Jewish communal network. However, the proliferation of alternative organizations with non-conventional Jewish views is symptomatic of the new, multicultural Jewish globalism.

Many young American Jews have very high standards for moral national behavior, expecting the countries they feel attached to—like the United States and Israel—to live up to those moral standards. Their critical attitudes toward Israel are often matched by critical attitudes toward the United States, reflecting a redefinition of their relationship and involvement with Israel. Young American Jewish leaders and cultural figures ubiquitously declare themselves to be dedicated to global and local social justice in vigorous efforts that transcend ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic boundaries.

Familiarity—with Israel—Breeds Critiques as well as Connections

As a result, unlike past generations, among American Jews in their twenties and thirties repeated trips to Israel are related not only to

attachments but also to knowledge of and critical attitudes toward a broad range of Israeli policies. For example, a young Jewish professional described at length problems in Israeli life, such as “trafficking sex workers, foreign workers who are oppressed, Bedouins that don’t have water.” A young rabbi explains that generally the world to her “doesn’t seem that threatening,” so she doesn’t understand why Jews are “so closed-off.” Many young Jews, echoes Rabbi Sharon Brous, “are very resentful of a Jewish life and a Jewish experience that is insular, that’s only worried about Israel or that’s only worried about the Jewish community or Jews in need.” Young adults are looking for “some more broad articulation of what it means to be a Jew and a human being in the world,” explains Brous, so that young Jews understand what it means to engage “not only the Jewish community, and not only the Jews in Israel, but far beyond the Jewish community as well.”

Their critical attitudes toward Israel are often matched by critical attitudes toward the United States

Alternative Voices—the Young Traditionalists

Innovative young American creators include a significant group who can be classified as “young traditionalists,” musicians, social, political, and religious activists, and authors who are “protective”

(to use Cohen's terms) of the Jewish People and the State of Israel. In American Jewish writing by younger authors, for example, protagonists are sometimes the symbolic exemplars either of Diasporism or, in contrast, of Zionism and protective traditionalist loyalties. Some writers portray intrepid wandering Jews who pursue personal existential salvation in remote diasporic locations despite daunting odds. Others—equally feisty—are traditionalists. According

**Writer
Dara Horn
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Harvard
campus**

to a personal interview, the depth of novelist Dara Horn's attachment to survivalist ethnic Jewishness was forged in her own experience of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Horn explained that "9/11 was tremendously devastating" to her emotionally and "very much alienated me from university life, university

culture." When she returned to Harvard, she discovered an overtly anti-Israel environment, which "felt like a different planet" to her after New York. She was consoled that her thesis advisor was Yiddish scholar Ruth Wisse, "herself of course alienated from university culture." It was through Wisse's profound combination of deep commitment to Jewish ethnic survival and love of literature that Horn felt encouraged to continue believing in "the value and importance of literature, at a time in my life when I did not see it." Horn soon discovered that it was politically

incorrect to be pro-Israel on the Harvard campus at the height of the Second Intifada, and that her overt pro-Israel stance brought students into her class "almost as a refuge from campus culture, who were very afraid of their peers." Even today, Horn says "the terrorist attack was tremendously formative in my adult life."

Dara Horn's novel *The World to Come* (2009) legitimates tribalism by capturing the vulnerability of contemporary Jewish communities to terrorist threats, while at the same time emphasizing the immanence of spirituality in a variety of unlikely persons and places. Horn grew up in a Conservative home and today maintains Conservative Jewish connections and activities. Her connections to Jews and Judaism are intellectual, literary, emotional, and strongly traditionalist in many ways. She earned a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at Harvard, having learned Yiddish so she could understand 19th century Hebrew writing better—"I realized they were thinking in Yiddish," she says of the master Hebrew stylists of the time.

Other writers also have strong connections to traditional Jewish communities—and equally strong arguments with them—and utilize both their insider knowledge and their outsider critiques in their fiction. Allegra Goodman's *Kaaterskill Falls* (1999) masterfully captures the gradations of accommodation and rebellion within stringently Orthodox summer colonies in the Catskill Mountains; and the sociological jockeying of religious in-groups and out-groups animates Tova Mirvis' *Ladies' Auxiliary* (2000) and *The Outside World* (2004), which depicts inbred Southern Jewish communities interacting with outsiders from the North.

Young Jewish Creative Initiatives and Structural Changes in American Jewish Identity and in American Patterns of Belonging

It would seem that the new young Jewish creativity represents structural changes in both American Jewish identity and in general American patterns of belonging.

The change in Jewish identity started to occur after 1945 but we are starting to see its effects in the most recent generation—those who are now 20-40 years old. This change can be described (in Karen Brodtkin's words) as "Jews became white folks."¹⁸ That is that Jews became (or were allowed to become) part of the dominant white American ethnicity just as other Euro-ethnics (e.g. children of Italian or Polish immigrants) became part of this population. As part of the overall white American ethnicity, inter-European white ethnicities of origin (Italian, Polish, WASP etc.) began to seem less important. As Brodtkin (1998) describes it, this change had several causes: the discrediting of racist and eugenic discourse regarding European ethnic groups in the wake of WWII and the Holocaust; the 1945 GI Bill of rights and the post-war Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policy of suburbanization. These last two factors enabled the Jews to become middle class. Joining the white American middle class ethnicity enabled the Jews like other Euro-ethnics to engage in "optional ethnicity" or "costless ethnicity." This form of ethnicity is basically symbolic and it is essentially a "leisure time activity, rooted in nuclear family traditions

and reinforced by the voluntary enjoyable aspects of being ethnic."¹⁹

The pattern exhibited by young creative American Jews fits this identity pattern very well. As we have seen, young (non-Orthodox) Jews do not conceive of their Jewish identity in terms of "us and them" and many of them have significant social and personal relations with non-Jews. Like all social phenomena, this too is over-determined. In addition to the general shift in values in the past 30 years from "survival" to "self-expression"²⁰ (in which intergroup trust is increased), the entrance of American Jews, along with other Euro-ethnics into the general white ethnicity means that differences between Jews and others are just not that important anymore. Furthermore, the creative, cultural expression of Judaism exactly fits the pattern of "optional ethnicity." It's optional, it's fun, and it adds interest and status to those who engage in it.

The creative expression of Judaism exactly fits the pattern of "Optional Ethnicity"

The second structural aspect is that mass-membership organizations have been in decline in the United States for over a generation. Since the 1970s not only have labor unions been in decline (they have been under sustained political attack) but also fraternal organizations such as the Elks, mass ethnic organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Veterans Associations

and the like.²¹ Thus, the non-denominationalism or "post-denominationalism" of younger Jews and their resistance to joining establishment organizations fits the contemporary American pattern. It would seem that these changes are due to the fact that America has become a network society in which mass modes of production and political organization (the nation state) are being replaced by more individualized and customized modes of production, consumption and identity

They are not just recalcitrant young people, they reflect structural changes in Jewish and American society

formation (even within a transnational space) (Castells 1996).²² Thus young Jews like other Americans are not joining Jewish mass, one-size-fits-all organizations (such as Federations) but rather participating in projects based upon shared interest and meaning.

These structural aspects are stressed here because it is important to realize that

the new patterns evinced by the young leadership are not simply whims of recalcitrant young people, rather they reflect structural changes in Jewish and American society and hence will have staying power of one sort or another. Thus, it is imperative that Jewish communal organizations formulate a long-range response to them.

Conclusion: Creative Entryways for a Jewishly At-Risk Cohort

Protectionist, conventionally-Zionist young Jews are in a minority among their age cohort. Many of the innovative activities they promote are not controversial because their goals are transparently in the service of traditional Jewish values such as Zionism and Jewish knowledge and practice, even when their methods are innovative and unfamiliar. However, more "edgy" young leaders, artists, and social entrepreneurs sometimes engender hostility.

In the religious world, the young leaders who created Independent Minyanim are often accused of being "selfish" in their search for spiritual intensity and meaning, since many have removed themselves from the wings of Judaism that lavished their resources on their day schools, summer camps, and other educational ventures. Some more mature rabbis, within the Conservative movement especially, have complained about a "brain drain" or a "commitment drain" that seems to have drawn many of their most gifted young protégés into the Independent Minyanim movement. With these young leaders absent from congregational schools, worship services, and other activities—taking with them their inspirational singing, studying, lecturing, and general thoughtfulness—the congregations that remain miss their talents. Had they remained, they would have provided what sociologist Charles Liebman called the "conservative elite" of their generation. Where is the sense of wider community, some critics wonder. In the search for personal perfection, is the sense of peoplehood and obligation lost?

The fact of the matter is that the huge population of Jewish singles in their twenties and thirties scarcely, if ever, sets foot into Conservative and Reform (and some Orthodox) congregations except on high holidays or special family occasions. Singles **are**, however, attracted to Independent Minyanim and Partnership Minyanim. In that sense, these innovative new congregations are not really "stealing sheep" from the established denominational congregations. One may look at them as performing just the opposite task—keeping single young Jews involved with prayer and other congregational activities until and if they marry, have children, and then seek out more conventional environments that offer religious schools and other services expanded families require. Indeed, making room in establishment spaces for the creative leadership and innovations of younger leaders can bring benefits to both. Tact and care are necessary, of course: many an "Independent Minyan" has fled the proffered chapel or social hall of a neighboring synagogue (often to a local church social hall) when they felt (correctly or incorrectly) that they were being co-opted by a larger entity that did not share their values.

Recognizing and Promoting Interactions

There is much potential benefit to recognizing and supporting fluid symbiotic relationships between "conventional" institutions and philanthropies and "innovative" Jewish leadership. These are not two hermetically sealed worlds—just the opposite, they are deeply interwoven, as sociologist Shaul

Kelner notes when looking at his history as a young Jewish leader/researcher and describes why "the distinction between funders, recipients, researchers, and practitioners is misleading":

I am an alumnus of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship and the Jewish federation system's Project Otzma, as well as a former participant in The Conversation, a collaborative project of the Center for Leadership Initiatives and *The Jewish Week*. I have taught in all three Wexner Foundation leadership programs (Graduate Fellowship, Israel Fellowship, and Heritage Program), in the Mandel Foundation's Jerusalem Fellows program, in the STAR Schusterman Rabbinic Fellowship, and in the alumni program of the Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel.... [Young Jewish leadership and change are grounded] in the world of private philanthropic foundations.²³

"The distinction between funders, recipients, researchers, and practitioners is misleading"

As Brandeis Professor Sylvia Barack Fishman conducted her own interviews for the Avi Chai Young Leadership project, she was struck by how often she found "innovative," "non-conformist" Jewish cultural leaders housed within conventional Jewish institutional workplaces—federations, synagogues, etc. Rather than denying or ignoring

the symbiosis between the "old, conventional" and "new, innovational" expressions of Jewishness, we should try to build on their benefits: proximity can promote dialogue, where there is a will to do so.

Opening—not Closing—Doors

Many observers, especially those who devote considerable amounts of time and energy to conventional Jewish institutions, including federations and defense organizations, synagogues

and Jewish schools, wonder about the value of a Jewishness based solely upon cultural connections.

Paradoxically, Jewish culture occupies a more prominent place in maps of meaning of the Jewishly impoverished

"Why should we," the dialogue goes, "devote scarce communal funds to supporting a large and loosely organized group of people who care little and give less to conventional Jewish organizations, who seemingly mention Israel only to criticize it, who

do not see intermarriage as a challenge—indeed, whose rolls include a fair number of non-Jews. Why should we reward novelists who celebrate the Diaspora and have been accused of excoriating Israel?"²⁴

Punishing young adult creators and consumers of these Jewish arts for what appears to some observers as shallow Jewishness is quite literally tantamount to **slamming closed the doors through which the least Jewish enfranchised are most likely to walk, as well as rejecting**

the important creative efforts of immensely talented and dedicated young Jewish artists, entrepreneurs and leaders. JDub participants have been "disproportionately young, single, and earn[ing] relatively low incomes"²⁵—precisely the demographic that is most likely to feel alienated in conventional American Jewish organizations.

For many decades, American Jews have not formally affiliated with Jewish institutions until they marry, have children, and face family needs such as educating their school-age children. Today, large numbers of American Jews postpone such adult responsibilities well into their thirties and even their forties. As a result, those with weak Jewish ties often have little impetus to participate in conventional Jewish activities, and few alternative opportunities to explore their connections to Jewishness.

Cultural venues comprise a particularly large segment of the Jewish identity of those with the least Jewish education, the fewest Jewish friends, and/or the most alienation from the organized Jewish community. It is a paradoxical fact that while the most Jewishly engaged actually consume far more Jewish culture than the least Jewishly engaged, Jewish culture occupies a much more prominent place in the Jewish maps of meaning of the Jewishly impoverished. By supporting Jewish cultural venues—particularly those that appeal to a broad spectrum of younger Jews—we are maintaining the vital Jewish connections of the most Jewishly at-risk population. We are also supporting the work of some of our most committed young leaders.

We can learn from "protective" young leaders like Dara Horn. One of the most striking characteristics of these young creative traditionalists, whether they are musicians, artists, or authors, or they work within artistic venues, or religious, communal or social justice organizations that reach their peers, is that they know that conventional, knee-jerk condemnations—no matter how brilliantly polemical—will simply alienate their diverse audiences, not change minds. These young leaders are not afraid to speak up for what they believe in—quite the contrary—they are eloquent advocates for their values, including their ways of understanding Jewishness. But at the same time, they have learned the art of listening with an open heart and responding to the complexity of the contemporary multicultural ethos. These are skills worth emulating.

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Creating Jewish Meaning in Europe: Emerging Adults, Cultural Creativity, and the Jewish Future

The past decade has seen remarkable growth and a revitalization of Jewish life across Europe. New initiatives are emerging in countries across the continent, and people are connecting and reconnecting to Jewish life—culturally and spiritually. Social entrepreneurs are creating new realities, focusing on education, arts and culture and community building, and introducing new ways of expressing Judaism, ways that are inclusive, open and accessible, reaching people who were previously unaffiliated with the established communities. Rather than leaving societal needs for the Jewish central institutions, social entrepreneurs are creating innovative solutions, delivering extraordinary results and improving the lives of thousands of disaffected Jews.

New initiatives are emerging in countries across the continent, and people are connecting and reconnecting to Jewish life

Young activists, even in very isolated environments and with very little, if any, institutional support, have been responsible for starting up a number of new initiatives such as a Jewish Web-Radio in Milan, a Jewish- Israeli film festival in Amsterdam, a career advice center in Moscow, a European Jewish-Muslim dialogue conference, and a Holocaust Memorial Day in Romania.

Anja Yablonskaya, 25, from Ukraine, a community development director for the Jewish community in Kiev, has been responsible for developing the "Breathing One Air" program. "There are a lot of Jews in Ukraine but the number of those affiliated with a community is small. The old community model is not working, and it is important to me to help bring a change and a new vision of Jewish life not only in Kiev, but all over Ukraine. I want to change the attitude of 'what can I get from the

Europe as the most promising place for a Jewish revival, offering an alternative model that frequently engages the European skill of managing contested space

community' to 'what can I give to the community,'" she said. "Young people are interested in something modern, progressive and fresh and so I'm trying to build creative projects based on things like modern art, tolerance and human rights to draw intelligent and dynamic people to the community."

Back to the Future: Will a Jewish Renaissance Come from Europe?

Clive Lawton, the founder of the UK-born Limmud festivals initiative, perceives Europe as the most promising place for a Jewish revival. For him, Europe, rooted in its 2,000-year heritage, is certainly not a duplication of the US and the Israeli models, for which he questions the sustainability, but an alternative

model that frequently manifests the European skill of managing contested space rather than demanding instant clarity.

"Israel and America, for so long the dominant voices of world Jewry, carved up between them the ideological how-to-be-a-Jew discussion in the 20th century. While Israel 'nationalized' Jewish life, America 'privatized' it. In Israel, the state managed it for everyone. In America everyone was free to make it up as they chose. For a long while these two thriving centres conducted a dialogue of the deaf as to who was the most likely to survive into the 21st century. The one thing they mostly agreed on, though, was that Europe was a basket case, either dead or dying, a vast cemetery (or for the positive amongst them – a museum) with a few survivors left over from the Shoah. Both felt justified in the prescience of their forebears for leaving. Jewish life in Europe was always doomed.

"But near the end of the 20th century, three startling things happened. America discovered that its system (or lack of it) for securing the future of the Jews wasn't quite working as had been hoped. The huge upheavals of Jewish continuity developments emerged from that. Meanwhile, the Israeli government commissioned the Shenhar Report, which found that most Israelis wouldn't know a Jewish teaching if it bit them on the nose. (Still not quite sure what they're doing about that!) But the third thing was that suddenly, in the midst of this momentary loss of self-confidence on the future-of-the-Jews front, people noticed that Jewish life was not only continuing in Europe, it was actually starting to stir."

Hence, according to the Jumpstart Report writers,²⁶ Europe is witnessing an unprecedented revival of contemporary Jewish life. As of spring 2010, they estimated that there were 220-260 European Jewish startups currently in operation. Relative to their respective populations, there were, according to these observers, nearly twice as many Jewish startups in Europe (1 project: 6,400 people) compared with North America (1 project: 11,000 people).

While the Connecticut-based Westbury Group²⁷ shares a similar optimism regarding European Jewish revival, some younger practitioners, who have community-building experience in America and in Israel, observe a gap between US-funded startups and the local Jewish establishment, which doesn't back the new entrepreneurs. "My fear," says Ariel Beeri of PresentTense, "is that Jewish investment in building communal capacity in Europe has been either a reaction to the Holocaust, or a desire to "scale" the innovation happening in the United States of America or Israel to the Old World. What has resulted is a bifurcated community in Europe where the Old Guard holds both the keys to the Jewish communal pot, and the incentive to keep control. In the other corner, the New Guard is learning from their generation throughout the world and trying to start new ventures, but with external funding and therefore without the buy-in of their institutions or their key community members."

Yet Europe is certainly a different place and one of the major differences between the old continent and the new one lays in the lack of institutional support for grassroots initiatives. Young European Jewish entrepreneurs are not less innovative

than their American counterparts, but they lack mentoring and support systems. European Jewish institutional leadership shares with the European political elites conservatism and a respect for tradition, which in our case also means an aversion to risk and a resistance to emerging elites.

The generation gap is not equally wide throughout the entire continent. Coming from different historical and sociological backgrounds, European Jewish communities differ in terms of their acceptance in the general society, communal capabilities, and in the intensity of their Jewish life. British Jewry, which shares many cultural and institutional links with other Anglo-Saxon Jewries, has enough self-confidence and cultural anchoring to establish and support innovation incubators.

European Jewish institutional leadership shares a conservatism, which also means an aversion to risk

Of the communities that deeply suffered in the Shoah, French Jewry is the only one that has succeeded to set up an extensive network of communal services. Yet, this rebuilding has been done in a centralized manner that leaves very little space for individual initiatives. Ezra Venture, whose name refers to Joshua Venture, the US project that inspired the organization, is the first continental Jewish social incubator. In order to overcome the lack of support for "innovative projects that meet new cultural educational or social needs within the community," six young French businesspersons

decided to invest their own savings to provide seed money and mentoring for 2-3 projects a year. Until now, three of their ventures have succeeded in securing long-term financial backing from central Jewish institutions.

As a rule, startups are born to respond to needs not met by the institutions, and given the lack of responsiveness of the institutions, young European Jews have no other choice than to create startups and provide themselves with their own solutions.

Institutional withholding of engagement is a key reason for the large number of innovative startups in Europe

Institutional withholding of engagement seems to be one of the key reasons for the large number of innovative startup projects in Europe.

Launching Brand J

The challenges that face European Jews are partly similar and partly different from those of their American counterparts. Therefore,

the startups they create also differ in some respects from their American counterparts. But let's start with some commonalities such as music, dance, and fun. All over the world, emerging adults listen to and make music, and young, international contemporary music celebrates diversity and does not get along well with ethnical and religious borders. From Rio de Janeiro to Paris, London and Berlin, Jazz'n'Klezmer festivals attract mixed bands of Jews and non-Jews playing together and

enjoying music together. All across Europe, small groups of activists have launched Jewish cuisine courses, Jewish art expos, and Jewish film festivals. The leading project that, thanks to its professionalism and exceptional spirit, has succeeded to expand out from London to more than one hundred other places is the Limmud enterprise.

The question that challenges young Jews is how to be part of the "cultural mélange" they see as an extremely positive global trend and, at the same time, keep their ethnic distinctiveness? Their response, which is pretty smart, is to launch, what we may call, *Brand J*. In order to position themselves in the roiling activity of the self-identified Jewish cultural, social and political initiatives, they have adopted as part of their brand name the letter "J" or alternative easy-to-Google common designators that echo their ethno-religious linkage – let's mention among others: *JDub*, *Jewcy*, *JewTube*, *RadioJ*, *Jewsalsa* and *JuMu* (music and art), *Jhub* and *JVN* (social innovation) and *J-Street* and *J-Call* (politics).

Yet, when we compare American and European Jewish innovation scenes, some differences are blindingly obvious: the proliferation in North America of creative spirituality and Tikkun Olam grassroots projects is not echoed by a similar drive in Europe. This gap illustrates one of the fundamental differences between being an emerging Jewish adult in Europe and in America.

Beyond the lack of institutional backing of startup projects, as mentioned earlier, Europe is different from America in at least the following

interconnected dimensions: reluctance from the general population to accept Jewish exceptionalism, the centralism of the Jewish establishment, the Shoah-centered discourse about Jews, language diversity and lack of connectivity. Local startup initiatives aim to cope with these specific needs.

Between Assimilation and Distinctiveness

Whereas in America, young Jews have softly integrated their Jewishness into their multifaceted identity, European Jews still live according to a binary identity, like that of American Jews in previous generations. Similarly to the grandparental generation of today's American Jews, even the European Jews who have very little in the way of Jewish ethnic capital, who know little or nothing of Jewish languages, written texts, and cultural expressions, have a sense of being linked—positively or negatively—to their Jewish ancestry. Even if young European Jews do not experience any impediment to their educational, economic, or social mobility, their Jewishness is a key component of their identity. As a result of the global post-modern cultural identity collage, they can, as do their American counterparts, study Talmud and eat lobster on Friday night.

Anti-Semitism has fulfilled, and continues to fulfill, a critical function in the construction of European collective identities. On the old continent, Jewish belonging is never a trivial issue. The most popular word that appears beside any famous person in France on Google is "Jew" and, it was only following an anti-racism campaign, that Apple decided to withdraw the "Jew/non-Jew" app that answered

precisely this pathological need, shared by Jews and non-Jews alike, to question the Jewishness of any known person. Artists, politicians, writers, and movie producers of Jewish ancestry are routinely questioned by the media about their relationship to Judaism, and to Israel. This obsession positions Jewish identity as a delicate matter for European Jews in general and emerging adults particularly. Concretely, Jews are faced with an impossible choice: they are subliminally asked to assimilate while the social milieu doesn't allow them to do it. To cope with this tragic choice, one of the fastest-growing Jewish French sarcastic blogs, named *Jewpop*, has chosen as its slogan the grotesque motto "The Site that Sees Jews Everywhere," and as its battle cry "Join the Conspiracy," therefore taking the anti-Semite obsession *ad absurdum*. Refusing the isolationism that is tempting a part of the community and the pitiful attitude of Jews who try (in vain) to hide their Jewishness, they decided to assume, with humor, their ethnic identity in a way that recalls Philip Roth's attitude in the sixties. The initiative is so successful that some non-Jewish artists ask to contribute to the blog. As Jewish humor and the blogosphere are both known to press against frontiers, the Belgian version of this blog calls itself "The Site that Sees Goys Everywhere," and ridicules further the anti-Semite obsession.

Anti-Semitism has justified & continues to fulfill a critical function in the construction of European collective identities

The Shoah is a key reference of the post-war Europe and this centrality casts the Jews in a troublesome role in this tragedy. Young Jews don't want be reduced to this negative symbolic role. Moreover, the Shoah reference is a double-edged sword because any reference to the Holocaust reminds the Europeans of their miserable attitude, not to mention murderous deeds, during this period. Young Jews try in different ways to reject this problematic trap. One way is through literature and art. In this regard, the graphic novel *We Will Not Go to Auschwitz* tells the story of third generation survivors that decided to "tour" the thousand years of Jewish life in Poland, but deliberately avoid visiting Second World War sites.

Centralism and conservatism of the Jewish establishment

The Internet has helped isolated English-speaking or Hebrew-speaking Jews to connect themselves to the "Global Shtetl"

We mentioned earlier that very little funding is available for innovation in the Jewish community and that young adults are rarely integrated in the leadership. This is particularly true in the religious domain where, even if very few Jews are religiously observant, the central rabbinates representing entire communities are under

the exclusive control of Orthodox authorities. Despite this, Reform communities are growing, particularly in the Protestant countries. There

is certainly a need for a spiritual renaissance in Europe, but because grassroots initiatives are jeopardized by the Jewish establishment, the traditionalism of the Jewish centralistic leadership, and religion's bad name in Europe, we don't yet see alternative Independent Minyans and Havurot in Europe. This lag between "new-age" initiatives emerging in the US and their slow acceptance in the more conformist world is not specifically Jewish—we observe a similar delay with other religions too—and, not surprisingly, London is the first place in Europe where alternative Minyans and new communities initiatives, such as the *Assif's* melodic traditional egalitarian community and the "Shabbat Resouled" funk band, have begun emerging.

Language diversity and the need to interconnect isolated communities

The Internet has helped isolated English-speaking or Hebrew-speaking Jews to connect themselves to the "global shtetl." However, in Europe, isolation comes along with the diversity of languages and an inability to produce high-quality Jewish educational materials. An interesting way to confront these constraints is Jewish European Learning Experience Dot. net. (JELED) Developed through a joint effort of several small communities, this e-learning project aims to create curricular materials, ideas, and opportunities for interaction, and is made available in 'uncommon' languages, such as Dutch, German and Finnish. If children can play games, solve puzzles and find coloring books and other activities on Jewish topics, the

forum enables their parents and teachers to be in contact with peers from other communities, both national and international. Many startups aim at gathering and connecting young adults from tiny communities who do not have the opportunity to experience Jewishness in their immediate environment.

For small isolated communities lacking critical demographic mass, physical and virtual

connectivity is a matter of survival, and young adults who want to keep their Jewishness are the ones who invent creative festivals and hospitality traveling experiences to meet fellow Europeans with Jewish backgrounds. If strategic thinkers and young adults alike believe that we should better use the existing real estate and Shoah reparations to fund new initiatives, the central institutions are reluctant to make such decisions.

Notes

- 1 Story + Torah = Storah.
- 2 Susie Fishbein, "Kosher By Design" (New York: Artsroll/ Shaar Press, 2003).
- 3 An e-flyer advertisement, "Jewishlicious Music Spotlight: Aharit Hayamim," on Tuesday, February 17, advertised the concert in the following way: "Aharit Hayamim is Israel's #1 Festival Band. Aharit's Israeli reggae, dub and ska groove and sensibility is rooted in a longing for peace and love of Zion they share with their Rastafarian Brethren....They embody the Grateful Dead and Bob Marley rolled into one." (Adam S., Music Director: jewishliciousfestival@gmail.com).
- 4 Matthew Ackerman, "Shed No Tears for the Death of JDUB," posted July 14, 2011, www.commentarymagazine.com.
- 5 Jacob Berkman, "Music Dies for JDub Records: Legacy of Groundbreaking Jewish Label Lives On," July 20, 2011, comments posted following article, "Israeli Jew," <http://forward.com/articles>.
- 6 David A.M. Wilensky, "JDub Records, a music video eulogy," posted July 13, 2011, <http://blog.newvoices.org>.
- 7 Data are drawn primarily from extensive interview and focus group data from the diverse studies in the forthcoming volume, "The New Jewish Leaders: Reshaping the American Jewish Landscape," edited by Jack Wertheimer (based on research funded by the Avi Chai Foundation), and also incorporate recent social scientific studies of younger American Jews, including a 2010 Survey of New Jewish Initiatives in North America (Jumpstart, The Natan Fund, and The Samuel Bronfman Foundation), and a study published by the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) and Berman Jewish Policy Archive at NYU Wagner, among other sources.
- 8 Sylvia Barack Fishman, "The Way Into the Varieties of Jewishness" (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007), 213-215.
- 9 Riv-Ellen Prell, "The Havurah Movement: Prayer and Community in American Judaism" (1989).
- 10 Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, "The First Jewish Catalog: A Do-It-Yourself Kit" (1965).
- 11 Marshall Sklare, "The Greening of Judaism," *Commentary* 58 (No. 6), December 1974: 51-57 (rpt. Marshall Sklare, *Observing America's Jews*, Waltham, MA.: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 1993, pp. 74-86).
- 12 Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- 13 Steven M. Cohen, "Expressive, Progressive, and Protective: Three Impulses for Nonestablishment Organizing among Young Jews Today," Wertheimer, ed., *The New Leaders*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-111.
- 14 See: Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel, eds., *Turning Up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); Janet Handler Burstein, *Telling the Little Secrets: American Jewish Writing Since the 1980s*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); Lois E. Rubin, ed., *Connections and Collisions: Identities in Contemporary Jewish-American Women's Writing*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); Paul Zakrewski, ed., *Lost Tribe: Jewish Fiction from the Edge*, (New York: HarperCollins/ Perennial, 2003).
- 15 Planet of the Jews novels include such very different works as Nathan Englander's *The Ministry of Special Cases* (2007), Judith Katz's *The Escape Artist* (1997), and Rivka Galchen's *Atmospheric Disturbances* (2008), each of which brings its Jews to Argentina. Jews shiver in Siberia in Anya Ulinich's *Petropolis* (2007) and end up in Alaska in Michael Chabon's *The Yiddish Policeman's Union* (2008) and Amy Bloom's *Away* (2008). Sephardic Jewish culture and the dislocation of Jews in Muslim, Arab or North African lands

are depicted in novels such as Dalia Sofer's *The Septembers of Shiraz* (2007) and Gina Nahai's *Cry of the Peacock* (1991), echoing a cornucopia of celebrated pieces of memoir literature portraying similar subject and societies. Other novels, such as Gary Shteyngart's *Absurdistan* (2006) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), and Allen Hoffman's strange *Small Worlds* (1996) and *Big League Dreams* (1997), tell unfamiliar stories about European Jews, recounting eerie travels that, whether they proceed through familiar or unfamiliar countries of origin, are painted with grotesque details distant in every way from the warm hominess of "Fiddler on the Roof."

16 2010 Survey of New Jewish Initiatives in North America, *op.cit.* This classification system was developed by Steven M. Cohen and Dasee Berkowitz (2009).

17 Elie Kaunfer, *Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2010), 95.

18 Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says About Race in America*. (New Brunswick, N.J. and London: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

19 Mary C. Waters, "Optional Ethnicities – For Whites Only?" In Silvia Pedraza and Ruben G. Rumbaut eds. *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in America*. (Belmont Ca.:Wadsworth 1996) p. 444-54. Mary C. Water, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1990).

20 Inglehart, Ronald, *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1997) See Annual Assessment 2010.

21 Theda Skocpol, "Recent Transformation of Civic Life", in Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina eds., *Civic Engagement in American Life*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1998). Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, (Norman, Oklahoma, U. of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

22 Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society*

and Culture (Three Volumes) Blackwell, Oxford, 1996).

23 Shaul Kelner, "In Its Own Image: Independent Philanthropy and the Cultivation of Young Jewish Leadership," in Wertheimer, *New Jewish Leaders*, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-321, p. 256.

24 Ruth Wisse, "Slap Shtick. The Yiddish Policeman's Union" *Commentary Magazine*, 124, no. 1 (July/August, 2007): 73–77.

25 Cohen, "Expressive, Progressive, and Protective," *op.cit.*, p. 105.

26 www.jewishecosystem.org/euro2010/, p.7.

27 www.compasseurope.org/about-compass.php.

PART 4

Developments in Israel



Analysis: A New Political Landscape

On May 8, 2012 Israelis awoke to a new political landscape: a national unity government based on one of the widest coalitions in the country's history, with 94 of the 120 Knesset members (78 percent of the total). They had gone to sleep the night before with the bill to dissolve the Knesset having passed its first reading, and with agreement among the parties to hold elections on September 4, 2012.

The Knesset's decision to dissolve itself and hold early general elections was not triggered by political constraints. Netanyahu's government enjoyed a stable majority and could have remained in power even without broadening the coalition. However, the decision to bring the elections forward should not have come as a surprise to anybody in Israel's political arena. Even though the prime minister had promised to hold the elections at the end of the Knesset's legal term in late fall 2013, he nevertheless made all of the preparations needed to enable him to join any initiative to hold early elections at a time convenient to him. These steps also forced the rest of the political establishment to make similar preparations.

The 180 degree turn that occurred between May 7 and 8 was made possible mainly by a convergence of interests among three of the central figures of

Israeli politics: Shaul Mofaz, whose party, Kadima, was at risk of being trounced under his leadership; Ehud Barak, whose Independence Party (that had split from Labor) was hovering too close to the electoral threshold, the minimum percentage of votes needed to gain Knesset representation; and Binyamin Netanyahu, who despite his popularity in the polls, faced a number of difficult tests before the elections and who, only a day earlier, had been surprised at a meeting of his party's central committee **by the strength of the ideological right and of settler activists in Likud.**

An analysis of the dramatic changes first requires an understanding of the factors that brought Netanyahu to opt for early elections:

- a) **There was concern within the prime minister's political circle that the re-election of Barack Obama in November would result in an attempt by his administration to interfere in Israel's internal politics. Political insiders in Israel believe that something similar occurred under the elder George Bush, against Yitzchak Shamir during the 1992 election campaign, and under Bill Clinton against Binyamin Netanyahu himself in 1999.**

b) The overt attacks by the former heads of the Mossad and the Shin Bet on the diplomatic-security leadership over the handling of Iran, and the emergence of the Iranian threat as a subject for public debate, demanded for the prime minister a renewed mandate before engaging in any military initiative.

c) Elections had to be held early enough to leave a window for a strike against Iran before the US elections in November, in

All the Zionist parties except Meretz declared they would not rule out joining a Netanyahu-led government in the future

the event that diplomatic and economic efforts to achieve a settlement with Tehran failed.

d) The short political and legal timetable for legislation dealing with "sharing the burden" and army service by ultra-Orthodox Jews following the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the Tal Law.

e) Introducing the two-year budget for 2013-14 that may require painful cuts as a result of the deficit's growth, a possible decline in economic growth, urgent security needs, the pressure of the social protest movement, and the economic crisis in Europe.

f) While the rival parties were prepared for elections on a technical level, they did not present a serious threat to a Netanyahu/Likud victory, and early elections did not pose an electoral risk.

In fact, despite the prime minister's concerns about the reaction of the right within his own party, and of Avigdor Lieberman who is competing for the same base of support, Netanyahu remained strong enough to advance almost any policy or initiative. This strength was, to a large degree, based on the weakness of his opponents in the Knesset, who had not managed to produce a candidate with a chance of succeeding him or of imposing a different agenda.

Tzipi Livni, until last month leader of the opposition, paid a personal political price for the situation that had developed. This once-promising leader, whose 2009 campaign — "Tzipi or Bibi" — achieved impressive electoral results (28 seats for her Kadima Party to 27 for Likud), was unable to assemble a coalition. Her success at the ballot box proved to be worthless since the votes she received came mainly from the left bloc. This in contrast to the previous elections held in March 2006, when Kadima leader Ehud Olmert drew his power from the ailing Ariel Sharon's popularity, which enabled the party to win significant support from the right bloc. Livni also proved unable to rally the troops in opposition, neither within her own party (indeed, Shaul Mofaz defeated her by a substantial margin in the Kadima leadership elections) nor in leading an active opposition that offered a credible alternative to the government.

The victory of former journalist Shelly Yachimovich, who was elected Labor leader and who has earned respect for her work as a member of the Knesset and her success in rehabilitating the party's standing, is not yet considered a viable candidate for prime minister.

A convergence of interests against early elections also developed within the current coalition: the split in the Labor Party that left Barak with a shrinking political horizon; the cloud of the police investigations and threat of indictment that have accompanied Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's tenure; the threat to Shas leader Eli Yishai from his predecessor Arie Deri, who spent years in jail for corruption and who has announced his intention to return to the political arena; and the lack of interest among the other coalition partners in early elections.

In all the latest opinion polls, Netanyahu has led the other contenders by a substantial margin. This situation led most of the Zionist parties, with the exception of Meretz, to declare that they would not rule out joining a Likud-led coalition. Moreover, Netanyahu's increased strength and the lead he built over his rivals eroded the potential for a shift in the "blocking alliance"—of the kind that has in the past forced a change in government—could emerge within the Knesset.

Despite his experience as a former vice-prime minister, minister of defense and army chief of staff, which would seem to qualify him to run for prime minister, Shaul Mofaz was not seen by the public as a serious alternative to Netanyahu. This can be explained, among other reasons, by his decision when Kadima was founded to leave the Likud at the last minute for the padded bandwagon of Ariel Sharon. This came after he publically committed to stay in Likud, and his decision cut his ties with his natural base in the center-right of the political map, at a time when Kadima captured the liberal center-left position.

Under Sharon and Peres, Kadima was considered a party capable of capturing support from both Likud and Labor. Their effective departure from the political scene cast doubt over the party's survival in its original form. Even though Livni lost her support within the party itself, she, at least spoke to Kadima's public. Livni is "one of them" in a way that Mofaz is not, hence the erosion of his leadership and of Kadima's strength, especially following Livni's departure.

Into the liberal center, too, came Yair Lapid, who has natural intelligence and the charm of a television personality, but lacks diplomatic and political experience. On the declarative level, he claims to be fighting corruption and nepotism, and to support liberal values. But the by-laws he set out for his own party state that he cannot be removed as its head until 2020, while the council he set up to govern the party includes his wife, his son, his personal trainer and others who were appointed to secure his own position. At this stage, he is not a contender and does not pretend to be a candidate for prime minister.

But if Mofaz and Barak's political reasons for delaying elections are clear, why did Netanyahu join the effort to establish a broad coalition? In the first briefing Netanyahu held with Mofaz in his role as leader of the opposition, Mofaz raised

Yair Lapid, who lacks diplomatic and political experience, is competing for the same voters as Kadima

the idea of joining the coalition. Netanyahu, who had rejected a similar offer from Barak in 1998 only to be trounced in elections, tasked one of his advisers with checking whether there was any substance to Mofaz's overture which, to say the least, did not inspire great confidence in the prime minister.

Concurrent with the ongoing election preparations, then, a quiet exploration began among the political advisers, who were also joined by Barak's. These

The broad coalition strengthens Netanyahu's ability to initiate new policies in various areas

conversations, which lasted almost two weeks, did not rule out a widening of the coalition. However, two significant events occurred on the eve of Netanyahu's decision in this regard:

a) At the Likud Central Committee meeting it became apparent to the prime minister that the

strengthening of the right wing within his party, and of the settler representatives, risked forcing him to stand at the head of a Likud list that would make it very difficult for him to function effectively after the elections, even if he were to win as expected.

b) The Supreme Court decision to demolish a neighborhood in the settlement of Beit El, which increased pressure on Netanyahu.

In addition to these, two other tests already faced

the prime minister: the striking down of the Tal Law, which had ensured that relations with the ultra-Orthodox remained calm; and the relocation of the settlement of Migron from its present site.

A broad coalition—of the kind that Netanyahu succeeded in establishing—is likely to make it significantly easier for him to overcome these hurdles, to contain the right wing of the Likud and to turn Netanyahu into a leader on a national scale, with a wide base of support. He is also likely to complete his entire term and become—other than David Ben-Gurion—the prime minister with the most years of service.

And yet, the central factor in his decision is **likely to have been Iran**:

- a) Netanyahu as head of a national unity coalition is not the same Netanyahu heading a coalition of the right. Assessments are that this change would not only strengthen him domestically but make it much more difficult for the Obama administration, assuming the president is re-elected, to interfere openly in internal Israeli politics.
- b) The absence of elections in September widens the range of options available with regard to Iran should diplomatic negotiations and economic sanctions fail to halt Iran's nuclear program.
- c) Bringing one more former minister of defense and army chief of staff into the decision-making circle significantly strengthens the Netanyahu government against criticism of his government's judgment in the diplomatic-security arena.

The agreement between Netanyahu and Mofaz focuses on cooperation on three levels: a) advancing the peace initiative with the Palestinians; b) enacting new legislation dealing with the issue of army service and employment among the Haredim; and c) changing the electoral system. These are three "landmines" that Israeli society and its leaders have not succeeded in disarming in the past.

Solving these three issues cannot be taken for granted even with the new coalition, and efforts to deal with them are likely to bring additional changes in the political landscape, and the dismantling of old political partnerships.

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It is too early to tell where Netanyahu is heading. Even if the new broad coalition narrows somewhat, his ability to initiate new policy directions in various areas has been strengthened considerably. The move that he led has placed him in an almost unassailable position. Ehud Barak also stabilized his position for at least another year, enabling him to better prepare for elections when they do come.

The significance of the move for Mofaz is less clear. He gained time, but his credibility has been dented: from having been Netanyahu's bitterest critic, he has now become his partner. Only substantial accomplishments during his time in government—or, alternatively, his rejoining Likud with Netanyahu's support—are likely to improve his political standing.

The Labor leader, Yachimovich, was on the ascent and, at first glance, it appears that she is among those harmed by the cancellation of early elections. But it is likely that, in the long term, she will benefit from the move. As leader of the opposition, she may well be able to rally behind her the majority of those voters who oppose the new broad coalition and emerge as the main alternative.

Yair Lapid is in a far less comfortable position: a year-and-a-half outside the political arena could completely erode his chances. If Tzipi Livni returns to the arena with a few disaffected Kadima MKs, she will compete for the same political turf as Lapid and further erode his position. It is true that Lapid has said that he is not interested in bringing known politicians into his party. But given the shifting nature of Israeli politics, the possibility that he could change his mind cannot be ruled out, and a Livni-Lapid union would likely yield respectable electoral dividends.

Even if the new broad coalition narrows somewhat, Netanyahu's ability to initiate new policy directions has been strengthened

As of now, Kadima's accession to the coalition significantly reduces the bargaining power of the religious parties, of Yisrael Beiteinu, and of the entire right wing, that is likely to oppose efforts to advance a diplomatic initiative with the Palestinians and the Arab states. Such an initiative is likely to improve Israel's standing with the West, and thereby, provide Israel with greater freedom of action vis-à-vis Iran.



New Proposed Knesset Bills and Israeli Democracy

Major bills submitted in the Knesset in the past year that have stirred controversy:

- **Nakba Bill**

In its original form, the bill proposed to criminalize the practice of marking Israel's Independence Day as a day of mourning. It was passed into law by the Knesset in March 2011 in a much amended form, which dropped the criminal sanction.

- **Anti-Boycott Bill**

In its original version, the bill proposed to make calls for boycott against Israel and Jewish settlements in the occupied territories a criminal offense. It was passed into law by the Knesset in July 2011, but the criminal sanction was dropped, though the law still allows punitive damages. A petition against the law has been submitted to the Supreme Court.

- **Media Defamation or Anti-Libel Bill**

The bill proposes to increase six-fold the present limit on compensation for libelous reports. It passed first reading in the Knesset in November 2011.

- **Bill regarding foreign government funding of NGOs**

Originally submitted in the form of two bills, it seeks to limit and tax foreign government funding of Israeli NGOs. To date, discussions on the NGO bill have been frozen by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

- **Bill regarding the vetting of Supreme Court justices by a Knesset committee**

The bill was dropped in November 2011, after being slammed by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

- **Bill aiming at restricting the right of petition before the Supreme Court**

The bill was unanimously voted down by the Ministerial Committee on Legislation in November 2011.

- **Bar Association bill**

The bill proposes to change the composition of the committee that nominates judges for the Supreme Court, giving the ruling coalition increasing representation. **It was frozen in January 2012 by decision of Prime Minister Netanyahu, after sharp criticisms by some Likud ministers and the attorney general.**

- **Basic Law 15: Legislation**

The new proposed legislation allows that only the High Court of Justice (HCJ), composed in this instance of a panel of nine justices¹, has the power of judicial review. The proposed legislation would also enable a Knesset majority of 65 MKs (out of 120) to temporarily (for a five-year period subject to extension) override such decisions. **A legal memorandum describing the proposed law was distributed by the Ministry of Justice in April 2012.**

The past year has been marked by strong preoccupation, both in Israel and abroad, with a string of bills sponsored in the Israeli parliament by the nationalist right-wing party, Yisrael Beiteinu, of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and by members of Prime Minister Netanyahu's center-right Likud party as well as some lawmakers from Tzipi Livni's centrist Kadima party. The bills have stirred intense controversy, and claims abound that they are illiberal and infringe the fundamental right of freedom of expression and the independence of the judiciary. Both in Israel and in the Western media, one increasingly hears that Israeli democracy is deteriorating.

It is extremely unlikely, however, that the current assault on liberal rights and freedoms will succeed, and that Israeli democracy will suffer substantial erosion. Israel's liberal democratic

system emerged and developed under extremely adverse conditions, which is remarkable in itself, and is a strong counter-indication to the demise of democracy today. The claims of the imminent collapse of Israeli democracy are not new, and assaults on democratic and liberal values have been successfully repelled in the past. The common assessment and sense is that the Israeli Supreme Court will quash any legislation that is contrary to democratic and liberal norms. Indeed, even before being challenged in front of the Supreme Court, the new proposed bills initiated in the past year highlighted above were in fact frozen, dropped, or severely amended. These outcomes occurred due to the legislative process in Israel, and to the political opposition.

Some of the legislative proposals were dubious from the viewpoint of liberal democratic norms, and several of them clearly violated them. They

seemed to be attacking the legitimacy of certain views and to be targeting left-wing organizations and individuals, the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the general principle of equality and non-discrimination.

One of the first contentious legislative proposals was the so-called "Nakba" bill, which proposed to criminalize the practice of marking Israel's Independence Day as a day of mourning. It was passed into law by the Knesset in March 2011 in a much amended form, which dropped the provision for criminal sanctions. Similarly, the 'Anti-Boycott' bill, which initially sought to make calls for boycott against Israel and Jewish settlements in the occupied territories a criminal offense, was passed into law by the Knesset in July 2011 in a modified version, which abandoned criminal sanctions, though it still allows a legal avenue to pursue punitive damages. In the past several months, two series of Knesset bills have generated particularly tumultuous discussions, both within Israel and overseas. One bill proposed that prospective candidates for Israel's Supreme Court be vetted by a Knesset committee, but it was dropped in November 2011, after being slammed by Prime Minister Netanyahu. Another bill, aimed at restricting the right of petition before the Supreme Court, was unanimously voted down by the Ministerial Committee on Legislation in November 2011. A third bill, the so-called "Bar Association" bill, would have changed the composition of the committee that appoints judges, giving the ruling coalition increased representation. It was frozen in January 2012 by decision of Prime Minister Netanyahu, after sharp criticism of some Likud

ministers and the attorney general. The second series of controversial bills seeks to limit and tax foreign government funding of Israeli NGOs. To date, discussions on the NGO legislative proposals have been frozen by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The introduction of these bills now follows several socio-demographic shifts that have affected Israeli democratic culture in the past two decades. First, the ultra-Orthodox population has grown more than threefold since 1990, from three percent of the total population to over ten percent today. It is among the Haredim that commitment to civil equality and support of freedom of expression is the lowest.² Second, immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who arrived in the past two decades, today represent almost 20 percent of Israeli citizens. Although Russian immigrants are gradually becoming more similar in their views to the general Jewish public in Israel, they are still relatively new to democratic norms and politics.³ Third, these socio-demographic shifts affect not only the populace, but political elites as well. The controversial bills initiated in the past year have been proposed by lawmakers who are not only responding to their constituencies' expectations but who also believe that the delicate balance between nationalist and liberal values has tilted too far to one side. For example, in the view of some segments of Israeli

The likelihood of substantial erosion of Israel's democracy is extremely low

society, certain domestic NGOs have exploited the openness of Israeli society to further an anti-Israel agenda, both within Israel and abroad in such forums as the United Nations and the international media. The bill against foreign government funding of Israeli NGOs is regarded by some as a legitimate law that merely seeks to prevent foreign countries from supporting such organizations and interfering in Israel's internal affairs. It is not dissimilar to the Foreign Agents Registration Act

(FARA) in the US, which requires any organization whose activities are supported by foreign funding and which act in a political or quasi-political capacity to register as a foreign agent and make periodic public disclosure of its relationship with foreign donors.

In the past decades, the activist policies of the Court have generated opposition from across the political spectrum

The perceived need by some lawmakers to alter the balance between national needs and liberal values through legislation, including legislation aimed at the composition and powers of the Court, also reflects a sense among some circles of the Israeli public and leadership that the Supreme Court has overstepped its role and has allowed, under the rubric of protecting individual rights, a minority to rule over the majority. A 'constitutional revolution' has occurred in Israel over the past two decades. In the landmark 1995 *Mizrahi* case the Supreme Court, presided over by Justice Aharon Barak,

held that the two Basic Laws passed in 1992 had "*supra-legislative constitutional status*" and that, accordingly, the Court may strike down Knesset legislation violating the rights enshrined in the two Basic Laws⁴. The Court broadened judicial review to all twelve Basic Laws in the 2003 *Herut* case⁵. But most significantly, the Israeli Supreme Court has developed a particularly active approach to judicial review, intervening quickly and on a myriad of issues at a constitutional level, in contrast to the tradition of prudentialism that has historically characterized the US Supreme Court.⁶

In the past decades, the activist policies of the Court have generated opposition from across the political spectrum, and not only from right-wing circles as is often assumed—in fact Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin was one of the strongest supporters of the Court and of Judge Aharon Barak, while the opposite was true for Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. But opposition to the Court's judicial activism has increased in the last several years, including within mainstream legal academic circles. Thus, the controversial bills initiated in the past year in the Knesset are part of this dynamic of opposition to the Court. Although, in the 1990s, the most vocal opponents of the Court were the ultra-Orthodox and nationalist factions, who rejected its interventionism in matters either pertaining to religious issues or to the rights of non-Jews, opposition to the Court's judicial activism has spread among wide sections of the Israeli public in the last decade, as a result of controversial rulings on social and defense matters. Although the Supreme Court still outpolls other courts in public's confidence, in 2010 only 56 percent of the general

Jewish public—Jewish citizens excluding Haredim and settlers—retained great faith in the Supreme Court, compared to 80 percent in 2000.⁷ Growing opposition to the judicial activism of the Court is one of the main factors contributing to this steep decline.⁸

In April 2012 the most serious attempt at changing the balance of powers between the Israeli High Court of Justice and the Knesset was introduced by Justice Minister Yaacov Neeman. The proposed new Basic Law, a 15th, would officially acknowledge HCJ's role in judging the constitutionality of laws, but would give the Knesset the power to temporarily override court decisions (with a 65 MK majority vote). Like all proposed legislation related to the Israeli courts, this instantly became a matter of heated debate. Supporters claim that such an acknowledgment of the Court's power is a de-facto acknowledgment that Israel's Basic Laws function very similarly to an official constitution, others argue that giving the Knesset the power to circumvent Court decisions is hazardous to Israel's liberal democracy. The most serious criticism of the proposed legislation, so far, has come from incoming Chief Justice Asher Grunis. Grunis publicly complained that it was inappropriate to propose such a momentous law without consulting the Court's justices.

Whether this new Basic Law bill can pass the Knesset at this time is far from certain. There are members of the coalition who oppose some of the proposed bill's language and/or some of its details—the most contentious debate relates to the number of Knesset members required to override a Court ruling. More than a handful of

involved observers argue that the proposed 65-vote threshold is too low for them to support the bill. Those seeking an amended version argue that legislation to override the Court might be necessary, but only in cases when there is a more considerable Knesset majority. There are also many MKs who oppose any such remedy, and would vote to defeat Neeman's proposal.

Socio-demographic shifts and the controversy over the Supreme Court's judicial activism (paralleling, to a large extent, controversies in the United States over judicial activism) do not portend the demise of Israeli democracy itself. The presence of strong forces committed to liberal democratic values from the founding years of the State of Israel, despite conditions extremely inhospitable to embedding liberal democracy, is a strong counter-indication to the demise of democracy today. The emergence and development of democracy in Israel was a remarkable achievement. It requires no effort for peaceful and prosperous West European countries, such as Denmark or Norway, to maintain liberal democracy within societies imbued for generations with a democratic political culture and which remain free of violent conflict or its prospect.

Israel came into being and developed under conditions and in an environment decidedly

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adverse to liberal democracy. And yet, it became over the years more of a liberal democracy—rather than less, as often alleged. The first and foremost impediment to liberal democracy in Israel has been the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even in longstanding democracies, violent conflicts or severe threats to the state’s stability and security are likely to lower democratic standards during the time these pressures prevail. But in Israel the state of emergency is chronic and open-ended.

The first and foremost impediment to liberal democracy in Israel has been the Arab-Israeli conflict

Moreover, the conflict has important spill-out effects on Israeli society itself. It shapes, and certainly makes even more of a challenge the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, which overwhelmingly regards itself as part of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the composition of Israeli

society militates against the development of a liberal democracy no less than the unremitting Arab-Israeli conflict. The large majority of Israel’s Jewish population originally emigrated from countries deprived of any democratic political culture, and in many cases, characterized by a rather autocratic one. As for the large Arab minority in Israel, it has no other experience of democracy than Israeli democracy itself.

History also reveals that claims of the imminent demise of Israeli democracy are not new. Since

1977, it has been claimed repeatedly that Israel’s democracy is eroding and that some sort of clerical fascism is taking shape. Many warnings were voiced in the late 1970s and 1980s with the ascension to power of the Likud under the leadership of Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir. The rhetoric of ‘democracy in danger’ was heard well into the 90s. And yet, while many opponents to the policies of the Israeli right were predicting the imminent collapse of Israeli democracy, the country was in fact undergoing an extensive process of liberalization. Israeli democracy is not a formal democracy, but rather, a substantive one. Today, unlike before 1977, the ruling party or coalition in Israel is well aware that it can be voted out of power in the next election. The power of the Knesset as well as the judiciary—first and foremost the Supreme Court, but also the attorney general — has grown much stronger vis-à-vis the executive branch. Civil society and the media are far more developed, vibrant, and influential. Freedom of expression is outstanding, including on issues as sensitive as security. There is every freedom to vilify not only the Israeli government and its policy but also the state and its ideology. In fact, every Zionist sacred cow is today drawn and quartered — particularly so in the academy, media and in the arts. This is not to say that the past decades have been free from any assault on freedom of expression and democracy. During this period, too, nationalistic rhetoric abounded; at its worst it was racist and fascist. Illiberal bills were often submitted to the Israeli parliament and on some occasions, undemocratic administrative decisions and draconian laws were adopted.

But past assaults on democracy by the executive and legislative powers have been repelled, chiefly owing to the intervention of the Israeli Supreme Court. Even long before the "constitutional revolution," the Supreme Court was vigilant in protecting liberal democratic norms through narrowing interpretations of laws limiting those rights and freedoms. For example, according to the terms of a 1985 amendment to the Basic Laws, candidates that reject Israel's right to exist as the state of the Jewish People, or negate its democratic nature, or incite to racism, can be prevented from participating in Knesset elections. The legislation allowed for the disqualification in 1988 by the Central Elections Committee of the extreme-right wing Kach party, led by Rabbi Meir Kahane, a decision that was upheld by the Supreme Court. But at the same time, the Supreme Court opposed all attempts to disqualify Arab parties on the grounds that they oppose Israel's Jewish character. It has overturned in 1988, and then again in 2003 and most recently in 2009, all decisions to ban Arab parties⁹.

If the past is any indication, the Supreme Court will strike down today, as well, any legislation that violates democratic values. It will either interpret it narrowly in a way that does not violate democratic principles, or quash it altogether. Today the Court's ability to strike down such legislation through the power of judicial review is far stronger.

In February 2012, Chief Justice Beinish retired and was replaced by Chief Justice Asher Grunis who was known for his opposition to the Court's judicial activism. Yet, since ascending to the High Court, Chief Justice Grunis has overseen a Court which

that has ordered the government to dismantle the Ulpana settlement in Beit El, and has recently announced one of the most significant decisions in the Court's history protecting the rights of women from discrimination in pay in the workplace. Chief Justice Grunis also has been zealous in defending the prerogatives of the Court in the face of the proposed Ne'eman Basic Law. The appointment, in early January, of four new Supreme Court judges to replace retiring justices represents, taken as a whole, a fair cross-section of Israeli society and ideologies, which may affect the perception of the Court as more balanced in the eyes of the public.¹⁰ Still, any such changes in the composition of the Court are not likely to drastically alter the historical role of the Court as guardian of democratic values.¹¹

The appointment of four new justices, taken as a whole, represents a fair cross-section of Israeli society

Even prior to Supreme Court intervention, the controversial bills can be fully expected to be adopted in a considerably changed form—if they are adopted at all. The multiple stages of the legislative process in Israel, as in other parliamentary democracies, ensure that there is often a great difference between what is originally submitted and what is eventually passed. A bill that violates freedom of expression as originally submitted may well end up not violating it as adopted. And indeed, while no intervention of the Supreme Court has yet taken place, many of the controversial bills have

already been modified in the course of the various stages of the legislative process, if not abandoned altogether. Attorney General Weinstein sent a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu regarding the bill seeking to limit and tax foreign government funding of NGOs, in which he warned him that the proposed legislation was unconstitutional and that he would not be able to defend it should it be passed into law and challenged before the Supreme Court. To date, discussions on the NGO bill have

Netanyahu came out strongly against the bill on vetting Supreme Court justices in the Knesset: "There will not be such a law in a government of which I am the head"

been frozen by the Israeli prime minister. As for the two most controversial Supreme Court bills, it seems that neither of them will be passed into law, at least in their original form. Prime Minister Netanyahu has come out strongly against the bill on vetting Supreme Court justices in the Knesset, and declared that "There will not be such a law

in a government of which I am the head."¹² The second bill, seeking to limit the right of petition before the Supreme Court, has been unanimously voted down by the Ministerial Committee on Legislation. The anti-boycott bill has been adopted after the criminal sanctions, originally proposed, were dropped, though the law still allows legal petition for punitive damages. It is, indeed, highly problematic from the viewpoint of freedom of expression. Whether an Israeli court would be likely to award punitive damages in such cases is

very doubtful. In any case, a petition against the law has been submitted to the Supreme Court for review.

Second, in the current political climate it is unclear whether elected representatives who initiated the controversial bills in fact intend for them to pass in their original form. In the past months and years, anger has grown among the Israeli public against the fringes of the left that have, for example, cooperated with the UN Goldstone report, or against the extreme leftist organizations calling for a boycott against Israel or collecting evidence against Israeli officers. Some on the Israeli right have, therefore, decided that they should at least appear to be doing something to fend off these radical leftist trends. Proposers (and supporters) of the bills claim that there is an urgent need to establish a better balance between liberal and nationalist values. But submitting draconian bills is also often merely a political tactic intended to score public opinion points, rather than to bring about the changes these bills propose. Lawmakers initiate the bills with an obvious desire to be noticed by the public. Such bills also participate in the 'game' of mutual vilification played by both the Israeli right and the Israeli left. While such legislative demonstrations are a negative contribution to Israeli public life, this does not necessarily mean that there is a serious intention to carry the bill all the way to the statute book as proposed.

Even if the controversial bills do not pose a risk of destroying Israeli democracy, the political machinations cause considerable damage to Israel. They cause internal damage to Israeli politics and democratic culture. Specifically, the legislative

process is discredited. Legislation is a serious process and one should never propose a bill that is merely a political demonstration – especially if it is a demonstration of intolerance and contempt for liberal values. The ‘game’ of mutual vilification and demonization between the Israeli left and the Israeli right poisons the public atmosphere. At present, parts of the right (unfortunately, not just the extreme right) are clearly leading the way, but left-wing contributions to this game should not be discounted.

Moreover, the recent controversial bills cause considerable damage to Israel's reputation abroad—not just to its reputation as a democracy, but also to its image as a strong and successful country. It conveys the impression that Israel is a torn state and society, perhaps on the verge of disintegration, and that Israeli patriotism needs to be protected by punitive legislation. A recently published survey of the Israel Democracy Institute shows that as far as the Israeli public is concerned, including the great majority of the left, there is no problem of patriotism.¹³ Among Israeli Jews, nearly 88 percent declare that they are proud to be Israelis. 82% of those who define themselves as belonging to the left and, interestingly, 66% of the ultra-orthodox say that they are proud to be Israelis. The number of Israeli Arabs who say that they are proud to be Israelis is much lower than among Jews, but it is nonetheless, much higher than most people would have expected—nearly 53%. That an absolute majority of Israeli Arab citizens are willing to say so is a remarkable achievement under the circumstances, and confirms what many polls, over the years, have indicated—that the Arab public in

Israel is, on average, considerably more moderate, in its attitude toward the state, than its political leadership and its vocal intellectual elite.

Furthermore, the controversial bills and the illiberal rhetoric surrounding them play into the hands of Israel's political adversaries. Many persons and organizations overseas welcome any chance to claim that Israel is only a ‘pseudo-democracy’; the recent legislative fury provides them with ammunition. Apart from the ‘usual suspects’ who are habitually hostile to Israel, some of Israel's strong supporters and defenders have also spoken out and expressed concern. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a closed forum at the Saban Center in Washington that she is worried and astonished by the legislative initiatives in the Israeli parliament to put restrictions on left-wing organizations.¹⁴ That a high-level US government official, whose long-standing commitment to Israel cannot be questioned, comes to express such comments, even though it seems they were not intended to be on the record, is not a good sign. If these concerns persist, they may cause real damage to US-Israel relations, especially since the sense that Israel and America share common democratic values is clearly *one of the main pillars of the wide support Israel enjoys among the American public.*

The recent controversial bills cause considerable damage to Israel's reputation abroad – not just to its reputation as a democracy

Last, but not least, the current attempted assault on democracy is likely to cause damage to the relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora—particularly the American Jewish community, most of which is politically liberal. American liberal Jews, although they may be very critical of Israel's present government and policies, are fundamentally supportive of the Jewish state, not the least because they take pride in Israeli democracy. Many of them have voiced strong concerns about the recent legislative trends. They stressed that, like for the rest of the American public, commitment to shared moral values and democracy is one of the key elements binding together American Jews and Israel. The perception that Israeli democracy is in danger could lead to a decline in the attachment of liberal Jews to Israel. Some fear that eventually this may contribute to a weakening of the bipartisan support enjoyed by Israel until now, with American conservatives—Jews and non-Jews alike—who will remain staunch supporters of Israel while liberals increasingly distance themselves from the Jewish state. That would be a very undesirable development for Israel, the interest of which is without doubt to be supported by the Jewish community and the wider American public across the political board—by both Democrats and Republicans.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance - though not exaggerated fear mongering. Democratic

values and norms should never be taken for granted. They are always in danger, liable to be challenged and eroded in various ways. This does not mean that democracy itself, or the overall level of freedom, is in danger. If one wishes to summarize the progress of American democracy in the 1960s, it is clear that, all in all, this was a time of great improvement, particularly as regards the rights of African Americans, but also in other fields. And yet there were constant attacks and violations of democratic norms during this period (not to speak of shrill illiberal rhetoric), many of them hailing from US President Nixon himself in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

To some extent, even obvious rhetorical exaggerations may sometimes be useful in confronting real dangers—but only to a limited extent. Certainly, there were in the past and we witness today some illiberal and undemocratic trends in Israel. Such trends and forces need to be vigorously confronted. The Israeli political and judicial system and the Israeli public provide the necessary resources for this. In the meantime, it is also worth pointing out, once in a while, and particularly as voices claiming the very opposite are so often and so loudly heard, that the existence and development of Israeli democracy has up to now been a remarkable achievement.

Notes

1 The Israeli Supreme Court currently has fifteen justices, but generally sits in panels of three. The new proposed legislation requires an expanded panel of nine justices for the Court to exercise the power of judicial review.

2 *The Israeli Democracy Index 2011* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2011).

3 *The 2009 Israeli Democracy Index – Auditing Israeli Democracy Twenty Years of Immigration from the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2009).

4 CA 6821/93 *Bank Mizrahi v. Migdal Cooperative Village*, 09 November 1995. The two Basic Laws passed by the Knesset in 1992 – Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation – provided for the first time for the protection of fundamental human rights and civil liberties.

5 HCJ 212/03 *Herut v. Chairman of the Central Elections Committee for the Sixteenth Knesset*, 08 January 2003.

6 Alexander M. Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch: The Supreme Court at the Bar of Politics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986).

7 Tomer Zarchin, “Study: Faith in court system tumbles among Haredim, settlers,” *Haaretz*, 22 June 2010.

8 There are other factors however, including discontent with the length and complexity of legal proceedings and disappointment in specific court rulings.

9 There are several other examples of the Israeli Supreme Court’s exercising judicial review, both before and after the enactment of the two 1992 Basic Laws. In the 1981 “Agudat Derekh Eretz” case (HCJ 246/81 “*Agudat Derekh Eretz*” *et al. v. Broadcasting Authority et al.*, July 28, 1981), the Supreme Court invalidated an amendment to the Elections Law, on the basis that it had not been passed by an absolute majority of the Knesset as required in the case of legislation that infringes the principle of equality in elections. A similar ruling was held by the Court in the

1983 Rubinstein case with regard to an amendment to the Elections Financing Law (HCJ 141/82 *Amnon Rubinstein M.K. et al. v. Chairman of the Knesset et al.*, June 16, 1983). The Supreme Court also pronounced a landmark ruling in the 1989 Schnitzer case (HCJ 680/88 *Meir Schnitzer et al. v. The Chief Military Censor et al.*, January 10, 1989), when it imposed substantial legal constraints on the exercise of military censorship according to the 1945 Defence (Emergency) Regulations, judging that “[f]ree expression may not be curtailed unless there is a near certainty that the publication will cause substantial and grave harm to security.” Two more recent examples of the exercise of judicial review by the Court are the 2006 Adalah case (HCJ 8276/05 *Adalah Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel et al. v. Minister of Defense et al.*, December 12, 2006) and the 2009 Academic Center case (HCJ 2605/05 *Academic Center of Law and Business et al. v. Minister of Finance et al.*, November 19, 2009), in which the Court held that a legislative amendment was unconstitutional, because it violated several rights enshrined in the 1992 Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty disproportionately.

10 The four newly appointed judges of the Supreme Court are Jerusalem District Court Judge Noam Sohlberg; Jerusalem District Court Deputy President Zvi Zylbertal; Tel Aviv District Court Judge Uri Shoham; and the Dean of the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law Daphne Barak-Erez.

11 The example of the US Supreme Court is a good case in point. The US Supreme Court has indeed changed recently in a stark direction to the right, following the appointment of several conservative judges, and yet the Court has not overturned past liberal decisions on abortion and affirmative action.

12 It is significant that Dorit Beinisch, the outgoing president of the Supreme Court, declared, during the rare visit paid by the prime minister to the Court ahead of her retirement, that she had always believed that Netanyahu would not agree to any legislation weakening the Court: “I knew that (...) your background, world view, and everything you represent would not allow any harm to come to the

court," she said to Netanyahu.

13 "Israeli Democracy Survey 2011" in *The Israeli Democracy Index 2011* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute, 2011).

14 Barak Ravid, "Clinton warns of Israel's eroding democratic values," *Haaretz*, 05 December 2011.



Summer 2011 in Israel: The Revolt of the "Undeprived" — What it Was, How it Was, What's Left

1. Introduction and Conclusion: From Tents to Committees

The tents that sprouted in July 2011 on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv were emblematic of the "Social Protest Summer." They were the highlight of the protest. The wave was triggered by Daphni Leef, a young woman from Tel Aviv who was evicted from her rented flat and could not find alternative accommodations. Leef decided to express her protest by putting up a tent in a location that is the epitome of Tel Aviv's image as the epicenter of Israel's culture and fashion: the Mann Auditorium, Habima National Theater, the intersection of Rothschild and Ben-Zion Boulevards. Soon, many youngsters joined Leef, and at the height of the protests some 2,500 enthusiastic, eloquent, creative, and angry young Israelis occupied the Rothschild Tent City, as it came to be called. Their anger was contagious; tent cities rapidly sprang up in parks and boulevards in other cities (the largest was in Jerusalem). Hundreds of thousands attended the rallies organized by the young protesters. The vast majority of the media mobilized to support, boost, and glorify the protest movement. The radio

and television networks erected live broadcasting posts amidst the tents, and provided nonstop reporting around the clock. The coverage was unprecedented: in fact, the media urged citizens to take to the streets in protest and counted every passer-by as a bona fide protester.

Who were these multitudes of protesters? Although no survey has been carried out to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the protests' leaders and participants, the broad media coverage did yield a typical portrait of a protester, who was not necessarily found among those physically occupying the tents. These were young men and women, aged 25-35, married with young children or planning a family, educated, university graduates or studying toward an academic degree, working and earning above the average wage (around NIS 9,000 per month), renting or living in flats that they considered too small, and still in need of financial assistance from their well-off, middle-class parents. In other words, the salt of the earth, the invisible backbone of Israeli society.

What were they protesting against? The center of the protest was the plight of the young middle class, i.e., the economic difficulties of the protest

leaders. They were hit hard by the rapid increase in the price of food and housing, two of the major expenditures in any young family's budget. It was quite surprising: there is a vast body of empirical and statistical data showing that Israeli society is plagued by deep economic inequality and extreme poverty, but there are no figures indicating the economic pauperization of the middle class. During the last decade, the poor got poorer, the rich got richer, and the middle remained in the

The resonance and magnitude of the call: "The People Demand Social Justice" forced the government to make changes in its taxation policy

middle. And yet it was this middle—the middle class—that came out to protest *en masse*, whereas the poor remained unseen and unheard.

The voices of the middle class, however, burst forth at full volume. The early manifestations of the protest were already discernible in the spring and summer of 2010, when at the end of

another drought year, it was decided to levy a special "Household Drought Tax." Opposition to the drought tax took the form of civil disobedience, forcing the government to partially retreat. The "Water Protest" was soon followed by the "Petrol Protest," the "Cottage Cheese Protest," and the "Housing Price Protest." In each of these specific cases, the protest amounted to merely demanding government or corporate action to decrease the price of certain commodities or services. It did not incorporate a political demand

for a fundamental change in economic policy. It was only toward mid-summer, when the monster of protests threatened to turn on its creators in the form of aimless anarchy, that its leaders began to consolidate a platform. They asked a host of socio-economically left-wing oriented experts for advice. Concurrently, the government established the Trajtenberg Committee, a broad public-governmental commission headed by Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg, a prominent economist who declined to remain in his role as economic adviser to the prime minister when Netanyahu was elected. The committee was authorized to suggest significant changes in the state's budget and taxation policy. At the time, near Rosh Hashanah and amidst discussions by various committees and public groups, the universal call for "Social Justice," first heard during the early stages of the protest wave, grew louder. That slogan fueled the protest and quickly entered the Israeli vocabulary despite the eventual decline of the protest movement.

Many corporations pointed to the "Social Protest" as an explanation, or pretext, for the decline in their profits in the third quarter of the fiscal year. The politicians were quick to use this buzzword in their public speeches, regardless of the context. The involvement of academic circles was detectable from the start, when already in early August some of the protest leaders decided to consult a team of experts, led by Professors Aviah Spivak and Yossi Yona. When faculty members returned to their teaching routine as the summer vacation and overseas sabbaticals were drawing to their end, academia's involvement intensified and scientific conferences were organized to

explore and discuss “Social Justice.” Having played a critical role in augmenting the protest, the media now uses the phrase incessantly and unhesitatingly. The Trajtenberg Committee for Socio-Economic Change opened its report to the prime minister and finance minister with a philosophical discussion of the issue of social justice, and an attempt to define it.

The slogan “The People Demand Social Justice” (ha-am doresh tzedek hevrati), chanted by the hundreds of thousands attendees of the massive protest rally in Tel Aviv in August 2011, has thus remained etched in the public’s consciousness. But has it also had an effect? It did, partially. Its resonance and magnitude have so far forced the government of Israel to introduce a number of changes to its direct and indirect taxation policy. These changes are scheduled to go into effect in 2012 and upgrade, to a certain extent, the progressivity of the Israeli taxation system. Most of these changes will benefit a highly defined and specific segment: young working middle-class families with children aged 1-4 years. In bottom-line terms, such families would get an addition of several hundred shekels to their net monthly income (depending on the children’s age and the parents’ salaries). The source of financing such additions, paid in the form of special tax credit points to wage earning parents and increased child benefits, was found in increasing the burden of taxation for those whose gross monthly income exceeds NIS 40,000, increasing tax brackets on capital gains from investment and financial savings, and increased taxation on corporate profits. On paper, these measures should balance each other

out, so that the anticipated negative changes in tax collection forecasts for the coming years are not attributed to these steps, but to the crisis in Europe and its repercussions on Israeli economy.

Many of the taxation changes attributed to the protest are far from being radical inventions; Finance Ministry’s Managing Director Haim Shani and other senior Finance Ministry officials presented to Prime Minister Netanyahu a similar layout during 2011, which was promptly rejected.

The Finance Ministry’s top professional echelon objected to Netanyahu’s vision of the desired tax system; he insisted on low corporate taxation, regarding it as an incentive to investment. “It took mass demonstrations,” Shani said recently, “for Netanyahu to adopt the line suggested by Treasury officials.” From a macro-economic perspective, the

Many of the taxation changes attributed to the protest movement are far from being radical inventions

Social Justice protest achieved a shift of about 0.5% of the national income from the top percentile to the sixth to eighth decile of the wage earning population. National Security Institute experts have determined that the change derived from the redistribution of income across the entire economy is not going to cause any reduction in inequality indicators or deliver families from poverty.

But the social protest did not set out to reduce poverty and inequality. It centered on the middle class, and the middle class gained from it. Thus,

from a sectorial point of view, the “Revolt of the Undeprived” has been quite successful. From the point of view of Israeli society as a whole, however, the outcome is disappointing. Dr.

Every second Arab and Haredi citizen is living below the relative poverty line

Daniel Gottlieb, deputy managing director of Research at the National Security Institute, hit the nail on its head when he wrote in the latest report on poverty (November 2011): “A policy designed to increase social justice which neglects the poorest poor is not worthy of its name. One cannot claim to do justice when the most vulnerable

are left out of the policy’s scope.”

2. Poverty Out, Middle Class In

Throughout the last decade, and more intensely ever since Israel was accepted as a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), poverty and income inequality, which is a reflection of poverty, have been highlighted as the paramount problem of Israeli society. Public committees have been established to discuss poverty, the media have devoted thousands of articles and reports to poverty, and even the OECD’s reports on Israel have mostly focused on its social deficiencies. In the poverty reports issued by the National Security Institute, as well as in reports by other NGOs and state bodies, there was ample and clear statistical

evidence of the concentration of poverty in two distinct population groups—the ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) community and the Muslim-Arab sector. These reports found consistently, year after year including in 2011, that every second Haredi and Arab citizen is living below the relative poverty line, a calculation based on half the median family’s income, adjusted to the number of persons. About two thirds of Israeli poor and about 75% of the children plagued by poverty belong to these two groups. Shortage of food is felt only in these two groups, even after receiving the transfer payments to which they are entitled.

Israel’s social problem, as perceived in the public and professional discourse in Israel and abroad until the summer of 2011, had been the scope and scale of poverty. Israel’s poverty rates are excessive—double the rates in developed countries—as are its inequality indicators. These indicators portray Israel as the land of deep social gaps not because of low income in the middle class, but because of lack of income at the bottom of the ladder. “Even the healthy growth that characterized the economy in six out of the last seven years has failed to improve fundamentally the state of the poor,” Dr. Gottlieb wrote in the preamble to the aforementioned report on poverty. Here lies the social tragedy of Israel: the great tidal wave of economic growth in the mid-2000s skipped the poor, and actually made their situation worse.

Did it also skip the middle class?

The Central Bureau of Statistics publishes an Annual Review of Income, which is the only reliable source for drawing comparisons over time.

The Bank of Israel has reprocessed the bureau's figures—having had access to the raw data as well—and summarized them in the section dedicated to welfare policy in its latest annual report. The tables and analyses indicate that between 1999 and 2009/10, the middle decile's share of the income pie has not changed, remaining at the level of 51.5% with minor fluctuations. The lowest decile's share decreased steadily, whereas the highest decile's share climbed. National Security Institute analyses yield similar findings. The third to seventh deciles were consistently getting about 41% of the income pie; the third to eighth deciles were getting about 51.5% of the net income, and approximately 46.5% of the gross general income. This share remained unchanged over the years.

The Bank of Israel did a breakdown of the components of the income inequality index (known as the Gini Index, which expresses the level of inequality in income distribution: when the index equals 0, everyone has the same income; when the index equals 1, all income goes into the pockets of a single person), and found that among non-Haredi Jews of working age, the index is about 15% lower than the general inequality index. That is, the distribution of income among non-Haredi Jews is fairly equal. Bank of Israel economists state that the increase in gaps during the last decade “was influenced mainly by the increased inequality between non-Haredi Jews and Haredis and Arabs.” In other words, the key to reducing inequality is narrowing the income gap between Haredi Jews/Arabs and non-Haredi Jews. The solution: seeking proper employment for fair wages. Suggestions for incentives and methods

for encouraging Arab women and Haredi men to seek employment were at the center of public discussions and recommendations by numerous committees that addressed the issue, including the National Economic Council affiliated with the Office of the Prime Minister. Already in 2007, Olmert's government adopted a socio-economic agenda outlined by Professor Trajtenberg, who was then head of the Council. That agenda prioritized increasing Haredi and Arab participation in the labor force as the most effective way to increase the income of families in the lowest quintile (20%) of population and to reduce the scope of poverty. Toward the end of the Olmert government's term, the National Economic Council published another important document, which outlined labor market reforms and changes in the state's attitude toward the Haredi community required in order to motivate yeshiva students to join the labor force. Only 4.8% of non-Haredi Jewish families with a single wage earner are below the poverty line. This may be the sociological explanation for the glaring absence of poverty from the discourse of the summer protest.

When the indicators of inequality over time were broken down into two factors—the market and the government—it turned out that it was the government, and not the market, that

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was responsible for the widening gaps. The inequality in gross economic income distribution (inequality produced by the market) has actually decreased since 2002, while the taxation policy, and allowances in particular, have grown much less progressive. This negative change began at the same point in time when Netanyahu, then finance minister, introduced his restraining and curtailing economic policy, in 2003. Haredi families were adversely affected by the cutback

The Haredi community is currently harboring an inordinate accumulation of social dynamite

in allowances, and their situation has been deteriorating steadily ever since. It could be said that the price of not joining the labor force has gone up since 2003, but it is the Haredi community that is forced to pay this high price, while its rate of participation in the labor force remains low. The gap between the Haredi community and the non-Haredi public

is widening, even—and particularly—when the head of the family is employed for meager wages. The government-initiated price increases and the soaring prices of food have severely eroded the Haredi community's dwindling purchasing power. The Haredi community is currently harboring an inordinate accumulation of social dynamite.

The Haredi population's plight is, however, limited in scale and geographical scope, and

could not have mobilized the masses. The change was brought on by the protest of mid-range wage earners.

The Trajtenberg Committee seems to have difficulties in finding an economic explanation for the outburst of social protest. The Committee's report often reads as a middle-class manifesto, high on poetic phrasing and low on data, numbers and information. The Committee points to an "economic distress" of the middle class as the main reason for the protest, but furnishes only a single piece of evidence: "the average wage increased very little in the last decade, at a rate much lower than the per capita product, so that the average citizen did not get to enjoy much of the growth." This "proof" does not hold water. The proper measure of economic capability is not in real wages, but the disposable real income of a wage earning family, adjusted to the number of persons; and that income has increased at approximately the same rate as the per capita national income. From 2000 to 2010, the real income (minus inflation) of the average family increased by about 17.5%. Consumption per capita rose by about 20% and the GDP per capita grew by about 18% during the same period. The real income of the average wage earning family grew at the same rate.

The picture across an entire decade may be misleading, however, those in their thirties now held a totally different personal status in 2001. It is, therefore, better to examine what has happened over the last five years. The real GDP per capita grew between 2005 and 2010 by 12%, and the net income of salaried households grew by 9%. Can

this gap, which does reflect a relative worsening in the economic status of a large group of wage earners, explain the multi-dimensional and massive outbreak of protest? The quoted data from the Central Bureau of Statistics contradict the claim that an Israeli family cannot "close the month." The gross income of an average salaried household last year was NIS 16,700/month, the net income was NIS 13,900, and net expenditure was about NIS 12,000.

The Adva Center, a distinctly left-leaning socio-economic research institute, has examined the distribution of income by strata: upper, middle and lower. The researchers found that during 2000-2009, the share of the middle stratum in the total income of Israeli economy decreased by about 0.2%, with most of the decrease occurring in the first half of the last decade. Could this be the incendiary fuel of social protest?

The Trajtenberg Committee report mentions another possible cause for the protest: capital has grown at the expense of labor. All or most of the fruits of growth have been plucked by capitalists. The report does not refer to any statistical source to corroborate this claim; instead, it contains condemnations of "tycoons." This is regrettable as data regarding the distribution of the national income between return on labor and return on capital are published regularly by the Central Bureau of Statistics, and are easily accessible to any economist. Such data indicate that corporate profits, defined as "local operational surplus without crediting home owners' income," have indeed taken a considerable share of the

national income—but not in recent years. The return on capital did increase sharply and the return on labor to wage earners did decrease sharply until 2005, but there has not been a significant change since then.

Minister of Finance Dr. Yuval Steinitz was also unaware of the economic difficulties of the middle class, but he did act vigorously, within budgetary limits, to improve the net income of poor wage earners. Since the Ministry of Labor was dismantled and incorporated in the Ministry of Industry, its focus has been directed toward creating jobs in the economically and socially vulnerable periphery. The Ministry of Welfare catered to needy populations. In the social discourse space, no argument was ever made for directing more state resources to the middle class. Among all the officiating politicians, it was Prime Minister Netanyahu who was first to sense the plight of the young middle class and urged his government to take steps to lower housing prices. The tent protest did not take him by surprise; he was surprised, however, when the protest turned from "anti-prices" to "anti-Bibi," and he regarded it as a political conspiracy designed to overthrow him through street rallies.

Netanyahu was surprised when the protest turned from "Anti Prices" to "Anti Bibi"

3. So What Powered the Revolt of the "Undeprived"?

The social protest was not driven by the economy, or at least not by the issue of income distribution. It was driven by rage. Rage against the government, which is broadly perceived as indifferent to public sentiment, failing to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the public, making decisions with

There is a prevailing sense that there is no one to count on, neither the politicians nor even the welfare and social systems

a total disdain for public opinion, being arrogant and aloof. The rage stems from a sense of frustration, alienation, a belief that "they've stolen our country." The National Robustness Index, taken from surveys before the Sderot Conference on Society, revealed increased distrust in the majority of government agencies among the most

stabilizing and formative stratum of Israeli society. There is a prevailing sense that there is no one to count on, neither the politicians nor even the welfare and social systems.

The first inklings of this rising anger appeared when, two years ago, Netanyahu's government announced its intention to impose a value added tax (VAT) on fruits and vegetables. The public outcry nipped the initiative in the bud. A year and half ago, when the same government decided to increase the price of water (the drought tax), it almost caused a tax revolt. Under mounting

public pressure, the tax was revised, limited in time, and eventually buried quietly. But the rage did not subside. It was now re-directed at the water utilities, which were and are still perceived as responsible for the high price of water. In this matter, however, the victory of public opinion was marginal, and the utilities remained intact.

At the beginning of 2011, the anger intensified once more, lashing out against petrol prices, and particularly against the high taxation of gasoline. Led by discussion groups on the Internet, the protest failed on the ground: demonstrations were small and no real decline in sales at the pump was registered. Still, the protest won a major political victory. An intended raise of the excise tax on petrol was revoked, and government-initiated increases were put on hold.

From gasoline, the rage rolled on to other areas related to the cost of living. The intense public rage over the upsurge in housing prices reached the government, forcing the prime minister and his cabinet ministers to hastily advance emergency plans for de-freezing land, revising the housing tax, and creating schemes for building rent-controlled public housing projects.

In June, the rage surprisingly reached the price of food, and especially of dairy products (cottage cheese). Surprisingly, not because the Israeli food basket is cheap—it is still expensive in comparison to other countries—but because most of the big increases in food prices took place in 2010 and the year preceding it. But at that time, the citizens of Israel had other things to worry about: unemployment was still high, and the wounds of the financial crisis had yet to close up.

During the “Cottage Protest,” the Knesset’s Research Center examined the changes in price and wage indices. The findings indicated that in current prices, wage earners’ salaries rose from 2005 to 2011 (May) by about 23%. At the same time, the consumer price index rose by 18%, resulting in a 4% increase in the real wage, measured as the ratio between gross wage in current prices and the average rate of inflation. The net wage has probably increased at a slightly more significant rate, due to the ongoing income tax reform (see below).

4. Why in 2011?

If this is indeed a multi-year trend, what happened in 2011 to propel hundreds of thousands to take to the streets to demonstrate? Why did the rage, kept back till then, suddenly burst forth? In order to provide a rational answer, one must delve into an analysis of the typical budget of a young middle-class family. As said, in the last five years, the real income of the average (and median) family rose by 4%. At the same time, the income tax burden of wage earners was significantly reduced: a family of average wage earners now pays only about 9% income tax (just 6% in the periphery), compared to 13% in 2005. This tax relief has created a fiscal avenue for maintaining the standard of living.

Middle-class households have also decreased their savings: in 2005, an average salaried household saved about 15% of its income, compared to only 10% in 2011. While the decrease in savings has financed the increase in living standards, it has also jeopardized, and still jeopardizes, the ability

of households to withstand future crises, thereby exacerbating the sense of insecurity.

These two trends—lower taxes and less saving—enabled the middle class, until 2011, to keep their heads above water and perhaps even a bit higher than that. But these trends have ended in the last couple of years. Concurrently, households have been burdened by credit as never before. Encouraged by the low interest rate and due to the need to take large mortgages, the non-business private sector’s debt soared. Disposable household income, after paying mortgage, has shrunk considerably, and the discrepancy between expectations to maintain or raise the standard of living and the actual financial ability of the average salaried household widened and became intolerable.

The decrease in savings has financed the increase in living standards, but has exacerbated the sense of insecurity

Especially badly hit were households whose consumption basket largely consists of food. The food price index rose from 2005 to May 2011 by more than 32% - more than double the rise in the general food price index in the eurozone – while the fruit and vegetable price index rose by 38%. Young households saw their food purchasing power erode by 11%.

A similar examination of a shorter and more relevant period for the causes of the protest, from May 2006 to May 2011, indicates stagnation

even in terms of the average statistical income: consumer prices rose by 15%, and the average wage rose by 16.5%, whereas real wages rose by a negligible 1.25%. At the same time, food prices rose by 25%. Cottage cheese, the main offender, which triggered the initial 2011 protest, took the cake: in four years, its price went up 33%.

How is it possible that young heads of household were forced to ask themselves in the summer of 2011, that following this wonderful period

Between the mid-1980s and the second half of the 1990s, housing prices increased by about 100%

of economic growth, why can my family not afford to buy the same food basket it could buy five years ago? And if that family did not own a home, its chances of ever owning one were dramatically diminished. According to data published by the Ministry of Finance, in the first half of 2011, a young couple needed 140 monthly

(net) paychecks in order to buy a second-hand flat in Tel Aviv and the Sharon region, compared to about 90 monthly paychecks to purchase a similar flat in 2007. The Mishkan Index, which reflects the economic purchasing power of potential homebuyers, deteriorated from early 2008 to early 2011 by 26%. The yearned-for flat became a pipedream.

5. Uncontrolled Housing

Housing prices in Israel rise and fall in a multiyear business cycle. When they go up, buyers believe it will last forever. When they are down, sellers believe they will never stop descending. Shifts in the trend, thus, always come as a surprise. Between the mid-1980s and the second half of the 1990s, housing prices increased by about 100% in real terms. Demography took its toll: the massive immigration from the former Soviet Union required permanent housing solutions. Encouraged by the government, fearing the spreading of protests (yes, non-home owners demonstrated even then), a massive national construction project began, designed to build 150,000 flats (double the necessary quantity) in two years. In 1997, the industry was hit by a recession and then crashed. It took another blow during the Second Intifada. The real price of an average flat in 2007 was 22% less than its price in 1997. Housing developers and contractors, many of whom were left with a stockpile of empty flats and went bankrupt, scarcely began new builds. The relatively low rents drew singles and young couples to the big cities. About half the households in Tel Aviv were, and still are, renting.

In 2009, with the emergence from the recession brought on by the financial crisis in the US, the residential real estate trend reversed once again. Veteran Israelis, who were disillusioned with investments in financial assets whose value eroded drastically, used their savings to purchase residential real estate. So did foreign residents. French Jews, for instance, discovered the (as yet) cheap flats in Netanya. Low mortgage

interest provided an incentive for families who could afford it to move from renting to owning. Demand soared but the supply lagged behind. A temporary shortage of new builds drove the prices up. Between 2009 and 2011 the price of an average flat in central Israel rose by 55%, and from 2007/2008, by 65%. Young salaried couples saw their goal of owning a flat fade into the distance. Even massive assistance from their parents was no longer enough.

Netanyahu's government did not create the disparity in the housing market, it inherited it. But the government was reluctant to take substantial steps to alleviate the situation. It took a year and a half for the new government to even officially acknowledge the existence of a real estate bubble. Many more months passed before the first governmental plans, designed to slow down the pace of price increases by accelerating the marketing of state-owned land, taxation revisions to promote the selling of empty flats, streamlining the process of obtaining building permits, etc., were finally publicized. But by then, young non-home owners were tired of waiting for long-term solutions. They ventured out of their rented flats and put up the tents. Next to the tents, they affixed the slogan "Affordable Public Housing Now."

This was a challenging innovation. The government of Israel stopped financing, initiating or building public housing a long time ago, when the wave of FSU immigration subsided (although construction of public housing continues unabated beyond the Green Line). Residential land was marketed—at a very slow pace—to the highest bidders. Only the

neediest were offered housing assistance, the rest had to fend for themselves in the free market. And what does one do when the free market goes mad, as it often does in the residential real estate sector, and as it did in 2010/11 in Israel? Wait for the market to calm down, according to government spokespersons. Wait patiently for prices to begin to fall once more. For young couples with children, this answer was unacceptable. Tired of the preaching and the learned explanations, they took to the streets to demonstrate for "Affordable Public Housing Now," along with hundreds of thousands who shared their feelings.

The emphatic calls for "Affordable Public Housing Now" captured the young middle-class imagination, but failed to crystallize into a set of practical and realistic demands. The concept of "affordable" was not defined, perhaps because a definition would have excluded the majority of protesters in terms of entitlement criteria. Based on income per capita, the first on the list for public housing would be large Haredi families, who were not represented in the protest movement and even served as a target for criticism ("Why do Haredi families get housing when we do not?" some of the protest leaders challenged Shas Housing Minister Ariel Atias). The prime minister and the finance and housing ministers claimed—rightly, to a large extent—

Next to the tents, they affixed the slogan: "Affordable Public Housing Now!"

that they were doing their best to accelerate and promote housing construction. "Please be patient," they asked, "a turning point is just around the corner."

Indeed, the turning point did arrive. Housing prices began to drop almost immediately after the tents were dismantled, and those who did not have a home to return to, returned to dwelling in streets, parks, public spaces and building lobbies.

On the issue of housing, the protest lagged behind the reality. It did not make its mark on the government's decisions

According to Finance Ministry figures, new home prices dropped 1.2% in September 2011 compared to August. According to Central Bureau of Statistics figures, the price of all housing, new and existing, went down by 0.2% in September—the first real decrease in three years.

On the issue of housing, the protest lagged behind the reality. It did not make its mark on the government's decisions. The politicians anticipated it and manipulated it to their own ends.

6. From Rage to Politics

Both the Knesset's Research Center and a special committee appointed by the Ministry of Industry to examine food prices have failed to furnish a plausible explanation for the excessive prices of food, or to provide a valid comparison of food prices in Israel vis-à-vis other developed countries. Various hypotheses were advanced, with their respective culprits: the farmers who opposed the exposure of agricultural produce to competing imports, the dairy farms that exploited the Israeli obsession for white cheeses, the retail chains that greedily widened their profit margins, the deregulation of food prices, and consumer indifference, in that order. Meanwhile, it took two weeks for the producers and distributors of dairy products, cottage cheese in particular, to realize that they were heading for a consumer tsunami. After a few futile attempts to meet the challenge, they succumbed and cut prices. Every link in the cottage cheese production and distribution chains agreed to take part in lowering the unit price from 6 to 5 shekels. Toward the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur), several retail chains launched special sale promotion campaigns, and the public enjoyed lower prices for a limited time.

By late July and early August 2011, the protest movement was thus divided. One faction, delighting in the achievements in terms of price reductions, decided to focus on the consumer aspect and turn the protest into a consumer watchdog, similar to the American magazine *Consumer Reports*, which publishes

recommendations to readers on where and what to buy and what to avoid. Other targets for boycotting were announced: diapers, ATMs, prams, household products, etc. The calls for boycott proliferated and lost their effectiveness. Concurrently, and in opposition to this apolitical and anti-corporate faction, a much more ideological and political leadership emerged, which declared a new goal: changing the order of priorities on the government's economic-social agenda. The group's spokespersons appeared in the mass media and upheld, first tentatively and later boldly, the demand for social justice. The direction changed, and so did the tone and the emphases. It was no longer about specific solutions to particular problems, but an overall change in the state's economic-social policy. The rage became political, and focused primarily on Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Who was raging? The first wave of idealistic tent dwellers were joined, physically or in spirit, by legions of young people, aged 25-35, who have difficulty raising 2-3 children on two full or one-and-a-half salaries. Like their parents before them, they carry the yoke of Israeli society on their backs, along with the burdens of everyday life: spending hours in huge traffic jams on their way to work in the morning and on their way back from work in the evening, struggling to pay the monthly mortgage, and the exorbitant prices of daycare facilities and education, and coping with a shortage of social services provided by any modern welfare state. This is the second generation of Israeli natives unhindered by considerations of ethnic origin. Many of them were reluctant to

demonstrate against dairy farms or farmers, but they did not hesitate to join the rallies against what they perceived as outrageous social injustice and fundamentally flawed socio-political priorities.

As numerous observers and commentators have pointed out, the politicization of the protest undoubtedly attracted the entire spectrum of opposition to Netanyahu's government, for reasons that were not necessarily economic. Itzik Alrob, a young Haredi man (a few Haredim participated as individuals, however, as indicated above there was no group Haredi protest) who ignited the cottage cheese protest, wrote that "in the central tent city on Rothschild Boulevard, a single desire prevails: to topple the government."

The politicization of the protest undoubtedly attracted the entire spectrum of opposition to Netanyahu's government

In a position paper published by the Israel Democracy Institute website, Yair Sheleg wrote: "The sense of a dead end in the negotiations with the Palestinians has been replaced on the national agenda by civic issues ... the outburst of protest on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv sprung from the protest leaders' feeling that the government and the majority in the Knesset have declared war on them and their ideological (leftist) ilk ... one sector positions itself clearly as the adversary of the protest: the religious right, and the settlers in particular."

In those scorching days of August, there was a sense of great public apprehension in light of the impending Palestinian UN bid for statehood; the

government seemed at a loss, and a certain drop in the prime minister's popularity was discernible. On Saturday, August 6, the first national anti-government demonstration took place. The organizers were astounded by the massive turnout of citizens demanding change. Not a change in prices—a change in policy. At this point, the government's spokespersons and ministers were still trying to deflect the anger to “tycoons,” “market concentration” and other enemies of free competition, and divert it from the government's gates, but to no avail.

**Citizens
demanded
change. Not
a change
in prices —
a change
in policy**

In a slim pamphlet published by the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, “The Economy of Protest,” the question was “How did we get here and what can be done?” And the answer was: “The tent protest that began in July 2011 is clearly the outcome of the policies of Israeli governments ... a

policy entrenched in the belief that the free market is the only solution for most of the societal issues that concern the Israeli public ... The struggle is about the shape of the country for years to come ... This is not the protest of spoiled brats because their toys were taken away from them ... The current situation is a direct result of government policy, a policy aimed at slashing the public sector and encouraging the business sector to take its place, reducing the government's budget and selling off government and public assets.”

This economic-political analysis, penned by Prof. Avia Spivak, who was appointed head of the protest's advisory team, was adopted by its leaders in its entirety. They were no longer demanding greater competition in order to improve the functioning of Israeli capitalism, now they demanded a thorough revision of its tenets in order to steer it closer in the direction of the social-democratic ideal of the founding fathers of socialist Zionism. Many of the youngsters leading the protests and speaking out in town squares came from Labor movement backgrounds; their yearnings are understandable.

The rage of the young middle class united many, driving hundreds of thousands to the streets. After a number of blunders and misguided publicity moves, the prime minister reacted with great wisdom: he established a public committee and appointed Manuel Trajtenberg, a leading economics professor who was affiliated with the previous Kadima-led government. The committee's inauguration day marked the dying out of the protest in its public, demonstrative form. When the Trajtenberg report was published and submitted in late September, many middle-class families felt that it had indeed improved their financial situation somewhat, and dropped out of the protest. Those left made tactical mistakes typical of young people intoxicated by their own sense of power: they rejected the Trajtenberg Committee's recommendations out of hand, without giving reasons, using rude, juvenile language.

7. Breaching the Budget

Concurrently, and much belatedly, the protest leaders were persuaded to create their own economic policy paper. They recruited an impressive team of economists, headed by Professor Joseph Ze'ira of the Department of Economics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and included Prof. Avia Spivak, Prof. Arie Arnon, Prof. Lea Ahdut, Tamar Bar-Yosef, Boaz Sopher and others.

At the core of the protest team's recommendations, labeled "Change of Course," were expanding the existing budgetary framework, the allocation of tens of billions of shekels more to social projects, and financing the additional expenditures through a dramatic increase in income taxes, as well as a host of changes in labor relations, price controls, and the regulation of savings, trust and pension funds. This was contrary to the Trajtenberg Committee's recommendations, which were based on strict adherence to existing budget limits and redirecting resources to social projects solely through sharp cuts in the defense budget.

As a starting point, the protesters' advisory team led by Prof. Ze'ira recommended the augmentation of public spending (state budget) by NIS 20 billion within three years, far beyond the layout agreed to by the government and legislated by the Knesset. The team suggested that the additional NIS 20 billion be directed toward financing important social projects, which the Trajtenberg Committee—bounded as it was by the existing budgetary framework—

did not address: infrastructure development in Arab municipalities, assisting weakened local authorities, construction and maintenance of public housing projects, expansion of the public health system and social allowances, including old-age pensions, income support and a negative income tax. The authors justified the massive rechanneling of resources from private income to public expenditure as a remedial move designed to correct the policy of recent governments, which have "drained the public sector as justification for privatization."

The advisory team's recommendations on the issue of "socio-economic democratization" were just as far-reaching. In order to enhance transparency and civic participation in the economic decision-making process, the team recommended the abolition of the bi-annual budget in favor of annual budgets, and the shelving of the rule of thumb that predetermines the volume of public spending as a function of governmental debt, arguing that the state's budget must reflect its society's needs.

On one hand, the recommendations and suggestions of the protesters' advisory team were far more extensive, inclusive and less sectorial than those made by the Trajtenberg Committee, which focused on providing benefits to young middle-class

The team of economists set up by the protest leaders recommends expanding the existing budgetary framework and dramatically increasing income taxes

families with children. The implementation of these recommendations could reduce income distribution inequality and poverty indicators significantly. On the other hand, they were articulated using a dry and highly complex professional economics jargon and totally devoid of the youthful spirit, enthusiasm and originality of the tent protest. The Israeli middle class found these detailed recommendations too far-fetched and reeking of socialism, which is anathema to them. The middle class prefers a market economy

The young Israeli protesters were and still are fundamentally different from other protest movements in other countries

to massive governmental intervention, although their version is a market economy that is not totally unrestrained, but regulated and fair, capitalism with a human face. In contrast, many of the protest leaders wanted socialism with a human face.

Eventually, under much internal and external pressure, the social protest movement submitted its

detailed answer to the question “So what is it that you really want?” but by then it had only a handful of listeners. The economic-practical part of the protest had already died out. “Trajtenberg” stole the show. The tents on Rothschild Boulevard and in other sites across the country were gradually evacuated and dismantled, with no significant violence. The good kids who put up the tents remained good kids as they took them down.

In their total avoidance of violence (except for a few pranks) and obedience to the law, the young Israeli

protesters were and still are fundamentally different from other protest movements in other countries. As a result, they have enjoyed a much greater public sympathy, and more substantial gains.

8. From Movement to Awareness

What’s left of the protest? On the practical level, there is a significant reward in terms of taxation policy: a new tax on high incomes, an extraordinarily high tax (the highest rate in the world) on capital gains, and a corporate profit tax that is also very high. Conversely, taxes on gasoline were lowered and benefit points were granted to working fathers of young children. Roughly calculated, this represents a shift of about 0.5% in GDP. All the other recommendations, both by the Trajtenberg Committee and the Committee for the Enhancement of Competition are still being discussed, but their essence is clear: they are designed to enhance competition in the Israeli economy. To this end, they provide the regulating authorities with new instruments for injecting enhanced competition everywhere and in every sector. Their main concern is the Israeli consumer and the Israeli investor—not the Israeli worker, not the Israeli producer.

The leaders of the social protest movement, on their part, maintain that they do not regard unrestrained perfect competition as a panacea for every societal flaw or as a transcendent social ideal. They warn that striving to maximally intensify competition would foment further division and segmentation in Israeli society. “Our protest,” they insist, “did not demand

more competition among businesses; it demanded more public investment in housing, education, health and welfare — more equal opportunity for weakened populations in the periphery and disadvantaged communities — more consideration for the working middle class — a more participatory decision-making process concerning critical economic issues — and more accountability. A greater solidarity. All of this has no trace in the government's discussions and resolutions." They find the term "benefits," as used by the government's official spokespersons, very telling: it means that priorities have not been changed, just a few perks handed out in order to restore calm. "Have you been protesting this summer? Now go and buy a thousand shekels' worth of duty-free goods on the Internet and shut up."

The face of the state's economy remains the same.

In terms of raising awareness, what's left of the protest is much more significant. For a considerable period of time, the issue of social justice occupied the top of the political and media agenda in Israel. People talked, argued, and went out to the streets to demonstrate their support of abstract concepts such as "social justice" and "changing priorities." The heroes of TV reality shows were—albeit temporarily—shoved aside by the heroes of social revolt. And although entertainment quickly regained its hold on the electronic media space, which was so exhausted by the protest as to regard it as a mere transient curiosity—a shift did occur; something did change in the collective Israeli consciousness.

The summer of protest and its young leaders—young women in particular—are not going to vanish from

the Israeli discourse or popular culture. They will be there for years to come. The present government and its successors will find it much harder to implement economic and social policies without first consulting "the people." The masses that took to the town squares to say, "Hey you up there, it's time you listened to us down here," have accomplished something. The grass-roots pressure of the group on the masses did prove effective: not in terms of its capacity to generate the profound transformation the protestors had hoped, but certainly in its capacity to scare those at the helm, to make the decision-makers wary of the electorate's wrath.

The die has been cast. The struggle for social justice, whatever it means exactly, has already begun. It is a healthy and democratic struggle, as long as it does not breach a boundary.

That boundary is hate; hate, the mad offspring of justified social rage. If we all restrain ourselves in our speech and criticism, and if we keep our discourse factual and stay away from demagoguery and agitation, Israel may be spared, in 2012, the emergence of a social-populist hate movement like the Greek anarchists, Le Pen's successors in France, or Finland's Real Finns. This danger is much more imminent and substantial than is generally believed.

The face of the state's economy remains the same - but something did change in the collective Israeli consciousness

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Protest – Not Only in Israel

A few months after the tent city on Rothschild Boulevard came into existence, tent cities sprouted in US cities as well, first in New York and later in university towns across America. The American protesters adopted the slogans “Occupy Wall Street” and “The 99%,” explicitly targeting the movement’s arch-enemy: the upper percentile—the one percent of America’s richest, many of

Protests in Greece, Spain, and Italy did not stop the governments from adopting and enacting fiscal austerity policies

whom are bankers. Protests in a similar vein soon erupted in Britain, France, Holland and other countries as well. Their active phase was relatively short, and none of them succeeded in forcing their respective governments to change one iota in their budgetary policies. In countries where the protest took on a more violent nature, such as

Greece and Spain, it accomplished the opposite result: the collapse of socialist governments.

The failure of the protest movements in America and Europe to change the economic policy of their governments is remarkable both in view of the economic situation there—double the Israeli unemployment rate, harsh budget cuts, insolvent/bankrupt governments—and in light of the massive mobilization of liberal public opinion to support the protest. Trade union leaders, heads of NGOs and social organizations, artists, public

figures, cultural figures, film stars, senior media personalities—all of these and many others endorsed the protests enthusiastically.

So why did the protest achieve so little? The answer is that although in public surveys more than a third of Western countries’ citizenries sympathize with the protestors, they have difficulty grasping what they seek to accomplish. The movement’s messages are disorganized and vague, sometimes unrealistic, and sometimes populist. Veterans of the deep radical left tried to hijack the spontaneous movements, ready even to join forces with the right-wing social-populist strand. It turns out that the Western middle classes, albeit so badly hit by the economic crisis, are cautious and reluctant to be dragged into rallies that are mere rituals denouncing capitalism: protest movements in Greece, Spain and Italy did not stop the governments from adopting and enacting fiscal austerity policies, on a scale unseen in Europe in the last two generations.

Against this background, the achievements of the Israeli social protest movement seem even more remarkable. After a few weeks of confusion, the Israeli protest adopted important principles: No to extremism and fanaticism; no to gallows for the rich; no to taking over the stock exchange and the banks; but Yes to defined and specific demands, aimed mainly at the government. The Israeli protest demanded—and got—state assistance for young couples with children, food basket price cuts, a progressive change in taxation composition, and public participation in social policy-making. This is a resounding and exciting success.

On a single Saturday, our social protest drew about 400,000 Israelis out to the streets to peacefully protest for social justice, or, to be precise, for five or six **concrete**, non-revolutionary, not far-fetched demands. In contrast, the American Occupy Wall

Street protest movement has not been able to draw more than a few tens of thousands of protesters to the streets, and its influence has been limited to invigorating the political discourse ahead of the November 2012 elections.

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The People's Army? Orthodox Soldiers and Religious Dilemmas in the IDF

Alongside the public debate regarding Israel's social and economic divisions, which emerged along with a wave of protests last summer, another discursive strand has also surfaced. It focuses on the impact of religion on Israeli society, with the IDF—as a manifestation of Israel's complex human mosaic—right in the eye of the storm.

In late spring 2011, Chief of Staff Benny Gantz approved a standard version of the *Yizkor* (Remembrance) prayer in military commemoration ceremonies. His decision generated great controversy (and was later revised at the recommendation of a special committee Gantz himself appointed). This was the latest in a long-standing debate about which form of the prayer should be used in official IDF memorial ceremonies. Should it be the official version stipulated in General Staff Orders and based on Berl Katzenelson's eulogy in memory of the fallen in the Battle of Tel-Hai ("Yizkor Am Israel," i.e., "May the Nation of Israel Remember"), or the version proposed by Rabbi Goren ("Yizkor Elohim," i.e., "May God Remember") the traditional religious version, which has gradually crept into military texts, and has been in use since the official

ceremony of the state's 53rd Independence Day (more than a decade ago!).¹

About a month after the *Yizkor* controversy broke in the media, fuel was added by two further events. The first, the farewell letter of General Avi Zamir, outgoing IDF head of human resources, in which he urged the curbing of religious radicalization in the IDF triggering a flare-up among both secular and religious groups. The second was a study by Dr. Neri Horowitz, commissioned by the chief of staff's women's issues adviser, which also warned against accepting rabbinic demands and further religious radicalization in the IDF. In September 2011, the issue was once again a top news story when four religious officers' course cadets were discharged—and five more disciplined—after walking out of an event commemorating Operation Cast Lead, in defiance of orders, when women soldiers went on stage to sing.

The four were expelled from the officers' course for refusing orders, failing to return to the hall, and for expressing no remorse for their actions. Subsequently, other cases have surfaced, some involving local frictions and others of a more ideological-political nature, including street

rallies and protests, speeches in the Knesset and discussions in the Office of the Chief of Staff. All of this illustrates the extreme tension that attends the integration and growing involvement of religious soldiers in the IDF.

This is not the first time charges of religious takeover or IDF radicalization have been raised. The causes and headlines that had fueled previous episodes are quite similar to this most recent eruption. In 2008, three religious soldiers were jailed after refusing to attend a course taught by a female instructor.² In

A primary objective of the new pre-military preparatory colleges is to provide religious young people a way to integrate into regular IDF tracks

2005, a headline shouted “IDF Presents: Modesty Guards.” And there was a public outcry in 2002 when Yoel Marshak, the Kibbutz Movement’s head of the Department of Projects urged kibbutz youth to aspire to and strive for officer roles in the army, “in order to prevent a situation in which a few years from now the majority of the junior

officer echelon would be manned by ‘skullcap wearers,’ [Orthodox men,]” a phenomenon that he called inconceivable in a secular country.³ These stories and many similar ones in the last decade have captured headlines and provoked agitated responses. Several recent events—their severity, intensity, and the sentiment manifest in reactions to them—have been noteworthy.

The historical relationship between religion and the military has largely been influenced by the “Army of

the People” model advanced by David Ben-Gurion, who maintained that the military was an apolitical state body for which the obligation to serve must apply to every segment of the population in order to achieve equality. Instead of creating closed units for religious youth, basic mechanisms should be instituted to enable religious soldiers to integrate in the army and serve without jeopardizing their faith and lifestyle.⁴ Ben-Gurion, however, consented to the request of Agudat Israel’s leaders, and already in 1948 had agreed to postpone the draft for yeshiva students defined under *Toratam Omanutam* (full-time Torah Study as Vocation). At the time, only a few hundred students were classified as such. In 1977, with the ascent of Likud and the establishment of a new coalition led by Menachem Begin, the Haredi Agudat Israel party was approached to join the new coalition, and as part of those negotiations it was agreed that the quota restricting the number of military service *Toratam Omanutam* deferrals would be lifted. Because of these political agreements, and despite special arrangements introduced into the IDF at its establishment (such as keeping kosher and observing the Sabbath), in the early years of the state, the recruitment rate among the National-Religious was lower than their share of the general population. This was primarily due to their anxiety that military service would lead to the corruption of religious youth through their exposure to an undesirable environment of cultural and social influences they perceived as negative.

After the War of Independence, the Nahal battalion served as the primary framework for the integration of religious-Zionist youth in the army, thanks to

the program's unique features, a combination of military training, agricultural training, and settlement. Although Kerem B'Yavneh Yeshiva was established in 1953, it was only in 1965, following protracted negotiations between National-Religious faction rabbis and army commanders, a historic compromise was reached, which granted the yeshiva recognition as a *Hesder* (arrangement) *Yeshiva*.⁵ As part of the compromise, the army committed to assign religious recruits designated Hesder students to closed, homogenous units and shorten the active duty period of their service, in a scheme similar to the Nahal. In return, the rabbis agreed to table their demands for exempting all yeshiva students from military duty.⁶

The establishment of the Hesder Yeshivot was not the only factor leading to increased recruitment rates among religious Zionists. The Yom Kippur War, which led to the negotiations over the terms of a ceasefire—including the possibility of Israeli demobilization from the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights, thereby threatening the territorial integrity of “the Greater Land of Israel,” was the catalyst for the founding of the Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) movement in 1974. Gush Emunim's ideology was based on the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook and his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. They believed that the establishment of the Jewish state contained a messianic, redemptive meaning that had evinced their key tenets, divinely inspired commandments to settle, annex and safeguard “Greater Israel.”⁷ Gush Emunim members saw themselves as the vanguard with a mission to point the right way to other Zionists, arouse the Jewish People of Israel and snap them out of their weakness.

They encouraged National-Religious youth to stand at the forefront of the national project, to settle and protect the land, and to defend the territories already liberated.⁸ The establishment of the Hesder Yeshivot was a great boost in logistical and technical terms, and the founding of Gush Emunim provided the spiritual motivation and drive behind the increase in the number of yeshiva student IDF recruits. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s, despite a substantial increase in the number of National-Religious yeshiva recruits, both sides remained frustrated. The army leadership complained that most religious inductees did not enroll in officer courses, were not prepared to assume command responsibilities, and, in general, served much shorter terms than required in the regular training program. Conversely, religious inductees expressed an eagerness to join combat units and to become officers, but their abbreviated program made these positions difficult to achieve. At the time, many of the graduates of National-Religious educational institutions (more than 70%) who chose to join the army as general recruits, took off their skullcaps during their military service, which alarmed their parents and teachers.

A desire to change the situation led to reinvigorated thinking about integration strategies, and in 1987, the first religious pre-military preparatory college

IDF leadership complained that most religious inductees did not enroll in officer courses

(*Mechina*) was established in the Shomron region settlement of Eli.⁹ The primary objective of these new colleges was to prepare religious soldiers to assume leadership positions in the IDF by providing a robust religious-ideological program designed to orient them to cope with secular influences. At the same time, high-level IDF officers engaged in discussions with the Hesder Yeshiva leaders to extend the scope of Hesder programs, so that the length of religious soldiers' military service could be extended to approximate the length of the regular service period. Today, according to Ministry of Education figures, there are 17 religious and 18 secular pre-military colleges recognized and accredited by the IDF and other state authorities.¹⁰ These new frameworks have contributed to a substantial increase in the

number of religious-Zionist IDF recruits in general, and into combat units and command positions in particular. Although the social composition of the IDF is a well-kept secret, partial data indicate that, in 1990, the share of religious combat soldiers among graduates of advanced infantry officer training courses was 2.5%, by the end of the 1990s it was around 15%, in 2008 it reached 26%, and in the latest infantry officers course it was 42%. (According to the 2010 Israeli Statistics Abstract, in 2009 the share of non-Haredi Orthodox aged over 20 in the general population was 11.7%).¹¹ Other data suggest that more than a quarter of company and regiment commanding officers are religious, and about a third of offices course graduates, in the last decade, have worn skullcaps.¹²

Share of Combat Soldiers out of Preparatory Pre-Military Colleges and among General IDF Recruits 2001-2004 (males only)

Year	Framwork	Combat Soldiers	Support Troops	Did not Serve
2001	Preparatory	82.8%	16.1%	1.1%
	IDF General	38.4%	61.6%	-
2002	Preparatory	76.7%	21.4%	1.9%
	IDF General	39.3%	60.7%	-
2003	Preparatory	80.0%	16.9%	3.1%
	IDF General	40.2%	59.8%	-
2004	Preparatory	80.1%	18.2%	1.7%
	IDF General	40.8%	59.2%	-

Share of Officers out of Preparatory Pre-Military Colleges and among General IDF Recruits 2001-2004 (males only)

Year	Framwork	Officers	Non-Officers	Did not Serve
2001	Preparatory	25.9%	73.0%	1.1%
	IDF General	9.3%	90.7%	-
2002	Preparatory	22.3	75.8%	1.9%
	IDF General	8.6%	91.4%	-
2003	Preparatory	23.0%	73.9%	3.1%
	IDF General	8.2%	91.8%	-
2004	Preparatory	20.5%	77.9%	1.7%
	IDF General	7.1%	92.9%	-

Data taken from B . (2010). The place of skullcap wearers in IDF's tactical command. *Maarachot*, 432, p. 55.

Combined, the substantial increase in the number of observant recruits and their integration in command roles, along with a concomitant decline in other sectors, have forced the military to make certain compromises designed to reduce tensions and to ensure the continued recruitment of highly motivated youth who regard their military duty as a mission to fulfill their ideals.

A Number of Factors May Explain the Worsening Crisis in Religious-Secular Relations in the IDF:

1. Numeric Disparity in Recruitment and Sharing the Defense Burden: Between 1985 and 1996 the rate of participation in combat forces and command programs declined from around 90% willingness to enlist to about 70%. This phenomenon is known as the "motivation crisis." A key manifestation of the crisis was the drop in the rate of volunteering for combat service in IDF select units by members of the "old elites," including kibbutzim and top high school graduates in urban centers.¹³ Religious-Zionist youth who, in that period secured extensive accommodations facilitating their IDF service, comprised the primary demographic to fill this vacuum, and today the number of combat soldiers, commanders and officers from religious Zionist circles far exceeds their share of the population. At least for the short term, the deal has paid off for all concerned: Israeli society and the IDF benefit from a greater reservoir of highly motivated, capable recruits, while religious-Zionist voices more fully participate in the national consensus. In the long run, however, this could have far-reaching implications for the "Army of the People" model.¹⁴

2. Social and Cultural Gaps: Fundamental differences between the secular and religious communities and the difficulties in bridging the gaps between them in inherently rigid and demanding frameworks such as the military and observant Jewish religious practice have led to perceptions that the religious pose a threat—the "other" who attempts to impose his ideology on the military and Israeli society writ large. In this context, one must bear in mind that religious Zionism is a legitimate stream of Israeli society that attempts to integrate and exercise influence in Israeli society in general and the IDF in particular (as do other groups, such as women who advocate full gender equality in the military). Religious Zionists are not trying to rebel against state structures, but to instill them with more of their own conceptions and beliefs. Another important distinction must be made between different views and trends within religious Zionism itself, which is hardly monolithic and is composed of several distinct sub-groups. At one end of the spectrum are the Haredi-nationalists (Hardalim), whose more extremist members are drawn as negative caricatures of religion in the mainstream Israeli consciousness. At the other end are the "Modern Orthodox" who actively oppose the Hardalim, and advocate liberalism, openness, and moderation.

Today, the number of combat soldiers, commanders, & officers from religious-Zionist circles far exceeds their share of the population

The majority of the religious-Zionist public is somewhere in the middle, blending characteristics from both poles.¹⁵

3. Political and Ideological Gaps: Many Israelis associate the religious-Zionist camp with Gush Emunim and the right wing. This gains currency when the army is faced with difficult concrete tasks such as dismantling settlements and policing the West Bank. The main concern in this context is that, to quote Yoram Perry, “under controversial

The Gaza disengagement showed that collaboration between IDF commanders and religious-Zionist leaders prevented disobedience within IDF ranks

political and military circumstances, the gap between one's military and ideological stances could be blurred.”¹⁶

The execution of the Gaza disengagement in the summer of 2005 showed that, in reality, collaboration between IDF commanders and religious-Zionist leaders could yield solutions that prevent mass public

outcry and disobedience within IDF ranks. As the Gaza evacuation was being prepared, the IDF High Command issued explicit orders not to compel religious soldiers to take part in the operation. At the same time, considerable efforts were made in the civic and religious arenas to create and encourage dialogue. Bleak predictions about the disengagement proved false thanks to the caution shown by the IDF, along with the patience and reserve exhibited by many religious-Zionist leaders. There was no

mass civil disobedience, let alone extreme violence. The religious leadership accepted IDF involvement, and the number of religious officers has continued to grow since.

Disagreements and predictions regarding the future conduct of religious-Zionist youth continue to concern Israeli decision makers and IDF leaders, and academics and political scientists who study the subject are looking for solutions. There are still pressing concerns and gloomy predictions that future settlement dismantling will not be tolerated quietly in religious-Zionist quarters. Some argue that the lesson religious-Zionist youth took from the Gaza disengagement is that quiet struggle fails, and that, in the event of future evacuations, they must be much louder and consider more violent forms of resistance. As mentioned above, religious Zionism is not a monolith but a broad collection of people, attitudes and beliefs, and in attempting to imagine scenarios and create forecasts, we must take the silent (and moderate) religious-Zionist majority into account.¹⁷

4. The Dual-Hierarchy Mechanism: In the process of shaping the historical relationship between religion and the military, a dual system was created, with IDF encouragement, in which religious soldiers are subject to both military commands and the wishes of their rabbis. This poses significant difficulty—first and foremost—to individual soldiers, as they try to navigate this dual-management model and figure out where their loyalties lie—whether they should obey the military framework of which they are a part, or the rabbis who sent them to the IDF and continue to support them during their military duty. A

recent example of this dilemma can be found in statements by Rabbi Elyakim Levanon, head of the Alon Moreh Hesder Yeshiva, regarding the controversy over women singing at IDF events and ceremonies: “[IDF rabbis] are bringing us close to a situation in which we will have to tell [male] soldiers, ‘You have to leave such events even if a firing squad is set up outside, and you will be shot to death.’”¹⁸ This dual authority is problematic for the army as well, since the present framework gives inordinate power to yeshiva heads, who maintain an ongoing dialogue with the army over the terms and nature of their constituents’ service and have free access to army bases where they are stationed.¹⁹ The yeshiva heads’ bargaining power and suasion with the IDF increase proportionately with the rising rate of recruitment and volunteering for combat duty among religious youth.

5. Increase in the Number of Female Soldiers and their Incorporation into Combat Units: As pointed out by the sociologist Yagil Levi,²⁰ the clash between women and religious soldiers is multi-dimensional. Some prominent dimensions involve the desire within each group to instill its cultural values in the other to create an environment more suitable to its side. Other dimensions are less obvious, such as the desire to set the national agenda and maximize influence, and the perception of military duty—by both liberal feminism and the religious sector—as a vehicle for accumulating power, social mobility, and political capital outside the army, or at least to clear some of the obstacles to accessing such resources. These ideological clashes are evident in countless everyday IDF activities—from objecting to women

in combat forces by protesting their integration as instructors, to *Kol B’Isha Erva* (the female voice has an erotic quality)²¹ controversy, which outraged much of the Israeli public and spread outside the army into a broad-based protest.²² The tension between a growing feminist consciousness that cannot consent to the exclusion of women in the public sphere, on one hand, and the purported infringement of religious customs on the other, are major factors in the current escalation of the crisis between religious Zionism and the IDF, and within religious Zionism itself.²³

6. Ambiguity in IDF “Appropriate Integration” rules:

In 2003, a high-level committee headed by General Yiftah Rontal, then commander of IDF ground forces, issued the policy paper “Appropriate Integration.” Its guidelines stipulate that, in every training exercise or course aimed at both sexes, where there is the risk of physical contact—*Yihud* in Halachic terminology—religious soldiers would

be assigned to single-sex units; it is adamant that religious soldiers must not be forced to serve in mixed-gender combat units. In addition, the paper sets out ground rules regarding matters of modesty, separate accommodations in army barracks, and more.²⁴ Today, more than ever before, it seems that Appropriate Integration policies are causing problems: on one hand, the many grey areas in

Yeshiva heads' bargaining power with the IDF increases proportionately with rising rates of religious soldiers in combat positions

its phrasing are forcing low-ranking field officers to deal with many broad and complex dilemmas, which the army refuses to resolve. On the other hand, in recent months it is increasingly argued that the very implementation of Appropriate Integration policies erodes the status of women in the IDF. In response to the problem, Prof. Yedidia Stern, the Israel Democracy Institute's vice president for research, has suggested that "what is needed is a multi-faceted policy of setting limits while allowing commanders to be flexible... On the other hand, the carrot needs to be used along with the stick: After setting limits, the army should

This framework is a force multiplier for the rabbis' influence on their young adherents and the army

go the extra mile on behalf of religious soldiers, and allow prudent officers the flexibility to deal with specific issues."²⁵

7. The Arrangement—"Torah Study as Vocation": Having been enforced as a temporary regulation since the days of David Ben-Gurion, the arrangement was crystalized in the Tal Bill (2002), which

stipulates that youngsters whose only vocation is Torah learning, and who are eligible under the law, may be granted postponement of military duty for one year. This postponement may be extended in additional one-year increments, up to full exemption from military duty. Designed specifically to accommodate the needs of the Haredi community, the arrangement serves many

religious Zionist youth, mainly in postponing their army service during their studies in Hesder yeshivot and Mechinot. It should be noted that a similar arrangement serves secular youth who volunteer for a "service year" or enroll in secular Mechinot. The great fear is that the bill's structure creates a dilemma among religious youth, or perhaps even a negative incentive, to leave Hesder yeshivot and opt for the "Torah Study as Vocation" arrangement instead.

8. Dedicated Frameworks for Religious-Zionist Recruits: Many religious-Zionist recruits enlist at a later age, having studied in Hesder yeshivot/ Mechinot, and they stay affiliated with these mediating structures, which are governed by civilian rabbis. This framework, especially at this youthful stage of life, is a force multiplier for the rabbis' influence, on their young adherents as well as the army; this rabbinical influence tends to dwindle among older/adult religious Zionists.

9. Growing Media Involvement: Many issues, which previously were resolved within individual army units, are currently talked about publicly in a loud and widespread debate playing out in the media. One of the key problems is that due to the nature of media coverage, most of the events on the agenda tend to focus on the sensational—the most visible and extreme voices make the news, while more moderate voices of the majority are ignored.

The overall picture, however, is not so bleak, and there are some reconciliatory factors in play as well:

1. The Army of the People: The IDF constitutes a human mosaic of cultures, which reflects the whole of Israeli society, and is perceived as a catalyst for integration and communication between sectors. Despite an erosion in the army's status in recent years, this idea remains at the core of national consensus, and many vehemently object to any breach of the Army of the People principle.²⁶

2. Mediating Structures: There are a number of such structures in the Israeli system interfacing between the army and the people. Some operate outside the military system but with its endorsement and encouragement, such as the Hesder Yeshivot and pre-military preparatory colleges, and other mediating structures exist directly under IDF auspices, such as its Yeshivot Section and the Military Rabbinate. These bodies assist in bridging gaps between the secular and the religious and regulating pressures between them. Experience shows that when their disagreements are made public they foster a hostile atmosphere, whereas settling disputes in the reconciliatory and tolerant settings these mediating bodies provide decreases hostility levels often enabling the parties to achieve an arrangement acceptable to both.²⁷

3. Increased Numbers of Religious Soldiers in Command Positions (including senior officers): In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number of 'skullcap wearers' in key IDF command positions which has also proven to be a significant rapprochement enhancer. These commanders are

already functioning as fair mediators, generally capable of looking at both sides of the divide between the IDF and the religious Zionist youth and compassionately comprehending the difficulties and limitations of each. In addition, they act as role models, and their experience in navigating the system's inherent difficulties sets an example and can provide a basis for finding middle ground.

4. The Existence of Authority Structures and Decision Rules: The IDF provides several structures and rules designed to

minimize frictions or offer solutions. These include adjustments that had been made in the past and the Appropriate Integration Order (from the legal aspect), and IDF institutional structures such as the Yeshiva Section and Military Rabbinate. Despite the many grey areas that exist, most of the problems are adequately addressed within existing frameworks.

The IDF is a human mosaic of cultures, which reflects the whole of Israeli society

5. A Liberal Culture that Promotes Tolerance and Reciprocity: Despite the many difficulties and the inherently rigid military setting, military leaders, state officials, and the mainstream of religious Zionism, have all called for finding solutions amicably, with consideration and respect for different views and beliefs.

One must not underestimate the rapid succession of events that have taken place within the IDF recently.

In the State of Israel, military and political elites are intertwined through both the incorporation of the military elite into political decision-making processes, and in its function as a human resources reservoir for the political system (and, more and more, the business sector as well). Revisions and decisions introduced in the military arena carry major social and political implications for Israeli society as a whole. As former Chief Military Rabbi Brigadier General (Ret.) Avihai Rontzki astutely described it, “the struggle over control of the IDF is a battle over the shape of Israeli society.” The IDF is at the forefront of a culture clash between opposing forces, each vying to impose its approach and

“Price Tag” attacks began to appear in 2008, to create balance of terror to dissuade the government from dismantling certain settlements

normative values. But this is not the only front, nor the last.

The responsibility for finding solutions and coping strategies for this social challenge cannot rest solely on the shoulders of IDF commanders. The army is capable of dealing with the problem within the military setting by solving localized conflicts

(using existing means and ground rules and the prudent application of conciliatory measures), and by setting guidelines for the period of military service (such as the Appropriate Integration order). But in order to address the root of the problem, a broader decision is needed, guided by a national and social vision from which clear definitions can be derived and translated into unambiguous policy.

It is the government, and not the security agencies, that is responsible for paving the way for drawing up a social-cultural contract to provide rules, tools and guidelines related to the state’s vision of the complex relationship between religious and secular groups in Israel, and especially with respect to the state and its national agencies. In this way we could potentially avoid future internal conflicts, or at least alleviate tensions, to create a more tolerant, liberal and supportive Israeli society.

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The Second Axis of the Clash: The Religious Right, the IDF, and the Government

Although it is beyond the scope of this writing to address the causal-ideological connection between the religious radicalization of parts of the religious-Zionist faction and their radicalized rightwing political leanings, recent events, including the escalation in violent “Price Tag” acts by extremist settler groups—against Israelis and Palestinians alike—cannot be ignored.

Price Tag attacks began to appear in 2008. At first, these acts were aimed at Palestinians as part of the struggle and competition over land, and as acts of revenge, sanctioned by a number of rabbis,²⁸ for Palestinian terror attacks against Jews. Although acts of revenge, on both sides, are nothing new, the Price Tag acts of violence and vandalism are distinct because they have been responses to what the government and the army have been doing in

the territories: attempting to demolish structures in outposts and evacuate settlers. The goal, at first, of those planning and executing Price Tag attacks was to create a balance of terror that would force the government to reverse its intention to dismantle certain settlements. Then the Price Tag perpetrators upped the ante and decided on two new courses of action. One was the use of focused violence against IDF property (such as destroying military vehicles at the Benjamin Division base and torching tires), and recently also against key army figures (such as stoning the commander of the Ephraim Division); the other involves activities inside Israel (among others, the desecration of Muslim and Christian burial grounds in Jaffa, and mosque torchings in Tuba Zangariya in the Galilee, and in Jerusalem).²⁹

Since the late 1960s, two major trends have characterized radical religious Zionism. One is increasing religious observance—among other things, in matters of modesty and gender relations—and another is the increased level of political engagement and other activities meant to preserve the integrity of “Greater Israel.” The diverse phenomena accompanying these trends are merely different manifestations of the same ideological conception. Many of the rabbis are responsible for this religious radicalization, and for supplying the ideological arsenal and purported Halachic justification for political radicalization as well. Some play a role in the violent activities of settler youth, albeit mostly indirectly. One salient example of this phenomenon can be found in a statement by Rabbi Dov Lior, who has repeatedly supported and praised the “Hilltop Youth” who, it is alleged, perpetrate “Price Tag” attacks: “*Noar Hagvaot* [the

Hilltop Youth] are wonderful youth, busy settling and redeeming the land, not wasting their time with drinking and violence. The establishment of *Garinim Toraniyim* (Torah Nuclei)³⁰ and the *Teshuva* movement are a tremendous process that will have a massive effect on the people of Israel who are thirsty for any morsel of Judaism.”³¹ Rabbi Lior also weighed in on the female singing issue, when a public affairs body he heads, *Beit Horaa L'Inyanei Tzibur*, ruled that orders to listen to women singing are clearly illegal, and that those who choose to obey them would be held responsible for their actions.

The great fear is that such statements by Rabbi Lior and some of his colleagues could inspire further violence by religious-Zionist youth, whether through direct or indirect influence. There is concern too that they may foment stigmatization of those religious-Zionist youth who choose to join the army.

For the most part, the religious-Zionist public has been, and still is, a staunchly Zionist community that is deeply committed to the State of Israel and its frameworks. However, the attacks by some within their ranks on the IDF, the state, and its agencies are certainly alarming. These developments and their social and political implications will be a focus of study and analysis in the ongoing work of JPPI.

Rabbi Dov Lior:

"The Hilltop Youth are wonderful, busy settling and redeeming the land"

Notes

1 Perry, Yoram. (2007). A New Military Elite. In Ben Raphael, E., Sternberg, Y., et al (eds.), *New Elites in Israel*, p 133.

2 Rothenberg, Hagit, "The Battle over Camp Sanctity", *Channel 7*. (14/02/2008).

3 "Senior Kibbutz Movement official warns against religious 'takeover' of IDF," *Walla editorial board*, December 3rd, 2002.

4 Drori, Zeev. (2005). *Between Faith and Army: The Haredi Nahal Battalion: Risks and Opportunities*, Floresheimer Institute for Policy Studies, pp. 13-14.

5 B. (2010). The place of skullcap wearers in IDF's tactical command. *Maarachot*, p. 51 [in Hebrew].

6 "... There is a need for military people and weapons, and equally important, a lot of people of Torah and faith. We have said that two commands are upon us: to be great in Torah and to serve in the army to save us from our enemies" (Drori, 2005, p. 13); Janet O'Dea (1977). Gush Emunim: Roots and Ambiguities. *Bitfutzot Hagola*, No. 79/80, 18th year, Winter 1977, pp. 95-103.

7 O'Dea (ibid.).

8 Eldar, Akiva, & Zertal, Edit (2004). "Masters of the Land: Settlers and the State of Israel 1967-2004", p. 265, 269.

9 Huberman, Hagai, "Knitted Beret". *Arutz Sheva*, July 8, 2004.

10 Ministry of Education website: www.cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Mechinot_Kdam/Mechinot/.

11 The data regarding the rate of combat soldiers in previous years were taken from B. (2010), p. 53; data regarding the last advanced infantry training were taken from Harel, Amos, A different IDF. *Haaretz*, November 11, 2011; data regarding the share of religious people in the population are taken from the

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), "Statistical Abstract of Israel 2011," Table 7.4: Persons aged 20 and over, by religiosity and by selected characteristics: www.cbs.gov.il/reader/shnaton/templ_shnaton.html?num_tab=st07_04x&CYear=2011 (last access January 8, 2012).

12 Supra, Perry (2007), p. 26.

13 For a discussion, see Spiegel, Udi (2001). *Motivation to Serve*. The Knesset Research and Information Center [in Hebrew]. Levy, Yagil (2007). *From the Army of the People to the Army of the Periphery*, pp. 67-68, 85; Perry, "New Elites," p. 122, 127-127.

14 This opinion was voiced by both sides: in a *Arutz Sheva* interview in 2004, Rabbi Eli Sadan said that "if the religious sector takes over the army it will be a Pyrrhic victory" (Knitted Beret, July 8th, 2004); in a *Maariv* interview upon completing his term as Paratroops Division Commander, Brigadier General Herzi Levi said: "Today the situation is distorted, and no one can be happy about it. The religious population cannot be boastful and say, 'great, our share of soldiers and officers is growing,' because this is not good for anyone. The short-term gain is a major threat in the long term."

15 For more on this issue, see, for instance: Sheleg, Yair (2002). On the brink of division in religious Zionism. *Haaretz*, March 26, 2002; Fischer, Shlomo (Forthcoming). Turning point or continuity? Torah regime, citizenship and the sources of radical Zionism in Zeev Shavit, Orna Sasson-Levy and Gai Ben Porat (eds.) *Identities, Boundaries and Spaces of Classification*, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Kibbutz HaMeuchad. ; Cohen, Asher (2009). The skullcap and the beret: Image and reality – the public discourse on religious Zionism and military service. In Moshe Rachimi (ed.), *Sefer Amadot: The Beret and the Kippa*, Orot College, Elkana, pp. 95-114.

16 Supra, Perry (2007), pp. 133-134.

17 For an elaboration and internal view of the struggle within religious Zionism, see: Stern, Eliezer (2009). "Knowing to Disengage." In *Massa Kumta: Navigating at Eye Level*, pp. 193-220.

18 Halevi, Abraham. "Sacrifice the soul over women's singing, even soldiers are shot to death." *Kikar Hashabat*, November 17, 2011.

19 Supra, Levi (2007), pp. 88, 262, 264.

20 Levi, Yagil (2008). "Proper/Hesitant integration: A Proposal for a multi-dimensional analysis of the women-religious struggle in the IDF," *Public Space Journal of Politics and Society*, Vol. 2.

21 B. Brachot 24a. Kidushin 70a.

22 See, for instance: Ravid, Barak. Netanyahu: The exclusion of women is an issue the secular public will not concede. *Haaretz*, November 27, 2001; Liss, Yehonatan, and Bar-Zohar, Ophir. Proposed bill: Religious soldiers to have impunity from women's singing. *Haaretz*, November 29, 2001; Bender, Arik. Peres against the exclusion of women: 'Public spaces must not be made into foci of discrimination'. *NRG*, December 12, 2011.

23 Expressions of the various positions within religious Zionism may be found here: Navon, Haim. "Women's singing: The world must have gone mad," *Ynet*, November 20, 2001; Editorial by Elazar Stern: "Less rabbis; less fabricated laws," *Srugim*, September 14, 2001; Nachshoni, Kobi. "The army enforces women's singing? Rather be shot to death than listen," *Ynet*, November 17, 2001.

24 Supra, Levi (2008).

25 Harel, Amos. "A different IDF," *Haaretz*, November 18, 2011.

26 Supra, Perry (2007), p. 135.

27 Rosman-Stolman, Elisheva. "Army and Religion as Demanding Systems: IDF and Religious Zionism," Ph.D. Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 2006.

28 One of the rabbis who explained and even justified revenge acts was Rabbi Yitzhak Ginzburg, head of the Od Yosef Hai yeshiva in Yitzhar, among others in his book *Kuntreis Baruch Hagever*, which relates to the massacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein in the Cave of the Patriarchs. These ideas are elaborated in: Fischer, Shlomo (2007) "Nature, Authenticity and Violence in Radical Religious Zionist Thought", in Hannah Herzog, Tal Kochavi and Shimshon Zelniker (eds.), *Generations, Locations, Identities: Contemporary Perspectives on Society and Culture in Israel, Essays in Honor of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt*. Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, Tel Aviv. (Hebrew).

29 Fischer, "The State Crisis and Potential for Uncontrollable Violence in Israel-Palestine," Workshop on **Religion, Violence and War**, Institute for Theological Inquiry, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J., October 30 – November 1, 2011, pp. 35-36.

30 Groups of highly religious and highly nationalistic young religious-Zionist couples who go to urban towns and neighborhoods to intensify religious life.

31 Katz, Menachem, Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, "Encourage Arab Emigration" *Kikar Hashabat*, April 16, 2009; also cited in *Newsflash*, "Rabbi Lior calls for support of hilltop youth," *Arutz Sheva*, December 7, 2011.



Science and Technology Policy in a Jewish People Context

Science and Technology and Israel's Apparently Growing Isolation

On October 5, 2011 the Nobel Prize Committee honored Prof. Dan Schechtman of the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) in Haifa with a Nobel Prize for his outstanding achievements in chemistry. He became the fifth Israeli Nobel laureate in science or economics—or the sixth if one includes an Israeli scholar who lives in the United States. Schechtman was the sole recipient in chemistry, which is a rare distinction as the overwhelming majority of Nobel awards in all disciplines are today shared by two or three laureates. For a few days, Israelis and many Jews forgot their usual concerns and celebrated the event. Some recalled that the number of Jews among the Nobel laureates has been, from the beginning, amazingly large. Between 1901 and 2011, 621 scientists or economists received Nobel Prizes; at least 152 of them were Jews by religion or origin. This is 25 percent. As the proportion of Jews in the world population declined during the 20th century from approximately 0.5 percent down to 0.2 percent today, one could say that

Jews are enormously over-represented among the greatest scientific minds of modern times.

A Jewish scientist received a Nobel Prize for the first time in 1905, an Israeli scientist only in 2002, long after the creation of Israel. Some noted that the number of Israeli Nobel laureates was very small compared to the number Jewish laureates outside Israel, during a period when the share of the world's Jews residing in Israel grew from around 6 percent to more than 40 percent. Naturally, they wondered whether this indicated a basic weakness of Israeli science that might continue in the future.

Of course, there are other indicators of strength in science and technology (S&T). The number of scientific publications is one. In less than thirty years, Israel has become the latest of the “small big powers” in scientific research and publications, comparable in many ways to Sweden or Switzerland, countries that are still much richer and had a century to develop their current strength in science. In 1996/97, Israel contributed 2.5 percent of the world's publications in mathematics (compared with Sweden's 1.0 percent; Switzerland's 1.3 percent), 1.5 percent in physics/astronomy (Sweden 1.8 percent, Switzerland 2.5

percent) and 1.2 percent in neuroscience (Sweden 2.7 percent, Switzerland 1.3 percent). Israel's scientific publications kept increasing year by year in absolute numbers, but by 2009/10 Israel's performance became weaker when measured as percentage of total world publications, in some fields more so than the performance of Sweden and Switzerland, mostly due to the lack of financial resources (Mathematics: Israel 1.6 percent, Sweden 1.0 percent, Switzerland 1.6 percent; Physics/Astronomy: Israel

The Cornell-Technion bid came first in a competition between seven major universities and consortia

1.0 percent, Sweden 1.4 percent, Switzerland 2.2 percent; Neuroscience: Israel 1.3 percent, Sweden 1.8 percent, Switzerland 1.4 percent). A third measure is Israel's strength in science-based (high-tech) and defense technologies. Israel's defense R&D expenditures have remained at a high level during the last

twenty years. They have generated a number of impressive technological innovations not reflected in scientific publications. And last but not least, the civilian high-tech sector contributes more than 40% of the country's industrial exports, although it must be added that Israel's high-tech exports have weakened since summer 2011 due to the economic crisis in the West.

Thus, while Israel's apparently growing political isolation has become a popular theme among Israeli and foreign news commentators, there is

at least one sector where Israel currently does not seem to be isolated, but where the country's links and exchanges keep growing year by year: science and technology (S&T). When it comes to S&T, Israel's international reputation is undiminished. Its cooperation with foreign countries—big and small—and multinational research organizations is increasing. Three significant examples should be mentioned. In September 2011 CERN (the Center of European Nuclear Research) named Israel as one of five additional countries “worthy” of joining its Large Hadron Collider (LHC). This is currently the world's largest collaborative scientific experiment, involving 6,500 scientists from 80 countries. Isolated boycott calls from a few European militants who did not belong to the scientific community were ignored. Israel's formal inclusion in this project has certainly increased the country's prestige in the global academic research community. And in December 2011, the Technion in Haifa, jointly with Cornell in New York, won a bid to build a new applied science campus in New York City. The Cornell-Technion bid came first in a competition between seven major universities and consortia. City officials expressed the hope that the new campus would turn New York into a center of entrepreneurship and technological innovation to rival California's Silicon Valley.

Third, agricultural and water technologies have been among Israel's earliest—Israeli drip irrigation systems hit the global marketplace in the 1950s—and most impactful exports. In May 2011, IDE Technologies, an Israeli water desalination company that has designed and built 400 desalination plants in 40 countries, with more than a dozen

desalination plants throughout Asia, mostly in India, won the “Desalination Company of the Year” Global Water Intelligence award for its work on China’s largest desalination facility in Tianjin. The Tianjin plant is distinguished not just by its size, but also because it employs IDE’s Multi-Effect Distillation (MED) technology, which harnesses waste heat and steam from nearby industry and is 50 percent more efficient, and hence greener, than any other thermal desalination facility in operation today.

Israel’s adversaries, too, know the role of S&T in the country’s economic and military strength, and its international links. On June 7, 2011, the Saudi columnist Fawaz Al ‘Ilmi published an article in the Saudi daily *Al-Watan*, comparing Israel’s achievements in S&T to those of the Arabs. “Israel is at the pinnacle of scientific research, the Arabs at its nadir...This year, Israel published numerous scientific studies that put it in first place worldwide in terms of the number of studies...As for the Arab countries, they are all at the bottom end of these statistics...Israel has been forming strategic ties with scientifically advanced countries in order to merge with their research centers...” and so on. Al ‘Ilmi’s long article is a remarkably objective, almost admiring analysis of Israel’s success story, which is rare in the Arab media and particularly in the state-controlled Saudi press. What may emphasize the Arab failure even more is the increase in scientific research in Turkey and Iran since the beginning of the 21st century. Al ‘Ilmi does not refer to these countries.

S&T is a key source of both “hard” and “soft” power. It is indispensable for economic as well as military superiority—that is, hard power. And scientific

discoveries that enrich our understanding of nature confer public prestige and generate expectations that they will benefit all of mankind—that is, soft power. Some experts predict that the ongoing acceleration of scientific research and discovery will bring, by 2050, more radical change to our planet than S&T has during the last three hundred years. Whether some of these changes will be seen as desirable or not, S&T certainly gives nations the ability to influence the long-term course of history. How a nation performs in S&T will be one of the main determinants of its place in the great international power alignments that lie ahead in the coming decades. Israel’s future will be decisively affected by both international and its own scientific and technological developments.

**Saudi journalist
Fawaz Al’Ilmi:
“Israel is at
the pinnacle
of scientific
research, the
Arabs at its
nadir”**

The Roots of Israel’s Achievements in S&T

There are many, complex roots of Israel’s scientific and technological achievements, and some of them go back to the early 20th century if not much earlier.

- **Israel’s universities:** The high standard of excellence and international connectedness of Israeli research started with the creation of the

country's first academic research institutes, the Technion in Haifa (founded in 1912 but actually opened only in 1924), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1925) and the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot (1934). Two outstanding scientists, Albert Einstein and Chaim Weizmann, who would later become Israel's first president, were the co-founders and initial fund-raisers of these institutions. The pursuit

**Veblen:
The intellectual
pre-eminence
of the Jews,
particularly in
the sciences,
is rooted in
their "Creative
Skepticism"**

of scientific excellence was one of the ideals of early Zionism. According to current international comparisons, the Hebrew University, the Technion, the Tel Aviv University and the Weizmann Institute are among the fifty to one hundred best scientific and technological research institutes the world over.

- **A pre-state immigrant population that had brought from Europe a high level of literacy and respect for all forms of learning and knowledge:** A specific feature of the Jewish tradition of learning is a critical mind and a sometimes excessive argumentativeness. These are cultural traits that greatly facilitate scientific and technological innovation. The sociologist Thorstein Veblen explained what he called the "intellectual pre-eminence of the Jews" particularly in the sciences by their "creative skepticism" (1919).

- **The visionary statecraft of Israel's founder and first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion,** who understood the critical importance of science for Israel from the beginning and also knew that Israel would need a coherent and forward-looking science policy, meaning government support, long-term funding, priority setting and the creation of an appropriate institutional framework. Ben-Gurion himself was Israel's first science policy maker. A small number of other exceptional personalities, often concerned scientists with or without an official mandate, have in subsequent decades helped to shape Israel's S&T policies with their own initiatives.
- **Defense-oriented research and technologies:** The Ministry of Defense and associated industries spend more on R&D than any other actor in the country's S&T system. The authorities do not publish comprehensive and detailed figures, but the media have estimated that Israel's total annual defense budget is near to 20 billion dollars, of which ten percent or even more is invested in R&D and high-tech acquisitions. Defense R&D has always been the most effective single catalyst of Israel's technological progress. It has spawned the country's successful informatics sector, transferred important innovations to the bio-medical sector, and has entered the energy field. Israel is repeating—albeit on a much smaller scale—the experience of the United States where many of the main new technology sectors of the 20th century were direct spin-offs of defense research (e.g.

nuclear, electronics and informatics, civilian aircraft, deep-sea technologies). Most of the spin-off in Israel has occurred through the transfer of R&D personnel from the defense to the civilian sector. Nevertheless, there are complaints that Israel's civilian industry could benefit much more from the country's defense R&D if civilian entrepreneurs were more proactive. But it must also be recognized that it is not always easy to cooperate with the defense establishment for security and other reasons.

- **Israel's S&T policies are decentralized and follow no national master plan.** They are a complex, interactive system where government ministries and committees, the Knesset, the universities, industry and research foundations play different roles which are often, but not always, complementary. The main power rests in the hands of the Planning and Budgeting Committee, which allocates the budget for higher education; the chief scientist of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, who supports industrial research particularly in the high-tech sectors; and last but not least, in the Finance Ministry, which has the final say on S&T funding.
- **The immigration from the Former Soviet Union (FSU):** Between the late 1980s and today, approximately one million new immigrants arrived from the FSU. Between 1989 and 1995, 11,000 scientists (according to Israeli definition) arrived. Between 1990 and 1995, 65,000 engineers and architects arrived, as did 14,000 physicians and dentists. For

Israel, this enormous infusion of scientific and engineering talent was both unexpected and invaluable. FSU's immigrant researchers and engineers have played a distinguished role in lifting Israel to the level of a "small big power."

Warning Signs

Throughout history, leadership in science has moved from one civilization or country to another. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the world centers of science were in central Europe, the United States and Russia, where Jews made an enormous contribution to scientific discovery and innovation, as said above. Israel's achievements can be seen as a more recent sub-chapter in this sudden explosion of Jewish talent in science. Whether Israel will be able to hold and improve its place in the global S&T race depends on the factors that largely explain Jewish and Israeli achievements of the past. Some of these factors seem to be stable while others are changing.

FSU immigrant researchers and engineers have played a role in lifting Israel to the level of a "small big power"

- *Two stable factors:* First, Israel's research universities endeavor to maintain a high level of quality and, if it depended on them alone, would likely continue to be counted among

the best in the world. However, it will not depend on them alone. An important part of their financing is provided by foreign Jewish philanthropy, and this is likely to shrink due to the global economic crisis. New ways must be found to help universities raise additional funds, lest the long-term pursuit of academic research at current levels be jeopardized.

- Second, the Ministry of Defense will continue to pioneer advanced research and development in many fields from which high-tech and other civilian industries can benefit.

Among the Haredim, the respect for learning & knowledge is enormous, but only for religious knowledge

- *Five changing factors:* **First**, the traditional Jewish respect for learning (and teaching) and every form of knowledge has not disappeared in Israel but is no longer what it once was. It survives mainly among a minority. A

particular problem is the rapid growth of the Haredi population. There the respect for learning and knowledge is enormous, but only for religious knowledge. This population may contain exceptional talents, but they will be lost for science and technology even if some join the work force. Top-class science demands a life-long, exclusive commitment, just like Torah study, and the best and the brightest Haredi youth will probably continue to focus on Torah rather than science.

- **Second** is the qualitative decline of pre-university education. Here lies one of the country's great weaknesses in regard to its scientific and technological future. The average level of education and performance in science and mathematics of Israel's schoolchildren has been sinking during the last thirty years by international comparison. In several statistical assessments, Israel's children today score slightly less well than the international average, but this average includes a large number of less advanced Third World countries. Compared with countries where the children are "front runners" in science and mathematics (e.g. Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, followed by some of the rich OECD countries) Israeli children score substantially less well. When Israel's level of development and its aspirations are taken into account, its schoolchildren should do as well as the "front runners." However, Israel also has islands of educational excellence. They are accessible to those living in the cities of the coastal plain, who are ambitious and enjoy the required financial resources. Whatever excellence Israel shows in S&T originates partly from these islands and partly from immigrant families, particularly those from the FSU. But Israel is probably missing out on a lot of potential talent from the less well-to-do or from the country's so-called "periphery." Also, the current situation indicates a high and perhaps increasing level of social polarization, which, if not stemmed, will begin to sap Israel's strength. In the long run, improving the scientific and mathematical proficiency of Israel's children is

a sure way to help them to a better future and narrow the country's social gaps.

- **Third**, in the next ten or fifteen years, the great majority of FSU immigrant scientists and engineers, who enriched Israel so much, will reach retirement age. Currently, there is no prospect of another million well-educated Jews immigrating to Israel in a short time-span to replace them. Moreover, their contribution to Israeli science and technology was not only at the top level. The FSU immigration also contributed high-quality middle-level technicians and technical engineers upon whom Israel's high technological and scientific achievement also rests. Due to the upcoming retirement of the immigrants who came in the 1990s, Israel may be facing a shortage of this kind of valuable personnel. In response, the heads of technical colleges have embarked upon a public campaign to secure state funding so as to expand and upgrade their programs.
- **Fourth**, Israel's science policy presents a mixed picture. It was indispensable to Israel's emergence as a scientific power. Its flexible and decentralized structure is well-adapted to the continuously changing, kaleidoscopic nature of Israeli society and to the messy, badly coordinated Israeli governance system. However, the current system is less well suited to protect the long-term needs of S&T when changing political priorities or short-term financial constraints require budget cuts or reallocations. This was obvious during the years 2001-2009, now called the "lost

decade" for Israel's science. During these years continuous university budget cuts affected the quality of teaching and research and prevented the hiring of young scientists. The data cited above, showing Israeli publications in several fields of science declining in relative terms by international

comparison, are an obvious reflection of the "lost decade."

The trend has now changed and during the last two years the government has begun to compensate for the shortfalls of those years. Alas, as said above, the trend could turn negative again if a predicted downturn in foreign

philanthropic contributions is not made up by other means. Past experience, particularly in pre-war Germany and the United States, shows that Jews flourish in science and innovation in countries where they do not face discrimination, and where such activities enjoy public prestige, high visibility, and the generous financial and moral support of the authorities. In fact, in these countries the relative contribution of Jews to science and innovation was and is hugely superior to that of any other small minority.

- **Fifth**, one should be alert to a possible future (though not yet actual) threat to science

The cuts in university budgets between 2001-2009 affected the quality of teaching & research, and prevented the hiring of young scientists

emerging from the academic boycott calls by Western pro-Palestinian militants against Israel's academia as a part of the general delegitimization campaign against Israel. So far, the overwhelming majority of these calls have been

The time seems ripe for broadening the framework of Israeli science policy

sounded from professors and students of the social sciences and humanities, not of the natural sciences or technology. But some of the militants have tried to extend their boycott calls to science and mathematics as well, with little apparent long-term success as indicated above.

International interaction is the lifeblood of modern science. Isolating Israeli science—only a conjecture so far—would have dramatic consequences.

The Jewish People as an S&T Resource

Many critical observers and experts have trumpeted these warning signs, particularly Israel's educational shortcomings, which are generating a flood of complaints and policy proposals. However, it seems that nobody has yet suggested a policy framework that could include the Jewish People in the Diaspora as a potential S&T resource for Israel. This resource should, of course, include Israelis living abroad, a number of whom are outstanding academic scientists and researchers. Informal, not yet proven

estimates speak of almost 15,000 Israeli researchers working in US industry, academia and government laboratories. What is proven by recent studies however, is that first-generation Israeli immigrant researchers in the US remain strongly connected to Israel, their families, friends and former colleagues. The time seems ripe for broadening the framework of Israeli science policy. In December 2011, a young Knesset member who understands the crucial importance of S&T and education, proposed that Israel should hold an annual scientific conference at which Israeli scientists who had emigrated abroad could present their work.

Can Jews, particularly in the United States, be a “force multiplier” for Israeli science, comparable to their engagement as political force multipliers in spite of the—apparent—political distancing between Israel and a part of America's mostly liberal Jewish community? Until now, Israeli science has been dwarfed by the scientific research efforts and achievements of Jews across the world. Between 1948, when Israel was created, and 2011, 120 American, Russian, French and other Jews received Nobel Prizes in science and economics, compared with only six Israelis. In technological innovation the proportion could well be similar, but is impossible to gauge because the definition and statistical assessment of both “technological innovation” and “Jewish innovators” are extremely difficult. Although it is true that a growing number of Asian scientists are joining American S&T faculties, Jews remain over-represented, sometimes greatly so, in American academia.

Many of Israel's academic and industrial researchers are immigrants, mainly from the FSU

and the United States. However, when we speak of the Jewish People as an “S&T resource” we do not necessarily mean that they make Aliyah to Israel. S&T has been a bridge between the Jewish People in the world and the Land of Israel almost since the beginning of the Zionist movement, in most cases not leading to Aliyah. Weizmann’s, Einstein’s and other Jewish scientists’ impact on the foundation of Israel’s main academic institutions was already mentioned. In our time, interchange and cooperation between Israeli and Jewish scientists, researchers, inventors, and entrepreneurs across the world continue unabated. This cooperation can go beyond research links. During the last few years, Jewish scientists and faculty members in various countries have been fighting successfully against the already mentioned boycott threats and other de-legitimization efforts targeting Israeli academia. Some distinguished scientists who are Jewish or of Jewish origin have no link with the Jewish community and no religious, cultural or Zionist affiliation with Judaism, but are willing to be connected to Israeli academia and scientific research. Many of them are members of the “Friends of the Hebrew University,” the “Friends of the Technion,” and similar support groups existing in most countries with Jewish populations. One could conjecture that having abandoned all religious or national links with Judaism, it is as if such scientists were happy to have found in science a vocation that allows them also to be connected with Jews, particularly those in Israel who share similar value systems.

Obviously, scientists outside Israel cannot make up for Israel’s failing educational system, its weak

science policy, or the aging of FSU-educated researchers. But some of them could act as “force multipliers” for Israel if there is sufficient funding, policy and institutional support across borders, as well as R&D projects that call for international cooperation. In that case, S&T could even become an additional link between Israel and Diaspora Jews. Not all S&T endeavors will lend themselves to such cooperation. Most defense and industrial research will probably be excluded because it is competitive and therefore confidential.

Other research might target specific and temporary problems of one country that call for quick answers. But there are also many long-term problems of global as well as Jewish-Israeli relevance that lend themselves to what could be called a “Jewish People Science Policy.” Addressing such problems would help Israel

and others, and this is likely to elicit interest from researchers across the world, not least Jews who are concerned about the future of Israel. In such cases Israel could become the global catalyst of a transnational research effort as long as the funding and the legal and institutional requirements can be met. Funding could turn out to be the most critical condition, although being a catalyst does not necessarily require vast sums of money.

However, in order to avoid any ethnic connotations or misrepresentations, such a proposal should

Since the beginning of the Zionist movement, S&T has been a bridge between the Jewish People in the world and Israel

not be presented as a “Jewish People Science and Technology Policy.” It would be more appropriate to use a neutral term and present it as a “Network-based S&T Policy” replacing a territorial, “Israel-only policy.” This formulation would also make clear that

During the next 10 years Israel plans to raise \$4 billion to develop oil-substitution technologies

the initiative would be open to scientists from all nations and origins. But the basic idea, of Israel soliciting the participation of Jews across the world, should be explored and implemented. There are many ways to do that, for example through the already mentioned international friendship groups supporting Israeli universities.

Moving from a Territorial to a Network-based S&T Policy: The Case of New Energies to Replace Oil as Transportation Fuel.

In early 2011, the Israeli government launched a “National Plan to Develop Technologies that Reduce the Global Use of Petroleum-based Fuels in Transportation and to Boost Knowledge-based Industries Focusing on this Field.” This project has great global importance because it aims at increasing energy security for all oil-poor countries while also reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. It is of even greater importance for Israel and the Jewish People because the current dominance of Middle

Eastern oil producers weakens and could threaten Israel’s geopolitical position. It is an ideal example of a project that should be “network-based” to attract the participation and support of international scientists and innovators who may be concerned, among other things, about Israel’s future. The Israeli government proposal, as originally formulated, has no Jewish People dimension but calls for international cooperation. Today most countries consider the latter as indispensable to major civilian R&D projects and thus include an international component in these projects. However, a network-based S&T project would, in this case, go beyond the traditional forms of inter-state cooperation because it has one government calling not only on other governments, but even more on a specific group of concerned persons all over the world.

During the next ten years, Israel plans to raise four billion US dollars, a minor part coming from national budgets, as well as from the more than sixty national companies already involved in oil-substitution technologies. The goal is to develop technologies such as certain bio-mass fuels, gas-liquefaction, gas production from shale rock, and, in the long term, electric cars that may require less oil for energy generation than the current gas-driven cars. Together these could begin to replace a considerable proportion—arguably up to 30 or 40 percent—of the world’s current use of petroleum for transportation. Particular attention should be paid to the requirements of China and India because these two are the fastest growing oil importers. Many of the proposed technology sectors are of course, not new, but experts are confident that a large number of recent discoveries and innovations,

several of them made by Israeli companies, will greatly accelerate progress in these fields.

Several international energy experts have reviewed and recommended the Israeli initiative. This could turn Israel into a catalyst of a slow but major paradigm shift in energy technology and into a global knowledge center of oil-substitution S&T. In addition, adding energy-diplomacy to Israel's relations with Asia, Africa and Russia would also likely strengthen Israel's international position. Finally, an important participation of the Jewish People in this endeavour might have not only hard, but also soft power implications.

This project was launched almost at the same time as international energy companies began to discover enormous fields of natural gas in Israel's territorial waters in the eastern Mediterranean. These finds will make Israel, in a few years, independent of energy imports and could transform the country into an important energy exporter. In addition, new technologies for accessing natural gas in shale rock are being developed, making available additional natural gas deposits in the US, China, Poland, Israel, and possibly other places. Do these discoveries make the oil-replacement initiative redundant? Israel has indicated that it plans to continue this initiative irrespective of the ups-and-downs of oil and gas prices, contrary to the past practice of many countries and companies that abandoned the search for oil substitutes once oil prices receded. Ultimately, oil substitutes will have to be found, and they will be found. This initiative does not primarily address Israel's energy needs, which are minimal by international comparisons, but the

crucial economic, strategic and environmental needs of most of humankind.

Additional Policy Directions: A Provisional List

In order to include a Jewish People component in its oil-substitution project, Israel will have to think about, and increase the planned legal, institutional, financial, foreign relations and other policy instruments. The following list needs to be further discussed and supplemented:

- Formulate a transnational, network-based S&T policy and design a global infrastructure for the purpose of Israel's oil-substitution project. Identify the appropriate government branch to launch this policy (e.g. the Prime Minister's Office).
- Set up, at the same time, a national network in Israel that will connect the relevant academic, industrial and other actors who currently do not often cooperate.
- Create a unit to keep in touch with the international, mainly Jewish scientific community (or re-create the one that existed in the 1950s in the Prime Minister's Office).
- Identify a project leader from among Israel's respected scientists, science administrators or innovators.
- Select an international scientific advisory board that would meet twice a year to discuss the progress of work.
- Form an "Investors' Club" by mobilizing

American Jewish venture-fund owners, not necessarily to collect money but to get more people involved and draw their attention to innovation from oil-replacement S&T.

- Explain to Jewish philanthropists that some long-term fundamental research is a prerequisite of major breakthroughs in oil replacement technologies, and that such pre-competitive research would be worthy of their support.
- Encourage large private foundations, which fund activities linked to the Jewish and Israeli future, to support research and innovation in oil-replacement technologies.
- Create an annual prize to raise awareness and provide rewards for S&T achievements in oil-replacement technologies. Set up an expert committee to select the prizewinners.
- Create and offer scholarships at foreign, particularly American, universities to support research scientists in the relevant fields and finance the exchange of students.
- Invite and fund Jewish or other foreign researchers to spend time in Israeli research centers that work on oil-replacement technologies.
- Promote public innovation events to highlight the potential of oil-replacement technologies.
- Strengthen the teaching of S&T, including new energy technologies, in Israeli and Diaspora Jewish schools.

PART 5

Developments to Watch

Public Funding for Religious/ Private Schools in the United States

A number of prominent leaders in the US Jewish community have started a new initiative to lobby members of state legislatures to increase public funding for Jewish education.

The basic idea of the new initiative is for the states to cover the cost of private and religious schools at the same level as public schools. This idea is based upon the principle that taxpayers are eligible for state paid education for their children, whether in public or in private schools. The support state governments would give private and religious schools could take a variety of forms: vouchers, state tax credits or forms of direct funding.

The proponents of the new initiative argue that if their proposal is enacted, it would provide a response to the high—and even prohibitive—cost of Jewish education. Furthermore, it would also open the door to a solution to another problem facing contemporary Jewish education in the United States: the lack of sustained attraction Jewish education has for non-Orthodox families.

Most non-Orthodox families enroll their children in supplementary (afterschool) Jewish schools with minimal educational levels due to their few hours, over just a few years. If a "level playing field" in terms of expense were established between Jewish schools, public schools, and other private schools it would make sense to plan and construct a new type of Jewish school that would attract non-Orthodox parents and their children.

Both problems—financial burden and lack of non-Orthodox enrollment—are reflected in the Avi Chai Partial Survey of Jewish Day Schools, published in December 2011. It shows that the overwhelming expansion of all-day, multi-year Jewish day school education is occurring in Haredi and Chabad schools. From 1998 to 2008, non-Haredi Orthodox schools saw slightly increased enrollments, Haredi enrollment increased by 41% (from 86,702 to 121,940) while non-Orthodox full-day Jewish schools—Conservative, Reform and non-denominational community schools—saw their combined enrollment rise only 4.7% (from 36,897 to 38,630). Additionally, the component of non-Orthodox students in Orthodox schools declined from 20% to 10% in the same ten years.

Moreover, since the onset of the financial crisis, non-Orthodox enrollment in these intensive school settings has declined. "In the three years since 2008, following the collapse of the economy, non-Orthodox enrollment dropped 9.5%, to just 34,977. Non-Orthodox enrollment is even lower this year (by 5.2%) than it was in 1998, when Avi Chai first counted."¹

The growth rate of Haredi education comes as no surprise given the high Haredi birthrate, which by far exceeds that of the non-Orthodox. The growth rate of 4.7% until 2008, in regard to the attendance of non-Orthodox schools, shows that these schools were holding their own, and perhaps a bit more than that if we take into account the low non-Orthodox birthrate² and what appears to be a declining percentage of children among the American Jewish population.⁴ Nevertheless, the growth was not overwhelming, and large numbers of non-Orthodox Jewish families seem not to find non-Orthodox Jewish day schools attractive. This is despite a widespread Jewish communal emphasis on, and investment in, day school education since the late 1990s.

The second point that arises from this data is that the financial crisis has eroded enrollment in Jewish day schools, again, mainly among the

non-Orthodox. Since 2008, enrollment in non-Orthodox day schools has declined by 9.5%. Among the non-Haredi Orthodox it has risen slightly, and among the Haredim it is presumed to have expanded. Apparently, the high cost of Jewish education together with the economic hardship engendered by the crisis has caused non-Orthodox parents not to enroll their children in Jewish day schools. Thus, lowering the cost of Jewish day school tuition would seem to be a significant factor in increasing enrollment.

The leaders of this initiative, though, envision that it will accomplish more than merely easing the burden on families whose children are currently enrolled in Jewish day schools. They see it as having the potential to provide a breakthrough in Jewish education. As indicated above, if Jewish schools become roughly competitive with public and other private schools in terms of cost, it would be necessary to plan and construct a new type of Jewish school that would attract non-Orthodox children in the face of competition from public and other private schools. If the construction of this new type of Jewish school is successful, it could significantly alter the patterns of non-Orthodox enrollment in Jewish schools.

Despite the potential advantages, there are many in the American Jewish community who oppose these initiatives. These factions continue the traditional liberal American Jewish commitment to keeping a strong wall between church and state, ensuring that religion is relegated solely to the private sector. Indeed, many in this large group of American Jews themselves attended public schools when the singing of Christmas carols and other

quasi-religious activities were routine and led to feelings of exclusion. They fear that any porosity in the wall separating church and state will return religion to the public schools. These opponents also detect technical flaws in the initiative. They claim, for example, that Jewish schools enjoying tuition support through state tax credits would have to accept non-Jewish students.⁵ It has recently been reported, though, that groups that had traditionally been opposed to public funding for private and religious schools (such as the AJC) have recently been reconsidering their opposition.⁷

The Jewish People Policy Institute has undertaken the follow-up steps listed below:

1. The preparation of a cost-benefit analysis of the initiative that may serve as a **marketing tool** for Jewish communities;
2. The preparation of a vision for structuring new schools;
3. The preparation of a training plan for school principals, administrators, and teaching personnel.

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A Window of Opportunity for Aliyah from Europe?

Amid economic and political uncertainty in the European Union, the region's continuing demographic changes, and the rise in anti-Semitism, there is renewed interest in an effort to encourage Aliyah from Western Europe. Among the recent, and for European Jews, unwelcome developments are the rise of extremist movements in Greece and the electoral defeat of French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who had maintained a hard-line policy against Iran and who enjoyed broad support within the French Jewish community.

Following the lethal attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse, France, on March 19, 2012, there were official calls in Israel for European Jews to make Aliyah. However, judging from comments made by many French Jews, their desire to move to Israel is muted by their concern over the difficulties involved in the immigration and absorption process.

Among middle-class European Jews, and even more among those from lower classes, Aliyah to Israel has become beset by barriers and difficulties. Researcher Ilana Shpaizman asserts that, without serious public debate, Israel's immigration and absorption policy has gradually changed—from a

Following the attack in Toulouse, France, there were official calls in Israel for European Jews to make Aliyah

universal policy to a selective one that essentially forgoes "weaker" groups and is designed instead to attract skilled migrants and "returning residents" who can contribute to the country's economic growth.⁶ Thus, it is likely that at least one of the factors preventing a significant increase in the number of *Olim* from Western Europe has more to do with absorption difficulties than motivation.

In light of the small number of *Olim* immigrating to Israel in recent years, and facing a variety of economic constraints, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption decided to make substantial cuts in the number of employees speaking western languages who are available to help *Olim* navigate the web of Israeli bureaucracy. The importance of these workers, known as "project staff," is particularly great given that, even though less than half of new immigrants are arriving from the Former Soviet Union, the majority of employees at the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and at *ulpanim* speaks no foreign language other than Russian and has little understanding of the Western immigrants' particular needs. In other words, there is a "chicken and egg" situation: the small number of immigrants from the West leads to a reduction in the number of project staff, and the decline in the number of project staff leads to small numbers of immigrants. This despite the fact that one cannot discount the possibility that there is potential for "quality" immigration that is not coming to Israel because of the lack of suitable assistance and support.

Unlike immigrants who come to Israel from "distressed" countries, most candidates for Aliyah from Western countries who choose to come

to Israel in order to fulfill their Zionist dream and to assure their children's Jewish identity are university educated with promising careers in their countries of origin. When they arrive in Israel, they are forced to deal with three main challenges: **1) the need to have the foreign degrees they hold recognized in Israel; 2) placing their children in good schools or kindergartens enabling them to integrate socially; and 3) finding jobs.** Without a broad and supportive network of assistance, and without reliable information about the chances of having their various expectations met, a large proportion of potential *Olim* give up on their plans.

If we are wise enough to change our approach to the immigrant population and recognize them as people who choose, from among a wide range of options, to join the Israeli collective of their own free will, we will likely be able to design efficient immigrant services suited to their needs. In such a situation, it is not impossible that Israel could become a magnet for young, ambitious Jews willing to undertake the challenge.

The solutions that have been proposed to improve the situation fall into four categories:

- 1) Removing bureaucratic barriers, such as those involved in gaining recognition of foreign degrees and professional licenses; and a reexamination of the military enlistment regulations (for instance, making the compulsory military draft law more flexible) by setting up an inter-ministerial committee/national authority charged under a cabinet mandate.

- 2) Significantly improving the absorption system in Israel. Creating plans for selected cities, towns and communities to ensure they include all absorption services—ulpanim, children's education, community activity and employment. The plan should be implemented by specially-trained project staff in cities with high concentrations of *Olim*.
- 3) Renewing and expanding "Community Aliyah" projects, including a proactive system of attracting *Olim*.
- 4) Establishing an operational body that integrates the experience of "community Aliyah" projects and the lessons learned from the recruitment and absorption of North American *Olim*—that can provide a comprehensive solution to those seeking to make Aliyah from Western Europe, and especially from France.

Notes

1. J.J. Goldberg, "Day Schools Stuck in Neutral," www.forward.com/articles/148762/?p=all see also Jack Wertheim, "Day School numbers not so Bad", www.avichai.org/topics/adipiscing-elit-adipiscing-elit/.
2. The "effective birthrate" of American Jews as a whole is 1.4, far below the reproduction rate. See www.thejewishweek.com/news/new_york/battle_beanie_counters.
3. See the NJPS 2001 survey, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/US-Israel/ujcpop.html.
4. See for example Marc Stern, "Opportunity Scholarship not Helpful," www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ijlTI2PHKoG&b=6161209&ct=11555691; www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=ijlTI2PHKoG&b=6161209&ct=11555691.
5. www.jta.org/news/article/2012/04/18/3093156/jewish-groups-rethinking-vouchers-tax-credits-to-religious-schools.
6. Shpaizman, Ilana: "The Privatization of Aliyah Promotion" (2011) a position paper prepared for the Center for Social Justice and Democracy at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem.

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Policy Paper: Absentee Voting Rights for Israelis Abroad, Yogev Karasenty and Inbal Hakman, 2012.

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About JPPI

The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) is an independent professional policy planning think tank incorporated as a private non-profit company in Israel. The mission of the Institute is to ensure the thriving of the Jewish People and the Jewish civilization by engaging in professional strategic thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry. Located in Jerusalem, the concept of JPPI regarding the Jewish People is global, and includes aspects of major Jewish communities with Israel as one of them, at the core.

JPPI's activities are action-oriented, placing special emphasis on identifying critical options and analyzing their potential impact on the future. To this end, the Institute works towards developing professional strategic and long-term policy perspectives exploring key factors that may endanger or enhance the future of the Jewish People. JPPI provides professionals, decision makers and global leaders with:

- Surveys and analyses of key situations and dynamics
- “Alerts” to emerging opportunities and threats
- Assessment of important current events and anticipated developments
- Strategic action options and innovative alternatives
- Policy option analysis
- Agenda setting, policy recommendations and work plan design

JPPI is unique in dealing with the future of the Jewish People as a whole within a methodological framework of study and policy development. Its independence is assured by its company articles, with a board of directors co-chaired by Ambassadors Stuart Eizenstat and Dennis Ross—both have served in the highest echelons of the U.S. government and Leonid Nevzlin in Israel—and composed of individuals with significant policy experience. The board of directors also serves as the Institute's Professional Guiding Council.



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