THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL BETWEEN THRIVING AND DECLINE

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Value Basis

The distinction between "thriving"[1] and "decline" depends on values. The same future may be considered "thriving" from the perspective of certain value systems, and simultaneously be referred to as "decline" from the perspective of another. For the purposes of this paper, the central value in terms of which "thriving and decline" are discussed is "Israel as a Jewish-Zionist and democratic state and the core state of the Jewish People". This value, however pluralistic in details, is further elaborated in the realistic vision below. Its counterpoint, decline, includes both collapse and destruction in the physical sense and losing its Jewish-Zionist and, less likely, its democratic nature, as elaborated in the realistic nightmare presented below.

"Thriving" and "decline" are poles on a continuum, with reality being in-between with differences between various dimensions of societal realities. Therefore, to be more precise, one should not use the phrase "thriving and decline" but instead think and plan in terms of "thriving-decline", so as to emphasize the continuum. And one should think and act in terms of more thriving in various dimensions, such as the standard of living, and more decline in others, such as serving as the core state of the Jewish People.

The values in terms of which thriving and decline are evaluated change with time, especially from generation to generation. Furthermore, there may

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[1] The usual pair of terms is "rise and decline", but I prefer the concept of "thriving" instead of "rise" as better reflecting the underlying idea.

be leaps between different phases of existence in which the very ideas of thriving and decline go through a metamorphosis. Thus, images of thriving of the Jewish People before Zionism, as distinct from messianic dreaming and longings, often did not include a Jewish state. Similarly, thinking in terms of thriving and decline of the British Empire lies in a different historical space from discussing the situation of the UK today in terms of thriving and decline.

Such considerations become critical when one tries to contemplate, or at least speculate about thriving and decline of Israel or the Jewish People in terms of long-duration, multi-generational futures, say one to two centuries ahead. Such long-term speculations are relevant for long-term policies by providing horizons for putting unavoidable shorter-term analysis into long-duration[2] perspectives.[3] However, for hard-core policy planning shorter time horizons are mandatory, because longer ones introduce too much uncertainty and inconceivability,[4] especially in a period of epochal transformations as the

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[2] Thinking in terms of "long duration history" has been pioneered by the French historian Fernand Braudel. See for instance his translated collection of essays *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). His distinction between "foam on the surface of history" and "the deep streams of history", to paraphrase his terms, is critical for serious policy thinking in contrast to *ad hoc* coping with current events. His efforts to understand the realities of France in terms of long duration history illustrate the necessity for analytical long-term histories of the Jewish People which are sorely absent in modern literature. See Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France.* Volume I: *History and Environment (*London: Collins, 1988) and *The Identity of France.* Volume II: *People and Production* (London: Collins, 1990). Braudel died before completing the volumes on the French state and external relations.

[3] In some views, the Vatican thinks partly in terms of such long duration history. See John L. Allen, Jr., *All the Pope's Men: The Inside Story of How the Vatican Really Thinks (*New York: Doubleday, 2004).

[4] On this concept, see Yehezkel Dror, Beyond Uncertainty: Facing the Inconceivable". *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 62, No. 1 & 2 (August/September 1999), pp. 151-153.

twenty-first century, to provide reasonable bases for responsible strategic intervention[5] recommendations.

Selection of a preferable time horizon requires a compromise between three main considerations:

1. The importance of the future value-wise.

2. The time needed for maturation of main policies, in terms of their life cycles and critical mass of time requirements in order to make a real difference to the future.

3. The degrees of uncertainty, which usually increase exponentially with the length of time taken into account.

There is an additional important consideration for selecting time horizons for action-oriented policy planning, namely political time. The political time in a democratic state is largely determined by the length of electoral cycles. But some factors reduce the constraints of political time, such as continuity of senior politicians from election to election, existence or absence of a semi-permanent professional senior civil service and the momentum of main policies. Israel is characterized by a strange mix between long-term concerns and efforts in some domains and abysmal incapacities to weave the future in others.

Taking all these considerations together, the time horizon selected for this paper is the middle of the twenty-first century.

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[5] "Strategic interventions" are actions that try to intervene with future-shaping historical processes so as to bend them away from undesirable futures and towards desirable ones, subject to changes in values altering the very meanings of "undesirable" and "desirable". To have a significant probability of success, strategic interventions must meet a number of criteria, e.g. at least some understanding of relevant historical processes and an adequate mass of intervention to achieve significant impacts on the future.

Jewish People Perspective

An additional set of values, which should be applied, is that of the thriving and decline of the Jewish People as a whole, as influenced by the development of Israel. In 2006, Israel became the largest Jewish community in the world. By 2015, unless a highly unlikely change in robust present trends occurs, a majority of all core Jewish populations will be living in Israel. Therefore, in quantitative terms, what happens in Israel is of critical importance for the future of the whole Jewish People and to Judaism as a civilization. This is not less the case qualitatively. The nature of Israel as more or less a Jewish state is likely to exert much, and perhaps determinative influence on the thriving or decline of the Jewish People and Judaism as a whole, by either strengthening Jewish identity and creativity or in effect encouraging assimilation and dissipation.

To add as a thought experiment the extremely unlikely possibility of Israel being physically destroyed, such as by a nuclear strike or an unprecedented earthquake, there is little doubt that such an event would have harsh consequences for the viability of what remains of the Jewish People. Opinions may differ as to whether the Jewish People would survive and perhaps recuperate or whether it will more likely dissipate. There is no way to predict which one of these possibilities is more probable and it makes no difference to the main thrust of this paper, which is to assure as much as humanly possible the thriving of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish state and the core state of the Jewish People – *ipso facto* making a tremendous contribution to the thriving of the Jewish People as a whole.

I leave open the question whether some thinking should be devoted to enabling the Diaspora to withstand a catastrophical end to Israel. But let me mention some considerations against doing so, namely moral, social and psychological costs; negative impacts on relations between Israel and the Diaspora; and grave, methodological problems of working on apocalyptic possibilities that have an extremely low probability but critical consequences. Furthermore, there is a certain danger of self-fulfilling prophecy, with thinking about a possible catastrophical end to Israel, demoralizing Israel, encouraging its enemies and weakening efforts to make such a contingency impossible – which should be the main direction of action. Nonetheless, considerations for contemplating such a possibility include the need to prepare as much as possible even for the worst, however unlikely. "Thinking about the unthinkable"[6] is required in a world which is very unstable security-wise and quite likely to experience catastrophical events.[7]

Leaving aside esoteric scenarios, in addition to the critical impacts of the future of Israel on the future of the Jewish People and Judaism, the future of Israel is of profound importance to core beliefs of Judaism and critical in terms of Zionist ideology. All this adds up to make the future of Israel one of the two most important issues facing the Jewish People in the twenty-first century, the other being the rate of assimilation in Diaspora communities which is not less critical for the future of the Jewish People as a whole.

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[6] This apt phrase was coined by Herman Kahn in his 1962 book, *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, addressing the possibility of the USA surviving a nuclear war.

[7] See Yehezkel Dror, "From My Perspective: Lucifer Smiles", *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 69, Number 4, May 2002, pp. 431-435.

Therefore, maximum efforts to assure a future of thriving of Israel as a Jewish State, which is the core state of the Jewish People, should serve as one of two central aims of Jewish People action. Hence the importance from the perspective of the Jewish People as a whole of exploring alternative futures of Israel, their drivers and strategic interventions which can influence the future for the better.

Alternative Futures for Israel 2050

The method selected for this paper is to present two relatively "pure" alternative futures of thriving or decline in the year 2050 in the form of a realistic vision and a realistic nightmare. This approach is accepted in much of better business strategic planning,[8] has been used by a number of countries such as Malaysia[9] and has also been applied in Israel in the Project Israel 2020 initiated by a group of professors at the Israeli Institute of Technology – Technion, headed by Adam Mazor.[10]

Based on ongoing work by the author[11] and his colleagues, the main dimensions of the realistic vision and realistic nightmare for a Jewish-Zionist

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[8] E.g., see Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad, *Competing for the Future* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994).

[9] See *The Way Forward – Vision 2020,* available at: http://www.wawasan2020.com/vision/. For the political context of this initiative and the importance of the personality of the ruler, see Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. pp. 327-331.

[10] For a condensed version, see ftp://132.68.13.3/events/israel2020/Israel2020_Taktzir.pdf . For initiatives to revise that document and prepare *Israel 2050*, see http://www.neaman.org.il/neaman/publications/by_issue_list.asp?fid=493&parent_fid=490.

[11] See Yehezkel Dror, *Epistle to An Israeli Jewish-Zionist Leader* (Jerusalem: Carmel Publisher and the Israeli Zionist Council, 2005), pp. 14-19. A parallel book, *Epistle to a Jewish People Leader*, is in work.

and democratic State of Israel which is also the core state of the Jewish

People in the year 2050 can be summed up as follows:

<u>Realistic Vision 2050</u>

1. The Jewish population consists of about 9 to 9.5 million, constituting about two thirds of the Jewish People worldwide.

2. The prime minister and the entire government, opposition leaders and the majority of Knesset members, with massive public support, regard the enhancing of Israel's essence as a Jewish-Zionist state of the Jewish people, along with serious concern for the future of the Jewish people as a whole, as an absolute value which must be diligently and resolutely promoted. This is done within democratic norms, adhering to basic human values and taking into account the needs and rights of minorities.

3. Controversies over the meanings of a "Jewish-Zionist state of the Jewish people" continue, but they stimulate creativity and are accompanied by a sense of shared destiny and belonging to one people. "*Ahavat Israel*" is a prevalent sentiment shared by the majority, along with "unity through pluralism" and "all Jewish People bear responsibility for each other".

4. Israel is increasingly regarded as the core state of the Jewish people, ultimately responsible for its future as a whole in full partnership with Diaspora communities. It is increasingly integrated in and familiar with the Jewish people and engages in many activities tailored to strengthen Jewish communities in the Diaspora, while at the same time it encourages *Aliyah* in numerous new forms, such as dual residences in Israel and abroad. Leading Israeli politicians also fulfill Jewish People leadership roles in cooperation with leaders from the Diaspora. A constitutional advisory status is granted to a "Jewish People Council" comprised of Jewish People leaders and thinkers from around the world. Jerusalem serves as the spiritual, ethical, cultural and religious capital of the Jewish people.

5. Israel excels in main domains of Jewish civilization, combining continuity with pluralistic innovation. A kind of "invisible cultural border" separates Israel from other countries, while universal values and global cultural components continue to be integrated. The self-identity of the majority of the Jewish population is first of all "Jewish" (following their self-identity as "human beings"), followed by "Zionist" and "Israeli".

6. There is peace between Israel and its neighbors, based on signed accords. There are diplomatic, economic and cultural relations between Israel and most Arab and Islamic countries. There are no terror activities. However, due to continuous instability in the countries of the region and changing trends in Islamic states, there is uncertainty

regarding the stability of the peace and there are fears of an outbreak of mega-terror, despite massive international cooperation to thwart it. Israel maintains its defense superiority and national fortitude. The global position of Israel is good and the "special relationship" with the USA further improves, as do relations with the European Union, China and other countries.

7. A joint super-project by the State of Israel and the Jewish People has resulted in the *Aliyah* and creative integration of about one million Jews, some in novel types of "dual residence" *Aliyah*. This *Aliyah* is accompanied by accelerated cultural, economic and social thriving. Concomitantly, there is a decline in emigration, many Israelis and their children who used to reside abroad, return to Israel, and Israelis residing abroad are closely integrated into the State of Israel, for example by enjoying the right to vote in Israeli national elections.

8. Thanks to the establishment of Israel's permanent borders in a manner fitting demographic considerations, *Aliyah*, successful demographic policies, conversion initiatives and other measures, Jews constitute a stable majority of about 80 percent of Israel's population, with a clear majority also in the Galilee and Negev.

9. An equitable minority policy, along with the peace accords and socio-economic advancement, result in increasing acceptance by the minorities of Israel's Jewish-Zionist as well as democratic nature. Some opt to be citizens of the Palestinian state while maintaining their residence and social security rights in Israel.

10. A peak is reached in pluralistic, Jewish creativity, based on both Judaism and the best of general human creativity. Some of this work is significant in universal terms. A number of Israelis are included among the top creators in surveys of leading cultural human achievements, with Israel having one of the highest per capita ratios of outstanding cultural creators.[12]

11. Israel has many attributes of an exemplary society, based on, to a large extent, Jewish-Zionist values, including being a learning knowledge-society; relatively small social gaps compared to most Western societies; vibrant cultural life; diverse forms of communal and group lifestyles; high environmental quality despite the density of the population; etc. In global ratings of human development, such as the UNDP Human Development Report, Israel ranks among the top countries.

12. The economy is thriving, based on advanced knowledge on one hand, and export high-tech and service industries on the other. In global

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[12] For the concept and ways to comparatively measure peak human achievements both in literary-cultural domains and in science, see Charles Murray, *Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950* (New York: Perennial, 2004). Findings include top rating of Jews as constituting a much larger percentage of peak creators than their percentage in general populations.

ratings of competitiveness, such as by the World Economic Forum, Israel is one of the most successful countries.

13. Israeli achievements in science and technology are very high, including peak creativity recognized globally, e.g. in terms of Nobel prizes, citation indexes and comparative ratings.

14. The geographical distribution of the population is improved. A metropolitan area is developing around Beer Sheba. High-thriving buildings proliferate, turning the entire Dan metropolitan area into an integrated urban space. The significance of physical distances shrinks thanks to fast public transportation and the integration of the entire population into cyberspace.

15. Israel enjoys a high international standing and much soft power[13]; it frequently engages in *Tikun Olam* initiatives, most of which prove successful.

16. The young generation mostly adheres to renewed Jewish and Zionist values, along with post-post-modern values, with an intensive search for the meaning of life beyond material and physical gratifications. Large numbers of the younger generation regard a pluralistic, Jewish life and the realization of Zionist values as part of their life's meaning and self-realization.

17. There exists a significant number of outstanding spiritual, moral and cultural leaders accepted by the Jewish people at large, and partially recognized internationally.

18. A constitution stresses Israel's nature as a Jewish-Zionist and democratic country and its being the state of the Jewish people, leaving controversial issues such as state-religion relationship to the future. The regime is presidential. Changes in the electoral system, combined with Israel's characteristics as a knowledge-based society, improve the quality of the political elite in moral and cognitive terms. A constitutional division in the Supreme Court includes also judges who are not legal professionals. As aforementioned, a "Jewish People Council" operates alongside the Knesset, reflecting the views and wishes of Diaspora Jews and advising the government and the Knesset on Jewish People considerations. All in all, a very high level of capacity to govern is achieved, including both serving the population and weaving the future.

The obverse is a realistic nightmare.

Realistic Nightmare 2050

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[13] The term refers to appreciation of and respect for cultural and social achievements. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics.* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

1. The total Jewish population of Israel is around 6 million, which constitutes about half of the Jewish people worldwide.

2. An increasingly larger part of the Jewish population and its elites are inclined to post-Zionism and a "state of all its citizens", and seeks "normalization" in the post-modern sense, with secular Jews rejecting Jewish-Zionist values and religious groups becoming more radically orthodox.

3. Controversies over the meanings of a "Jewish-Zionist state of the Jewish People" grow fiercer and a growing majority rejects the very idea.

4. The distance between Israel and the Diaspora grows, with increasing opinions in U.S. Jewish communities that they are more "Jewish" than the State of Israel. In Israel, lack of interest in the Diaspora is on the increase. Among the younger generation, indifference to the Jewish People is quite common. Israeli leadership regards the Diaspora mainly as a source of funds and is not really interested in encouraging *Aliyah* and addressing Diaspora needs.

5. Israel increasingly turns into a "normal" Western country, though not a highly developed one. There is a great desire to join the European Union at the cost of giving up main Jewish-Zionist values including the Law of Return,[14] without any signs that the European Union is willing to accept Israel as a member state. The self-identity of the majority of the Jewish population is mainly Israeli and "Hebrew" in a narrow sense.

6. Israel is in an endemic conflict with a Palestinian state that has been established without final agreement regarding borders, the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem. The peace with Egypt grows extremely cold, with signs of increasing influence by radical fundamentalists. Despite preventive efforts, weapons of mass killing[15] proliferate in a number of Middle East countries. Israel suffers waves of terror including some cases of mega-terror. The global geo-strategic situation is unstable, with the U.S. becoming more inclined to isolation and downgrading its special relationship with Israel, while Europe and China demand "further concessions" from Israel. Israel maintains its defense superiority but lacks effective measures against terror and new types of threatening violence. The public experiences fatigue and loss of morale due to the security burden and doubts concerning Israel's future security.

7. There is almost no *Aliyah*. Emigration is prevalent, including many highly qualified young professionals and researchers. Almost all Israelis able to obtain a second citizenship do so. Israelis residing

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[14] On contradictions between maintaining and strengthening the nature of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish State and the State of the Jewish People on one hand and joining the European Union as presently constituted on the other, see Yehezkel Dror and Sharon Pardo, "Approaches and Principles for an Israeli Grand-Strategy Towards the European Union". *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2006, pp.17-44, esp. pp. 28-31.

[15] I use this term instead of "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD), which does not adequately express what is involved.

abroad are rapidly disengaging; many of them ignore their Israeli citizenship and do not register their children as Israelis.

8. The demographic balance is steadily deteriorating with the percentage of Jews shrinking towards 65 to 70 percent. The non-Jewish majority in the Negev and Galilee increases and voices additional demands for autonomy and cantonization based on the "the right to self-determination". These demands are raised in international forums, where they enjoy growing support.

9. Relationships with minority communities are highly strained. A united Arab party enjoys large representation in the Knesset. Demands are made for turning Israel into a multi-national state, the abolition of The Law of Return and changing the flag and the national anthem. Some of these demands are backed by Supreme Court decisions based on the principles of equality and civil rights. The participation of minorities in terrorist acts is on the increase, and security services warn against the proliferation of supporters of an Intifada by Israeli Arabs.

10. Cultural creativity and activities are in decline. Israeli works of art and culture bear no meaning for the Diaspora and fail to make an impression in the world, except for several post-Zionist artists, some of whom call to "stop the failed and unjust Zionist experiment" and publish dystopias describing the fall of Israel as a Jewish state. In global surveys, no Israelis are included among high quality creators.

11. The social situation is grave, with widening gaps, sharp disagreements, mutual accusations and hostility among different segments of the Jewish public, along with partially violent street activities. The level of education is deteriorating. In global ratings, Israel declines constantly and joins the lowest ranks of the developed countries.

12. The economy is increasingly lagging behind Western countries and cannot compete in advanced technology – among other reasons due to the emigration of many top level professionals. The number of unemployed increases. Israel is constantly declining in global ratings of competitiveness.

13. Israel achievements in science and technology are minor, without any peak attainments. Professional literature discusses Israel as "a country that failed in science and technology".

14. Most of the Jewish population is concentrated in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, with growing deterioration of the environment and the quality of life, except in affluent enclosures, whose numbers are on increase.

15. Israel's international standing is poor. It is suspected as a center of organized crime. There are no significant Israeli contributions to global issues.

16. The majority of the younger generation holds post-modern values, stressing materialism and "having a good time", even as these trends are declining in many Western countries. Post-modernism is

discernible in the younger generation of the Orthodox sector too. Discussions about "Zionism" are ridiculed by most youngsters.

17. There is no substantial spiritual, moral and cultural leadership to speak of.

18. Politics is appalling, with much party fragmentation, factions within parties, governmental instability and cases of corruption. Most of the public regards politicians with contempt and derision. Decision-making quality is poor, indecision is rampant as are compromises that combine the worst features of alternatives.

Facing Crossroads into the Future

Both the thriving and the nightmare visions are radical, though they are not the most extreme scenarios that can be imagined. Neither is likely to be fully realized. Reality will be between them, but may approximate either the thriving or the nightmare alternative future.

Thanks to a number of characteristics, Israel is among the countries that have the benefits and risks of a large evolutionary potential, with very different alternative futures being within the realm of the possible. These characteristics include, for instance, the many contradictions and antinomies inherent in present dynamics, such as between being a Jewish state and being a Western state; the dependence of the future of Israel on a very unstable Middle East, and the youth of the state with many institutions not being hallowed by long traditions. Therefore, quite a number of significantly different trajectories into the future are open to Israel. In part, the actual future of Israel will be determined by factors beyond its control. But Israeli choices and also Jewish People actions have a high probability of exerting much influence on Israel's future, if they are of high future-weaving[16] quality.

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[16] It was Plato in *The Statesman* who first used the apt metaphor of "future-weaving" to describe the main task of outstanding rulers.

Israel faced in the past quite a number of critical choices exerting much influence on its future, such as the very decision regarding its establishment, its immigration and absorption policies, the settlements policy, the peace treaty with Egypt, building the national water transportation system and more. However, this does not diminish the future-making importance of the crossroads it is facing now and will face in the foreseeable future. It seems very likely that the next fifty years will be crucial for Israel, in terms of war and peace, society and economics, its very nature and "spirit" as more of a Jewish-Zionist or more of a "normal" state and in its roles and standing in the Jewish People as a whole.

The crossroads into the future, whether posed by external realities or created by Israeli initiatives, impose heavily on Israeli choice capacities. To borrow a metaphor from Xunzi, a main follower of Confucius:

> As Yang Zhu once lamented at a crossroads: if a man makes an error of half a step in the wrong direction, when he awakens to the fact, he will have made a blunder of a thousand *li*."[17]

Israeli decision makers and significant segments of the public are aware of the historical situation of multiple crossroads into the future in which Israel is positioned, with its future-making demands and opportunities. They often do not perceive the multiplicity of choices and their long term implications as embedded in deep uncertainty. Nevertheless, most Israeli senior decision makers know and feel the historical significance of their choices and the more responsible among them suffer from the burden, while oscillating between the exhilaration of power to shape the future and the frustrations from the

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[17] John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works. Volume II: Books 7-16* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), page 161.

constraints hindering them from doing what they know, or think they know, is required.

Moving from the subjective aspects of facing crossroads into the future, however important for understanding Israeli policy making realities, to the objective circumstances, let me emphasize again the critical assessment that during the first half of the twenty-first century Israel will face multiple trajectories into the future leading to radically different alternative futures, some of which are ominous while others are very good. However, the crossroads into the future are not clearly marked. On the contrary, the processes leading from present choices into the future are in part unstable, mutation-prone and influenced by chance events and random leaps.

Therefore statecraft, even at its humanly best, constitutes in essence "gambling with history",[18] often for very high stakes, and, in the case of Israel, also fateful ones. All the more, maximum efforts are needed to identify main drivers and craft promising strategic intervention recommendations, which increase the probability of a positive correlation between intentions and the actual consequences of choice.[19]

Methodological Difficulties

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[18] See Yehezkel Dror, "Statecraft as Fuzzy Gambling with History", *Futures Research Quartely*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Fall 1993), pp.95-107; and Yehezkel Dror, *The Capacity to Govern: A Report to the Club of Rome* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), ch. 15.

[19] I do not deal here with methods for coping with uncertainty, such as seeking robust options, accelerated learning and upgraded improvisation. For a good introduction, see James A. Dewar, *Assumption-Based Planning: A Tool for Reducing Avoidable Surprises* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Identification of drivers and crafting of strategic intervention recommendations require a triple operation: first, it is necessary to identify main drivers, i.e those closely interconnected clusters of variables, which are likely to exert significant influence on the future of Israel, such as the Islamic radicalization of neighboring countries and the quality of Israeli top-level decision makers. Second, from the set of main drivers a subset of those that are in principle susceptible to influence by Israel and thus can serve as policy instruments must be mapped. Third, strategic intervention recommendations likely to impact positively on the drivers and which are feasible or can be made so, have to be identified, invented and then developed and crafted into policy options.

However, doing so even in part is very demanding. Main difficulties include the following three:

1. Lack of understanding of social macro-change and deep historical processes, combined with doubts about the applicability of theories of thriving and decline validated in respect to the past to a substantially different future.

2. Meaninglessness in the context of historical processes of distinctions between "independent" and "dependent" variables, because of multiple interdependencies;[20] and lack of adequate criteria for selecting a proper level of analysis and action within the infinite chain of causes and effects.

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[20] See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 4.

3. The open nature of strategic intervention recommendations, with creativity being able to invent new ones, this being a main characteristic of innovative statecraft.

Nevertheless, with the help of theories of thriving and decline[21] and histories of specific cases of rise and decline on one hand[22] and studies by the author and others of the dynamics of Israel in its regional and global context on the other,[23] some main drivers can be identified and potent strategic intervention recommendations can be developed. This is done on an operational level of middle-range specification, which meets pragmatic requirements of real life policy making.

Main Drivers

Let me first mention some of the external drivers that, to a large measure, are not susceptible to Israeli and Jewish People influence, as explored both by

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[21] These are surveyed and applied to the Jewish People in the accompanying paper by Salomon Shalom Wald, op.cit.

Studies of the history of the Jewish People in terms of theories of thriving and decline are sorely missing. Similarly, available literature on the "amazing survival of the Jewish People" is scarce and lacking explanatory power. A conference held on this subject in Jerusalem in 2005 illustrated the lack of deep understanding of the history of the Jewish People in terms of long duration drivers. This should be a cause for concern, for although the future will be different from the past, there is also much continuity. Therefore, the past has much to teach us on drivers of history which in part continue to operate, potentially providing some of the foundations needed for crafting effective, strategic interventions.

[22] E.g., Philip Longworth, *The Rise and Fall of Venice* (London: Constable, 1974); Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); and Mahmood Iftekhar, *The Rise And Fall Of The Islamic Empires* (Frederick, MD: PublishAmerica, 2004), to be read together with Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise And Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2006).

[23] E.g., Yehezkel Dror, *Memorandum for the Israeli Prime Minister: I. Situation of the Nation* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1992), in Hebrew; and Yehezkel Dror, *Memorandum for the Israeli Prime Minister: II. To Build a State* (Jerusalem: Academon, 1989), in Hebrew.

governments[24] and in literature,[25] as well as JPPPI work. These include science and technology, globalization, economic trends, global security and conflict, stability and instability of Middle Eastern countries, changes in policies of main powers and especially the USA, large-scale natural disasters impacting on Israel, and cultural change influencing Israeli society and culture.

Israel can somewhat influence some components of such external drivers of the future, such as select technologies and some developments in the Middle East. And some such impacts, such as on nuclear proliferation and the stability of key Middle Eastern countries, may be of global importance. However, in the main they are beyond the influence of Israel and the Jewish People. Utilizing them and, if this is impossible, adjusting to them is therefore required for thriving.

However, there are many drivers that can be influenced by suitable strategic interventions, including six main ones:

1. Commitment to renewed Jewish and Zionist values;

2. Intellectual capital;

3. Quality of leadership;

4. Governmental future-weaving capacities;

5. Demography;

6. Social justice, pluralistic cohesion and robustness;

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[24] E.g., see National Intelligence Council, *Mapping the Global Future: Report on the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project* (January 2005) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005).

[25] E.g., See Eamonn Kelly, *Powerful Times: Rising to the Challenge of Our Uncertain World* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing, Pearson Education, 2006).

In selecting these drivers for consideration, I exclude those shared by Israel with other countries, such as economics and environment. These are important but not directly salient to the special character of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish State and the State of the Jewish People, on which this article focuses.

Neither do I take up external relations and security, though they constitute a critical driver. Requiring as they do a paper on their own, I leave their consideration to another opportunity.[26] Similarly, I leave to another opportunity the discussion of the integration of Israel into the Jewish People as a whole and the fulfilling of its missions as the State of the Jewish People.

Diagnosis and Strategic Intervention Recommendations

The scale and intensity of interventions needed in respect to various drivers depend on their direction. When a driver is operating in favor of thriving and there are reasons to expect that it will continue to do so, no specific strategic intervention recommendations are necessary. All that is needed is incremental improvements together with careful monitoring. But if drivers lead to decline or there is reason to suspect that they will do so absent intervention, high quality intervention recommendations are required. Therefore, in respect to the main drivers, a short diagnosis of their present direction is presented before a number of strategic intervention recommendations are suggested.

The diagnosis and the strategic intervention recommendations are tentative. However, much of the diagnosis and many of the recommendations

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[26] I discuss them at length in a forthcoming article, to be published in *Israel Affairs* in 2006, on "A Breakout Political-Security Grand-Strategy for Israel".

are accepted, at least in principle, by many Israeli policy intellectuals and policy makers. That despite such agreement most of them are not acted upon is *per se* an ominous sign of the danger of decline in some critical dimensions unless trends are reversed through large-scale and in part radical well-considered strategic interventions.

1. Commitment to renewed Jewish and Zionist values

Evaluation of trend: Public opinion polls indicate that on the level of general declarations a majority of Israelis support Jewish and Zionist values. This is even more so the case with most of the senior decision-making echelon. However, the operational meaning of these values is neither clear nor agreed upon. And the vast majority of Israeli Jews, including many senior politicians, knows very little about the Diaspora and often is not really interested in it. The question of what is a "secular Jew" is discussed in a number of books, but remains wide open.[27] There is much neglect of and disagreement about the meanings of Israel being a Jewish State, also in religious sectors. And there is even less agreement and also little thought on concrete steps to be taken to insure this nature of the state.

Furthermore, the radical shift in Israeli policies towards the occupied territories and Jewish settlement in them may well undermine commitment to

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[27] This is neither surprising nor necessarily a negative phenomenon. The radical shift caused by the Enlightenment from religion being the shared core individual and collective identity of Jews and the Jewish People to a majority not being religious in the Orthodox sense needs much more time to work itself out.

classical Zionist values, with little thought being given to their renewal in ways preserving essentials while fitting radically changing situations.[28]

So-called "value education" in the public schools is largely a failure, with some religious schools being exceptions. Most of the effort goes to teaching Jewish traditions and Zionist history, without making them relevant to the mental world of the younger generation.

Strategic intervention recommendations:

    a. Writings and discourse on the operational meanings of Israel being a Jewish and Zionist state should be encouraged, with the participation of thinkers from Israel and the Diaspora.

    b. A number of pluralistic core curricula in Jewish and Zionist values should be developed with emphasis on innovative content fitting the interests of the youth and the world in which they are living. A cadre of appropriately prepared educators should be in charge of implementing these curricula.

    c. A widely accepted Jewish/Zionist thinker should serve as a kind of "value advisor" in the office of the Prime Minister.

2. Intellectual capital

Evaluation of trend: Israel is well equipped with intellectual capital, in part augmented by immigration. At the same time, large parts of the population are rather ignorant in Jewish thinking, current affairs, humanities and science and technology.[29] Scholastic achievements in science and technology are low according to comparative ratings and knowledge of languages is poor. Also,

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[28] About ten years ago, the Zionist Library decided to publish a book series on "Zionism in the 21st Century". Despite much effort, only two authors willing to write on that subject were found.
[29] To put it more bluntly, what in Talmudic literature are called "Amei Haaretz" (ignoramuses) and regarded as an existential danger, are quite prevalent in Israel.

while reliable figures are not available, it seems that significant numbers of highly qualified academics and researchers are leaving Israel due to lack of positions at the universities and tempting offers from abroad stemming from global competition for "the best".

Strategic intervention recommendations:

a. A grand-policy to develop Israel into a learning knowledge-society should be adopted, with special attention to life-long learning, mid-life career changes and teaching the young how to learn.[30]

b. Proficiency in English and one more language, in addition to Hebrew, should be required of all university graduates and should be encouraged in secondary schools.

c. Special efforts should be made to encourage immigration and reduce emigration of high quality human resources, including creation of suitable employment opportunities.

d. Opportunities and incentives for part-time living in Israel of outstanding creators and innovators should be provided in ways that will facilitate their contributions to Israel.

e. A lot can be done by civic society, grassroots initiatives, local governance, universities and private enterprises, but a critical requirement for advancing Israel towards a learning knowledge-

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[30] On the partially overlapping ideas of knowledge and learning societies, see Peter Raggatt, *The Learning Society: Challenges and Trends* (London: Routledge, 1995) and UNESCO, *UNESCO World Report: Towards Knowledge Societies* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005). For an example of what is regarded as a relatively very advanced learning society, see Ari Antikainen, *Transforming A Learning Society: The Case Of Finland* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). For a striking different case from which nevertheless much can be learned, see Jason Tan and Ng Pak Tee, ed., *Shaping Singapore's Future: Thinking Schools, Learning Nations* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 2005).

society, is to make the Israeli government knowledge-intensive, as discussed below.

3. Quality of national leadership

Evaluation of trend: It is not a subjective judgment of mine alone but agreed on by many discussion partners among politicians, public figures and researchers that the quality of Israeli politicians is mediocre, with quite a number being inadequate in terms of moral stature, cognitive capacities and knowledge, while only a few are outstanding.

Even more obvious is the scarcity of widely accepted spiritual leaders, with the small number of outstanding politicians being larger than the miniscule number of spiritual leaders outside some religious communities. Their lack is very harmful given the problems faced by Israel, which make spiritual leaders all the more important.

Furthermore, the vast majority of Israeli political leaders quite clearly is not familiar with the realities of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and does not understand the overall dynamics of the Jewish People.

Strategic intervention recommendations:

a. Knesset members and other elected politicians should be given opportunities to participate in workshops and retreats where main Israeli issues are discussed in depth, off the record.

b. Broadening of the preparation of Rabbis should be encouraged to include philosophy, history and social sciences so as to increase the probability of spiritual leaders widely accepted as such emerging from their ranks.

c. Universities should provide optional graduate and post-graduate courses and seminars on Israeli policy problems, leadership, policy making and so on, which are attractive to students considering political careers.

d. Study tours of Jewish communities should be offered to politicians, on the condition that they are real, learning opportunities.

e. A Jewish People Leadership Academy should be established, where actual and emerging leaders from both Israel and the Diaspora spend together time, from a couple of days to a number of weeks, learning and considering in depth, inter alia, the long term alternative futures of the Jewish People, including that of Israel.[31]

4. <u>Governmental future-weaving capacities</u>

Evaluation of trend: The situation is paradoxically mixed. Many politicians and officials are concerned about the future. But the vast majority of policy choices, including very important ones, are short term oriented. Reasons for this serious weakness include deep uncertainty about the future combined with lack of professional strategic staffs capable of coping with it; overloads, coalition structures that prevent holistic consideration of issues and more. A main cause is what a former Head of the Israeli National Security Council, in an appearance on television in 2006 ", called a culture of short term thinking".

Three additional weaknesses inhibiting future-weaving abilities and capacities to govern as a whole exist:

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[31] For a detailed proposal, see Yehezkel Dror, " A Jewish People Leadership Academy", in: Mordecai Nisan and Oded Schremer, eds., *Educational Deliberations: Studies in Education Dedicated to Shlomo (Seymour) Fox.* Jerusalem: Keter and Mandel Leadership Institute, 2005, pp. 430-450.

a. A governance structure, which hinders adequate concentration of democratic power necessary for making critical, future-shaping choices.

b. Intense political competition together with conflicts between pragmatic considerations and value-based doctrines, causing the domination of politics over policy.

c. Absence of a highly professional senior civil service able to "represent" the future while having the knowledge and continuity required for long-term policies.

Much can be added on the weaknesses of Israeli governance in future-weaving capacities, but the partial diagnosis above suffices to make the point that significant improvements are needed to enable the government to fulfill its crucial functions in bringing about a thriving future.

To put this finding into proportion, it should be noted that such weaknesses are shared by nearly all contemporary governments, which are not equipped morally, cognitively and politically to engage in critical choices.[32] Indeed, in many respects -- such as a sense of mission and awareness of responsibility, as well as skills of improvisation -- Israeli senior politicians are significantly better than their counterparts in many countries. However, because of the positioning of Israel ahead of crossroads leading into very different futures and the crucial importance of governmental decisions in influencing the shape of things to come, the quality of governance is more crucial for Israel than in most countries. Therefore, significant upgrading of Israeli governmental capacities is urgently required.

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[32] For detailed discussion and improvement proposals see *The Capacity to Govern*, op. cit.

Strategic intervention recommendations:

    a. The knowledge intensity of the Israeli government should be radically improved, including learning opportunities for politicians and development of a merit-based ==senior civil service== with strict qualification requirements.

    b. Democratic power concentration, essential for critical choices, should be facilitated by strengthening the Prime Ministership or moving towards a presidential or quasi-presidential regime.[33]

    c. Strategy units should be set up and strengthened, especially on the level of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, but also in all main ministries. They should be staffed by high-quality professionals.[34]

5. <u>Demography</u>

Evaluation of trend: The problem is now well recognized, with differences in birthrates between the Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of the Israeli population expected to reduce the percentage of Jews below requirements insuring the Jewish character of the state together with democracy.

Strategic intervention recommendations:[35]

    a. Give much weight to demographic considerations in determining the borders of Israel.

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[33] On the movement in this direction in many countries, see Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb, eds., *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[34] Much can be learned from the strategy unit of the British Prime Minister, as described in www.**strategy**.gov.**uk**

[35] These recommendations are taken from an ongoing JPPPI project headed by Sergio Dela Pergola.

b. Provide facilities encouraging and enabling families with two or three children to have a third or fourth child.

c. Accelerate conversion of non-Jewish immigrants who came to Israel according to the Law of Return.

d. Strictly control entry and residence in order to prevent illegal immigration.

6. Social justice, pluralistic cohesion and robustness

Evaluation of trend: While Israel is doing well economically, especially in respect to high technology, social dynamics are problematic. Without taking at face value some of the statistics on poverty, child suffering, unemployment and so on, serious social problems evidently exist, such as:

a. Growing income disparities, going beyond what is dictated by globalization and necessary for competitiveness.

b. Development of an "underclass" lacking a minimum of adequate living standards.

c. Certain erosion of staying power, with terror clearly influencing some important Israeli withdrawal decisions.

d. Traumatization, a sense of defeat and also a feeling of being betrayed by segments of the settlers and their supporters, which is bound to escalate when "consolidation" ("*hitkansut")* takes place.

Strategic intervention recommendations

In addition to relevant recommendations presented in the context of commitment to renewed Jewish and Zionist values drivers, necessary strategies include:

a. Developing a long-range employment and social welfare policy prioritizing children and the younger generation.

b. Revision of the tax system, with serious consideration of expenditure tax, a small but substantive inheritance tax and additional progressive taxation of real estate and stock market capital profits.

c. High level politicians should play a role as educators of the public, all the more so in the absence of a widely accepted spiritual leadership, taking care not to let hopes for peace erode readiness to kill and be killed as essential for the stability of peace agreements and for future thriving of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist State.

d. More emphatic and sympathetic attention and assistance to evacuated settlers, and posing new Zionist challenges to them.

Action This Day

I am using the "action this day" labels placed by Winston Churchill on urgent instructions[36] as a metaphor to emphasize the need to start as soon as possible action in line with the strategic intervention recommendations presented above or parallel ones. This does not imply that a sudden spur of energy will insure thriving, the latter requiring consistent and persistent long term efforts. However, a start should be made urgently, otherwise the chances of shifting trajectories into desired directions are likely to decrease in important dimensions.

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[36] As described, for instance, in Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, ed., *Action This Day: Working with Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 1968), passim.

The call for urgent action in no way assumes that Israel is likely to decline without it. Israel is an unusual and heroic, historic achievement which has proven its vitality and strength. However, success in the past is no guarantee of thriving in the future, all the more so in a rapidly and radically mutative world. Prudence, therefore, requires a maximum effort to influence future-making processes so as to reduce the probability of decline and increase the probability of thriving, whatever their chances may be without such intervention. If the number of drivers of the future, the evaluation of which is not very reassuring, is taken into account, maximum effort to act now so as to strengthen the likelihood of thriving is not only a matter of prudence, but may well be essential and even crucial.

This is a task primarily for Israel but also for the Jewish People as a whole. With respect to the latter,[37] concentration of Diaspora involvement in Israel is required for those drivers and strategic interventions which are most important for the thriving of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist State and the State of the Jewish People regarding which the Diaspora has much to offer that is beyond the capability of Israel on its own.

Let me accordingly conclude with some derived tentative action proposals for Jewish People leaders and organizations:

1. Give priority to insuring the long-range future of Israel as a Jewish State and to investing in the young generation.

2. Focus resources on a limited number of synergetically interacting projects so as to achieve a critical mass of impact.

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[37] This version of the paper is directed at Jewish People leaders and thinkers. Therefore, I concentrate on action recommendations for them. Action recommendations for the Israeli governments derived from the analysis in this paper will be developed and presented separately, both by JPPPI and by the author as an individual.

3. Consider the following domains as examples of candidates for such projects:

    a. Supporting new types of *Aliyah* based on dual residences;

    b. Advancing Israel towards a learning knowledge-society;

    c. Improving leadership by setting up a Jewish People Leadership Academy in Jerusalem;

    d. Setting up a number of brain trusts including leading thinkers from both the Diaspora and Israel to help cope with critical issues facing Israel;

    e. Design and implement select modules to aid the development of Jerusalem, the Negev and the Galilee, on the condition that there are comprehensive Israeli projects within which such modules can make a significant difference.

4. All this is subject to the imperative of expending maximum effort to augment the security of Israel in the face of escalating Islamic fundamentalist threats.