



2014 – A Strategic Crossroads

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Introduction

As this overview is being completed, the serious security deterioration and confrontation between Israel and Hamas is still unfolding. Significant IDF forces have been operating on the ground in Gaza since July 17, 2014. In the ten days prior to the ground operation, Hamas fired rockets deep into Israeli territory, even reaching the outskirts of Haifa in the north. "Iron Dome" batteries successfully intercepted most of the rockets, and the Israeli Air Force carried out hundreds of attacks against Hamas targets in Gaza. Hamas's rejection of an Egyptian cease-fire proposal, together with its unabated rocket barrage and its attempts to infiltrate Israel through a system of attack tunnels led the Israeli cabinet to decide on a ground operation.

It is too soon to assess the overall significance of the military conflict with Hamas, but it does underscore the fact that 2014 has brought Israel to a strategic crossroads on two fronts: the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and the future of Iran's nuclear program. Both issues may place additional stress on the triangular relationship: Israel, the United States, and the American Jewish community. The diplomatic negotiations with the Palestinians, which ended without result when their April 30, 2014 deadline expired, and the military conflict with Hamas leave Israel with a set of problematic potential scenarios.

At the same time, the interim agreement with Iran and the ongoing permanent settlement talks being held in Vienna raise serious concerns in Israel. The coming months may bring new tensions between Washington and Jerusalem that may trouble American Jewry and could strain the "triangle," a cornerstone of Israel's and the Jewish people's power. The main issues – the fighting in Gaza and the so-far unsuccessful attempt to achieve a breakthrough in reaching an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, along with efforts to halt Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon – are occurring within stormy global and regional contexts. Replete with uncertainties and dilemmas highly relevant to Israel's standing, both issues test Jerusalem's decision makers and the triangle's strength.

The Global Context

The "world order", both the one that prevailed during the Cold War and that which characterized the years of American dominance following the Soviet Union's collapse, have been supplanted by a "world dis-order" that has yet to coalesce into a stable and functioning system. Alongside the rise of China and the increasingly assertive geopolitical challenge that Moscow still poses to Washington, an erosion of the international standing of the United States continues. Home to almost half the Jewish people who live there in unprecedented prosperity, U.S. friendship and support for Israel are critically important. The already-complex geopolitical arena familiar to us in

the past has been further complicated by more recent trends that draw their force and direction from the various incarnations of the "Arab Spring," the American withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, the economic crisis in the United States and Europe, and the continued rise of Asia. Professor Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore has predicted that we are only five years away from a historic milestone: for the first time in 200 years, a non-Western country – China – will become the world's largest economy in purchasing-power parity (PPP) terms. In this context, Mahbubani claims that: "The big question for our time... is this: is America ready to become number two?"¹

The erosion of Washington's readiness to lead the free world (and to use its power to do so), to develop its international standing, and of the manner in which its power is perceived – as weakening – by those who provoke it, found expression in U.S. hesitance in the face of the aggressive steps taken by Russian President Putin during the Ukraine crisis. Putin was not willing to accept the possibility that Kiev would favor a Western orientation and escape from Russia's sphere of influence. He sent forces to the Crimean Peninsula (March 1, 2014) and initiated a quick referendum that transferred the peninsula to Russian sovereignty. Israel, it should be noted, did not feel the necessity to stand alongside the United States and did not join the 100 countries that declared Putin's move illegal at the UN General Assembly (March 27, 2014) (A similar incident occurred on June 29, 2014 when, contrary to the U.S. traditional position, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that Israel supports the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.) The crisis is still in full force so it is too soon to assess how it will affect the Middle East. Various commentators believe that if Putin is not stopped in Ukraine, his appetite for broadening Russia's influence will be felt not only in its neighboring countries, but in the Middle East as well. Others claim that, in response to West-imposed sanctions on Russia, Putin may harden his positions on the Syrian crisis and be less ready to assist in the negotiations with Iran.

Accompanying the trend of the United States' diminishing international standing is another development that seriously threatens basic Israeli interests – the growing U.S. reluctance to be involved or present in the Middle East. Israel will be greatly affected not only by changes in the quality of its relationship with Washington, but also by a change in the United States' global standing. It is interesting to note that, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center (July 11, 2014), contrary to public opinion in Arab countries, 71% of Israelis have confidence in President Obama's ability to "do the right thing" in world affairs (in response to the same question, only 19% of Egyptians and 17% of Jordanians answered affirmatively).² The perception taking root, that the United States – Israel's ally – is in the process of decline and of abandoning the Middle East, erodes Israel's deterrence capacity and the power associated with it.

Developments supporting the perception of diminishing American interest in the Middle East include the continuing economic crisis in the United States, drastic cuts in the Pentagon budget, Washington's pivot toward Asia and the rise of China, and the forecast that the United States will soon no longer be dependent on imported energy. (Technological developments in the field of energy will enable the United States to replace Saudi Arabia as the world's leading crude oil producer within a year, and by 2020 the United States will even become an energy exporter.)³

The continuing U.S. disengagement from Afghanistan (following the disengagement from Iraq) and its avoidance of military action in Syria, even though the "red line" concerning the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons – set by President Obama himself – was violated, testify to an

American desire to close the chapter of its active military involvement in the region. Many in the United States feel that this involvement, which exacted a heavy price – in blood and treasure – was a disappointment and failed to achieve its primary goals. This bitter feeling was reinforced by recent developments in Iraq, where Fallujah and parts of Ramadi fell to radical Islamic forces at the beginning of January 2014. Many American soldiers' lives were lost conquering these cities, and now it seems all for naught. The situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate with the impressive gains of the Sunni extremists working within the framework of the ISIS organization (the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham – or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)), who conquered – without serious opposition – Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul (June 11, 2014) and extensive additional territory that place them not far from the capital, Baghdad. According to UN data, more than 5,500 Iraqis were killed during the first half of 2014.⁴ The United States and its allies face a difficult dilemma as to how to respond to this challenge, which makes a fiction of the central government in Iraq, erodes the last few achievements that still remain from the war against Saddam Hussein, and presents the West with a most extreme rival – ISIS – which controls more and more territory and which, according to most commentators, is significantly more dangerous and has much greater ambitions and capacities than Al Qaeda. ISIS seeks to erase the borders between Arab states in order to establish a united Islamic caliphate to be governed under the strict rules of early Islam. Jordan is preparing for the possibility that it will be marked as the extremist organization's next target, and Israel too has been forced to prepare for the possibility of a new and determined enemy on its borders. The threat ISIS poses led President Obama to deviate from his own policy and announce (June 21, 2014) that the United States would deploy 300 military advisers to assist the Iraqi army.

Polls show that 52% of Americans prefer that their country focus on domestic affairs and stop bothering with global affairs (this is the highest figure recorded on this issue in the 50 years since this question has been asked).⁵ Similarly, only 14% of Americans believe that military intervention is right answer to the crisis in Ukraine.⁶

This waning appetite for involvement in the Middle East is apparent just as the region is in the midst of a storm that requires a superpower's stabilizing influence. While many commentators reject the notion of "American decline," some also believe that the United States will not be able to disengage from the Middle East because of its potential to undermine global security, possibly igniting a nuclear war, and cause a global energy-economic crisis (even if the United States were no longer to depend on Middle Eastern oil, disruptions in the supply would likely undermine the global economy, which would, in turn, damage America's own).

Turmoil has characterized the Middle East since the outbreak of the "Arab Spring". The civil war in Syria and the crisis with Teheran test the implications of reduced U.S. involvement in the region. The regional upheaval has made the American task of preserving relations with key states in the Middle East even more difficult. Thus, during President Obama's visit to Saudi Arabia at the end of March 2014, serious disagreements emerged between the two countries, which have been allies for decades. Riyadh's grievance centers on U.S. policy toward Iran, which it sees as too soft, on the lack of U.S. military support for the opposition forces fighting Assad, and on the coolness that Washington has shown to the al-Sisi regime in Egypt. Like other states in the region, Saudi Arabia fears that Washington's conduct in the Middle East may even signal its adoption of a new strategy whose aim is to create a regional balance of power in which Iran has a stabilizing role in

halting radical Islam (at the expense of the United States long-term allies). It is still not clear whether the invitation for the Iranian foreign minister to visit Saudi Arabia is a sign of a new Saudi policy toward Iran (which could undermine the anti-Iranian alignment), or whether it is only a tactical maneuver. In announcing the invitation, the Saudi foreign minister explained (May 12, 2014): "Iran is a neighbor. We have relations with them and we will negotiate with them. We will talk to them."⁷

The complex and fluid situation in the Middle East is forcing the United States to chart its foreign policy while, before its eyes, weighty considerations are pulling in opposite directions. For example: Should it give up on its commitment to democracy and human rights and focus on strengthening its friendship with the Egypt's repressive regime in the interests of stability, whether real or virtual? Against this background, the messages coming out of Washington are perceived in the region as contradictory, and its grand pronouncements as not necessarily being accompanied by the practical actions that should be inferred from them. President Obama made clear in his State of the Union address that he would not send his forces to dangerous combat zones unless absolutely necessary: "But I will not send our troops into harm's way unless it is truly necessary; nor will I allow and daughters to be mired in open-ended conflicts."⁸ National Security Advisor Susan Rice explained that President Obama, in his second term, will follow a more modest approach in the Middle East and will not allow the region to dominate his foreign policy as it did those of his predecessors.⁹ Secretary of State John Kerry presented the opposite approach at the World Economic Forum in Davos, in which he labeled claims that the United States is disengaging from the Middle East "a myth": "We are entering an era of American diplomatic engagement that is as broad and as deep as at any time in history... The most bewildering version of this disengagement myth is about a supposed retreat by the United States from the Middle East."¹⁰ It is appropriate to ask: Which of the two describes U.S. Middle East policy more accurately?

The Regional Context

The term "Arab Spring" has turned out to be premature. At best, it holds a vision for the distant future, and it certainly does not describe the current situation in the Middle East more than three years after Muhammed Bouazizi immolated himself in Tunisia (December 17, 2010) and provided the initial impetus for the outbreak of the popular uprisings that swept the entire region. The optimism many expressed at the beginning of the upheaval has largely given way to disappointment and concern. Increasingly, it is doubted that the movement that toppled autocratic rulers is capable of providing political cohesion and liberal reform to societies that lack a democratic culture and are laden with poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, tribalism, social divides, radical Islam, the oppression of women, corrupt regimes, discrimination against minorities, poor education systems, backward economies, and a weakened middle class.

From Israel's perspective, anchors that had provided relative strategic stability over the years have been weakened: Mubarak's overthrow and the undermining of Egypt's governability in general and in Sinai in particular; the deep crisis in relations with Turkey that seem unlikely to return to their previous levels; Syria's de facto breakup; threats to the monarchy in Jordan – Israel's neighbor, which has high strategic importance to Israel and the West; the anticipated changing of

the guard in the Saudi leadership (King Abdullah is already past 90 and has serious health problems); Iraq's difficulty in maintaining its unity and stifling internal terror; and so on. It is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with weakened governments that are no longer the real "address" for what is taking place in their sovereign territory where problematic non-state actors are strengthening at their expense. The shock waves and the lack of effective central government control open the door for Al Qaeda and Global Jihad forces to expand their presence closer to the border with Israel. They are increasing their numbers in Syria (including in the Golan Heights) and in Sinai, and have even made several attempts to attack Israeli targets. Alongside the release of popular forces and energies seeking freedom and economic wellbeing, progress, respect, and governability, the regional earthquake unleashed anti-democratic and anti-Western forces and energies that have become dominant. Thus, the way was paved for the rise of political Islam, though its performance and achievements at the helm of power brought disappointment and disillusionment, which even led to a military coup in Egypt. Violent jihadist forces have arisen and prospered around the Middle East and have, among other things, turned Syria into the greatest concentration ever of Global Jihad forces. In addition to all this, Iran has yet to abandon its efforts to possess nuclear weapons, despite the negotiations being conducted with it.

Some of the threats facing Israel are camouflaged by stormy events that would seem to indicate an improvement in its strategic stature: the Arab countries are preoccupied with problematic internal and economic challenges that jeopardize their stability; a conventional war against Israel does not appear a likely scenario; the Syrian army has been seriously worn down and is busy fighting a civil war; the Iran-Damascus-Hezbollah axis is in peril; political Islam has lost its standing and the luster has been removed from the seat of power in Egypt; Hamas has lost its base in Syria and after the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood government is now regarded as an enemy by Egypt's rulers; Hezbollah's standing has been hit as a result of its active fighting in Syria on the side of the hated Assad; and the Arab world, on the whole, is bedeviled by a violent internal Sunni-Shiite conflict. At the same time, the peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt remain in place; the development of the natural gas fields that will turn Israel into an energy exporter continues successfully, and regional players are seeking a connection with Israel in the face of threats posed by the Iranian axis.

Yet these facts, encouraging as they may be, cannot stifle deeper negative trends or change the reality that Israel is located in the heart of a violent and unstable region.

Even though the shockwaves in the Arab world are likely to reverberate for years, it is already possible to make a number of diagnoses that should inform Israeli strategic thinking: political Islam has become a very significant factor in the regional arena – in government and outside it; the growing power of the Arab street; the deep economic crisis; the outbreak of ethnic and religious disputes, and particularly the escalating Sunni-Shiite rift; central governments are weakening in the face of strengthening terrorist organizations and sectarian militias; and the growing sense that borders laid down almost 100 years ago by Sykes and Picot (1916) do not reflect ethnic and geopolitical realities. All these demonstrate the difficulty in shaping a single coherent doctrine that provides answers for every dilemma that arises. Some claim that in such a dynamic and unpredictable reality so rife with internal contradictions, it would be a mistake to apply a single rule to every situation that develops, that it is better to respond to each challenge separately:

The Egyptian Challenge Since Morsi's coronation as president (June 30, 2012), claims that the regime was failing grew, that it favored the Muslim Brotherhood's sectarian interests and that it allowed the economy to deteriorate. Barely a year passed before Morsi was overthrown in a military coup (July 1, 2013), imprisoned and made to stand trial, which may place him in front of a firing squad. Hundreds were killed in the riots throughout Egypt. Field Marshall Sisi became the de facto ruler. Many of the heads of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose movement was declared a terrorist organization and outlawed, were imprisoned. The West looked on astounded at the crude violation of human rights in Egypt. For example, following a trial that lasted only two hours, 529 members of the Muslim Brotherhood were sentenced to death (March 24, 2014). The all-out struggle that the Egyptian regime is waging against the Muslim Brotherhood reveals the extent to which Egyptian society is divided between forces that are bitterly hostile to one another: on one hand, the army and its supporters, and on the other, the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the young liberals who led the protests in Tahrir Square have also been imprisoned. (Since the revolution, more than 1,000 Egyptian civilians have been killed and 16,000 imprisoned due to their involvement in the protest against the regime). The new Egyptian constitution was ratified by a 98.1% majority in a referendum (January 14-15, 2014). However, only 38.6% of the electorate voted in the referendum, so it hardly represents a broad national consensus. The constitution grants the army immunity from serious criticism and allows for its continued dominance in Egypt. Sisi, who as expected won the presidential elections (May 26, 2014) had committed that, if elected, the Muslim Brotherhood would cease to exist in Egypt.¹¹

In a relatively short period, the United States has been forced to shape a policy to deal with three different Egyptian regimes: those of Mubarak, Morsi, and Sisi. This reality makes it difficult to establish a stable unequivocal strategy free of internal contradictions. And, in fact, the United States finds itself the object of criticism from all sides. Thus, for example, it has not defined Morsi's overthrow as a "military coup" since such a recognition would require, under American law, the cessation of aid it provides Egypt at a time when this aid is considered essential to maintaining some kind of leverage with Cairo. The United States attaches great strategic importance to Egypt's continued commitment to the peace treaty with Israel, to its cooperation in the struggle against global terror, and, of course, to free passage through the Suez Canal. Secretary Kerry encountered raised eyebrows when he stated that Sisi acted to "restore democracy." At the same time, the Americans are also voicing criticism over the infringement of human rights and limiting joint military exercises and suspending some Egyptian military purchases. Moscow, having spotted an opportunity, is offering Egypt a significant weapons deal and has rushed to host Sisi and his foreign minister (February 12, 2014).

The interruption of the Muslim Brotherhood regime caused satisfaction in Israel. Instead of facing an extremely hostile regime allied with Hamas, Israel now faces a military regime whose modus operandi is familiar, and with which it is possible to cooperate. And indeed, the quiet security cooperation between the two countries has been tightened, a result of fulfilling common interests in the border area and beyond. Sisi's regime understands the danger involved in allowing Jihadist elements to become established in Sinai and is making an effort to combat this threat. It considers Hamas a threat, is stemming the trafficking of weapons into Gaza, and is making efficient strikes against the network of smuggling tunnels that have been dug between Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Israel – with the help of its friends in the United States – is trying to convince the American

administration and Congress of the importance of supporting Sisi's regime to the region's stability and to the war against terrorism. It is even allowing Egypt to send forces into Sinai at levels above those stipulated in the military provisions of the peace treaty. Yet recent experience shows that stability in Egypt is far off, both because of the internal tension with the Islamic forces and because of the severe economic crisis that is expected to continue despite the generous Gulf assistance. Thus, alongside efforts to cultivate relations with Sisi's regime, Israel's eyes must remain open to the possibility that less comfortable scenarios may arise. Furthermore, it must pay attention to the gap between its own positive approach to Sisi's regime and the Americans' dualistic position.

The Syrian Challenge The war in Syria, which has intensified in the past year, has so far claimed more than 150,000 lives and has made refugees of more than six million Syrians (that is, one in every three civilians – 2.3 million in neighboring countries, and the remainder within Syria itself). During 2013, Assad's army registered some achievements: and in early May, 2014 even took back the "rebel stronghold" of Homs. Assad continues to enjoy the active military support of Iran and Hezbollah, and benefits from a Russian political-diplomatic umbrella and supplies of advanced weaponry intended to deter external military intervention. China is also not enthusiastic about applying military force against his regime. Assad held presidential elections (June 3, 2014), which gave him a further seven years in power and the ability to proclaim the legitimacy and legality of his government (even though the elections, which took place only in areas under Assad's control, were boycotted by his opponents).

The revelation that Assad used chemical weapons against civilians brought the United States to the brink of attack on Assad's military, which would have fulfilled its threat that it would not tolerate the use of chemical weapons. Obama announced (September 1, 2013) that he would seek the approval of Congress prior to a military strike against Syria, but his request was not brought to a vote. Avoidance of U.S. military operation came as a result of Kerry's comments (September 9, 2013) that a military operation would not occur if Assad would agree to the destruction of his chemical weapon stockpile. Moscow hurried to take advantage of the opportunity to save its ally from an American military attack and gained Assad's agreement to give up all the chemical weapons in his possession as well as his manufacturing capability (which he had previously denied existed). This surprising development – even though its implementation is lagging behind the timetable to which Damascus committed and despite the use that the regime continues to make of less lethal chemical weapons and suspicions that Assad has retained a certain residual capability – provided Israel with a significant strategic achievement (assuming it is fully implemented) in that it removes the substantial threat these unconventional weapons posed to the Jewish state.

The war in Syria brings together in a single geographic arena different types of "actors" and different types of response: the internal forces battling each other against an ethnic, tribal religious, and political background, the neighboring countries that fear destructive spillover into their territory, the regional forces, especially Iran and Saudi Arabia, which are transposing their competition for regional hegemony onto Syrian soil, the radical Islamic forces that see an opportunity to advance their pan-Islamic ideology, the superpowers (the United States and Russia) that are vying for influence in the area and pushing for conflicting solutions, and, of course, the factions that have been motivated by the historical conflict (Sunni versus Shiite) since the dawn of Islam. The war has brought a heavy human tragedy and caused waves of refugees who

are weighing down the economies of neighboring states (over a million in Lebanon, some 600,000 in Jordan and 900,000 in Turkey), yet the international community has not succeeded in stemming the crisis. Russia and China prevent the adoption of binding UN Security Council resolutions that would mean Assad's ouster or would at least impose humanitarian restraints on him. The United States has avoided supplying significant weapons (particularly anti-aircraft weapons) to the rebels given the uncertainty about what will happen in Syria after Assad departs, the existing split within the opposition forces, and the fact that among the groups fighting Assad there is an increasing dominance of Al-Qaida and Islamic Jihad elements for which Syrian has become a magnet (according to Israeli intelligence estimates, they number approximately 30,000!). The concern is that the weapons would fall into the hands of radical Islamic elements and would ultimately be used against American and Israeli targets. Furthermore, the arrival of thousands of foreign Jihadists in Syria raises the concern that they will become a destabilizing factor when they return to their homelands – just as the "graduates" of Afghanistan (Osama Bin-Laden among them) did in their day.

The Geneva II talks of January 2014 ended in failure. The talks, in which representatives of the government and the opposition participated, were intended, in theory, to implement the agenda decided upon in the Geneva I talks (June 2012), and at its heart: political transformation, meaning Assad's ouster. However, Iran does not accept this principle (and thus its invitation to the talks was cancelled), and Russia, which was not interested in having the talks deal with Assad's future, pressed to have them deal with secondary matters. Israel is following the shockwaves that its northern neighbor is experiencing while strengthening its deployment along the border and preparing for the possibility that the weakening of the central government in Damascus will turn Syria into a beachhead for Islamic terrorist elements that will work to undermine the quiet along the Golan border with no central address that can be efficiently deterred. Or it could become an alternative arena for anti-Israel Hezbollah activity – as occurred recently following a further Israeli attack (according to foreign reports) against a convoy of game-changing weapons sent by the Syrian regime to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Challenge (Hezbollah) The civil war in Syria undermines the stability of Lebanon. Over a million Syrian refugees who have fled to Lebanon are creating a significant humanitarian and economic crisis. Hezbollah's support for Assad undermines its position in the Arab world generally, but particularly in Lebanon. Several thousand of the organization's fighters are operating alongside Assad's forces in Syria. The hundreds of them who have been killed have been returned to Lebanon for burial. This reality refutes the organization's claim that its military capacity is exclusively intended to defend Lebanon against Israel. Its standing beside the hated Assad is portrayed as a Shiite affront against the Sunnis, and pulls the rug out from under the image Nasrallah has cultivated over many years: that Hezbollah works in the interests of all Lebanese citizens. Hezbollah's involvement in Syria has made Lebanon part of the battlefield and has brought with it bloodshed and deteriorating internal stability. The Sunni rebels fighting Assad exact revenge on Hezbollah and Iran with attacks carried out on Lebanese soil. The internal tension has intensified since May 25, 2014, when the current president's term ended with no agreement reached over who would replace him (under the constitution, the president must be a Christian). Hezbollah, which has avoided for an extended period opening a front with Israel, and has, for a long time, not responded to attacks ascribed to Israel against convoys of strategic

weapons from Syria intended for its use, and against the stockpiles of advanced Iranian missiles stored near Damascus. Recently, though, the Shiite organization has begun to respond with attacks against Israeli patrols in the Golan Heights and its reach has extended to Bangkok where, in mid-April 2014, the local police arrested two Hezbollah operatives who had planned to attack Israeli tourists. Hezbollah's continued efforts to arm itself with advanced Syrian and Iranian weaponry, and Israel's determination to thwart this, has the potential to lead to an escalation, possibly to revenge attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets worldwide, and even a slide into war. Under certain conditions, Hezbollah may decide that only a violent confrontation with Israel can restore the support it has lost in Lebanon and the Arab world.

The Jordanian Challenge Although the "Arab Spring" sparked demonstrations in Jordan, they were not as widespread as in other Arab countries. The protests focused on issues of corruption, calls for political reform, and expressions of anger at the worsening economic situation, rising prices, and the increasing unemployment rate (30%). In the past, the opposition in Jordan has avoided criticizing the king himself, whose being a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed's family is a considerable source of legitimacy. But since the outbreak of the "Arab Spring," this taboo has been challenged and King Abdullah II and his family have been attacked publicly (with the emphasis on his wife, Queen Rania, who is portrayed as a disconnected spendthrift), even though there have been few calls for regime change, which have come only from the margins of the political arena. Demands for reforms that will erode the Abdullah's power and result in Jordan becoming parliamentary monarchy are not limited to the Muslim Brotherhood. There is also dissent and discomfort within the king's traditional base of support, the Bedouin tribes, who regard him as a bulwark against the increased power of the Palestinians. The civil war in Syria has intensified the internal situation in Jordan and has dealt serious blows to its economy, infrastructure, and its social fabric (approximately 60% of Jordan's foreign trade is conducted through Syria). More than 600,000 Syrian refugees (which amounts to 10 % of Jordan's population) are putting heavy pressure on the Kingdom (in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have remained in the country after fleeing their own war and hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria who are not registered as such). Jordan is forced to pay substantial amounts for imported energy as Jihadists in Sinai has been blown up the gas pipeline from Egypt innumerable. Moreover, Jihadist elements have moved from Jordan to Syria to fight against Assad, which raises concerns about their destabilizing influence once they return to Jordan.

The danger of Jordan's destabilization worries the West and, of course, Israel. President Obama, who hosted the King Abdullah II in the United States (February 14, 2014), expressed his sympathy and promised to provide credit guarantees of \$1 billion and to renew the five-year agreement that will ensure the continuation of the joint civilian and military aid the United States provides Amman. A stable, pro-Western and friendly Jordan provides Israel with significant strategic depth. Its security forces demonstrate professionalism and efficiently prevent terrorist elements from using Jordanian territory as a base for attacks against Israeli targets. The fruitless round of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians showed that, whenever the possibility of a breakthrough arises, so do concerns on the Jordanian side: about how to safeguard Jordan's status vis-a-vis the Jerusalem holy sites, how to preserve the security of the Jordan River border after the establishment of a Palestinian state, and how to ensure that a solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees will not ignore the fate of those who have found refuge there, that it will not

bring additional refugees to Jordan from Lebanon and Syria, and will include an allocation of appropriate compensation to the Jordanian government for the costs it has incurred over the years as a result of absorbing Palestinian refugees. The implication for Israel, of course, is that it should work to strengthen the Kingdom economically and militarily and dispel any doubts or suspicions it might have, particularly in the wake of the failure of the talks with the Palestinians, that Israel regards Jordan as the solution to the Palestinian problem.

The Turkish Challenge The severe crisis between Israel and Turkey, which first became apparent with the strengthening of Islamic forces beginning in 2002 and erupted in full force following the Turkish flotilla to Gaza incident in 2010, took a significant turn when Netanyahu apologized to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan in a telephone conversation that was held at President Obama's side just as he was about to leave Israel (March 22, 2013). Netanyahu expressed his government's readiness in principle to pay compensation to the families of those killed aboard the Mavi Marmara and made clear in response to another Turkish demand – "to remove the blockade from Gaza" – that many steps had been taken to ease the passage of people and goods into the Gaza Strip. The United States pressed for reconciliation between its two allies, whom it regards as anchors of stability at the heart of a stormy and unpredictable region, although tensions in Turkish-U.S. relations cannot be ignored: differences over approach to Syria, the possible Turkish purchase of a Chinese air-defense system, Turkey's demand that the United States extradite Fethullah Gülen, the popular religious leader in exile in the United States, and American criticism of the deterioration of democracy in Turkey.

The war in Syria increased Jerusalem and Ankara's interest in easing the crisis between them and to create the basis for the cooperation that might be necessary in light of the implications of a continued deterioration in their common neighbor, Syria. Most commentators do not anticipate a return to the same close strategic partnership that characterized relations between the countries in the past (even though the level of mutual civilian trade actually increased during the crisis). Turkey consistently supports Islamist elements, including Hamas, is extremely critical of Israel, and is headed by a leader who is hostile to Israel and does not hesitate to improve his popularity at home and in the Arab world with harsh anti-Israel rhetoric. This impulse may erupt given the internal problems threatening Erdogan's administration: the slowing of the economy, social protests, revelations of government corruption, and the stance of Fethullah Gülen and his movement against Erdogan.

These problems did not prevent Prime Minister Erdogan and his party from achieving impressive results (43% support) in municipal elections held on March 30, 2014. Erdogan's announcement (July 1, 2014) that he would run for the presidency in August 2014 has strengthened speculation that he will work to change the president's role from a ceremonial to an executive one).

Despite common interests between Israel and Turkey with regard to Syria, and the common concern over instability there and over the growth of terrorist and jihadist elements (and the accompanying collapse of the policy of "zero problems" with Turkey's neighbors), there are quite a few differences in orientation and policy that may cast a shadow over the reconciliation and future relations between Ankara and Jerusalem. In the weeks that preceded the security deterioration in Gaza and Operation "Protective Edge" there were growing signs that the two countries are close to finalizing a reconciliation agreement. Media reports abounded that Israel

had agreed to raise the compensation it will pay to families of those killed in the flotilla incident to over \$20 million, that Turkey is prepared to prevent legal proceedings on its territory against Israelis who were involved in the Mavi Marmara incident -- and that Jerusalem and Ankara are close to an agreement that would re-normalize relations with the respective ambassadors resuming their posts. Erdogan recently predicted (April 28, 2014) that it would be a matter of "days or weeks" until it will be possible to begin the process of normalizing relations, the first step in which, he said, would be the ambassadors' return to the respective capitals. Erdogan even expressed the hope that "no more black cats" would appear and change the situation.¹² Yet with the military operation against Hamas, Erdogan declared that relations with Israel would not return to normal until Israel ceases permanently its attacks in the Gaza Strip and removes its "inhuman embargo."¹³ Erdogan used harsh anti-Israel rhetoric and called Israel's actions in Gaza an attempt to commit "systematic genocide."¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume, then, that even if the reconciliation agreement is finalized in the future, Israel will find it difficult to depend on Turkey as the supportive regional anchor it had been in past decades.

The Iranian Challenge

Hassan Rouhani's victory in Iran's presidential elections (June 15, 2013) raised expectations of a possible shift in Iran's policy. Even though Rouhani was part of the conservative establishment for many years, he was perceived as a reformist and won broad popular support thanks to the change he promised, including repairing relations with the United States and the West in order to lift the burdensome sanctions (since they were imposed in 2012, the Iranian currency has plummeted by 60%, and its oil exports by the same amount). In a series of well-planned steps, Rouhani signaled to the West his desire for a thaw and his readiness to reach a deal on the nuclear issue. The Iranian "charm offensive" found clear expression in Rouhani's September 2013 appearance before the UN General Assembly. The Iranian president avoided the vicious attacks against Israel the world had become accustomed to hearing from his predecessor, Ahmadinejad. Rouhani called the Holocaust reprehensible, and reiterated his promise that Iran would never strive for a nuclear weapon because Islamic law prohibits faithful Moslems to do so. Before leaving the United States, Rouhani spoke with President Obama by phone, and in so doing broke the communications silence that had existed between successive leaders of the two nations for 34 years.

Prime Minister Netanyahu called Rouhani "a wolf in sheep's clothing," and warned that Israel would not be deterred from standing alone against the Iranian threat.¹⁵ The nuclear talks that were restarted did indeed produce an interim agreement (November 24, 2013) that is valid for six months while negotiations for a permanent settlement continue. Iran agreed that during the interim period it would limit its enrichment of uranium to 5% (which is not sufficient for nuclear weapons), reduce or convert its stockpile of 20% enriched uranium in a way that would make it difficult (though not impossible) to re-enable it for military use, install no new centrifuges, and build no new enrichment sites. It also agreed to allow UN inspectors to conduct daily inspections of its enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordo, its heavy water plant in Arak, its centrifuge production facilities, and its uranium mines. The agreement does not apply to nuclear research and development or to the Iranian missile capacity. In exchange, Iran has received recognition of its right to retain an enrichment capability on its soil within the framework of a permanent

agreement, and a partial easing of the sanctions including the release of \$4 billion in frozen Iranian assets held in the West, and limited resumption of petrochemical exports, trade in gold and other precious metals, and spare parts imports for aircraft. The agreement came into effect on January 20, 2014 and the six months allocated to reaching a permanent settlement on the nuclear issue began (the possibility of six-month extension exists).

Netanyahu pronounced the agreement a “historic mistake.”¹⁶ Critics of the agreement claimed that it did not slow Iran's progress toward possessing a nuclear weapon, as all of the steps Iran is taking under the agreement are reversible, and because the agreement allows it to continue to progress toward its nuclear goal on all necessary development tracks: the production of fissile material, the development of new generations of centrifuges, the development of the weapons themselves, and the preparation of their delivery missiles. According to the critics, the agreement does not impose any restriction on the continuation of Teheran's regional subversion (see Syria) or its involvement in terrorism, and in essence grants it legitimacy for continuing nuclear enrichment within Iran in contravention of UN resolutions and previous demands that it stop doing so, while also leaving its existing nuclear capabilities in place: approximately 19,000 centrifuges, some of them of high quality (in 2003, Iran had fewer than 200), sufficient enriched uranium for 5-6 atomic bombs, a heavy-water plant under construction that is inefficient for electricity generation but has the potential to produce weapons grade plutonium, enrichment sites, and long-range missiles. It is further claimed that the easing of sanctions removes the pressure that had been effectively applied and sends a message to the Western business world to begin a race to win lucrative business from Iran (and, in fact, European and Russian delegations are already streaming to Teheran, although the lack of an agreement on the nuclear issue is delaying the signing of numerous deals).

Permanent settlement negotiations, which began on February 18, 2014, are supposed to achieve “a mutually-agreed long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure that Iran’s nuclear program be entirely peaceful.”¹⁷ The United States is striving for a settlement that will limit Iran's nuclear capacity to civilian purposes, and that will cause its breakout capability toward a nuclear weapon to require more time. The talks are focusing on the following topics:

- Limiting uranium enrichment to 5%.
- Removal of most of the stocks of fissile material from Iranian soil.
- The dismantling of thousands of centrifuges.
- Limiting the quality of the centrifuges to their current level.
- Closing enrichment sites (especially the one constructed deep under the mountain at Fordo).
- Closing the heavy-water facility at Arak in order to close off the plutogenic route, or at least to convert it to a light-water reactor consistent with a civilian nuclear program or to a production level lower than originally planned (once completed, the facility at Arak will have a production capacity of approximately nine kilograms of plutonium a year, enough for one nuclear bomb).
- Tightening the inspection arrangements, including access to the facilities suspected of being nuclear weapon construction sites (for example, the military base at Parchin).
- Obtaining an Iranian answer to evidence the West possesses that points to previous nuclear-weapons tests.

- Restricting Iran's ballistic missile program.
- Removal of the sanctions and the release of the \$100 billion currently frozen in Western banks.

Most commentators believe that, in complete negation of Israel's position, the United States and the West will reach a settlement that will leave Iran with a nuclear capacity, including allowing uranium enrichment on its soil. While the United States seeks to ensure that Iran will not have a rapid nuclear-weapons breakout capability, the Iranians will seek to achieve a status identical to that of other NPT members without nuclear weapons (such as Argentina and Brazil, which enrich uranium and are subject to relatively loose inspections). The interim agreement does indeed state, "The Iranian program will be treated in the same manner as that of any non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT."¹⁸ In this spirit, Iranian leaders declare that they have not agreed, and will not agree, to dismantle any centrifuges, nor will it agree to close the facility at Arak.

The first negotiation period ended on July 20, 2014 without a permanent agreement, but the parties did agree to a four-month extension of the talks. Israel will likely find itself faced with a reality in which the interim agreement with Iran is extended again and again (or, alternatively, may find itself with a permanent agreement that does not satisfy its demands). Some commentators believe that the two sides have incentives to reach an agreement, that the talks are being conducted in a serious manner, and that there is already a draft agreement (albeit with gaps between the positions, of course). The main effort is focused on a formula that is intended, from the United States' point of view, to extend the timeline necessary for Iran to break out and produce an atomic bomb. The reality of the interim agreement and continuing diplomatic talks or of an unsatisfactory agreement could leave Jerusalem with a dilemma – over whether to launch a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. Opinions are divided among the various experts. Some claim that Israel cannot, under any circumstances, permit a situation in which Iran can be allowed to establish itself as a nuclear threshold state with the capability to make progress and eventually to break out relatively quickly to construct a nuclear weapon, and that it will, therefore, be forced to take militarily action against the threat. Others claim that such a scenario is implausible because Israel will not attack Iran so long as the United States is negotiating with Teheran, and all the more so if the United States reaches a permanent agreement with Iran. This approach posits that Israel essentially forfeited the military option against Iran by not striking on the eve of the 2012 U.S. elections (a point at which it could have assumed that the United States would have had no alternative but to support such a move).

The negotiations with Iran expose the significant disagreement between the United States and Israel over their goal. Former National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley describes this bitter reality as follows: "Israelis do not want Iran to be a nuclear threshold state. But Iran is in fact already a threshold state and will likely remain one – that line has been crossed."¹⁹ The so-far unsuccessful attempts to pass legislation in Congress calling for a tightening of sanctions against Iran highlight differences on the Iran issue between Israel (and its supporters in the United States) and the Obama administration (more on this below). Against the backdrop of U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice's visit to Israel in early May 2014, Netanyahu expressed dissatisfaction with the status of the talks with Iran: "Iran seeks to destroy the State of Israel and is building a nuclear bomb toward this end... I want to emphasize Israel's position – we believe Iran must not have the capability to produce a nuclear bomb. Today Iran has thousands of centrifuges, thousands of

kilograms of uranium enriched to produce a bomb. A bad agreement will enable them to retain these capabilities. I am concerned that we are liable to be faced with a bad agreement in which Iran retains its capability to develop a nuclear weapon. It is better not to reach an agreement at all than to reach a bad one."²⁰ At its root, the dispute centers on the question of whether to leave Iran with an independent, monitored capability on its own territory, and if so, precisely which capability in terms of the time needed to break out to the weapons-grade fissile material needed for one bomb and to the weapon itself.

Beyond the nuclear issue, the talks with Iran have raised speculation over a possible broader thaw between Washington and Tehran. Middle Eastern states such as Israel and Saudi Arabia find themselves in one camp, which fears not only that a nuclear deal will leave the Iranian threat in place, but that it will also a signal that the West grants legitimacy to Iran's ambition for regional hegemony (for example, if it regards Iran as an ally in the effort to vanquish the radical Sunni movements that threaten Western interests in the Middle East). In addition to these harsh scenarios, there are also those who raise the possibility of a more positive picture, which might even represent an opportunity for Israel: an Iran whose relations with the West are improving and which is embarking on the road to economic reconstruction will be forced to reduce its subversion and its support for anti-Israel elements like Hezbollah. Such a scenario, even if its probability is not considered high, points to the possibility that Iran might change its policy toward Israel and recognize it.

During the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), Iran left the question of recognizing Israel to the Palestinians, even though it expressed opposition to recognizing Israel itself. In 2003, a resolution was even passed at the Islamic Summit held in Teheran that supported the Arab Peace Initiative. Since then, though, the Iranian position has hardened and acceptance of Israel's existence has been negated entirely. There are now some who see the possibility of change. During Ahmadinejad's tenure, Iran stood firmly on the side of Hamas and opposed Fatah positions, which accept Israel's existence and which support a two-state solution. Progress in the nuclear talks may, therefore, simultaneously reveal a greater Iranian willingness to come to terms, even if only de facto, with a process that envisions a two-state solution. This would make it even more difficult for Israel to convince the world of the need to attack Iran militarily, but it would also open a window to new diplomatic possibilities. Thus, an agreement is likely to lead to greater cooperation between Iran and the United States and, apparently, to greater regional stability, but it is also possible that the removal of sanctions will make it easier for Iran to divert more generous resources to deepening its involvement in the region. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that, in practice, Iran is continuing to cultivate forces hostile to Israel – Syria, Hezbollah, and Palestinian terrorist organizations – and to provide them with advanced weaponry, and that in the middle of the talks with Iran, Israel intercepted a ship in the Red Sea en route to deliver advanced missiles to Gaza at Iran's initiative.²¹

The Palestinian Challenge

The violent confrontation between Israel and Hamas (which is still taking place as of this writing) is another tragic milestone in the annals of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and of the series of

failed attempts to settle it. The confrontation erupted after a period of violent escalation following the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers (June 12, 2014) – according to the Israeli government – by Hamas activists. After Netanyahu's announcement that "Hamas is responsible and Hamas will pay,"²² Israel launched a broad operation against Hamas infrastructure and activists in the West Bank. The shocking murder and burning of a Palestinian teenager by a small group of revenge-seeking Jewish youth (July 1, 2014) ignited violent demonstrations in Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods. Rocket and mortar fire from Gaza increased. At first, the bombardment was mainly at the hands of dissident organizations that do not accept Hamas's authority, but the escalation gradually drew Hamas into the aggression, and into a comprehensive confrontation with Israel (Operation Protective Edge, July 8, 2014). Hamas began launching numerous rockets at Israeli towns and cities, including Tel Aviv and even north of it. The Iron Dome system achieved a rocket interception rate of 90%, and almost completely prevented Israeli civilian casualties. When Hamas refused an Egyptian ceasefire proposal, Israel – in addition to its punishing aerial strikes – opened a ground campaign (July 17, 2014) that continues as of this writing.

The security deterioration is taking place a year after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry began his failed attempt to broker an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Under pressure from Kerry, who made achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians a high priority, peace negotiations were restarted on July 30, 2013, with the goal of reaching a permanent agreement within nine months. As part of the process leading to the renewal of talks, Israel agreed to a four-phase release of Palestinian prisoners who had been held since before the Oslo Accords. Israel acceded to this Palestinian condition in order to avoid alternative conditions the Palestinians laid down: acceptance of the principle that the border will be based on the 1967 lines with territorial swaps, or an announcement of a construction freeze in the territories. The talks ran into significant difficulty, including changes to their defined objective. Before negotiations even began, the Americans attempted a breakthrough by first reaching agreement on the subjects of borders and security, while deferring the sensitive core issues (Jerusalem, refugees) for later in the process. In this spirit, President Obama stated during his visit to the region (March 2013): "The core issue right now is how do we get sovereignty for the Palestinian people, and how do we assure security for the Israeli people? And that's the essence of this negotiation. And that's not to say settlements are not important. It is to say that if we solve those two problems, the settlement problem will be solved."²³ The Israeli side had reservations about this approach, which were based on concern about losing, at the first stage of the talks, its most significant "card" – territory – and then being left with weakened bargaining power vis-a-vis Jerusalem and the refugees. Secretary Kerry was persuaded and stated that the goal of the negotiations would be to achieve a full and permanent agreement within nine months. After it became clear that this goal was too ambitious, the Americans announced that they would work toward a framework agreement. But it soon became apparent that this goal was not achievable either. It was agreed to move to indirect talks with U.S. mediation, and Kerry announced that the United States itself would draft a framework paper that reflected its understanding concerning the desired meeting point between the parties on the principles for a permanent agreement. The two sides, who were supposed to accept this document as the basis for continued talks, did not rush to embrace it and the United States was forced to allow them to express "certain reservations" to be dealt with in detail during the final status negotiations. Despite the significant energies Secretary Kerry and his team invested, the

United States did not succeed in bringing the sides to common ground in three main problematic categories: the phrasing of the final status principles in the American document; the manner in which the sides would be allowed to express their reservations; and "rules of conduct" (mainly – Israel's policy of building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem) that would have bound the two sides had they in fact agreed to extend the timeframe for negotiations.

From the outset, the task Secretary Kerry took upon himself was not at all simple. Israeli demands, such as the stipulation (to which the United States was party)²⁴ that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state, the very long-term presence of the Israeli army in the Jordan Valley, and renunciation of the Palestinian right of return inside Israel, etc., provoked fierce Palestinian opposition. Similarly intense Israeli opposition was provoked in response to Palestinian demands, such as the recognition of East Jerusalem as their capital, that the Israeli army withdraw from the West Bank within 3-5 years, that a certain number of Palestinian refugees be absorbed in Israel, etc. The more the United States insisted on expressing the framework principles in clear and precise language, the more it encountered opposition from both sides, threats that they could not continue with the talks, and demands to articulate more sweeping reservations to the principles they opposed. The more the United States allowed the sides to express sweeping reservations, the less significant the document it was drafting would have been.

American diplomacy did not succeed in squaring this circle by the agreed-upon deadline. According to the Americans, both sides contributed to this failure: Israel by not fulfilling its commitment to release the fourth group of prisoners (March 30, 2013) and by reissuing the tender for the construction of 708 housing units in the Gilo neighborhood of Jerusalem (April 1, 2014); and the Palestinians in their decision to submit requests to be accepted into 15 international conventions that are open to states (April 2, 2014), and in signing a reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas (April 23, 2014). According to Israeli sources involved in the negotiations, even the United States contributed to the lack of success by imposing goals at the outset that were too grandiose, and by not reaching understandings with each side as to the rules of the game during the talks, and the conditions for extending them.

Alongside the American criticism of the sides, Martin Indyk, Kerry's representative during the negotiations, also praised their readiness to compromise on significant issues: "I've seen Prime Minister Netanyahu straining against his deeply-held beliefs to find ways to meet Palestinian requirements. I've seen Abu Mazen ready to put his state's security in American hands to overcome Israeli distrust of Palestinian intentions."²⁵ At the same time, the Americans admit that Abu Mazen "shut down" at a certain point and provoked their anger when he did not respond to the bridging formulas intended to allow for the completion of the paper of principles presented to him by Secretary Kerry (February 19, 2014) and by President Obama (March 17, 2014). Signing the reconciliation agreement with Hamas was portrayed as additional important evidence that the Palestinian leader had lost interest in talks with Israel.

The relative weakness of Hamas explains its inclination to hurry and sign the reconciliation agreement. Hamas had pinned its hopes on its mother movement in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, and when it was ousted from power and declared a terrorist movement, Hamas, too, was declared an enemy by the Sisi regime. Accused of anti-Egyptian terrorist activity, its operation in Egypt was outlawed (March 4, 2014). Prior to this, Hamas had lost its base in Syria

because of its support for the rebels, a stance that undermined its relations with Iran, which is struggling to keep Assad's regime in power. Egyptian security forces destroyed most of the smuggling tunnels into the Gaza Strip, which exacerbated its political isolation, the security blockade, and the decline in economic aid. All of this undermined Hamas's position. Against this background, the organization was cautious for a while about confrontations with the IDF and the majority of violent activity originating in Gaza was carried out by the Iran-supported Islamic Jihad (for example, the firing of some 70 rockets on Israel on March 12, 2014), as well as other jihadist organizations.

The particular timing of Abu Mazen's decision to sign the reconciliation agreement – five days before the end of the nine-month negotiation period and precisely when the fragile Israeli-Palestinian dialogue on extending the negotiations was in full swing and approaching its climax – raised questions about the Palestinian leader's goals. The accession to the UN conventions and entering into an agreement with Hamas while simultaneously negotiating with Israel shows that Abu Mazen did not believe that reaching an agreement with Israel was an attainable goal (various pundits have claimed that Abu Mazen was surprised at the speed with which Hamas agreed to his terms). The possibility that he would be blamed for sabotaging the negotiations seems not to have been a central factor in his deliberations. It appears that Abu Mazen, who is approaching the end of his career, chose to simultaneously conduct additional strategic negotiations to advance his goal: transferring the decision about the Israeli-Palestinian issue to international forums and moving toward intra-Palestinian unity out of concern for his legacy.

The Fatah-Hamas agreement prompted an Israeli decision to suspend the negotiations, which, according to senior Israelis, were close to reaching a continuation formula (that included the release of Jonathan Pollard). As per the reconciliation agreement, a technocratic government headed by Abu Mazen and with a mutually agreed upon membership was announced on June 2, 2014. It is supposed to pave the way for presidential and legislative elections, and revamp PLO institutional leadership within six months of taking office. Abu Mazen made it clear that the new government would recognize Israel and condemn terrorism. He even declared that he, himself, would be authorized to continue conducting peace talks with Israel, though Israel demands that Hamas, as a party to the agreement authorizing the new government, accept the Quartet's framework. Netanyahu's answer to the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation was included in his response to the statement the Palestinian president made on Holocaust Remembrance Day, in which he referred to the Shoah as "the most terrible crime against humanity in modern history."²⁶ Netanyahu replied: "Instead of declarations intended to placate international public opinion, Abu Mazen should choose between an alliance with Hamas – a terrorist organization that calls for the destruction of Israel and that denies the Holocaust – and genuine peace with Israel."²⁷

Reactions in the West to the reconciliation agreement were mild in comparison to Israel's harsh response. The European Union pointed to the opportunity implicit in the Palestinians' coming to talks with Israel as a unified body that enjoys public legitimacy. Similar views were even heard in the American administration,²⁸ although the official U.S. line remained critical of the reconciliation move and President Obama called it "unhelpful."²⁹

The chances of implementing a lasting Fatah-Hamas reconciliation were limited from the outset. Similar agreements have been signed in the past and were not carried out. Many commentators

have difficulty seeing a situation in which Hamas accepts the Quartet's terms, disarm its military forces, and surrender its weapons to the legal government. Evidence of anticipated difficulties can be found in the words of Musa Abu Marzuk, deputy head of Hamas's diplomatic bureau: "Hamas will not allow any tampering with the brigades' armament, under any circumstances... Hamas will not recognize Israel. This is a red line that cannot be crossed... the conditions set by the Quartet committee do not concern us one bit."³⁰ The development of the reconciliation process becomes even more problematic in light of the military confrontation now taking place between Israel and Hamas. Abu Mazen himself provoked Hamas anger when – in a speech (June 13, 2014) to the foreign ministers of the Islamic states in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – he responded to the kidnapping of the three young Israelis by saying, "Whoever carried out this action wants to bring destruction upon us."³¹

In the wake of the failed negotiations, the United States declared a time out and has opted to divide the blame between the parties though with a clear tilt toward placing the main onus on Israel – certainly in public – as could be seen in a briefing for journalist Nahum Barnea,³² and in remarks Martin Indyk made at the Washington Institute. Secretary Kerry, before a Senate hearing, stated that both sides took a number of negative steps, "and then... when they were about to maybe get there, 700 settlement units were announced in Jerusalem, and poof, that was sort of the moment [that the talks collapsed]."³³ He admonished: "There's a limit to the amount of time that President Obama and I can invest in this topic with consideration to other challenges around the world, especially if the sides are not willing to show seriousness."³⁴

The administration's inclination is now to lower the profile of U.S. involvement and to let the sides "stew in their own juices." At the same time, Ambassador Indyk has rejected the possibility that the United States will abandon attempts to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He expressed hope that the two sides' leaders will overcome the difficulties that led to the crisis in the talks and promised: "When they are ready, they will certainly find in Secretary Kerry and President Obama willing partners to try again – if they are prepared to do so in a serious way."³⁵ One initiative the administration may take at the end of the "time-out" period is to publish the American paper detailing its permanent settlement principles. This would be intended to challenge the sides, and to invite them to renew negotiations on the basis of the paper in the future. Thus, when Secretary Kerry thinks about the various alternatives facing Washington, he has to consider the possibility of putting, at some stage, the paper of principles on the table and saying: "Here it is, folks. This is what it looks like. Take it or leave it."³⁶

The updated position that Prime Minister Netanyahu presented concerning Israel's security demands (June 29, 2014) deepens the divide the Americans will have to bridge in the future. Netanyahu warned that Israel faces a growing security threat given the "forces of extreme Islam who are knocking at our door in the north and in the south."³⁷ He stated that in order to maintain security and to ensure the demilitarization of a future Palestinian state, the IDF must retain freedom of movement over the entire area up to the Jordan River, "Any settlement will include Palestinian political and economic control alongside Israeli security control."³⁸

If attempts to resuscitate the talks do not bear fruit, the Palestinian side will likely carry out its threats to launch a diplomatic-legal campaign against Israel in the international arena, and to

strive to replace the "direct talks under American mediation" model with an alternative – that of "a quasi-imposed settlement under multinational sponsorship." Such a campaign already began at the end of the nine months of negotiations when the Palestinians applied to accede to 15 UN conventions. Other applications for membership in a variety of UN agencies are ready to go. Of principal concern in Israel is the one that could lead to Palestinian acceptance to the International Criminal Court in the Hague, which, if it comes about, is liable to put Israel in the dock on charges related to war crimes, etc.

In an extreme attempt to increase pressure on Israel, the Palestinians may even announce the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority and attempt to hand back responsibility for the West Bank to Israel and demand a "one state for two peoples" solution, even though Abu Mazen recently said that he would not dismantle the PA and that he prefers the two-state solution.³⁹

A diplomatic-legal confrontation resulting from the talks' failure could eventually lead to a deterioration of the security situation, and (even if there are no clear signs of it at the moment) perhaps to a third intifada, not necessarily of a character identical to the previous two. Experts believe that this time Israel would likely encounter a civilian uprising and popular violence that is not centrally organized. A troubling indication can be found in the Shin Bet summary of the scope of terrorist incidents in 2013, which reveals a sharp increase in West Bank terrorism and of attacks perpetrated from Gaza,⁴⁰ and of course in the violent demonstrations that took place in Jerusalem's Palestinian neighborhoods in July 2014.

Israel may also find itself facing an intensifying campaign of de-legitimization, sanctions and boycotts. Such a reality rose significantly on the Israeli public agenda when the European Commission published directives on the subject of transferring money and credits from official EU funds to bodies with ties to the settlements. According to these directives, EU agencies and funds will be prohibited from supporting or giving loans, grants, or awards to activities of Israeli entities in the settlements, and, in some cases, such as loans to Israeli bodies that operate beyond the Green Line either directly or indirectly. Against the background of these directives, the Horizon 2020 scientific cooperation agreement became the focus of tension between Israel and the EU. Without the semantic solution that was reached in the end, it would have meant the loss of 300 million euros in funding for Israeli research and development bodies, and additionally would have caused damage to Israeli science that is incalculable in monetary terms.

Recent months have seen an increase in boycott initiatives against Israel. Although the various boycotts are focused on Israel's presence and activity beyond the Green Line, they are increasingly being applied to entities within Israel proper with interests over the Green Line, and have for the first time also been imposed by governments. The American Studies Association (ASA) decided in December 2013 to impose an academic boycott on Israel. A large Dutch pension fund (PGGM) decided to withdraw its investments in Israeli banks since they have branches over the Green Line and are involved in financing construction in the settlements. The Netherlands' largest public water supplier, Vitens, announced on December 10, 2013 that it was severing its ties with the Israeli water company, Mekorot, because it drills for water in the West Bank and is part of a water-supply apparatus that discriminates against the Palestinians. In September 2013, another Dutch company announced that it was cancelling its contract with the Gichon Company to build a sewage purification plant because it was to be located beyond the Green Line. Denmark's largest

bank, Danske Bank, decided not to invest in Bank Hapoalim in light of its involvement in financing settlement construction. The Norwegian Finance Ministry announced on November 1, 2013, that it had instructed the country's largest pension fund not to invest in the companies of Africa-Israel Investments, Ltd. or in Danya-Cebus because of their involvement in East Jerusalem construction. In light of the accumulation of these and other boycott initiatives, the Israeli government held a special discussion on the issue (February 9, 2014) during which the minister of strategic affairs, Yuval Steinitz, presented a 100-million-shekel plan for an aggressive comprehensive struggle against the de-legitimization phenomenon. The failure of the Israeli-Palestinian talks led European countries to intensify their policy toward the settlements. Seventeen EU member states admonished their citizens not to conduct business with the settlements. Warning notices were issued stating that the settlements are illegal under international law and, thus, conducting business with them carries legal risks.⁴¹ It was also claimed that "the Israeli settlements are an obstacle to peace and threaten to render the two-state solution impossible ... The European Union and its member countries will not recognize any change in the 1967 borders, including in Jerusalem, unless this is done as part of an agreement between the sides."⁴²

Along with the threat of boycotts, senior EU officials warned (December 3, 2013) that the failure of the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians is liable to have implications for the continuation of aid funds EU countries give to the Palestinian Authority. In their words, the EU finds itself "funding the Israeli occupation" and is bearing costs that are supposed to be borne by the occupying state under international law. In light of these revelations, Secretary Kerry saw fit to warn Israel of "a strengthening de-legitimization campaign" against it, adding, "There is talk of boycotts and other kinds of things. Today's status quo absolutely, to a certainty, I promise you 100 percent, cannot be maintained. It's not sustainable. It's illusory."⁴³ Official Israeli spokespeople were outraged by these warnings and Minister of Strategic Affairs Steinitz responded: "Kerry's comments about a boycott of Israel are insulting and intolerable... We cannot be forced to conduct negotiations with a gun to our head."⁴⁴ Finance Minister Yair Lapid, though, actually followed Kerry's lead and warned too: "Europe is our main trading market. If there is no diplomatic settlement and we go into a plausible scenario – and there are much worse ones – in which there is damage of only 20% in exports to the EU and direct foreign investment from the EU stops – our exports will be harmed in 2013 terms by about 20 billion shekels a year. The damage to GDP will be about 11 billion shekels a year and 9,800 workers will immediately be laid off."⁴⁵ A similar warning came from the outgoing head of Israel's National Security Council, Yaakov Amidror: "The failure of the negotiations with the Palestinians will only increase the trend of boycotts and of Israel's international isolation."⁴⁶ It should be noted that simultaneous with other warnings heard from Europe, the EU's Council of Ministers passed a resolution to grant Israel and Palestine special and unprecedented status if and when a permanent settlement is reached.

The failure of the talks postponed the need for Israel to reach decisions on the sensitive core issues. This halted a process that would have likely led to political shockwaves in Israel and to tensions among Diaspora Jews. This may be a temporary delay. The sensitive final status issues will, in all probability, reemerge in the future, at which time Israel will be required to present positions and, presumably, make painful concessions. This hiatus is likely to be relatively brief, especially if Israel is pressed to respond to the American paper of principles or an initiative of a

similar nature arises in the Security Council. The principles of a permanent settlement, by definition, touch on issues of great significance to the Jewish people:

Jerusalem: There is no Palestinian or Arab party today prepared to sign a peace agreement with Israel that preserves its sovereignty over the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and over Islamic holy sites. The very fact of reaching an agreement based on any compromise over Jerusalem means the possibility of ceding some of the existing Israeli sovereignty over various parts of Jerusalem including the "Holy Basin." According to this scenario, Israel will be taking a historic decision that touches the core of the identity of the entire Jewish people. The internal debate may be extremely bitter.

The settlements in Judea and Samaria: An Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement based on the two-state principle will transfer most of the territory of the West Bank to Palestinian sovereignty. Beyond the security significance of an Israeli withdrawal, there could also be substantial Jewish significance, be it in disconnecting from lands walked by the legendary figures of the Bible, and where the Jewish people has its roots (The Cave of Machpelah, Rachel's Tomb, Joseph's Tomb, and many other sites) or in the necessity to evacuate tens of thousands of Jewish settlers (some of whom are expected to forcefully resist the evacuation). The argument over the future of Judea and Samaria and the settlement enterprise is about to create a highly sensitive political, security, national and religious controversy, and the evacuation – when it is carried out – is expected to be traumatic and will likely deepen rifts within the Jewish people, both in Israel and in the Diaspora. The argument also involves the question of whether Israel should insist that the agreement enable Jews to continue living in areas of the West Bank under Palestinian sovereignty.

Arab recognition of the Jewish people's right to its own capital and state: Prime Minister Netanyahu stressed in his Bar-Ilan speech (June 14, 2009) that "A basic condition for the end of the conflict is a binding and candid public recognition by the Palestinians of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people." Even though the Palestinian leadership has responded negatively, in the end, the Israeli demand is likely to be accepted in one form or another, especially if those handling the negotiations on the Israeli side are willing to "pay a price" for this achievement. There are those, of course, who will ask how essential it is – from the Jewish people's perspective – to insist on paying a significant price to secure this demand. (The U.S. administration's position on this issue is interesting. On one hand, Secretary Kerry expresses support for the Israeli demand that the Palestinians recognize it as a Jewish state.⁴⁷ On the other, in an appearance before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, he said: "I think it's a mistake for some people to be raising it again and again as the critical decider of their attitude toward the possibility of a state and peace, and we've obviously made that clear."⁴⁸

Can a peace agreement be a turning point in Jewish-Islamic relations? The Arab Peace Initiative (Beirut, 2002), which was born as a result of a Saudi move, articulates an Arab readiness for a comprehensive peace with Israel, for the end of the conflict, normalization and good neighborly relations – on the condition that Israel withdraw completely to the 1967 lines and that a "just and agreed upon" solution to the refugee problem is found. Since 2003, the Arab Peace Initiative has been endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which numbers 57 member states. Recently, this position was ratified again at the Islamic summit in Cairo (February 7, 2013). Opinions in Israel are divided as to the value of the Arab Peace Initiative and the degree to which

it is wise to rely on it in advancing toward an Israeli-Arab final status agreement. Given the history of relations between Islam and Judaism, is a diplomatic peace agreement powerful enough to mark a turning point in the Islamic world's attitude toward Judaism?

Jewish refugees from Arab lands: Progress in the negotiations is likely to provide an opportunity to place on the agenda a human tragedy that has not received world attention – the fate of the 850,000 Jews who until 1948 lived in Arab countries and who were uprooted from their homes following the creation of the State of Israel. The injustice caused these Jewish refugees has not gained Arab or international recognition, nor have they been compensated for their suffering or for their confiscated property.

Diaspora involvement in the process of making decisions on final status issues – that is, on issues that emotionally affect Jews everywhere. Should Diaspora Jews take any part in the process of deciding these issues, and if so, how should this be accomplished? The dilemma will be a practical test of the theoretical "New Paradigm" of greater equality in Israel-Diaspora relations.

Implications for the Triangular Relationship: Jerusalem-Washington-the American Jewish Community

We cannot ignore the duality that characterizes the relations in the triangle of Jerusalem, Washington, and the American Jewish community. On one hand, there is a deepest sense of friendship that is evident in the United States' massive practical support for Israel, particularly in the area of security. On the other hand, there is evidence of mutual anger and frustration. A reasonable scenario in which the differences between Washington and Jerusalem over the Iranian and Palestinian issues intensify may put the American Jewish community between a rock and a hard place. Public expressions of the pent up tensions that currently exist erupt from time to time in different ways. Thus, for example, the incident (January 14, 2014) that forced Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon to apologize for his harsh comments ("Messianic," "Obsessive") in attacking Secretary Kerry. And a repeat incident (March 18, 2014) in which Yaalon cautioned that if the American administration continues to show weakness in the international arena, U.S. national security would be seriously damaged⁴⁹ – a remark that drew the harshest of responses from the administration.

The potential for tension on the other side of the Atlantic was also evident this year in the case of AIPAC's involvement in an effort to pass congressional legislation to tighten the sanctions against Iran while negotiations with it were taking place. AIPAC and Israel were portrayed as trying to work against the president's policy, and as those who were eager to involve the United States in a new war in the Middle East. While advocates of the legislation claimed that the talks' success demanded keeping pressure on Iran, the administration explained that the enactment of additional sanctions would weaken Rouhani and the moderates in Iran, and would break up the Western coalition on Iran. AIPAC backed off the effort and thereby enabled its opponents to claim that it has lost some of its power.

The possibility of further strains in U.S.-Israeli relations, therefore, is growing as two strategic issues that have great implications for Israel's future unfold. The first involves the scenario of an

Israeli strike on Iran against the wishes of the American administration or of U.S. support for an agreement with Teheran that is unacceptable to Israel, and the second involves a scenario in which Israel is increasingly viewed as not having met Washington's expectations with regard to progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Either of these is likely to strengthen the emerging – though as yet far from dominant – point of view in the United States in which Israel is portrayed as a state whose diplomatic foot-dragging and aggressive regional approach are harmful to U.S. national interests and with which American friendship is becoming increasingly costly. Advocates of this line in the United States claim that their country is liable to be dragged against its will into another war in the Middle East, that its image in the Muslim world is being damaged, that it is being pushed into isolation in international forums, and that it is being subjected to harmful criticism because of its support for Israel.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the growing sense among Israeli decision makers that the United States is no longer the same resolute and effective superpower Israel could depend upon in dealing with strategic challenges and in moments of truth. The image portrayed is of a weakened power that is seeking to renounce its role as "global policeman" and to lower the profile of its involvement in the region. Israelis view the erosion in U.S. standing and its unwillingness to exercise its deterrence capacities (such as against Russia, Iran, and in the Syrian arena) as having a harmful spillover effect on Israel's deterrence capability.

The differences between the countries came to light in an interview President Obama gave to Bloomberg reporter Jeffrey Goldberg.⁵⁰ Obama stated that the only factor preventing the creation of a regional front against Iran is the lack of a solution to the Palestinian issue. He accused Israel of failing to offer an alternative vision for how it will survive – in the absence of the two-state solution – as a Jewish and democratic state living in peace with its neighbors. He claimed that construction in the settlements has continued aggressively over the past two years – more so than anything seen for a very long time. And he warned Israel: "If Palestinians come to believe that the possibility of a contiguous sovereign Palestinian state is no longer within reach, then our ability to manage the international fallout is going to be limited." The meaning of this statement is that, in the event that the negotiation route is blocked, the United States may no longer be able to protect Israel effectively against an international de-legitimization campaign as it has in the past. This warning was repeated in the remarks of White House official Philip Gordon, Obama's representative at the conference on peace initiated by the *Haaretz* newspaper (July 8, 2014): "How will Israel remain democratic and Jewish if it attempts to govern the millions of Palestinian Arabs who live in the West Bank? How will it have peace if it is unwilling to delineate a border, end the occupations, and allow for Palestinian sovereignty, security, and dignity? How will we prevent other states from isolating Israel or supporting Palestinian efforts in international bodies if Israel is not seen as committed to peace?"⁵¹

But it was Secretary Kerry's comments in a closed meeting that have provoked the most anger in Israel and among American Jews (April 25, 2014): "A two-state solution will be clearly underscored as the only real alternative. Because a unitary state winds up either being an apartheid state with second-class citizens – or it ends up being a state that destroys the capacity of Israel to be a Jewish state."⁵² Although Kerry later apologized, it did not conceal the mood prevailing in the administration: a mix of significant criticism of Israel's conduct, and reassuring rhetoric about the resilience of the relationship between the two countries. Thus, for example, the American envoy

to the peace talks, Martin Indyk, said that "Unlike the 'reassessment' Kissinger did in the Ford administration, there is one significant difference: President Obama and Secretary Kerry would never suspend U.S.-Israel military relations as their predecessors did back then."⁵³ Tension between the two countries were also evident in the Israeli reaction to Indyk's emphasizing Israel's role in causing the talks to break down (mainly settlement construction and its failure to release a final set of prisoners). Unnamed official sources attacked Indyk personally in the strongest terms, calling him a "hypocrite" and accusing him of not taking responsibility for his part in the talks' failure.⁵⁴

Tensions between Washington and Jerusalem do not skip over U.S. Jewry. Critical comments about Israel (particularly Kerry's use of the phrase "an apartheid state") have drawn outraged responses from Jewish spokesman in the United States, but they have also caused discomfort as American Jews increasingly find themselves between a rock and a hard place. The delicacy of the Jewish predicament in the United States was revealed when it became known that Pollard's release would likely be an element of the deal to extend the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. For example, former Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer, who opposed the deal, claimed that he has known Jews who were removed from Israel-related government projects after Pollard's imprisonment, and that Americans with Israeli relatives have sometimes been denied top security clearance. Ambassador Dennis Ross, who supported the deal, has said that the Pollard case strengthened the stereotype that Jews cannot be trusted on issues related to Israel.⁵⁵

U.S. Jewry is therefore likely to be challenged more stringently as gaps between Israeli and American positions become wider. The more Israel presses to "mobilize" American Jews behind the effort, and the more Israel operates in the administration's political back yard (especially if perceived to be favoring Republicans), the more difficult the situation may become. Such a reality could discomfit the American Jewish community and make intra-Jewish divisions highly conspicuous, especially given the claims that American foreign policy in the Middle East is influenced by Israel and the Jewish lobby in a way that conflicts with United States' own interests.

Conclusion

At the last UN General Assembly, President Obama made American foreign-policy priorities clear: "In the near term, America's diplomatic efforts will focus on two particular issues: Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the Arab-Israeli conflict. While these issues are not the cause of all the region's problems, they have been a major source of instability for far too long, and resolving them can serve as a foundation for a broader peace."⁵⁶ But along with the importance Obama places on these issues, he also lowered expectations as to the prospect of achieving the goals. In an interview he gave to the *New Yorker*, he estimated the prospects of reaching final treaties with Iran and between Israel and the Palestinians as "less than 50-50."⁵⁷ The president's sober assessment shows the severe uncertainty inherent in both issues that are so critical to Israel and to the resilience of the triangular relationship between Jerusalem, Washington and the American Jewish community. Yet, the severe uncertainty, which unfortunately characterizes the entirety of Israel's strategic situation, does not relieve Jerusalem of the need to take fateful decisions.

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Endnotes

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- ⁴ Reuters, July 18, 2014
- ⁵ January 6, 2014, U.S. Foreign Policy: Key Data Points from Pew Research, <http://www.pewresearch.org/key-data-points/u-s-foreign-policy-key-data-points/>.
- ⁶ Angus Reid Global, May 6, 2014.
- ⁷ *Al Monitor*, May 14, 2014.
- ⁸ January 28, 2014, President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address.
- ⁹ *New York Times*, October 26, 2013.
- ¹⁰ John Kerry, Secretary of State, Davos, Switzerland, January 24, 2014
- ¹¹ *Ynet*, May 6, 2014
- ¹² Charlie Rose, Erdogan interview, April 28, 2014.
- ¹³ Bloomberg, July 15, 2014
- ¹⁴ *Hurriyet*, July 18, 2014 ".... Attempting a 'systematic genocide' of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip".
- ¹⁵ *Ynet*, October 1, 2013
- ¹⁶ Galei Zahal, November 7, 2013.
- ¹⁷ "Joint Plan of Action," Geneva, November 24, 2013
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ The Washington Institute, Stephen Hadley, February 10, 2014
- ²⁰ *Haaretz*, May 7, 2014
- ²¹ March 5, 2014
- ²² *Haaretz*, June 30, 2014
- ²³ March 21, 2013, Transcript of Obama's Press Conference with Mahmoud Abbas.
- ²⁴ For example, in Secretary Kerry's remarks at the AIPAC conference (March 4, 2014)
- ²⁵ The Washington Institute, Amb. Marin Indyk's speech, May 8, 2014
- ²⁶ *Haaretz*, April 27, 2014
- ²⁷ *Yisrael Hayom*, April 27, 2014
- ²⁸ *Ynet*, April 29, 2014
- ²⁹ President Obama speaking at a press conference with the President of South Korea, April 25, 2014.
- ³⁰ *Al Monitor*, May 5, 2014
- ³¹ *Haaretz*, June 19, 2014
- ³² *Yediot Aharonot*, May 2, 2014
- ³³ *Haaretz*, April 8, 2014
- ³⁴ *Arutz Sheva*, April 8, 2014
- ³⁵ The Washington Institute, Ambassador Martin Indyk's speech.
- ³⁶ The Daily Beast, April 27, 2014
- ³⁷ *Haaretz*, June 29, 2014
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Ynet*, May 8, 2014
- ⁴⁰ *Haaretz*, November 3, 2013
- ⁴¹ *Haaretz*, June 25, 2014
- ⁴² *Haaretz*, July 3, 2014
- ⁴³ Remarks at Munich Security Conference, Munich, Germany, February 1, 2014, U.S. State Department website.
- ⁴⁴ *Ynet*, February 4, 2014

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- ⁴⁵ *Ynet*, January 29, 2014
- ⁴⁶ *Haaretz*, November 3, 2013
- ⁴⁷ Secretary of State John Kerry's speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.
- ⁴⁸ *Haaretz*, March 13, 2014
- ⁴⁹ *Haaretz*, March 18, 2014
- ⁵⁰ Bloomberg View, March 2, 2014 <http://www.bloombergtview.com/articles/2014-03-02/obama-to-israel-time-is-running-out>
- ⁵¹ Remarks as prepared by White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf Region, Philip Gordon, at the Haaretz Israel Conference for Peace, July 8, 2014.
- ⁵² *The Daily Best*, April 27, 2014
- ⁵³ The Washington Institute, Ambassador Martin Indyk's speech. May 8, 2014
- ⁵⁴ *Ynet*, May 10, 2014
- ⁵⁵ *New York Times*, April 3 2013
- ⁵⁶ President Obama's address at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, September 24, 2013
- ⁵⁷ "On the other hand, in all three circumstances, we may be able to push the boulder partway up the hill and maybe stabilize it so it doesn't roll back on us. And all three are connected." (*The New Yorker*, On and Off the Road with Barack Obama, David Remnick, January 27, 2014).