

"Jewish Sovereignty, Survival and Israeli Deterrence"

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Summary

The violent events of the past decade in and from the Middle East, including the wars in Iraq, the terror attacks from al Qaida, and the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict are closely linked to the tensions between Islam and the West, and the turmoil within the Islamic and Arab societies themselves. At the same time, developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict are often described and analyzed in very narrow terms, and through Palestinian, Arab and Moslem eyes, while wider perspectives are rarely considered.

This restricted focus on events in the very small territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River distorts the analysis and prevents understanding of the context and wider issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The core issue remains the Jewish determination to survive as a national and cultural entity in a world of nation states, and to implement the historic claim to sovereignty in the Jewish homeland, like other nation states. This was and remains the essence of Zionism, and is also the basis for Arab hostility and rejectionism, and the history of wars and terrorism.

The continuing warfare and violence during the past five decades has also resulted in significant geopolitical and regional strategic changes. Israel has been forced to develop increasing military capabilities, including a strategic deterrent option to ensure survival. Other sources of instability unconnected to the Arab-Israeli issue have amplified instability, and the undemocratic regimes in the region have enhanced their own military and strategic acquisitions, including WMD and long-range missiles, thus posing even greater dangers to Israeli and to other countries in the Mediterranean and beyond. The combination of state-supported WMD proliferation and global terror networks, including al Qaida, Hizbollah, Hamas and other groups, is particularly threatening.

In this environment, Israel has shown that deterrence can be effective, even against groups that claim to be prepared to die to accomplish their goals. Carefully developed and implemented deterrence policies are used effectively to reach and maintain a stable balance of power, even with respect to Palestinian terror groups, while weakening of deterrence capabilities, even in the name of peace, can lead to catastrophic violence. The Israeli experience in deterring state supporters of terrorism and terror groups themselves can provide lessons for dealing with global terrorism. At the same time, the employment of deterrence policies will cease to be necessary when there is widespread Arab acceptance of Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state, ending the threat to survival and thereby beginning a process of de-escalation through regional security cooperation.

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In the simplistic one-dimensional analyses of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the primary sources of instability and terrorism that we have witnessed in the past three years focus on issues such as settlements, "occupation", refugees, incitement, and terrorism. But these factors are only symptoms of a conflict that has much deeper roots. There were no Israeli settlements before the 1967 war, but this war was the result of the unfinished conflict following UN Resolution 181 (on partition) adopted on November 29 1947. The partition plan for compromise and the creation of two states was violently rejected by the Arab leadership, leading to a major campaign of terrorism, and a full-scale invasion of Israel by the neighboring Arab armies following the departure of the British. The cease-fire that stopped the fighting, after widespread death and destruction, and the flight of hundreds of thousands of refugees, did not end the conflict. The Arab states continued to maintain a state of war with Israel, and the later battles, including 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982 added to the toll of death and destruction. To take the issue of settlements and refugees out of this context is to misunderstand the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its impact.

The central factor that links this history of wars and terror campaigns, including the current terror war, is the continuous rejection of Jewish sovereignty, in any form. When we strip away the rhetoric regarding "occupation" and reach the core of the dispute, the central and unavoidable focus of this protracted ethno-national conflict is the issue of Jewish

sovereignty. In July 2000, when PLO leader Yassir Arafat walked away from the Camp David summit without engaging in any serious “permanent status” negotiations, as stipulated in the Oslo Declaration of Principles, he again emphasized that the center of the dispute with Israel is not borders or shared arrangements in Jerusalem. Rather, Arafat maintains the rejectionist policies of 1947, and rejected Jewish sovereignty in any form, and regardless of borders. The terror war that followed was a means of preventing the further acceptance of Jewish sovereignty. The goal, as declared from the mosques and seen in the maps on official Palestinian internet sites and in the school books, is to erase the Jewish state from history.

To reinforce this goal, Palestinian terror groups support by Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and with branches throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds, also amplified the campaign of demonization and delegitimation of Israel. In the United Nations, and in meetings such as the 2001 Durban conference against Racism, this objective has been pursued systematically. While there are over 20 countries with an explicitly and officially Moslem culture and religion, and most of Europe as well as South America are Christian countries, the concept of a country in which the majority culture and population are Jewish has been declared to be “racist”. The result has been to reinforce the basis for the development of Zionism and the rebirth of Israel 55 years ago, and the emphasis on military power and deterrence as the essential elements in national survival.

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Modern political Zionism developed in Europe – from France to Russia and the Balkans -- during the second half of the 19th century, and was based on three factors – the impact of modern nationalism on the Jewish people; the religious tradition associated with the return to the Land of Israel; and the need for defense against violent antisemitic attacks, particularly in Europe.

Its leaders, such as Theodore Herzl, Chaim Weizman, and Zeev Jabotinsky drew their inspiration from European nationalism, in the wake of the weakening of the multinational Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires in which many large Jewish communities were located. From these empires and the smaller principalities and city-states that existed on their peripheries, nationalist independence movements gathered strength. Old languages were recovered and became vehicles for such national revival. Out of this crucible, modern nations such as Italy (through the *risorgimento*), Greece, Poland, Serbia, and many other countries emerged. In this environment, the concept of restoring Jewish national and political rights in the Land of Israel, (known as Palestine in the non-Jewish world since the Roman conquest and exile 2000 years earlier), as well as renewing the Jewish culture and the Hebrew language for secular use, began to attract support.

The leaders of political Zionism also understood that in the modern world of nation-states, the preservation and survival of the rich Jewish culture, including but extending beyond the religious heritage and tradition, could best be insured through sovereignty. Just as other peoples and nations around the world were able to develop their cultures, languages, and traditions in such political frameworks, the Jewish nation required the same framework in order

to survive. The era in which minority cultures could survive and even thrive in multi-cultural societies had ended.

The rapid growth in support for the Zionist movement among European Jews, and gradual increase in the number of Jews who immigrated to Israel (“went up”, in the Hebrew terminology) was also influenced by two other factors. The masses of Jews living in this area, as well as in Arab and Moslem lands, responded to the religious/historical concept of “return” to the Land of Israel and to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Throughout the period of exile, individual and sometimes groups of Jews had, in fact, returned and Jews were always a significant part of the population in Palestine. At times, the communities thrived and became dominant, but were then attacked repeatedly by hostile powers. In the Crusades, the Jewish community in the Land of Israel was destroyed, and this pattern was repeated during subsequent waves of violence, but the Jewish community of the Land of Israel was always rebuilt and restored. As a result of this tradition, the program advanced by the leaders of political Zionism, with the emphasis on the return to the Land of Israel, resonated and appealed to the Jewish masses.

The centrality of the Land of Israel and the religious/cultural tradition in this political transformation was illustrated in 1903, during the 6th Zionist Congress in Basel. Herzl argued that due to the difficulties imposed by the Ottoman authorities, large-scale immigration to Palestine would face numerous obstacles, and he proposed negotiations with the British government for creation of a temporary sanctuary in Uganda. However, the majority of delegates to the Zionist Congress, reflecting the popular mood, rejected any plan that might be interpreted as providing an alternative to

return to the Land of Israel. In 1917, the legitimacy of these historic and religious claims were recognized in the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government declared its support for a Jewish homeland, and which was reaffirmed in the League of Nations' mandate.

The third factor that greatly amplified the impact and appeal of the Zionist movement was the need for defense and security against the antisemitism and the violent pogroms directed against Jewish communities. Herzl's conception of Jewish sovereignty was awakened by the Dreyfus trial in France (in which a Jewish officer was wrongly convicted of treason), and reinforced by the racist antisemitism in the cafes and clubs of Vienna. In addition, thousands of Jews were murdered in pogroms in pre-revolutionary Russia, leading to mass flight and desperate searches for sanctuary. Many found refuge in America and elsewhere, but quotas and restrictions left hundreds of thousands looking for a safe haven.

In this very unstable environment, Herzl's vision of self-defense and protection provided by a Jewish government and a Jewish army (as portrayed in his book *Altneuland* – or “Old New Land”) provided an appropriate response. As oppression and antisemitism spread through Europe between the wars, particularly following Hitler's rise to power, and in the Soviet Union following the Communist revolution, the flight of Jews to the Land of Israel increased greatly. The Holocaust and the most inhuman brutal destruction of the Jewish communities throughout Europe sealed the case for Zionism and Jewish national sovereignty among the vast majority of the surviving population around the world.

In 1947, the leaders of the Jewish community and of the Zionist movement cited these factors in making the case for sovereignty before the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). After hearing testimony from Arab leaders as well, UNSCOP proposed that this small territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, be divided into two states – one consisting of a Jewish majority, and the other designated for the Arab population. This proposal was embodied in UN Resolution 181, which was approved by more than two-thirds of the members on November 29 1947. On this basis, the modern State of Israel was founded following the departure of the British colonial forces in May 1948. The terror attacks that began following the partition resolution, and the full scale Arab invasion in May 1948 failed to dislodge the Jewish state and further highlighted the centrality of sovereignty to Jewish cultural and national survival.

ISRAEL AND THE REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER

The population growth and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the State of Israel took place in an environment of increasing military conflict. As noted, this period coincided with the extension of European colonialism throughout the Middle East, following the defeat of the Ottoman empire. Pacts between the British and French, such as the Sykes-Picot agreement, established boundaries of imperialist control, and created what later became the international boundaries in the region.

Following the Second World War, these empires and their control on the territories and peoples in the Middle East declined precipitously, and national liberation movements and radical leaders asserted their influence, adding to the ferment, instability and dependence on military power for

security and protection. The development of the State of Israel and its struggle for survival was always accompanied by these factors, and it would have been impossible for Israel to emerge without a major defense component.

Furthermore, as noted, the growth of the Zionist movement as the expression of Jewish national self-determination did not take place in a vacuum, and Arab nationalism developed in parallel. The growth of these two nationalist movements in a colonial and post-colonial environment created the clash that continues to this day, in the form of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(Palestinian nationalism, as an identifiable and independent movement, did not appear until the 1960s, when the term “Palestinian” began to be used to refer to the Arab inhabitants of this area, and the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded, ironically in Cairo with the active support of the Egyptian government under Gamal Nasser. However, pan-Arab nationalism gained wide support much earlier, and saw Israel and Zionism as a major threat.) Other factors added to the conflict, including religious antagonism, and the growth of global tension between Islam and the West, in which Israel is mistakenly seen as the leading edge of “the West” into “the Arab and Moslem heartland”.

In this environment, Arab attacks against the Jewish population, including the 1929 massacre of the community in Hebron, led to a response, in the form of self-defense organizations, and underground groups such as the Hagana (affiliated with the socialist Labor Zionists) and Irgun (affiliated with the Revisionists and Herut). Their self-defense activities increased during the waves of violence and periods of “unrest” in the Arab population

that took place during the 1930s, and were directed at both the British colonial government and the Jewish population. In the 1940s, and particularly after the Second World War, the Jewish underground para-military groups also played a central role in fighting the British colonial rule.

In 1948, with the independence of the State of Israel, these groups merged to form the IDF. In the wake of the Arab rejection of partition and in order to repulse the large-scale military invasion that followed, Israel's military capability increased, as a matter of national survival. The wars of 1948, 1956, and 1967 ended in temporary cease-fires, while Arab leaders repeated pledges to carry on the conflict, to seek Israel's destruction, and to refuse to negotiate with, recognize or sign peace treaties with Israel. The threat of destruction, would have meant the end of Zionism, Jewish sovereignty, and, Jewish cultural and religious continuity in an international system that is dominated by the nation-state. In other words, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a prominent example of what Kelman and other analysts refer to as an "existence dispute", and in order to survive, Israel had no choice but to develop a powerful military capability to respond to and deter the threats of destruction.

After the 1973 war, and responding to Israeli defensive capabilities, Egypt broke this pattern, and a series of interim separation agreements followed by the 1979 peace treaty marked an important change in the region, but this did not end the threat to Israeli survival. Weapons of mass destruction and terrorism are continuing to spread, and the risks were illustrated in the 1991 Iraqi war and the current Palestinian wave of terror attacks that began in September 2000.

The end of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq reduced the danger to Israel significantly, and Syrian ground forces have been weakened following the collapse of the Soviet Union (which was the primary source of weapons for the Assad regime), but other threats have continued or increased. Iran has succeeded in developing a long-range ballistic missile capability based on North Korean and Russian technology, and is attempting to acquire nuclear weapons in violation of its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Syria, as well as other countries in the region, also maintain chemical and perhaps biological weapons and missiles capable of striking Israel. Egyptian military growth, which is clearly directed at Israel, and Libya's renewed nuclear weapons development program, as well as reports of Saudi-Pakistani strategic cooperation, pose additional dangers. As a result, Israel's security and survival is far from assured.

In this context, successive Israeli leaders have continued to emphasize the centrality of deterrence in order to prevent and reduce the threat and level of conflict. This deterrence strategy was used effectively in 1991 against Saddam Hussein, was recently reemphasized in response to Palestinian violence, and also vis-à-vis the potential nuclear threat from Iran. In order to understand the changing regional geopolitical balance, the Israeli deterrence strategy and its impact needs to be understood in detail.

ISRAEL AND THE REGIONAL GEOPOLITICAL BALANCE

The Development of the Israeli Deterrence Strategy

The Israeli strategic deterrent option was developed on the foundation of the events of 1948, and the Arab invasion that was designed to destroy the Jewish state. Although Israel survived this war, it was costly. More than

6,300 Israelis -- one-percent of the entire Jewish population of 600,000 -- were killed, and many more were injured. The IDF was able to repel the Egyptian army, which had reached the outskirts of Tel Aviv, and also took control of the Sinai, but lost territory and control over the major water sources to Syria. The Jordanian Arab Legion occupied the West Bank, and conquered the entire Old City of Jerusalem, taking control of the Temple Mount, the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter, the Mt. of Olives, and other Jewish sacred sites. Until the 1967 war, these areas which contained the core of Jewish religious practice and tradition (comparable to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians, or Mecca for Moslems) were inaccessible to Jews, and not only to Israelis.

Furthermore, the armistice agreements of 1949 did not lead to any movement towards peace treaties and an end to the conflict. Instead, the Arab leaders openly vowed to renew the war to put an end to the "Zionist state" (or "entity"), which was and in many places, is still viewed through the highly misleading analogy of the short-lived Crusader kingdom in the Holy Land. The Arab states began to acquire the capabilities to implement this pledge, and the 1955 "Czech/Soviet" arms deal, which provided Egypt with a new generation of advanced weapons, led to Israeli participation in the 1956 Suez war. In 1967, clear plans by the Egyptian led Arab coalition led to the Six-day war and the Israeli return to ancient Jerusalem and to the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria.

Fully aware of these dangers, the Israeli leadership, headed by Ben Gurion, understood that in a prolonged conventional conflict, it would be very difficult for a very small state to compete and survive. Compared to the Arab

states, Israel lacked strategic depth, its population was a small fraction of that available to the Arabs for fighting major wars, and economically, the oil wealth of the Arabs would provide resources for weapons and frequent wars.

Instead of attempting to match Arab military capability with sufficient defensive forces to maintain national sovereignty, the Israeli leadership developed a policy based on deterrence, with the goal of preventing attacks by assuring massive responses far in excess of any potential gains.

Ben Gurion and his advisors were well acquainted with the military experience of the Roman Empire, and recognized that in a region of intense hostility and anarchy, in order to preserve the peace, it is often necessary to prepare for war (*Qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum*). The promise of unacceptable consequences and retaliation following an attack may not be politically correct, but in the face of deep-seated hatred and hostility, there is often no realistic alternative. The Israeli leadership was also cognizant of the costs of neglecting deterrence, as occurred in the 1930s during the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany. During this period, England was in the thrall of pacifism, and mass marches in the name of peace. When Hitler's Germany arose and took human brutality to unimaginable levels, England's pacifist elite was unable to recognize the evil that stood at its doorstep. As a result of this appeasement, Hitler was able to conquer half the world, and European Jewry was destroyed.

In applying these lessons to Israel, Ben Gurion focused deterrence policy on the development of an ambiguous nuclear option, based on the Dimona nuclear reactor, as a "weapon of last resort". While never declared or tested (under a 1969 agreement with the U.S. government, after Israel

rejected a decade of American efforts to inspect the Dimona complex), this deterrent was seen as sufficient to prevent attacks designed to destroy Israel. (Note that unlike the cases of Iraq, Iran or North Korea, the Israeli nuclear capability was developed before the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968. Israel is not a signatory, and is not in violation of any international commitments.)

This policy has been very successful. In the 1973 war, Egypt carefully limited its strategy to efforts to recapture territory lost in 1967, and avoided threatening Israeli national survival. In 1991, Saddam Hussein did not use chemical or biological warheads to attack Israel, but restricted the Scud missiles to conventional warheads that did little damage. The nuclear deterrent capability is also widely credited with having brought Egypt to the peace table, by demonstrating that the goal of defeating and destroying Israel is impossible without risking national self-destruction. It should be noted that in Israel, public opinion polls consistently show that over 80% of the population support the current policy of nuclear ambiguity. The policy has not changed in four decades, despite major changes in the government, and there is no realistic prospect of Israeli agreement to relinquish the strategic deterrent option as long as widespread rejection of Israel's legitimacy continues and threats to national survival continue. On the contrary, as we will see, this deterrence policy is also important in the age of global terror.

Vulnerability, Deterrence, and The Security Dilemma

From the Israeli perspective, military superiority, in general, and the deterrence option, in particular, are stabilizing and necessary to ensure survival, but elsewhere in the region, these capabilities are described as

provocative and threatening in themselves. Often forgetting or repackaging the history of Arab attacks and rejection of partition in 1947/8, the standard narrative, as perceived widely in the Middle East (except in Israel) and, among many in Europe, is one of Israeli expansion and exploitation of military force. Like other myths and narratives that are repeated so often that they assume a life of their own, this is also the case here. In this reinvented history, Israel is blamed for initiating the wars and overall conflict, rather than acting in self-defense, and the 1967 war is remembered incorrectly as a war of aggression rather than pre-emptive self-defense. The post-1967 images consistently emphasize Palestinian victimization and weakness, while increasingly ignoring the wider map of the Middle East and the broader geo-strategic balance, in which Israel's vulnerability remains significant.

Going beyond these different historic narratives and perceptions, the cycle of threat and response, and the development of powerful deterrent capabilities inherently creates a situation that Robert Jervis and other academics have referred to as the "security dilemma". The leaders of other major powers in the region, such as Egypt, Syria, Iran, Iraq and Libya, claim repeatedly that the Israeli capabilities are potential threats and sources of power. In the Middle East, the myth of Israel as an expansionist and dominating power continues to be widely held, despite the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai as part of the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, and the border adjustments after the 1994 treaty with Jordan.

The security dilemma and the perceived challenge of Israeli defensive and deterrence capabilities reinforce the other factors that fuel massive arms acquisition programs in the region. The other factors include interstate

rivalries and ethno-national conflicts, such as between Iran and Iraq (aided by most other Arab states), Iraq and its Arab neighbors (as illustrated in the 1991 invasion of Kuwait), Syria and Turkey, Saudi Arabia (internal and external), different factions in Lebanon, etc. Such conflicts are often amplified or exploited to deflect popular anger by the corrupt and narrow totalitarian regimes which are the norm in much of the Middle East. Thus, even without the presence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the region would be highly unstable and marked by extensive conflict.

These additional and mutual reinforcing factors, as well as the intense ideological core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, create many obstacles to negotiations and cooperation designed to limit the impact of the security dilemma. This concept and the interdependent nature of security are difficult to grasp in the context of zero-sum images, making cooperation in preventing war and violence extremely difficult. The multilateral regional security and arms control negotiations that were created during the 1991 Madrid Middle East peace conference produced little progress and ended without concrete achievements in 1995. This forum was limited from the outset by the absence of Syria, Iran, Iraq and Libya, as well as by Egyptian efforts to dictate the agenda and prevent implementation of confidence building measures as a first stage in the process.

Similarly, efforts to hold regional and bilateral talks, particularly between Israel and Iran, with the goal of preventing direct clashes and greater instability as the result of Iranian development of strategic weapons have also failed to produce any results. If the radical Islamic forces continue to hold power in Teheran, and use their intense anti-Israeli rhetoric and policies

(including support for Hizbollah, Hamas, and other terror groups, and threats to destroy the “Zionist entity”) while also gaining nuclear weapons, this combination will increase instability even further.

ADAPTING ISRAEL’S DETERRENCE STRATEGY TO THE AGE OF TERROR

In the absence of a foundation for security cooperation, deterrence remains the only realistic option. Israel’s deterrence strategy as the basis for national survival is widely seen to have been successful in preventing major attacks and insuring national survival with respect to threats from states such as Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Libya, and even Saudi Arabia. Although the conflicts with some states and regimes continue, they are muted and reduced through the potential for mutual assured destruction.

Beyond state and regime directed deterrence, Israel also emphasizes deterrence as a major element in fighting terrorist groups and non-state actors, ranging from the PLO and its various factions, to Hamas, Hizbollah, and Islamic Jihad. In the 1950s and 1960s, the IDF mounted a series of large-scale counterattacks against fedayeen groups based in the Egyptian-controlled Gaza strip and against Palestinian groups who used the Jordanian occupied West Bank to strike Israeli targets, and this was long before any “occupied territories” or “settlements”. These counterattacks were often condemned as demonstrating excessive force, and causing disproportionate damage, but they had a long-term impact of restoring stability and creating a deterrence impact. They showed that organized guerilla groups were, in fact, subject to the rules of deterrence, and given high enough costs, could be persuaded to end their attacks on civilian and other targets.

This experience contradicts the “conventional wisdom” of the post-Cold War era, particularly in Western Europe. In the post-conflict period, deterrence and terms such as "massive retaliation" and "assured destruction," lost respectability and became politically incorrect. The idea that the survival of the United States and Europe depended on threats to destroy dozens of Soviet cities in retaliation for a nuclear attack was seen by many as immoral and not credible. Even in the U.S., Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative reflected the efforts to replace deterrence with an alternative strategy based on defensive umbrellas.

As a result, In the confrontation against radical Islamic terror (such as Osama Bin Laden) and "asymmetric warfare," the role of deterrence has been largely neglected. In part, this reflects the continuation of the distaste for policies based on retaliation and the use of hostages. Indeed, the growth in the ambitions of the new global terrorism, like that of bin Laden, can be directly tied to the erosion of Western, and even Russian, deterrence as perceived by militant Islamists over the last two decades. The evidence shows that such groups and their supporters see Russia and the U.S. in retreat against challenges from the Muslim world. Bin Laden has made reference to the withdrawal of the U.S. Marines from Beirut in 1983 after the Marine Corps barracks were struck by a Hizbullah suicide truck-bomb. He also noted a second American retreat in the case of Somalia in 1993. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988 as a result of the military pressure of the Mujahiddin, from the Islamist viewpoint, foreshadowed and even brought about the collapse of the USSR itself.

The neglect of deterrence strategies against terror is also the result of the mistaken belief that terrorists such as bin Laden and members of groups such as Hamas, Hizbullah, and Islamic Jihad cannot be deterred. The common view, particularly among government officials and many academics, is that terrorists, particularly religiously motivated suicidal movements, are irrational and that no deterrence outcome exists that will prevent them from attacking their enemies and targets. In other words, if they are already prepared to die, the threat of death cannot dissuade them.

However, the Israeli experience and the research of Prof. Robert Pape from the University of Chicago demonstrate the fallacy of this claim. After escalation and the repetition of forceful and disproportionate counterattacks, the terror acts launched from Jordanian controlled territory stopped. In May 2000, after Israel withdrew from the Southern Lebanon security zone and returned to the international border, the number of attacks conducted by Hizbollah terrorists has been reduced to a very small number. In 2001, after two attacks in which a small number of Israelis were killed, Israel destroyed two Syrian radar bases in Lebanon, and this had the effect of forcing Syria to act firmly to restrain Hizbollah from launching further attacks.

From the Israeli perspective, the Palestinian campaign of terrorism beginning in September 2000, which has so far taken almost 900 lives, can also be seen as the result of a massive failure to deter. This is directly related to the Oslo process, and the premature effort to shift the operational paradigm from stability through deterrence to mutual trust and cooperation. During the Oslo process, and the creation and growth of the Palestinian Authority under

Arafat, Israel failed to respond to the Palestinian acquisitions of weapons and preparations for the resumption of the “armed struggle”.

As a result, between 1993 and 1996, the Israeli deterrent posture and image vis-a-vis the Palestinians eroded, and terrorist attacks did not elicit the disproportionate responses necessary to maintain credibility. Unlike the situation in the 1950s, the PLO was not held accountable for the escalating terrorist attacks, even though they emanated from territories under the jurisdiction of PLO leader Yassir Arafat. Israel was widely perceived as divided, politically weak, and afraid to respond and thereby create friction with the Clinton administration, that had also abandoned deterrence as the core of its security posture. The Israeli decision to act with restraint during the 1991 Gulf War and the Iraqi missile attacks was also seen by some as a sign of weakness in terms of deterrence (although Saddam Hussein's decision against using chemical and biological warheads indicated that, at this level, Israeli deterrence remained effective).

Since the current campaign of terror began in September 2000, Israel has struggled to regain the deterrence capability, with growing success. Political limitations and the dominant image of a benign and peace-seeking Palestinian leadership prevented strong Israeli deterrence moves for many months. Individual attacks against major terror leaders took place, (“targeted assassinations”) but these were very limited, and rarely took place due to ability of the terror leaders to hide among the civilian population. It was only after the Passover massacre in March 2001, and the universal revulsion created by this attack, that the Israeli leadership decided to enter the Palestinian cities and camps such as Jenin that housed the core of the

terrorist networks. Despite the false claims of “massacres” and political condemnations of “excessive use of force”, Israeli deterrence has been slowly restored, and the number of terror attacks has gradually been reduced. The threats to “remove” the top leaders – Yassir Arafat and Sheik Ahmed Yassin (Hamas) had the strongest deterrence impact, as did the Israeli Air Force attack that destroyed a terror training base in Syria a few kilometers near Damascus.

In summary, the Israeli experience shows that threats to national survival, whether from states and governing regimes, such as Saddam Hussein and Iran, or from terror groups, such as Hamas and PLO, can be deterred by a “mutual balance of power”. While they may send out individual bombers to blow themselves and their victims to pieces, the leaders of terror groups, including Arafat and Bin Laden, are by no means suicidal themselves, and will respond to force when it threatens their vital interests. Survival,

Deterrence and the War on Terror

The history of the world, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular, demonstrates that in a framework of deep hatred and conflict, with threat of annihilation, an effective deterrence strategy is vital for survival. Deterrence strategies based on punishment and massive retaliation may not be seen as humanitarian in the narrow and doctrinaire sense, but as long as the principles of democracy and freedom and the societies that espouse them are under attack, such strategies remain essential.

I began my presentation by discussing the origins of Zionism and the threats to Jewish national survival in a world based on nation states and intense military conflict. The Israeli military capability, including the

deterrence strategy, against both states that threaten national survival, and also against terror groups with similar goals, was a direct result of this hostile environment. The regional response, in terms of both pressure on Israel to relinquish its deterrent capability, and efforts by countries and regimes in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Libya and even Saudi Arabia to acquire weapons of mass destruction, will not change this situation and will even increase the Israeli threat perception.

The key to ending the regional arms race and halting terrorism must be found in fundamental political changes in the region, based on the acceptance of Jewish sovereignty and the legitimacy of a Jewish state in Israel. This core goal, conceived and developed by Herzl, Jabotinsky, Weizmann, and many others, is embodied in Israel and in its defense policies to ensure national survival, and the goal of sovereignty will not change.

The peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, as well as the Israeli permanent status proposals in the July 2000 Camp David Summit, have demonstrated Israel's basic commitment to the formula of "land for peace". However, until there are other partners from North Africa to the Persian Gulf that were willing to accept Jewish sovereignty in Israel, and to end the threat of military annihilation, the reliance on deterrence and the threat of mutual destruction will continue, despite the risks and uncertainties. There is no better realistic path.