

The Shimon Post



Presidential Press Bulletin

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Article 1.	The Economist <u>America in the middle between Israel, Turkey, Egypt and Palestine</u>
Article 2.	The Christian Science Monitor <u>An Israel in trouble makes a peace deal more urgent</u> John Hughes
Article 3.	Foreign Policy <u>Will Congress make the Israel Mess Worse?</u> James Traub
Article 4.	NYT <u>Ten Reasons for a European 'Yes'</u> Marti Ahtisaari and Javier Solana
Article 5.	Wall Street Journal <u>Optimists Were Wrong About the Arab Spring</u> Josef Joffe
Article 6.	CSIS - Center for Strategic and International Studies <u>The Future of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership</u> Haim Malka

Article 1.

The Economist

America in the middle between Israel, Turkey, Egypt and Palestine

Sep 17th 2011 -- WHEN is anything going to go right for Barack Obama in the Middle East? The president came to office hoping to deliver a two-state solution in Palestine, and wasted a lot of political capital failing to do so. He wanted dearly to put America on the right side of the Arab spring, though this entailed joining a war in one Arab country (Libya) while looking on helplessly while another (Syria) slaughtered its own citizens. Now he has been drawn into a tangle of quarrels between America's best friends in the eastern Mediterranean, from which there may be no exit.

Only yesterday, or so it seems, the eastern Mediterranean was a tranquil lake, policed congenially by the American sixth fleet. Israel, Egypt and Turkey were all friends not only of the United States but also of one another. Over the years, it is true, the peace between Israel and Egypt grew cold. After the 2008 Gaza war between Israel and Hamas a frost settled on relations between Israel and Turkey as well. Behind the scenes, however, the governments (and armed forces) of the three countries seemed happy to stick to their strategic understandings, leading policymakers in America to hope that this might be at least one virtuous triangle in the otherwise vicious geometry of the Middle East. No longer. On September 10th Mr Obama and his defence secretary, Leon Panetta, found themselves in frantic phone calls with Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, and Field-Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, the chairman of Egypt's governing council, striving to save Israel's staff in Cairo from a mob that had invaded its embassy. Egyptian soldiers rescued

the trapped Israelis. But the spectacle of Israel's ambassador being plucked from the jaws of the Arab spring to the safety of Jerusalem was a signal of what the Arab democratic awakening might mean for the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, Jimmy Carter's proudest achievement and the foundation on which America's Arab-Israeli diplomacy has stood for more than 30 years.

At the same time, America has been struggling without success to repair the breach between Israel and Turkey that followed Israel's killing of eight Turks and a Turkish-American on board the Mavi Marmara when it tried to break the Israeli naval blockade of the Gaza Strip in May last year. An elaborate plan to patch up the quarrel collapsed when Mr Netanyahu's prideful coalition partners refused to let him go beyond expressing regret and offer a formal apology. Turkey's own response has now gone into rhetorical overdrive: on top of booting out Israel's ambassador, suspending defence ties and threatening legal action, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, appeared at one point to hint that Turkish warships might escort future aid convoys to Gaza.

As in the case of the growing tensions between Israel and Egypt, the rupture between Israel and Turkey leaves America helplessly in the middle. Turkey is a NATO partner; Israel is America's special friend. The State Department says forlornly that it would like to see "these two strong allies of the United States" work together in search of regional stability. That will not happen any time soon. A UN report finding Israel's naval blockade legal, even if its use of force was "excessive", makes it even harder for Mr Netanyahu to give Mr Erdogan his apology. Mr Erdogan, likening Israel to a "spoiled child", has meanwhile gone on the warpath. He was in Cairo this week, at the beginning of a tour of the Arab world, winning the admiration of rapturous Egyptian crowds for his belligerent blasts against Israel.

Not content with standing on Turkey's own national honour, Mr Erdogan is also intent on making Turkey a champion of the Palestinians. Having felt personally slighted when Israel launched its Gaza war just when he was trying to mediate between Israel and Syria, he has now thrown Turkey's support behind the Palestinians' plan to give up on the interminable "peace process" and take their quest for statehood directly to the United Nations later this month. "Let's raise the flag of Palestine to the sky and let it be a symbol of justice and peace in the Middle East," he told a meeting of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo.

The Americans, who are the chief sponsor of the interminable peace process, are appalled by this idea. However strong an advocate he may be of a Palestinian state, Mr Obama says that trying to create one via a UN resolution, without a negotiated agreement, will be a "distraction". It could be much worse than that. Israel and its friends in Congress are considering dire retaliation, including cutting off financial aid and tax transfers to the Palestinian Authority. Security co-operation between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank might collapse, sparking a new intifada. So unless the Palestinians thoroughly dilute their planned resolution, Mr Obama will almost certainly veto it if it reaches the Security Council. That would give his pro-Israel credentials a needed pre-election boost, but might shatter all his strenuous efforts to improve America's standing with the Arabs.

Paying the Israel premium

American officials sped to the region this week, hoping, with European help, to avert a collision at the UN. But even if they succeed, America's Middle East diplomacy will be a mess. Though Egypt's present rulers might not welcome a rupture with Israel, the forces unleashed by its revolution will continue to push for one. Mr Erdogan's Israel-bashing will continue as well, because it is driven

not just by a grievance but also by a strategic decision to put Turkey on the right side of the Arab spring after Mr Erdogan spent too long ignoring the massacres in neighbouring Syria. That may seem hard on Israel, but the Jewish state is paying what some call a “Netanyahu premium” for its prime minister’s intransigence towards the Palestinians. And America, whose president also wanted so much to get on the right side of the Arab spring, will pay a growing premium for its friendship with Israel.

Article 2.

The Christian Science Monitor

An Israel in trouble makes a peace deal more urgent

John Hughes

September 16, 2011 -- If the dramatic upheaval taking place throughout the Arab world is to have a constructive outcome, a critical necessity is peace between Arabs and Israelis. On this issue, the world is now at crunch time.

The choice is clear: New descent into the senseless antagonism and violence that has bedeviled the Arab- Israeli relationship for decades, or a two-state agreement providing security for Israel and a sovereign homeland for Palestinians.

The prospects are not great. As one Arab nation after another is wrestling with the emergence from dictatorship into freedom, Israel, the most democratic country in the region, is confronted by an unenviable series of developments:

1. Egypt after Hosni Mubarak is seeing a surge of anti-Israel clamor, in which mobs have sacked the Israeli Embassy in Cairo and sent its diplomats fleeing.
2. Hamas, the extremist Palestinian organization that already holds sway in Gaza, has been making inroads in the West Bank, run by the more moderate Fatah.
3. The United States, Israel's staunchest ally, risks Arab isolation because of its opposition to the Palestinian push for statehood at the United Nations. The US says it will veto any attempt for full recognition of Palestine through the UN Security Council. Washington also objects to a possible vote by the UN General

Assembly, which would likely approve a nonvoting “observer” status for Palestine.

4. Syria, whose negotiation over the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights would be a critical part of any peace agreement, is in turmoil and its leadership is in question. It can hardly, at present, be seen as a responsible participant in discussions with Israel.

5. Turkey, which has sought a more influential role in the Middle East, is taking a significantly more aggressive attitude toward Israel. It once brokered negotiations between Syria and Israel; now it threatens to use its warships to challenge Israel’s blockade of Gaza, with which Israel seeks to prevent arms reaching Hamas. The Turks have expelled the Israeli ambassador.

6. As if all this negative news for Israel were not enough, Iran seems on faster course to acquiring a nuclear weapon or weapons. Could Iran, which has blustered about “obliterating” Israel, be irrational enough to threaten Israel with a nuclear missile if it produces one? The danger is that Israel, which has its own nuclear arsenal, might not wait long enough to find out. Although Iran is not an Arab nation, it is Islamic, and such a nuclear confrontation would wreak havoc in the Middle East as Arab friends and foes of Iran and Israel respectively took sides, even – especially in the case of Saudi Arabia – to the point of developing their own nuclear arsenals.

The most immediate of these problems demanding solution is the Palestinians’ determination to press for statehood recognition at the UN. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas claims this move stems from deep frustration over the lack of any positive negotiation on an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, and that statehood would put Palestine on equal footing with Israel for further talks.

The US argues that there is no shortcut to statehood, and a UN move by the Palestinians only complicates negotiations. The US Congress,

largely pro-Israel, might well cut off aid to the Palestinians if the UN moves favorably on statehood.

As long as a festering Israeli-Palestinian relationship, in which the US appears to favor Israel, continues, it will undermine the Obama administration's efforts to improve US relations with the Arab world. The US has enormous stakes in seeing that an edgy Israel and the Palestinians, who have a legitimate claim to a homeland of their own, achieve the accord that has so far eluded them.

The crux of any agreement would be that Israel and Palestine should be independent states, living side by side with guarantees of security for each. There are difficult details to be worked out, political issues concerning borders, and immensely sensitive religious issues over the future of Jerusalem. Nobody suggests this is easy.

But the consequences of failure are unthinkable.

John Hughes, a former editor of the Monitor, writes a biweekly column.

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

Will Congress make the Israel Mess Worse?

James Traub

September 16, 2011 -- With barely a week to go before the Palestinian Authority (PA) seeks a vote on statehood at the United Nations, members of U.S. Congress have begun to stage a lively competition for the most elaborately punitive legislative response. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has prepared a bill that would withhold funds "from any UN agency or program that upgrades the status of the PLO/Palestinian observer mission," a measure that cleverly kills two abhorred birds -- the United Nations and the Palestinians -- with one stone. Rep. Steve Israel, a New York Democrat, did her one better with a measure that would eliminate bilateral military assistance for any country that voted for statehood, thus punishing dozens of America's allies for expressing a difference of opinion. But Rep. Joe Walsh, a right-wing Republican from Illinois, took the cake with a resolution endorsing Israel's right to annex the West Bank should the PA go ahead with the vote, thus putting an end to a two-state solution. Walsh has proudly noted that he is copying a radical right-wing bill introduced into the Knesset.

This cynical bidding war demonstrates that blind partnership for Israel crosses both partisan and confessional lines: Anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists should note that Christians, not Jews, have sponsored much of this legislative blackmail. Fortunately, none of it has a chance of becoming law; the Senate is unlikely even to take up any of these measures. But there is one bill that sounds just sane

enough to pose a genuine threat: a House subcommittee has inserted language into an appropriations bill that would cut U.S. budgetary support to the PA should the Palestinians go ahead with the U.N. vote. Compared with all the loony bills, says Jeremy Ben-Ami, head of J Street, the liberal Israel lobbying group, "only cutting Palestinian aid begins to look like a compromise position."

Some compromise. Right now, the United States provides slightly more than \$500 million a year to the Palestinian Authority. Of that, \$200 million goes straight into the Palestinian budget. It is these "Economic Support Funds" that the House measure targets. That's only about 15 percent of the PA's \$1.3 billion budget; but the Palestinians already have a \$600 million deficit and stopped paying public salaries last month. Unless the Saudis or other Gulf Arabs make up the difference -- and it's their failure to make promised payments that has created the shortfall -- the enormous progress that the PA has made in building a state could grind to a halt. It's possible, though unlikely, that an additional \$200 million shortfall could lead the PA to collapse. But it's nearly certain that the government's legitimacy will suffer -- and that United States will be blamed.

Nita Lowey, a New York Democrat and the ranking member on the House committee overseeing foreign aid, has been a leading supporter of the move to threaten the cut in funding. Unlike Walsh, who has said, "There is no such thing as a two-state solution" and believes that peace will come through "Israel having sovereignty over the whole land," Lowey has been a strong supporter of the PA's state-building process and the U.S. funding that has helped make it possible. I asked why she was prepared to put all that in jeopardy to punish the Palestinians for seeking a vote on statehood. "There has to be a line in the sand," she said. The unilateral bid for statehood undermines the peace process. "The Palestinians," Lowey said, "will have to deal with the consequences."

But it's not just the Palestinians who will bear the consequences. Anything that jeopardizes the authority of the PA -- and by extension the moderate Fatah faction -- opens the door to its rival, Hamas, which of course would truly bring the peace process to a halt. And anger over an American decision to not only obstruct the Palestinian bid for statehood but punish its citizens will prove costly for the United States in a new Middle East where public opinion -- and people power -- increasingly matters.

I asked Lowey whether she worried about these consequences. "I worry," she said, "about the Palestinian Authority going to the U.N." She wasn't thinking about the consequences; that was the Palestinians' job. At moments like this, I can't help feeling that Congress should not be allowed to make foreign policy.

Lowey said that she still hoped that the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas would sheer off before she and her colleagues had to deploy their doomsday device. "I am an optimist," she kept repeating, pointing to the U.S. team, led by White House official Dennis Ross, that has been dispatched to the Middle East to gain Israeli and Palestinian agreement on a new framework of negotiations to be held under the aegis of the so-called Quartet, thus derailing the bid for statehood. But these discussions are in fact a shadow play; it is widely understood that Abbas cannot afford to abort the effort unless Israel makes the kind of concessions that it plainly is not prepared to make. Indeed, Abbas just delivered a speech rejecting the diplomatic bid and vowing to seek statehood at the U.N. Security Council.

Lowey and her colleagues are threatening the Palestinians with doom for refusing to engage with a peace process that is self-evidently dead. Palestinian leaders have been quite open about the fact that they chose the U.N. path only after they concluded that Washington could not or would not push Israel into making meaningful concessions.

"We know there is no escape from negotiations," a Palestinian official is quoted as saying in a recent report by the International Crisis Group. "We have no options because the process' sponsor has checked out." The U.N. statehood bid, then, is more a gesture of despair than an act of calculated diplomacy.

Kay Granger, chairman of Lowey's subcommittee and author of the legislative language terminating aid, recently described the upcoming vote as a "train wreck" -- which it may well be. Granger was of course blaming the Palestinians, who are driving the train. But this looming calamity has less to do with Palestinian stubbornness than with Israeli intransigence and American paralysis, both conditioned in part by the pro-Israel (right or wrong) crowd in Congress. In their despair, the Palestinians really may do something genuinely self-destructive. Abbas is fully aware that the United States would veto an attempt to gain statehood in the Security Council. That would be a train wreck, bringing terrible harm both to U.S. standing in the Arab world and to the Palestinians' standing in the United States. It's the one thing that might make Senate action on an aid cutoff unavoidable, thus turning Granger's metaphor into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

President Barack Obama's administration is now trying to line up enough votes at the Security Council to make a veto unnecessary and then persuade the Palestinians to go instead to the General Assembly, which could not grant statehood but could upgrade their status to that of "nonmember observer state," like the Vatican. Of course, the United States would oppose this too; and the Obama administration is hoping to reduce the Palestinians' expected margin of victory in the General Assembly by peeling off key European allies. That, according to a senior congressional aide, a U.S. diplomat, and an expert in the region, is the real purpose of the administration's eleventh-hour dash to the Middle East: to devise language

sufficiently acceptable to EU countries that they would agree to vote against the Palestinians in the Security Council or the General Assembly.

This is what U.S. diplomacy on the Middle East has come to. It didn't have to be this way. Perhaps if Obama didn't have to worry about the political consequences, he would be trying to find the least confrontational way of giving the Palestinians the dignity of enhanced status at the United Nations. Perhaps administration officials would now be trying to draft a General Assembly resolution that the Palestinians could accept, and that Israel could almost live with.

But they're not; in fact, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice recently felt compelled to squash rumors that the United States was doing any such thing, lest the Obama administration be accused of accepting an unacceptable reality. Instead, the United States will stand fast with its great friends in the Marshall Islands, and perhaps some EU members, in opposing an upgrade in Palestinian status at the United Nations. Then Congress may punish the Palestinians for their effrontery. And the Palestinians may react badly. And then the Israelis may react badly. And then the Arab street may react badly. Welcome to the train wreck.

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Article 4.

NYT

Ten Reasons for a European 'Yes'

Martti Ahtisaari and Javier Solana

September 16, 2011 -- It is not often that Europe has the chance to play a pivotal role on the world stage. But as the Palestinians push for recognition as a state at the United Nations later this month, the European Union is finding itself courted by each side, and therefore more influential on the Middle East process than at any time since the Oslo Accords. As ever, the biggest challenge facing the E.U.'s 27 member states is presenting a unified front. There are 10 compelling reasons for them to coalesce around a "yes" vote and keep the two-state approach to Middle East peace alive. The critical vote is likely to be in the General Assembly, on a resolution to upgrade the Palestinians' status from observer to non-member state. The Palestinians are likely to get a majority, but what matters more than the outcome of the vote is its size and composition. The Israeli government is lobbying hard for a "no," and the P.L.O., unable to significantly shape realities on the ground, hopes to at least show some diplomatic traction for its continued faith in the two-state approach. Europeans find themselves in the unusual position of being the key prize in this tussle.

The first reason why the E.U. 27 should vote "yes" is that the U.N. resolution is an attempt to keep the two-state solution alive. This solution is under attack from the steady expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's belief that the conflict should now be accepted as "insoluble." As a result this vote is not a meaningless distraction, but a reaffirmation that the peace process is meaningful.

The second reason for a European “yes” is that the Europeans have already invested hugely in the two-state solution that is under scrutiny, including the annual €1 billion aid to help build a functioning Palestinian state. Again, a “yes” is a reaffirmation that the project is worthwhile and can succeed.

The third reason for a “yes” is simply to respond positively to Mahmoud Abbas’ state-building achievements. Failing to vote “yes” would be to respond to demands for state-building by refusing to formally acknowledge where they have got to.

The fourth reason is about the Arab Spring. Anything other than a “yes” would expose Europeans to charges of double standards from both post-revolutionary governments and conservative Arab regimes (for different reasons) for failing to support rights for Palestinians while advocating them elsewhere.

Usefully, a “yes” also aligns European interests with European values (the fifth reason), as it resets regional relationships. Interests — including preventing jihadist terrorism, containing Iran, security energy supplies and retaining markets for our exports — would all be damaged by perceived hypocrisy on the Israel/Palestinian conflict.

Despite concerns from Atlanticists that a “yes” will damage relations with the United States, arguably it could also be in Washington’s interests (the sixth reason). The U.S. is unable to vote “yes” for evident domestic reasons, but the E.U. 27 doing so would strengthen America’s hand when dealing with Israel. In the words of William Hague, a healthy trans-Atlantic relationship would be solid rather than slavish.

The seventh and eighth reasons concern Israel. The Israelis’ objections to the vote — that it is unilateral and violates previous agreements — do not hold water, and are no reason for Europe not to vote “yes.” Although the vote would open up negotiating options for Palestine that are currently closed, overall it might even help Israel.

Moves toward recognition of Palestinian statehood within 1967 borders would reinforce the legitimacy of Israel's own existence. Despite Israeli fears, it would not necessarily open an easier path for Palestinian recourse to the International Criminal Court, and might give Europe a position from which it could pursue a quiet understanding with the Palestinians that they would not pursue I.C.C. jurisdiction for a significant period, drawing the sting from this troubling issue.

The ninth reason for a European "yes" is that it would not make Palestinian violence more likely. Indeed, a combination of perceived failure and the influence of the Arab Spring could touch off a "third intifada." Squeezed between Israel and the invigorating sight of televised uprisings, the Palestinian authorities need a sign of progress if they are to prevent frustrations turning to violence. European endorsement of their statehood would be a powerful public signal that progress is possible.

Finally, a "yes" at the U.N. does not entail bilateral recognition of Palestine. The vote is for upgrading representation at the U.N., and only individual states can bestow recognition on Palestine.

There is of course an 11th reason for a unified European "yes" vote. The world already has enough examples of European inability to play an effective international role. Optimists will hope that Europeans will, this time, surprise us all by doing the right thing and securing themselves a much-needed diplomatic success in the process.

Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland and U.N. mediator, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. Javier Solana is a distinguished senior fellow in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, and served as secretary general of NATO and E.U. high representative for common foreign and security policy.

Article 5.

Wall Street Journal

Optimists Were Wrong About the Arab

Spring

Josef Joffe

September 16, 2011 -- I wasn't alone, but the mea culpa is all mine. Like many, I thought that dawn was finally breaking over the Arab world when those nice, middle-class crowds thronged Cairo's Tahrir Square chanting "freedom" and "democracy" without burning American and Israeli flags. What a miracle, I mused: The dogs of hate are not barking. And what a wondrous moment of transcendence! Free the people, and they will free themselves from the obsession of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism their overlords had implanted to distract them from misery and oppression. It was a false dawn—and not only because of the sacking of the Israeli embassy in Cairo last week. On my desk sits a Reuters photo dated May 13; the caption reads: "People burn an Israeli flag during a demonstration on Tahrir Square." There were no such symbols of "Arab rage" when the protests erupted in late January. The demons of yore are back, and presumably, they have never left. The Friday demonstration on Tahrir Square was at first standard fare—yet another protest against the military regime. But at the end, several thousands armed with Palestinian flags, crowbars and hammers marched off to the Israeli embassy for a bit of deconstructionist work. But there is more. For six hours, desperate Israeli leaders tried to contact the junta; its leader Field Marshall Tantawi refused to speak with either the prime minister or his defense minister. It took another

seven before Egyptian security forces rescued the last Israeli—perhaps only because Washington had interceded in the meantime. The moral of this tale is simple. The revolution isn't going anywhere, and life is as miserable as always. So how about a little pogrom? It wasn't the junta that invented this stratagem, but our good friend Hosni Mubarak now fighting for his life in a Cairo courtroom. How do despots stay in power amid poverty, hopelessness and repression? By feeding the people the heady brew of hatred against the "Other." But why Israel, a neighbor officially recognized by Cairo and granted 30 years of peace? An iron law of Arab politics cracks the paradox: the better state-to-state relations, the worse the anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism within. Jew hatred? Isn't it just righteous anti-Israelism fed by the plight of the Palestinians? Go to a bookstore in Cairo, Amman or Riyadh—all quasi-allies of Israel—and you will find piles of anti-Semitic tracts. They are in Arabic, but a 100% import from yesterday's Europe—blood libel, world conquest and all. Ditto the TV fare and newspaper cartoons, which depict the Jew as bloodsuckers or cannibals.

Mubarak et al had struck a devil's bargain with their peoples: I'll treat with the infidels, and you gorge yourselves on the fantasies that keep you in line. The mistake of Arab Spring optimists like me was to ignore the stubborn reality behind the well-worn tactic. They should have asked: Why would the despots call on those particular demons? Because they are an integral part of Arab political culture, hence so easy to rouse. The import of European anti-Semitism began in the '30s, long before Israel's birth, let alone its conquest of the West Bank.

To invoke "essentialism"—deep and enduring traits—when looking at a culture, is a tricky thing. Cultures do change, even profoundly—look at Germany's breathtaking leap from Nazism into liberal democracy. But the sad trajectory of the Egyptian revolution, going

toxic only after a few weeks, confirms the depth of the loathing. Acceptance of the "Other" who is the Jew (or even a Copt) is not a pillar of Islamic culture. But the opposite—abhorrence—is such superb cement for societies rent by myriad conflicts: between sects, classes, tribes and nationalities, between modernity and tradition, city and country, devout and secular. To serve as target and unifier has been the fate of Jews in Europe, and it remains their fate in Arabia. Nor does it help to apologize, as the hapless effort of the Netanyahu government demonstrated when it tried to soothe tempers after five Egyptian soldiers were inadvertently killed when Israeli troops were pursuing militants along the Sinai border last month. The message of the mob in Cairo was: The embassy must go, the peace must go, Israel must go.

Is there no way out? Sure there is. Happy societies don't need the barbarians at the gate. But Arab society is not happy, which is why the clash within drives the conflict without, spilling over into Europe and, on 9/11, into the United States.

When will it ever end? Not soon. Take Sweden, a nice Protestant place. In the 17th century, it was the scourge of Europe, conquering about half of the Holy Roman Empire's states. It stopped fighting in 1814, taking the slow road to development and democracy instead. Only in the mid-20th century did it become such admirable model of tranquility. Would that history moves a bit faster in this century.

Mr. Joffe is editor of Die Zeit in Hamburg, a senior fellow of the Freeman-Spogli Institute, and a fellow of the Hoover Institution.

Article 6.

CSIS - Center for Strategic and International Studies

Crossroads: The Future of the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership (Executive Summary + key

findings and recommendations)

Haim Malka

Executive Summary

Sep 16, 2011 - Profound demographic, social, and political transformations are reshaping the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Changes under way in both the United States and Israel have eroded traditional pillars of the relationship, brought new elements to the fore, and contributed to debates in each country about how to defend that country's interests in a rapidly changing strategic environment. Uncertainty is growing about how the United States and Israel can and should cooperate to secure their interests and confront common challenges in a region undergoing dramatic shifts. Even more profoundly, Americans and Israelis increasingly see each other's policy choices as undermining their interests. The trend deepens U.S. doubts of Israel's strategic value and reinforces Israeli fears about U.S. commitments and guarantees to its security. Many argue that rising tensions in the bilateral relationship are transient, the mere by-products of a left-leaning U.S. president and a right-leaning Israeli prime minister. Others suggest the tensions stem from short-term policy differences over confronting Iran and resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet the real issue is far more profound. The United States and Israel have changed and continue to change, but the two countries' relationship has not kept pace. For years, the growing differences have been papered over, but continuing to do so is both unsustainable and counterproductive. Denial of the differences risks

undermining the national security of both the United States and Israel and deepens the spiral of mistrust that has intensified over the past several years. It is crucial to examine how and why the U.S.-Israeli bilateral relationship is changing and to assess frameworks for cooperation that could strengthen the interests of both Israel and the United States. More Israelis than Americans acknowledge that change is under way, but the ideas debated in both countries fall short. Some advocate a U.S.-Israeli defense pact, usually as part of a comprehensive regional agreement. Others argue for the United States to extend a nuclear deterrent to Israel in an effort to reassure Israelis and demonstrate the U.S. commitment to Israel's security. These options might provide short-term relief for Israeli security, but they ultimately reinforce Israel's deep dependency on the United States. That dependency fuels Israeli anxiety over the extent and sustainability of U.S. cooperation and assistance, generating more bilateral tension and misunderstanding. What is needed, instead, is a relationship that treats Israel less as a dependent and that contains clearer commitments of what each side will do for the other-with an implicit understanding that there are limits to those commitments. U.S. military aid to Israel also needs to be rethought, emphasizing Israel's role as it grows from being a dependent to a more equal partner. Israel faces multiple challenges, yet it is no longer the weak and vulnerable state it was at its founding, and it is no longer the state it was 20 years ago. The United States and the key constituencies within it that are driving U.S.-Israeli ties are also different from what they were a generation ago. The bilateral relationship needs to reflect these realities. Restoring true partnership in the bilateral relationship will be difficult but not impossible. To that end, Israel and the United States must work to rediscover the sense of common mission that bound the two allies in the past. That mission must transcend mutual threats and find a common strategy for advancing U.S. and Israeli

interests in the region through promoting regional stability and Israeli-Palestinian peace. Most important, Israelis and Americans must recognize that the future will be different from the past. Both should prepare for a time when the historic rationale for strong U.S.-Israeli ties may be less significant and when the politics in both countries may change the parameters of U.S.-Israeli cooperation. The U.S.-Israeli relationship is deep, but the challenges to it now are more profound than at any time in history. More honest assessments of the bilateral relationship are both urgent and vital.

Key findings and recommendations

This study has sought to understand how and why the U.S.-Israeli partnership is drifting. In the process it addresses difficult issues that many in both countries would rather leave unspoken. The importance of the partnership to U.S. interests in the Middle East and Israel's security, however, requires a critical assessment of why the partnership is changing and what lies ahead. Popular revolts in the Middle East signal an era of heightened instability for the foreseeable future and make addressing U.S.-Israeli differences more urgent. Those events have served as a reminder that change is inevitable and what may seem like given certainties today can quickly erode tomorrow.

It would be convenient to dismiss the crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations that unfolded in 2009-2010 as the inevitable clash between a progressive U.S. administration and nationalist Israeli government. Many supporters on both sides prefer to interpret the current differences as mere turbulence in the midst of a fundamentally durable relationship. But the differences are deeper than personalities and chemistry between Israeli and U.S. leaders. Social and political trends in the United States and Israel are reshaping the politics of both societies. What is especially alarming is the erosion of the intangible elements of support, most importantly the ideal of shared

values that had been the glue of the partnership long before the strategic alliance took shape. Israeli society today is very different from the Israel most Americans think they know. The rightward shift in Israeli politics, influenced in part by the expansion of ultra-Orthodox and Russian Israelis into public life and the retreat of Israel's secular liberal elite, is changing the values and priorities of Israeli society. These social and demographic shifts are, in turn, driving and shaping Israeli politics that are increasingly at odds with the politics of many U.S. supporters of Israel as well as long-standing U.S. policies. Israel's politics, which have been driven in part by leaders trying to survive rather than charting a long-term course that addresses the country's deeper challenges, have reinforced these political trends. In the United States, meanwhile, Israel has become a complicated domestic political issue. Unconditional support for Israel is becoming manipulated as a political tool in Washington's growing partisan divide, threatening to undermine the bipartisan support that has been a core element of the partnership. At the same time, liberal segments of the American Jewish community, especially among the younger generations, are feeling increasingly estranged from Israel. These dynamics amplify political disagreements and raise doubts about the values and reliability of each ally. Demographic and social trends in both countries suggest these political dynamics will continue in the years ahead. On a strategic level those changes create greater uncertainty about how the United States and Israel cooperate to secure their interests and confront common challenges. More often than in the past, Israelis and Americans see both the politics and policies of the other undermining their strategic interests. These trends erode mutual trust, deepening America's doubts of Israel's strategic value while reinforcing Israeli fears about U.S. commitments to its security. Distrust creates uncertainty, causing each side to act more unpredictably in order to secure its own

interests. The depth of strategic challenges facing both allies raises the stakes, further highlighting the diverging ways in which most Americans and Israelis see the world amid the tectonic changes occurring in the Middle East. Ignoring these perceptions only creates more friction and unpredictability, pointing to more turbulent times ahead.

Israelis and Americans Seek Different Outcomes and Solutions to Their Challenges

More than in the past, Israeli and U.S. threat assessments, understandings of the Middle East, and strategies for addressing threats diverge. Full convergence has never existed, and no two allies share identical perceptions and strategies. Yet these sharp divergences emerge during a period of significant regional change that will affect the interests of both allies in different ways. Whereas the United States sees a historic opportunity to fundamentally change the authoritarian foundation of Arab governance, Israel sees a direct threat to stability that could be exploited by radical forces. These differences reflect more concrete threats as well. Historically, Israel has mostly aimed to manage its security challenges in the absence of any promising means to more permanently resolve them; yet now, in the face of a perceived existential threat from Iran, it searches for an enduring solution. It sees Iran behind its most pressing security challenges—from a nuclear challenge to support for Hamas and Hezbollah. The United States, in contrast, has continued managing the Iranian threat as it seeks to resolve the Palestinian issue in the belief that an Israeli-Palestinian agreement could fundamentally improve the regional political and security landscape. Israelis argue that attempting to resolve the Palestinian issue while Hamas remains the dominant Palestinian political actor is not only untenable but dangerous. The differences reflect different assessments and priorities as well as different policies for addressing the challenges. Israel

believes urgent action against Iran is necessary and wants the United States to use force or at least the threat of force to persuade Iran to stop its nuclear weapons program. While Israel might have the military capability to delay Iran's nuclear enrichment program through military action for a limited period, Israelis widely believe that only the United States has the combined political and military assets to mount a broader military campaign against Iran's nuclear program. To Israelis, stopping Iran's development of nuclear weapons is the test of U.S. power and commitment in the region. Israelis fear that the United States will fail the test, leaving Israel to face its threats alone. Instead of threatening military force to stop Iran's nuclear program, Israelis hear talk of engagement, deterrence, and containment. For Israel the message is clear: the United States seeks to manage the Iranian threat, not resolve it conclusively. Many Israelis interpret the U.S. unwillingness to threaten Iran with military force as not only strengthening Iran's resolve but making a nuclear-armed Iran inevitable. Meanwhile the U.S. government has declared resolving the Palestinian issue as a national security interest. After raising the Palestinian issue so high on its agenda, the Obama administration remains committed to seeking a diplomatic breakthrough. The administration believes that the Israeli government continues undermining opportunities for progress, which ultimately hurts both Israeli and U.S. interests. In the years ahead the diplomatic challenges will likely intensify and spark additional U.S.-Israeli friction. Having lost faith in the ability of the United States to secure statehood, the Palestinian leadership seeks to leverage growing international sympathy to force a showdown in the United Nations and through international recognition of an independent state. The United States may well continue to use its veto in the UN Security Council, as it did in February 2011, to prevent resolutions condemning Israel or deemed to threaten Israeli interests. Doing so,

however, will increase the international diplomatic costs in terms of U.S. credibility at a time when the United States is moving to rely more on multilateral support on a range of international and regional efforts, and will further strain U.S.-Israeli ties. If U.S.-Israeli relations continue to hinge on progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian agreement or decisive resolution of the Iranian nuclear threat, both sides will remain frustrated and U.S.-Israeli ties will undoubtedly suffer. Much of the frustration will come as political and strategic shifts fuel Israeli uncertainty about U.S. power. Israelis believe the United States is projecting weakness in a region that has no mercy for the weak. The Israeli elite do not doubt U.S. power and military capabilities, but they do question the ways in which the United States will use its power in the Middle East to help promote stability and secure Israeli interests. Many Israelis across the political spectrum fear that Israel can no longer take America's projection of power for granted in an increasingly multipolar world. They see regional powers like China, Russia, and Turkey increasingly challenging U.S. policy and constraining its ability to protect Israeli security.

Failure to Address Political and Strategic Shifts Will Erode the Quality of U.S. - Israeli Ties

The threat is that political and strategic tension will gradually erode the quality of U.S.-Israeli cooperation and, at some point in the future, either by design or as a consequence of unforeseen circumstances, will lead to a deeper rift that will be difficult to repair. The need to rebuild trust between the United States and Israel is urgent because the lack of trust makes addressing common challenges more complicated and difficult. Ignoring these troubling dynamics threatens to undermine the national security of both Israel and the United States and risks deepening the spiral of mistrust at a moment when the United States needs the full cooperation of its allies and Israel faces serious challenges to its international standing

and security. For Israelis the stakes are high: as they see U.S. power and commitment declining, they foresee a parallel decline in their own power. For decades, Israel's partnership with the United States has been a force multiplier for its own deterrent. Yet, if the United States fails to shape the Middle East strategic environment, then Israel is more vulnerable. Those fears create deep uncertainty for Israeli policymakers, making decisive action to protect Israeli security and interests more urgent. If Israel perceives that the United States is passive or indecisive as Iran approaches nuclear breakout, Israel's impulse to take unilateral action will increase, making Israeli decision-making less predictable and posing significant challenges for U.S. management of the Middle East. Whatever Israel's unease about U.S. strategy, however, there is simply no substitute for U.S. leadership in the Middle East in the foreseeable future. Israel has few options for steering a different course. It will continue trying to influence the shape of U.S. Middle East policies, but its ability will remain limited especially if Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy stays frozen. Rather than expect that the United States will neutralize the Iranian threat, Israel will have to adapt and work within a broader U.S. containment security architecture, regardless of the drawbacks of such a framework. Even though many Israelis and Israel's supporters would like to believe that U.S. military power can solve Israel's most pressing problems if properly applied, ultimately the United States can only help Israel manage its threats and challenges; it cannot provide solutions.

Israel and the United States Should Restore a Sense of Partnership and Common Mission

It is unrealistic to expect U.S. and Israeli interests to be completely aligned. As a small country in a constant state of war, Israel's perceptions, threat assessments, and strategies for pursuing its interests naturally differ from those of a global superpower. Yet,

common cause and understandings on key issues are vital for a healthy alliance. Without a common mission and purpose to guide the U.S.-Israeli partnership, the relationship will continue drifting, and disagreements on key strategic challenges will threaten the interests of both allies. Today not only is there no common vision and strategy, but Israeli and U.S. policies seem to be working at cross-purposes on key issues. Israeli and U.S. policymakers at the highest levels should outline a common vision to ensure a lasting partnership that effectively addresses their most important challenges. This has to start with a commitment by leaders on both sides. Formulating a common mission is a shared project. Yet the burden is largely on Israel to adapt to new strategic and political realities because Israel has the most at stake in the partnership as well as the most to lose from its deterioration. As former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy has written, "in order to become a valuable ally, Israel has had to seek and nurture assets and capabilities of its own, of such caliber as to impress upon Washington that not only was the State of Israel here to stay, but that its activities and influence would stand the U.S. in good stead." To 11 successive U.S. presidents, Israel's leadership has successfully articulated a strategy and vision that both complemented broader U.S. goals and made Israel a vital component of pursuing those objectives. Israel's leadership needs to urgently restore that vital link and connection. The goal is all the more important because the United States has been struggling to articulate a coherent set of policies to address the tectonic shifts under way in the Middle East since the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in early 2011. To preserve the vitality of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, Israel should adapt and make itself indispensable in helping pursue U.S. objectives in an evolving Middle East strategic environment. Without a clearer Israeli strategy of how Israel fits into the U.S. vision of the Middle East, the partnership will continue to drift, with unforeseen consequences for

both the United States and Israel. Of utmost importance for strengthening the sense of U.S.-Israeli partnership is a practical strategy to address the Palestinian issue. It is difficult to see how U.S.-Israeli ties can improve without fundamental Israeli commitments toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Reaching an agreement with the Palestinians will neither transform the Middle East nor solve a host of challenges facing the United States and Israel, including extremism, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. An Israeli-Palestinian agreement would, however, relieve one set of grievances out of many in the region. It would also remove a key issue of contention that has complicated U.S. management of the Middle East, which will only become more complicated as populations in the region demand greater representation and an end to authoritarian rule. The problem is that the prospect of reaching an agreement under the current circumstances is low. This poses a significant dilemma for both the United States and Israel, because without resolving the problem or at least making some progress, U.S.-Israeli ties will likely suffer and the international drive to delegitimize Israel will intensify. Although the Palestinian issue remains a source of bilateral tension with few signs of progress, an Israeli-Syrian political agreement could significantly alter the current course of U.S.-Israeli dynamics and strengthen strategic cooperation. Past discussions of an Israeli-Syrian agreement included concrete U.S. security guarantees, which would likely be required for any future agreement. Many obstacles remain to such an agreement, including domestic upheaval against the Assad regime in Syria and Israeli opposition, but an Israeli-Syrian agreement could have a dramatic impact on the Middle East strategic environment, giving the U.S.-Israeli partnership a new sense of purpose. As Middle Eastern regimes adjust to demands for greater representation, maintaining regional stability will become more challenging. Israel's

place in these broader regional changes is important, not because it is at the center of Arab public discourse, but because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue plaguing U.S. efforts to manage a range of tasks in the Middle East. Future Arab governments will be more attuned to public perceptions, and Arab pressure groups are unlikely to remain as accommodating of Israel as they have been, as Egypt's decision to broker a fragile Hamas-Fatah agreement and open the Gaza border after a nearly five-year closure clearly demonstrates.

Israel and the United States Should Clarify Commitments and Responsibilities of the Partnership

As part of a broader effort to rebuild trust, the United States and Israel should use the U.S.-Israel Strategic Dialogue to discuss frankly each ally's commitments and responsibilities in order to address the deep uncertainties on both sides. Today the depth of U.S.-Israeli military-to-military cooperation is unprecedented. Yet in the current political and strategic climate, vague verbal declarations about America's "commitment to Israel's security" have become slogans rather than a formula for practical security arrangements. U.S. politicians and government officials will continue using such mottoes for political gain, but overusing them may exacerbate Israeli anxiety because their vagueness is subject to such wide interpretation. Clarifying contingencies that may require U.S. intervention or coordinated military action, most importantly regarding Iran, is highly sensitive but could add an important element of certainty to the relationship. Some Americans have argued that extending a U.S. nuclear deterrent to Israel would relieve Israeli anxiety of a nuclear Iran. Others have suggested a bilateral defense treaty. Neither, however, provides solutions to Israel's strategic challenges, which are a daunting mixture of hard security threats from states and nonstate actors combined with the psychological and diplomatic threat of growing international isolation. The U.S. government can address

Israeli anxiety and uncertainty, to at least some extent, by clarifying the meaning of existing U.S. security guarantees, including a deeper discussion about how Israel's conventional capabilities match its threats. Israel's responsibilities as an ally require clarification as well. For the sake of the United States and its own interests, the Israeli government should identify and articulate how its policies and actions contribute to U.S. interests in the Middle East and globally, beyond military and counterterrorism cooperation. Those elements of cooperation remain important, but Israel should demonstrate to the United States that it is a net asset in other ways as well. Most important, it should seek to ensure that it is a force for stability in the region by working toward an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, calibrating its use of force, and striving to improve its ties with other U.S. allies such as Turkey and Gulf Arab states. Progress toward these aims requires not only internal deliberations in Israel and the United States but a frank bilateral dialogue. For all of the high-level interactions, visiting official delegations, and close consultation on key issues, the quality of dialogue on sensitive issues affecting the partnership has deteriorated significantly. Most politically sensitive issues are either deferred or addressed only superficially. As close partners, Israel and the United States should strengthen the current U.S.-Israel Strategic Dialogue framework to address both the immediate and the long-range issues that confront the partnership. A more transparent and honest discussion of future constraints and commitments could ease some doubt and rebuild trust.

Israel and the United States Should Prepare for a Different Future Changes under way in Israel, the United States, and the Middle East ensure that the future will be different from the past. U.S. assistance and support for Israel over the decades have helped transform Israel into a powerful regional force and helped the United States promote regional stability for decades. Yet looking forward

there is no guarantee that the United States will be able or willing to maintain the current level of support indefinitely. In the overall U.S. budget picture and U.S. expenditures in the Middle East, the amount of aid Israel receives seems inconsequential. Yet, in a fiscal environment where the U.S. government is debating cutting \$4 trillion in spending over the next decade, and even the U.S. military is not immune to budget cuts, it is shortsighted for Israel to expect current aid levels to remain untouched over the long term. Although U.S. military aid is reassuring, especially given the unprecedented threats Israel faces, many Israelis, inside and outside of government, question whether the current level of assistance is sustainable in the long term. U.S. aid was crucial for transforming Israel several decades ago, yet today it has become a symbol of Israeli dependence. Some level of interdependency is unavoidable and even mutually beneficial. U.S. military aid strengthens Israel's deterrence against regional armies. Strong military ties and aid also lower the risk that the Israel Defense Forces will take unilateral actions that undermine U.S. interests. Yet under shifting political and geopolitical circumstances, U.S. military and political assistance ultimately undermines Israel's long-term autonomy and ability to manage its own defense needs. The challenge is to maintain a degree of interdependence that is mutually beneficial rather than a partnership that reinforces Israel's dependence on the United States. There is an important opportunity to have the sensitive conversation over rethinking aid at a time when the foundation of the partnership remains solid and cooperation robust. The U.S. and Israeli governments should begin discussing gradually phasing out aid after the expiration of the current aid agreement, in exchange for greater cooperation in joint research and development as well as providing Israel access to a wider range of military technology. Such a trade-off could benefit both countries. More important is that Israel could

advance to a new, more mature strategic partnership with the United States on a level with other U.S. allies such as Australia or Great Britain. A gradual process of phasing out U.S. aid could also provide Israel an opportunity to strengthen its military and economic base and breathe new life into its founding principles of self-sufficiency. These discussions should focus on maintaining Israel's QME, while relying more on its own procurement abilities. Overall, this process should include frank, high-level discussions through the U.S.-Israel Strategic Dialogue and the Joint Political-Military Group but must also include congressional leaders and pro-Israel lobbying organizations that promote U.S. military aid to Israel. The objective should be to identify areas to enhance cooperation that will help ease that gradual transition and over time create more durable ties and a secure Israel. A special working group within the Joint Political-Military Group, comprising defense officials and industry representatives on both sides, could identify appropriate defense technologies for joint research and development as well as specific U.S. and Israeli companies to undertake such projects. This would include a monitoring and oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with U.S. defense export regulations and prevent unauthorized technology transfer. More broadly, the United States and Israel should continue close military-to-military cooperation that emphasizes interoperability, missile defense, and deterrence, yet relies more on joint funding. On another level, the United States could help Israel expand its global emergency and humanitarian response capabilities, which were on display after the Haiti earthquake in 2010 and the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. Israel could also revive its efforts to promote technological innovation and progress in the developing world; this was a strong component of Israel's foreign relations in the 1950s and 1960s, and it generated tremendous goodwill and strategic benefit for Israel. A more strategic approach to harnessing Israeli

humanitarian relief and emergency response capabilities could help Israel combat its international isolation and rebuild its credibility as a force for stability. Strengthening Israel's self-sufficiency and easing its dependency will not solve the Iranian threat nor its other challenges. But relying more on its own capabilities and assets instead of on the United States is the best long-term guarantee of Israel's security. Moreover, a more transparent and honest discussion of future constraints and commitments could ease long-term tension and doubts. It is in the mutual interest of the United States and Israel to ensure that the partnership evolves to meet the needs of the future. Both should begin preparing for a time when unforeseen constraints will affect the nature and extent of U.S. support for Israel.

Looking Forward

During the last six decades, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has overcome many obstacles. In the months and years ahead, managing U.S.-Israeli relations will become more complex. The governments of both countries have made an effort to move beyond their differences and cooperate. But the mistrust runs deep. To overcome the current challenges and ensure more durable ties, the U.S.-Israeli partnership needs to adapt to changing strategic and political environments. The relationship should continue to strengthen Israel's long-term viability and security through its QME and U.S. political support. In return, Israel should help the United States promote regional stability by working more closely within America's broader Middle East policies, which must include Israeli efforts to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The challenges of addressing these changes are historic. Most Israelis are keenly aware that their relationship with the United States is changing in unforeseen ways. Many understand that Israel needs a strategic vision to help repair ties with the United States. Yet Israel's deep political divisions and complicated governing system make articulating such a vital strategic

vision a monumental task. Israelis see change ahead and are contemplating how strategic and political shifts under way in the United States and in their own country may transform the partnership down the road. Yet they are unsure about the contours of a future relationship or how they might help shape that future. The strength and durability of the U.S.-Israeli partnership throughout the last six decades has been the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The foresight to adapt was driven by bold leaders taking difficult decisions. The danger ahead is that leaders on both sides will choose ambivalence over decisiveness. Neither path is preordained. Whatever the future holds, the role of creative and courageous leaders will shape the contours of the U.S.-Israeli partnership that will emerge in the decades ahead.

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