

Defending Peace with Security Based Diplomacy

Dan Diker

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Introduction

For most of the past 18 years of Israeli-Palestinian peace diplomacy, since the signing of the 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles with Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization, Israel's vital security requirements have been relegated to a position of secondary importance in the interest of reaching a final peace agreement. Israel's traditional "security-based diplomacy" approach to foreign relations that had anchored the Jewish state's defense doctrine since the Six Day War in 1967 had been reversed. Instead, a doctrine of "diplomacy-based security" had come to dominate Israeli diplomatic thinking in which peace agreements were thought to be the guarantor of Israel's safety.

In service to this school of thought, previous Israeli bids to end the Arab-Israeli conflict with its neighbors, including the Annapolis process in 2008, the Gaza disengagement of 2005, the Lebanon withdrawal of 2000, and the Camp David summit in 2000, were marked by far-reaching and often unilateral Israeli concessions. At the same time, the Israel Defense Forces were called upon to retrofit Israel's security needs into a political model instead of establishing security "red lines" before or in the initial stages of diplomatic negotiations.¹

Israel's previous policy of making concessions first and then trying to enforce its vital security rights and requirements second, has created new international expectations that Israel continue to offer an intransigent Palestinian leadership deep concessions as "sweeteners" to coax them into negotiations. The Palestinians, in contrast, have remained steadfast in refusing to compromise on all the core issues - borders, refugees, settlements, and Jerusalem - while sensitizing the international community to what the PA leadership calls the "Palestinian rights" underpinning their statehood quest.² The public silence of past Israeli governments on its own rights-based case for a viable, secure Jewish state with defensible borders has encouraged confusion among allies and exacerbated the antagonism of its adversaries. The increasingly defiant and vocal demands by the Palestinian leadership for international recognition of statehood along the 1949 Armistice lines (1967 "borders") between 2009 and 2011, are a natural outcome of Israel's past concession-driven diplomacy.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's foreign policy speech at the opening of the summer session at the Knesset on May 16th 2011, followed by his major policy address at a joint session of the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C. about a week later - represented a fundamental restoration of Israel's security and rights-based approach to the conflict that Netanyahu had laid out at Bar-Ilan University on June 14, 2009, shortly after he took office. Netanyahu's sharp break from past Israeli policy was his insistence, up front, that reciprocity govern relations between the sides: that Israel be recognized as the nation state of the Jewish people,³ that a future Palestinian state be demilitarized, and that Israel's critical security needs be honored.

Netanyahu was indeed articulating a new Israeli political consensus about the peace process, but he was also restoring a security posture for his new government. He was announcing the resurrection of Israel's traditional "security-first" approach to diplomacy that had been reflected in Israeli policy by every Israeli government since 1967 and that continued into the first years of the Oslo peace process. When it came to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), the security-first approach was guarded by Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Binyamin Netanyahu. Ariel Sharon would also protect

Israel's rights and security interests in those territories, despite his unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. Netanyahu's revival of this approach in front of both houses of Congress and on several other occasions since his 2009 election seems particularly relevant in the context of Iranian-and al-Qaeda-backed campaigns across the region, as well as the Arab revolutions that have caused convulsions in Arab regimes amenable to the West, such as Egypt, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, and Bahrain. At the same time as the Iranian regime continues to race for nuclear and regional supremacy, destabilizing the Sunni regimes that have either made formal or *de facto* peace with Israel, the Iranian regime funds, trains, and arms terror groups on Israel's northern and southern borders, and even in the West Bank.

In this context, Israel's return to security-based diplomacy and insistence on Palestinian demilitarization and defensible borders is a vital guarantor of Israel's security and a "defensible" peace in the face of the profound uncertainties surrounding both the Palestinians and the Middle East as a whole.

From Congress to the Bar-Ilan Speech

Prime Minister Netanyahu's address to a joint session of Congress on May 24th 2011, represented a sharply articulated blueprint for Israel's security-based diplomatic approach to reaching an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, despite the fact that Fatah and Hamas had just sealed a unity government deal, and were demanding the UN recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state. Netanyahu was undeterred. He implored Abbas to break the pact with Hamas and respect Israel's security first, including rights based requirements for peace; Palestinian recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people, settlement of the refugee issue outside Israel's borders, security arrangements including a demilitarized Palestinian State, and an end to Palestinian claims.⁴

Prime Minister Netanyahu emphasized that Israel, "would not return to the indefensible lines of 1967". While he did not explicitly use the nomenclature of his policy of defensible borders which had always explicitly delineated Israel's critical need for land east of the 1967 lines, to maintain minimal strategic depth and topographical security to protect Israel's main Mediterranean coastal cities and airports, he emphasized the vital component of defensible borders, telling US lawmakers, "it is vital that Israel maintain a long-term military presence along the Jordan River. Solid security arrangements on the ground are necessary not only to protect the peace, they are necessary to protect Israel in case the peace unravels. For in our unstable region, no one can guarantee that our peace partners today will be there tomorrow".⁵

Netanyahu's speech was popular among the Israeli public but less so among the Israeli and Western media as it outlined Israeli security and rights-based demands without offering additional far reaching concessions to lure the Palestinians back into negotiations.⁶ However, this did not represent a change in policy for the Netanyahu government.

The security first and rights-based principles for peace that Netanyahu laid out were deeply rooted in the first foreign policy address of his government. On June 14th, 2009, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stood before a packed auditorium at the Begin-Sadat Center at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. It was a defining moment for Netanyahu. Just several months earlier, he had established a strong center-right coalition that reflected a 30% rise in public support for right-of-center parties.⁷ The Israeli public was looking to move away from the policies of former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Olmert's unsuccessful bid to negotiate a peace accord and establish a Palestinian state had brought him to offer unprecedented concessions to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.⁸ Despite Abbas' public admission of Olmert's far reaching concessions, the Palestinian leader noted that there remained "wide gaps between the sides" that had led to the collapse of peace talks.⁹ Newly elected President Barack Obama had placed exceptional pressure on the Netanyahu government for

additional concessions, including a full freeze on Jewish building in the West Bank and parts of Jerusalem that contradicted firm understandings reached with the Bush administration and even collided with the Oslo accords and the policies of the Clinton administration.¹⁰

Netanyahu surprised some in the audience and many in Israel that night by publicly accepting the notion of a future Palestinian State and formally joining the ranks of the so-called “peace camp” of five previous prime ministers.¹¹ However, unlike most of his predecessors, Netanyahu took a fundamentally different approach. He insisted that the Palestinians would need to make reciprocal gestures by accepting two principles:

1. Recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and
2. The demilitarization of a future Palestinian state, and accession to additional security guarantees, including defensible borders for Israel.¹²

He also reminded his listeners that Jerusalem would remain united under the sovereignty of Israel.

Netanyahu was placing Israel’s national rights and vital security needs first, and only then accepting Palestinian demands made on the Jewish state. This was a 180-degree shift away from Olmert's approach at Annapolis, who had dropped many of the fundamental security requirements that Israel had insisted upon in the past, in the context of the far-reaching concessions he had offered to Mahmoud Abbas.¹³

Netanyahu’s shift away from offering up-front concessions and instead readopting a rights and security-based approach, while also recognizing Palestinian demands for statehood, won the support of more than 70% of the Israeli public, according to a poll conducted by the dovish *Haaretz* newspaper the day after the speech.¹⁴ It would also presage another sharp increase in Netanyahu’s popularity among Israelis following his security-based diplomacy speech in Congress in May of 2011, when he would outpace opposition head Tzippi Livni by nine percent.¹⁵ One prominent commentator from *Haaretz* called the Bar Ilan speech “Netanyahu’s Revolution,” compared the prime minister to Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, and noted that “With the seven-word formula -- a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside a Jewish Israeli state -- he changed the discourse on the conflict from its very foundations. He set an unprecedented challenge before the Palestinian nation and the international community.”¹⁶

Netanyahu has followed up the ideas he reintroduced to Israeli politics on subsequent occasions. In reaffirming the need for both defensible borders and a demilitarized West Bank, he warned in a November 2009 speech, “We have to ensure that weapons do not flow into the Palestinian areas of the West Bank, which overlooks Tel Aviv and surrounds Jerusalem”.¹⁷ And on March 3, 2010, Netanyahu reportedly told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that “the Jordan Valley’s strategic importance along the Eastern border of the West Bank made it impossible for Israel to withdraw”.¹⁸

This was not the first time that Netanyahu stressed the security-first paradigm for peacemaking. In early 1997, during his first term in office, Netanyahu was asked by the Clinton administration to agree to a “future re-deployment,” in accordance with the Oslo Agreements, that required Israel to make a new withdrawal of an unspecified size in the West Bank.

Instead of engaging in a debate with the administration over the terms of a “credible” re-deployment, including specific percentages of territory, Netanyahu asked the IDF to supply him with a security map containing Israel’s vital territorial needs in the West Bank to provide for the country’s defense. The IDF map came to be known as “The Interests Map,” and Netanyahu took a version of it to Washington to present it to President Bill Clinton.¹⁹ Netanyahu’s decision-making at the time illustrated an important principle of his approach to peacemaking on which he insisted then and still embraces today: that Israel’s formal diplomatic positions on the peace process must be derived by first establishing its security needs, rather than the reverse.

Why has Prime Minister's Netanyahu's commitment to a security-first peace paradigm been so well-received by Israelis? It is because the reality of the failure of the previous approach has become too obvious to deny among the public. Seventeen years of concession-driven diplomacy not only failed to yield security or earn international goodwill, but led to a broad public understanding that Israel's security situation had become perilous.

During the first three years of the Oslo process, far more Israelis were killed by Palestinian terror attacks than during the fifteen years prior to its signing in 1993.²⁰ The collapse of the Camp David summit in 2000 and the ensuing suicide bombing war claimed the lives of more than 1,100 Israelis.²¹ The withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 only brought an emboldened Hezbollah to fire more than 4000 rockets across Israel's border in the 2006 Second Lebanon War, and the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 multiplied the thousands of rocket and mortar attacks on Southern Israel – more than 12,000 since 2001 -- and resulted in the defensive "Cast Lead" IDF operation in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009 that was condemned around the world.²² The failure of Oslo, Annapolis, and territorial withdrawals to improve the prospects for peace did not deter Israelis from yearning for peace. But they did offer a sobering lesson to the Israeli public about the dangers of indulging in wishful thinking. The public today is in no mood for unrealistic plans that are long on hope and short on credibility. They want security first; and a united Jerusalem. Netanyahu's Bar-Ilan speech was received so well in Israel because it articulated this broad public consensus.²³

Restoring Israel's Security First Approach

Surprisingly perhaps, Netanyahu's insistence at Bar-Ilan and in his 2011 Congressional address on a demilitarized Palestinian state and defensible borders did not represent a new strategy. True, former prime ministers Olmert and Barak had abandoned the standard policy of former governments since 1967 of presenting Israel's territorial requirements for defensible borders and other security needs in advance of or during the first stages of negotiations as part of their peace bids.²⁴ However, Netanyahu's insistence on prioritizing Israel's security conditions had also formed the national security "anchor" for previous prime ministers. Rabin had presented his vision for defensible borders at the height of the Oslo peace process, on October 5, 1995, in his last Knesset address 30 days before his assassination, as part of his successful bid for parliamentary ratification of the Oslo II interim agreement. He said of the final-status arrangement with the Palestinians, "The borders of the State of Israel, during the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six Day War. We will not return to the 4 June 1967 lines."²⁵ Rabin's territorial point of reference was not the 1967 lines. In fact, Rabin had told his top IDF brass that Israel would need to retain approximately 50% of the West Bank in any future settlement.²⁶

Rabin, like Netanyahu today, insisted on retaining the Jordan Valley, telling the Knesset assembly at the time, "The security border of the State of Israel will be located in the Jordan Valley, in the broadest meaning of that term."²⁷ What Rabin meant was that the Jordan River alone was an inadequate defensive barrier to prevent hostile forces and weaponry from reaching the West Bank's high ground and that Israel would need to rely on the eastern slopes of the 2-3,000 foot high West Bank mountain ridge that rise from the Jordan riverbed, constituting the Jordan Rift Valley. This was clearly Rabin's intention when he stipulated that Israel needed this zone in "the broadest meaning" of the term. Rabin also insisted on maintaining a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty.

It is somewhat ironic that, in contrast to Netanyahu, who publicly acceded to the notion of a demilitarized Palestinian state in 2010, Rabin, who had received the Nobel Peace prize together with Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres and PLO leader Yasser Arafat, rejected a fully sovereign Palestinian state, telling Israeli lawmakers in 1995, "We would like this to be an entity which is less than a state, and which will independently run the lives of the Palestinians under its authority."²⁸

There is some debate over the legacy of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon regarding his final plans for the West Bank, especially in view of the 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza strip and his decision to erect a security barrier close to the pre-1967 "Green Line" in the West Bank.²⁹ However, there is good reason to believe that his strategy for the West Bank directly followed Rabin and Netanyahu's security-based approach.³⁰

On April 14, 2004, Sharon exchanged letters with President George W. Bush in which Israel committed to withdraw from Gaza and the United States endorsed defensible borders for Israel.³¹ A week after the White House summit, Sharon explained the language of the U.S. letter to an overflowing Knesset plenum noting that the US guarantees included two territorial components: Israel would retain the major settlement blocs in the West Bank and it would also obtain defensible borders. In an unusual move, in the midst of his Hebrew address, Sharon repeated "defensible borders" in English to emphasize the American presidential commitment.

Implicit in Sharon's review of the U.S. letter was that beyond the large settlements close to the pre-1967 lines, there was also recognition of a vital geographic zone in the West Bank, namely the Jordan Valley.³² Sharon would repeat Israel's need to retain the Jordan Valley on subsequent occasions. He told *Ha'aretz* on April 24, 2005, "The Jordan Rift Valley is very important and it's not just the rift valley we're talking about [but]...up to the Allon road and a step above the Allon road. In my view, this area is of extreme importance."³³

Defensible Borders: Historical Context

The 1949 armistice lines, which stood as Israel's de facto eastern border from the end of the War of Independence until the 1967 Six Day War, presented the Jewish state with critical vulnerabilities and therefore could not be sustained as permanent borders. So perilous were these frontiers that Israel's former foreign minister, Abba Eban, referred to them in 1969 as "Auschwitz borders that must not be restored."³⁴ Yigal Allon, a commander of the pre-state Palmach and foreign minister under Rabin, was the architect of the defensible borders doctrine. He illustrated the problem in a 1976 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, which is no less relevant in 2011:

"One does not have to be a military expert to easily identify the critical defects of the armistice lines that existed until June 4, 1967.... The gravest problem is on the eastern boundary, where the entire width of the coastal plain varies between 10 and 15 miles, where the main centers of Israel's population, including Tel Aviv and its suburbs, are situated, and where the situation of Jerusalem is especially perilous. Within these lines a single successful first strike by the Arab armies would be sufficient to dissect Israel at more than one point, to sever its essential living arteries, and to confront it with dangers that no other state would be prepared to face. The purpose of defensible borders is thus to correct this weakness, to provide Israel with the requisite minimal strategic depth, as well as lines which have topographical strategic significance."³⁵

In Allon's view, first presented shortly after the 1967 war and shared by successive Israeli governments under Prime Ministers Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin,³⁶ Binyamin Netanyahu's first administration in 1996, Ariel Sharon, and reiterated by Prime Minister Netanyahu in his 2009 Bar-Ilan speech, the concept of defensible borders means that Israel has a right and a responsibility to establish boundaries that provide for its citizens' basic security requirements and that prevent Israel from accepting a geography that invites attack. This has always meant that Israel would retain some territories east of the 1949 armistice lines as part of any peace agreement with the Palestinians, especially in the largely unpopulated Jordan Valley.³⁷

Allon's plan for defensible borders has been a key point of reference for Netanyahu over the past 14 years. Netanyahu's former foreign policy advisor, Dr Dore Gold, noted that in 1997 Netanyahu

proposed a plan for final status with the Palestinians that was based on what he termed "Allon plus."³⁸

Israel's Confused Diplomatic Messages

The international criticism of Netanyahu's security-first posture is more comprehensible if considered in the context of the heightened expectations that were created by the willingness of previous Israeli governments to make deep concessions first, and only then attempt to retrofit Israeli security requirements. The following three cases illustrate the perils of concession-driven diplomacy.

Ehud Barak at Camp David in 2000

Prime Minister Ehud Barak's determination to reach an "end of conflict" agreement with Yasser Arafat at Camp David in July 2000 and again at Taba in early 2001 was the driving force behind his idea of creating a new concept of security arrangements on the territory of a future Palestinian state. Barak's proposals reflected the first abandonment by an Israeli government of defensible borders in the West Bank. He apparently believed it possible to keep Israel safe by settling for 12 percent or less³⁹ of the West Bank, as opposed to the approximately 33 to 45 percent required by a defensible borders strategy.⁴⁰ Barak may have made in his proposal in order to "unmask" Yasser Arafat, but his ideas would shape the intellectual legacy of the peace process for years to come.

Barak also proposed a sovereign Palestinian state with the proviso that the West Bank be demilitarized and Israeli early-warning stations and IDF troops be placed on Palestinian soil. However, despite Barak's unprecedented offer, then Palestinian security chief Mohammed Dahlan, who has again reemerged as a major force in Fatah, had categorically refused to accept the proposed Israeli security arrangements. As former U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross wrote, "Dahlan was dead set against any Israeli or foreign presence in the West Bank border crossing and rejected the idea that the Israelis should have guaranteed access routes into the West Bank."⁴¹

Barak's seeming abandonment of defensible borders and his acquiescence to security arrangements in their stead whittled down and even undermined Israel's longstanding insistence that it to retain the Jordan Valley and other vital security areas in Judea and Samaria. Despite the fact that during the Bush administration the Clinton parameters and the Camp David proposals were off the table, the Palestinians pocketed the concessions and would always be able to insist on them as a starting point for future negotiations.

Heightened expectations for Israeli concessions would not be limited to Barak's offers. Ariel Sharon, too, would whet the international appetite for a full return to the 1949 lines stemming from his decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Sharon's Unilateral Gaza Withdrawal

Sharon conceded the Gaza Strip in 2005 believing that he would provide security for Israelis and win international praise and goodwill for handing the Palestinians their first mini-state.⁴² However, Israel's generosity did not earn durable support from Europe and even provoked fears that the Gaza pullout was a ploy to avoid further territorial concessions.⁴³

Israel's concession of Gaza has been minimized internationally as organizations such as the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch continue to refer to Gaza as "occupied

territory."⁴⁴ Europe's expectation of future Israeli withdrawals reflects the degree to which Israel's unconditional unilateral pullout in Gaza undermined its territorial rights in the West Bank. This was the central reason that Israel's former Deputy Chief of Staff and National Security Council head Maj.-Gen. Uzi Dayan had publicly opposed full withdrawal from Gaza. He noted on June 4, 2007, that Gaza established an "immoral and dangerous diplomatic precedent for the West Bank."⁴⁵

Olmert's Unprecedented Concessions Backfire on Israel

The idea that Israeli concessions only drive international expectations for further concessions was best illustrated by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert during the Annapolis peace process that collapsed in late 2008. Olmert went beyond any other prime minister in the concessions he was willing to make to strike an agreement with the Palestinians. He offered between 93.5% and 97% of the West Bank, half of Jerusalem, including an international regime for the "Holy Basin" containing the Temple Mount and Muslim shrines, and expressed a willingness to allow 10,000 Palestinian refugees to resettle in Israel on humanitarian grounds.⁴⁶

Olmert's security team, headed by Brig.-Gen. Udi Dekel, also tried to retrofit security demands into the final agreement, such the demilitarization of a Palestinian state, special security arrangements in the Jordan Valley, Israeli security control of the Gaza coast, all of which were rejected by the Palestinians.⁴⁷ It was also clear to Palestinian and Israeli negotiators that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed.⁴⁸ However, when negotiations collapsed, the Barak pattern re-emerged: Israel's unprecedented concessions were rejected by the Palestinians but simultaneously pocketed so as to form the basis for the next round of negotiations.

Reconsidering Israel's Legal and Diplomatic Rights

One of the basic sources of tension between the Obama and Netanyahu Administrations regarding the peace process is that the U.S. has grown accustomed to concessions-based Israeli diplomacy. This approach has sidelined the legal and diplomatic rights that Netanyahu has revived. Israel's return to security-based diplomacy is both rooted in and protected by international resolutions such as UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967, which was unanimously approved and protected Israel's rights in the West Bank as a result of its having fought a war of self-defense there.⁴⁹ For the past four decades, Resolution 242 has governed all Arab-Israeli diplomacy and has been the legal backbone upholding Israel's right to "secure and recognized boundaries" – that is, defensible borders -- that the Security Council recognized as part of their determination that the Arabs, not Israelis, were the war's aggressors.⁵⁰

Resolution 242 would also form the legal infrastructure for future peace processes, such as the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, the 1991 Madrid conference, the 1993 exchange of letters with the PLO, the 1994 Treaty of Peace with Jordan, and the 2004 Presidential letter commitment from Bush to Sharon.⁵¹

A major challenge for Israel's return to security based diplomacy is that the Obama administration has broken sharply from past U.S. policy. Obama's public call for the future borders of Israel to be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, represents a fundamental revision of UNSC Resolution 242 and sidesteps the principle of Bush's 2004 presidential letter guarantee to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The Bush Letter's point of reference was that Israel would not return to the 1949 Armistice lines (1967 "borders"), as opposed to establishing the 1949 lines as the main point of reference for Israel's future border as Obama did. The Bush letter was overwhelmingly approved by bipartisan majorities in the House and the Senate. President Bush had quoted the exact language of Resolution 242 for emphasis and reassured Sharon that, "As part of a final peace

settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders, which should emerge from negotiations between the parties in accordance with UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338. The United States reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel's security, including secure, defensible borders, and to preserve and strengthen Israel's capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or possible combination of threats."⁵² While Obama would clarify the U.S. position in a speech to AIPAC several days later, saying that Israel would not return to the lines that existed before 1967, he avoided noting the principle of defensible borders for Israel which, in any scenario that is based on the 1967 lines plus swaps, cannot provide Israel with the strategic depth and topographical protections that were inherent elements of the Bush letter and of US policy since 1967.

As the Obama administration breaks from the traditional practices and understandings that have governed Middle East diplomacy for decades, the Israeli government will have to adjust its practices and understandings. As the administration weakens its commitment to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and other guarantees, the Israeli government must insist even more than it has had to in the past on the salience of these legal precedents and diplomatic guarantees.

Regional Threats and Israel's Return to Security Based Diplomacy

Regional convulsions that have shaken Arab states and challenge Israel, a nuclearizing Iran, its Syrian ally and regional terror proxies, as well as the ongoing activities by al-Qaeda close to Israel's borders, further justify Israel's insistence on a security first, diplomacy second approach to the Palestinians. While Al-Qaeda first emerged in Afghanistan in 1989, after September 11, 2001, it has moved its subversive activities closer to Israel's borders and has inspired new followers in newly destabilized Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza. Jordan has been repeatedly assaulted by Al-Qaeda operatives, as has Saudi Arabia, and today, Hamas is having difficulty suppressing the desire of Al-Qaeda groups in the Gaza Strip from firing rockets at Israel.⁵³

These developments – especially the rise of the Iranian-backed “resistance bloc,” consisting of Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas and the New Arab Revolutions that have upended Arab regimes – have shattered the illusion that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be isolated from larger regional trends and that a stable territorial settlement could be reached without considering these regional developments.

Every Israeli territorial withdrawal since 2000 has created a security vacuum that has been exploited by Iranian-backed forces in Lebanon and Gaza to improve their positioning against Israel. The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war and the 2008-2009 Israel-Hamas war have underscored the threat of short-range rockets and highlighted the importance of territorial protections for Israel and Palestinian demilitarization as Former Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon wrote following the 2006 Second Lebanon War.⁵⁴

Conclusion

By all indications, President Barack Obama continues to make the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the pre-war 1967 lines a centerpiece of his agenda. He will likely continue to pursue it relentlessly. The administration has already provided much evidence of its desire to take a more activist stance than past administrations. And while Obama has indicated that he will veto any resolution in the United Nations Security Council endorsing a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, his expressly pro-Palestinian policies provided succor to Palestinian interests in a unilaterally endorsed Palestinian state, which the PA Leadership has referred to as their “Kosovo Strategy”.⁵⁵

Obama may even present an American plan, perhaps forcefully, if the peace process does not progress to his liking, and despite intense opposition to the idea in Israel.⁵⁶ This “transformational” U.S. diplomatic approach has put the Netanyahu government on the defensive and under great pressure, and allowed the Palestinians to harden their positions on the core issues even beyond their demands at Annapolis.

Under these adverse conditions, a security-first diplomatic posture is needed more than ever. Israel will continue to find itself under intense pressure to make concessions to the Palestinians; no reciprocal gestures will be demanded from the other side, and failure to comply with Washington’s demands will likely continue to be met with criticism and punishment. In this environment, the Israeli government must stake out its position on a rock-solid foundation. The only foundation that provides the strength and solidity to resist unprecedented diplomatic pressure for additional concessions from the U.S. administration and Palestinian unilateral plans for a state along the 1949 armistice lines is a confident insistence on Israel’s fundamental and non-negotiable security requirements whose center pieces are Defensible borders in Judea and Samaria and a demilitarized Palestinian state.

¹ Former Prime Minister’s Ehud Barak’s attempts to concede territories reach a peace agreement with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and then negotiate Israeli security arrangements during the Camp David and Taba summits in 2000 and early 2001 respectively are good examples of this strategy. See Dan Diker, “A Return to Defensible Borders,” *Azure*, No 21, Summer 2005, <http://www.azure.org.il/article.php?id=174>

² See for example, Arafat’s address to the World Economic Forum in Davos January 28, 2001, <http://www.gamla.org.il/english/article/2001/jan/ler4.htm>

³ See Netanyahu’s speech at:

http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2009/Address_PM_Netanyahu_Bar-Ilan_University_14-Jun-2009.htm Netanyahu’s insistence that the PA recognize Israel as Jewish state had also been raised by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as part of the Annapolis peace process. However, The Palestinian leadership had refused to accede on this issue. See: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/923076.html>

⁴ Text of PM Binyamin Netanyahu’s speech to the US Congress, Jerusalem Post, May 24, 2011 <http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=222056>

⁵ Text of PM Binyamin Netanyahu’s speech to the US Congress, Jerusalem Post, May 24, 2011 <http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=222056>

⁶ Ethan Bronner, Israelis See Netanyahu Trip as Diplomatic Failure, New York Times, May 25th 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26mideast.html>

⁷ In the 2009 elections for the 18th Knesset, Israeli right wing parties grew from 50 to 65 seats, representing among other issues the public’s displeasure with Olmert’s unprecedented concessions to the Palestinian Authority including the concession of Defensible Borders in the strategically vital West Bank and the division of Jerusalem.

⁸ Gregg Sheridan, “Olmert Still Dreams of Peace,” *The Australian*, November 28, 2009

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/ehud-olmert-still-dreams-of-peace/story-e6frg76f-1225804745744>

⁹ See Jackson Diehl, “Abbas’ Waiting Game,” *Washington Post*, May 29, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/28/AR2009052803614.html>.

¹⁰ Elliot Abrams, “Hillary is wrong about the settlements” *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124588743827950599.html> The insistence of the Obama administration that Israel undertake a full cessation of building in Judea and Samaria and East Jerusalem had no precedent in US policy in the Middle East peace process. The 1995 Oslo interim agreements which still govern Palestinian Israeli relations pending a final agreement between the sides do not prohibit either Palestinian or Israeli building in the West Bank or Jerusalem whose final status was to be negotiated between the sides. See Dan Diker, “Does the International News Media Overlook

Israel's Rights in the Palestinian Israeli Conflict", *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No. 495 Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April, 2003 <http://www.icpa.org/jl/vp495.htm>

¹¹ Ari Shavit, "Netanyahu's Revolution", *Haaretz*, June 19, 2009. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1093877.html>

¹² Netanyahu insisted on Israel maintaining Defensible Borders, Israeli control of a unified airspace over the Palestinian state, electromagnetic security. He stated that a future Palestinian state would be prohibited from engaging in military covenants with foreign armies, and that no foreign forces would be allowed in Palestinian territory. Netanyahu also declared that "Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, must remain undivided with continued religious freedom for all faiths". Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's speech at the Begin Sadat Center, Bar Ilan University, June 14, 2009. <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechbarilan140609.htm>

¹³ Abbas acknowledged to the *Washington Post's* Jackson Diehl after the failure of Annapolis that Olmert's offer of between 93.5% and 97% percent of the West Bank, eastern Jerusalem, a special custodial regime for the "Holy basin," and the recognition of the right of return (that included the return of 10,000 refugees for humanitarian reasons—according to a senior official on Olmert's negotiating team) was more generous to the Palestinians than the offers of either George Bush or Bill Clinton, and yet Abbas said: "The gaps were wide." See Jackson Diehl, "Abbas' Waiting Game," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/28/AR2009052803614.html>.

¹⁴ Yossi Verter, Haaretz Poll: "Sharp rise in support for Netanyahu following speech", *Haaretz*, June 16, 2009

¹⁵ Ethan Bronner, Israelis See Netanyahu Trip as Diplomatic Failure, *New York Times*, May 25th 2011

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26mideast.html>

¹⁶ Ari Shavit, "Netanyahu's Revolution," *Haaretz*, June 19, 2009. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1093877.html>

¹⁷ Prime Minister Netanyahu Speech to the Jewish Federations of North America General Assembly, November 11, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1127027.html>

¹⁸ Jonathan Lis, "Netanyahu: Israel will never cede Jordan Valley", *Haaretz*, March 2, 2010

¹⁹ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005) p. 327

²⁰ "The number of people killed by Palestinian terrorists in the five years immediately after the Oslo accord (256), was greater than the number killed in the 15 years preceding the agreement (216).", see "Terrorism and Oslo", the *Daily Forward*, September 19, 2003, <http://www.forward.com/articles/8161/>

²¹ <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Palestinian+terror+since+2000/Victims+of+Palestinian+Violence+and+Terrorism+sinc.htm>

²² Dore Gold, "Israel's War to Halt Palestinian Rocket Attacks," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, Vol. 7, No. 34 March 3, 2008 <http://www.icpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=283&PID=0&IID=2049>

²³ Verter, Haaretz Poll: "Sharp rise in support for Netanyahu following speech", Regarding the Israeli public's support for a united Jerusalem see, Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem*. (Washington DC Regnery Publishing, Inc, 2007) pp. 277, 278

²⁴ Interview with Minister of Strategic Affairs and former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon, Jerusalem, March, 2010

²⁵ http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset-+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm

²⁶ Meeting with Former Senior IDF official in Jerusalem April 4, 2010

²⁷ http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset-+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm

²⁸ http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset-+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm

²⁹ Some in Sharon's inner circle such as former friend and Former Bureau Chief Dov Weissglass have suggested Sharon was prepared to part with the Jordan Valley. Arab affairs commentator Ehud Yaari noted in a March, 2010 article in *Foreign Affairs* that Sharon was prepared to withdraw to the West Bank Security barrier which comprises between eight percent and ten of the West Bank. See Ehud Ya'ari, "Armistice Now: An Interim Agreement for Israel and Palestine", *Foreign Affairs*, March 5, 2010

³⁰ Dan Diker, "Sharon's Strategic Legacy for Israel: Competing Perspectives", *Jerusalem Issue Brief Vol. 5, No. 15*, January 12 2006

³¹ <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html>

³² Dan Diker, "A Return to Defensible Borders", *Azure Quarterly*, No 21, Summer 2005, PP 52-53, <http://www.azure.org.il/article.php?id=174>

³³ Dan Diker, Sharon's Strategic Legacy for Israel: Competing Perspectives, *Jerusalem Issue Brief Vol. 5, No. 15*, January 12 2006

³⁴ Interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine, November 5, 1969

³⁵ Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 55 (October 1976), pp. 41-42.

³⁶ As for Prime Minister Menachem Begin, there is reason to think that he, too, privately accepted the idea of defensible borders, despite his public insistence that Jewish history and tradition demand that no part of Judea and Samaria be given away. According to Begin's foreign minister, Moshe Dayan, Begin was willing to consider shared sovereignty over the West Bank with neighboring Jordan. While Both Labor and Likud leaders recognized the strategic importance of the territories for Israel and agreed on Palestinian autonomy and not statehood in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, the nationalist Likud rejected any foreign sovereignty on West Bank soil, including Jordanian annexation. However, Dayan, who had served as foreign minister in the first Begin government, reported to the Knesset plenum toward the end of its term that Begin was not completely closed to compromise on that point. According to Dayan, Begin even indicated that he was prepared to "consider seriously any reasonable peace proposal from Jordan on the basis of territorial compromise in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza." Moshe Dayan, *On the Peace Process and the Future of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Israel Ministry of Defense and the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1988), p. 257. [Hebrew]

³⁷ Specifically, the Allon plan, which has guided the thinking of Prime Minister Netanyahu since his first administration from 1996 to 1999 holds that Israel's new defensible borders would mean "retaining absolute control of the 700-square-mile strategic Jordan Rift Valley east of the major Arab population centers," a zone that lies between the Jordan River to the east and the eastern slopes of the Samarian and Judean mountains to the west, as well as greater Jerusalem and certain relatively unpopulated sections of the Judean Desert. Allon's recommendation for annexing the Jordan Valley was supported by the fact that this area was--and continues to be--largely unpopulated, aside from the approximately thirty thousand Arab residents of Jericho, which would not be part of the annexed territory. This demographic reality and the need for control of the Jordan Valley would remain true over the following 43 years and would be a key benefit for Israel as reflected in president's George W Bush's presidential letter in exchange for Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza. It has also been noted in recent interviews with Netanyahu, preserving the plan's relevance for 2010.

³⁸ Dore Gold, "Defensible Borders for Israel," *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No 500, June 15, to July 1, 2003, <http://www.icpa.org/il/vp500.htm>

³⁹ Barak was reported to have approved an offer of between 93 percent and 95 percent at Camp David and 97 percent at Taba in line with the Clinton Bridging Proposals. He also was believed to have offered the Palestinians a compensatory 3-percent land swap from pre-1967 Israel at Taba, although this was denied by MK Danny Yatom, Barak's national security adviser, during a Knesset conference on defensible borders on October 19, 2004, sponsored by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

⁴⁰ The Allon Plan was based primarily on Israel retaining the Jordan Valley, a full third of the West Bank. The "Allon-plus" doctrine adopted by prime ministers Rabin and Netanyahu would also include other strategically vital settlements that would constitute approximately 45 to 49 percent of West Bank lands. This assessment is based exclusively on Israel's defense needs and does not include other national security interests such as the West Bank aquifers from which Israel draws a third of its potable water. A former IDF official told the author that in the beginning of the Oslo process in 1994 Former Prime Minister Rabin had determined that Israel would need to retain 63% of the West Bank which he had seen as a Security red line. Meeting in Jerusalem, April 4, 2010

⁴¹ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004), p. 703, cited in Dore Gold and David Keyes, "What If Bush Invited Sharon and Abu Mazen to Camp David?" *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No. 526 (January 2-16, 2005), p. 10.

⁴² Dan Diker, "Why Israel Must Now Move from Concessions-Based Diplomacy to Rights-Based Diplomacy", *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, No. 554, June-July 2007

⁴³ EU foreign policy chief and then-Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana warned at the time that the European Union would not support the Gaza disengagement if it did not lead to a full Israeli pullout from the West Bank. Solana called that scenario "nightmarish". see, Diker, "Why Israel Must Now Move from Concessions-Based Diplomacy to Rights-Based

Diplomacy”,

<http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=582&PID=2225&IID=1607>

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967, John Dugard, A/HRC/4/17, 29 January 2007 (esp. paragraphs 1, 6 and 22 referring to Gaza as part of the "Occupied Palestinian Territory" and applying the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding "occupied" territory).

⁴⁵ Speech by Maj.-Gen. Uzi Dayan at the conference on "40 Years of UNSC Resolution 242," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Jerusalem, June 4, 2007.

⁴⁶ Jackson Diehl, Abbas's Waiting Game, *Washington Post*, May 29, 2009 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/28/AR2009052803614_pf.html The number of Palestinian refugees Olmert offer to accept is a matter of debate. Arab diplomatic sources have indicated that Olmert would accept 100,000 over 10 years. However, an IDF official involved in the Annapolis peace negotiations told the author that the number did not exceed 10,000. Meeting in Jerusalem. April 17, 2010.

⁴⁷ Udi Dekel, Demilitarization – Preventing Military and Terrorist Threats From a Prospective Palestinian State, in "Israel's Critical Security Needs for a Viable Peace" Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, May 2010

⁴⁸ Aluf Benn and Barrack Ravid, Olmert's Negotiator: Full Mideast Peace Impossible, *Haaretz*, January 25, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1144854.html>

⁴⁹ Yehuda Bloom, "The Territorial Clauses of Security Council Resolution 242", in *Israel's Rights to Secure Boundaries: Four Decades Since UN Security Council Resolution 242*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2009, pp 32 -33.

⁵⁰ Gold, "Defensible Borders for Israel," "40 years of UNSC 242" and *Defensible Borders for a Lasting Peace*

⁵¹ See Dore Gold's introduction to, *Defensible Borders for a Lasting Peace*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2008. http://www.defensibleborders.org/db_introb.pdf

⁵² <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html>

⁵³ Dore Gold and Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan D. Halevi, "Al-Qaeda, Zarqawi, and Israel: Is There a New Jihadi Threat Destabilizing the Eastern Front? *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No 538, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, January 1, 2006, <http://www.jcpa.org/il/vp538.htm>

⁵⁴ Lt.-Gen. (ret.) Moshe Yaalon "The Second Lebanon War: From Territory to Ideology", in *Iran's Race for Regional Supremacy*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2008, P. 33, . . . <http://www.jcpa.org/text/iran2-june08.pdf>.

⁵⁵ Dan Diker, "The Palestinians' Unilateral "Kosovo Strategy": Implications for the PA and Israel", *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No 575, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, January, 2010, <http://jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=443&PID=0&IID=3271>

⁵⁶ Gil Hoffman, "Poll: 91% against Obama imposing deal" , *Jerusalem Post*, April 14, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=173093>. Notably, The numbers were similar for the Jordan Valley, where 90% opposed relinquishing Israeli control and 10% were in favor