Israel and the Arab Spring:
Opportunities in Change

Editors: **Dr. Nimrod Goren** | **Jenia Yudkevich**

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Edited by Dr. Nimrod Goren and Jenia Yudkevich

ישראל והאביב הערבי: הזדמנויות בשינוי

עורכים: ד"ר נמרוד גורן וג'ניה יודקביץ'

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Introduction

Winds of change have been blowing across the Middle East since late 2010. For the first time in decades, Arab citizens in different countries are going to the streets and demanding freedom and basic human rights. In much of Europe and North America, these developments have been by and large greeted with enthusiasm and hope for a better Middle East.

Israel, however, is viewing things differently. It is examining the new regional situation with considerable concern, and even fear. The Israeli consensus is that we are witnessing the start of a long era of instability, with increased threats of regional radicalization and Islamism. The Arab Spring is generally perceived in Israel as a threat to national security.

Israel's official policy towards the Arab Spring reflects these concerns. It aims at maintaining - to the extent possible - the status quo. Israel also refrains from taking initiatives to promote the peace process. This policy increases Israel's regional isolation and does not enable it to be part of regional processes that are reshaping the Middle East.

Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies believes that the potential threats that Israel sees in the Arab Spring form only part of a larger and more complex picture, and that recent developments across the Arab world also hold important opportunities for Israel's regional foreign policies and for its standing in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

For this reason, Mitvim, in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, has launched in 2011 the "Opportunities in Change" project that sets out to develop a fresh Israeli approach towards the Arab Spring - one that emphasizes opportunities and not only threats, and that aims to advance peace and regional belonging.

As part of this project, a multi-disciplinary task-team has been assembled, including experts from the fields of Middle Eastern studies, international relations, media, civil society and policy-making. The team members have been working to identify and analyze various opportunities for Israel in the Arab Spring, and to start putting them into use.

This book is one of the major products of this work. It includes ten articles written by the Mitvim task-team members. The articles combine policy-analysis with evidence-based research, and focus on issues related to Israeli perceptions of the Arab Spring, changing regional alliances, and possible channels between Israel and the Arab world. Together, they provide a broad overview of the opportunities for Israel in the Arab Spring, and spell out concrete policy paths towards their implementation.

It is a pleasure for us to thank all those who assisted the making of this publication. Our partners at the Israeli office of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation - especially Dr. Ralf Hexel, Micky Drill and Rinat Gimpel - provided us constant support and advice, from the onset of this project,

which we very much cherish. We also highly appreciate Prof. Elie Podeh, Board member at Mitvim and Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for his contribution to this book and for his assistance in reviewing the various articles. Other board members at Mitvim - Dr. Ilai Saltzman, Yonatan Touval, and Yair Rotlevi played an essential and helpful role in designing the project and in enabling its successful implementation. Lastly, we are thankful to Shoshana London-Sappir, for her translation and editing work that enabled us to publish this book in both Hebrew and English versions, and to Noa Shvartsun for the graphic design of this book.

Nimrod Goren and Jenia Yudkevich
Ramat Gan, Israel; September 2013

Foreword:
The Arab Spring as an Historical Opportunity | Elie Podeh[1]

The Webster dictionary defines opportunity as "a favorable juncture of circumstances" or "a good chance for advancement and progress". The academic literature largely follows this direction. Opportunities are seen as occasions to "do something" or favorable moments for a achieving a certain purpose. In situations of a conflict the opportune moment, according to William Zartman, "is not just 'whenever' but is contextually determined".[2] In his opinion, the opportunity may come from a lull in the fighting, a temporary cease-fire or from a meeting of the parties. Such an opportunity, he writes, "offers an opening for specific measures, for it is not self-perpetuating and will fall apart at the next incident if not seized and solidified".[3] The "invitation" for seizing the moment usually comes from a third party but it can also be presented by one of the rivals in the conflict. Zartman emphasizes that opportunities "are not revolving doors, where entry appears at regular intervals"; they constitute a period of time in the life of the conflict when diplomacy is possible.[4] Thus, when an opportunity presents itself it constitutes a kind of a liminal period, in which a certain breakthrough in the deadlocked conflict is possible.

In his analysis, Zartman in fact referred to two elements inherent in an opportunity: the objective component, relating to the circumstances, processes, events and conditions existing at the time, which set the basis for the existence of an opportunity; and the subjective component, referring to the ability of the leader(ship) - either one of the parties to the conflict or a third party - to identify the existence of the objective component of the opportunity and attempt to exploit it by offering some initiative. When these two elements converge, then a true opportunity presents itself.[5] It is important to emphasize that the opportunity represents possibility but not inevitability.[6] In order to turn the possibility into a real opportunity an offer or an initiative should be presented. On the basis of this analysis, my research on missed opportunities in the Arab-Israeli conflict defined that an historic opportunity is composed of two variables:[7]

The existence of a significant historical process or event that creates a basis for the emergence of an alternative. In other words, the convergence of certain historical processes and events may help induce a convenient moment or circumstances for pursuing peace - a "window of opportunity" as it has become known. These may include wars, revolutions, disintegration of

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states or regimes, as well as changes of governments and leaders. The existence of such a process or event may facilitate the presentation of the offer/initiative.

On the basis of recognizing the first element, the existence of a formal and/or informal initiative presented by one of the parties to the conflict, or a trustworthy mediator, that has an element of attraction to the offered party (or parties). Having said that, "attractiveness" cannot be objectively measured; what is considered attractive and generous by the offering party may be considered otherwise by the offered party. It is thus necessary to assess the extent to which the offer is innovative and revolutionary in terms of the status quo existing between the conflicting parties, thereby setting parameters by which to define "attractiveness". If the offer includes a significant incentive - a "mega-incentive", that is, an offer that cannot be refused in terms of security and peace[8] - then it may be defined as highly attractive to the offered party (or parties). Also, if the offer, in one way or another is repeatedly presented, it means that the offering party is consistent and serious in its effort.

The Arab Spring - referring to the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the civil war in Syria, as well as the reforms initiated by various Arab regimes - constitutes a major turning point in the annals of Arab history. This process has not yet been completed and it is impossible to assess how long it will take. As such, the Arab Spring corresponds to the first, objective element included in the definition of an historical opportunity. The question now is whether Israeli decision makers will identify these events as an opportunity and offer some new thinking with regard to solving the Arab-Israeli conflict or to Israel's conduct in the Middle East. In the past, Israel usually preferred to stick to the status quo during periods of regional changes. Evidently, this kind of policy did not serve Israeli interests in the long run. Recognizing the Arab Spring as a possible opportunity, the papers presented in this volume attempt to offer some creative unexplored avenues for Israeli policy in the Middle East. It is hoped that Israeli decision makers would see the significant changes in the region not only through negative lens but would recognize the existence of an opportunity to further some long-sought Israeli interests. An oft-quoted dictum by Winston Churchill says that a pessimist sees the difficulty in any opportunity while an optimist sees the opportunity in any difficulty. We need to inject more optimism into our policy.

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8   Nimrod Goren, The Role of External Incentives in Promoting Peace: The Cases of Israel and Turkey. Ph.D. Dissertation, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009.

Egyptian Plague or Spring of Youth?
The Israeli Discourse regarding the Arab Spring | Lior Lehrs[1]

From the outset of the protest events in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and other countries, many people in the world began using the term "Arab spring" to describe the sequence of events in the various locations. The term was based on the term "the Spring of Nations" that refers to a wave of national revolutions in Europe in the mid-19th century. It seemed to take a little longer for the term to penetrate the Israeli vocabulary on the subject and even when it did many hesitated to accept it and had reservations about its positive and optimistic connotations.

For instance, Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe (Bogie) Ya'alon stated that "the event is dramatic and historic and will be given a name, but not the Arab spring".[2] Former Mossad chief Meir Dagan also opined it was a mistake to use the term "Arab spring" and explained that "whoever coined the phrase drew it from events that occurred in Europe in 1848, when liberal ideas proliferated in the world. The truth is there is no liberal message".[3] Former head of military intelligence Amos Yadlin said "we understand today that the pair of words 'Arab spring' did not describe correctly the phenomenon that rocked the Middle East in 2011".[4] The Israel Defense Forces' intelligence branch discussed the issue and decided that the term "Arab spring" was unsuitable and decided to use the term "upheaval" as the official term describing the events.[5] Many other people in Israel, as shall be described below, began using the terms "Arab winter" or "Islamic winter" as terms to challenge the original term and express a negative reading of the events.

This article wishes to present an analysis of the Israeli discourse following the Arab Spring events as articulated by different parties in diverse forums of conversation. The article analyzes the public and media conversation in Israel and includes an analysis of statements, articles and public opinion surveys and refers to different players (politicians, public figures, journalists and military commanders) and different issues and questions that have arisen as part of the conversation on the subject.

"There is no place for the naïve in the Middle East"

In 1993 Benjamin Netanyahu published his book "A Place among the Nations", in which he devoted a chapter to the question of the connection between democracy and peace. In that chapter Netanyahu argued that the main obstacle to peace in the Middle East is the fact that

2   Reut Levy, "Minister Moshe Ya'alon: 'Peace will not come from leniency, withdrawal and capitulation'", B@r Ilan - Bar Ilan University's online newspaper.
3   Lior Guttman, "Meir Dagan: 'The military threat against Israel has dissipated for three to five years'", Calcalist, July 10, 2012.
4   Amos Yadlin, "One year after the Arab uprising", in Yoel Guzansky and Mark Heller (Eds.), One Year of the Arab Spring: Global and Regional Implications (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, March 2012), p. 11.
5   Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "Intelligence Humility", Haaretz, 16 December 2011.

none of the countries in the region except Israel are democratic. Netanyahu asserted that any Western party that wishes to promote "Western-style" peace in the region must first exert pressure on the Arab regimes to move towards democracy. Netanyahu criticized the West for never having exerted such pressure or attempting to link benefits to the Arab regimes with demands for democratic reforms.[6] Similar things were said by Netanyahu in his first speech as Prime Minister in the US Congress, in July 1996.[7]

Almost two decades later, in February 2011, Netanyahu's reaction as Prime Minister to the Arab Spring events was fundamentally different from what he wrote. Precisely when expressions of a democratic process began in the Arab countries, and precisely when the Western countries received that development with enthusiasm and welcomed it, Netanyahu presented a different position and, in his comments to the Israeli people, painted a very negative, harsh and threatening picture of the very developments he once hoped for. In his first public reference to the revolution in Tunisia, Netanyahu did not mention the democratic aspect of the events but described them only as an expression of the unstable nature of the Middle East. "The area we live in", said Netanyahu, "is an unstable area. We can see this in several different places in the region where we live".[8] His initial response to the protest in Egypt also ignored its democratic context and focused on the fear that the events would lead to the establishment of a "radical Islamic regime of oppression". "Such a regime", said Netanyahu, "tramples on human rights and threatens peace".[9]

In a speech Netanyahu made at the opening session of the Knesset in October 2011, he spoke in detail about the developments in the Arab world and sharpened his message on the subject. "Friends", said Netanyahu, "if I had to summarize what we can expect in the region, I would use two terms: instability and uncertainty... In the face of the uncertainty and the instability before us we need two things: power and responsibility". Netanyahu asserted in his speech that "if religious fanaticism does not modify its worldview, it is doubtful that the grand hopes that blossomed with the Arab Spring will come true. Realization of those hopes might even be delayed by a generation".[10] About a month later Netanyahu made another, stronger Knesset speech, in which he reiterated his position and added a critical and reprimanding tone towards anyone who saw the events as a good sign. "The Middle East is no place for the naïve", said Netanyahu. "Last February I stood on this stage while millions of citizens of Egypt streamed into the streets of Cairo. At the time commentators and many of my friends here in the opposition explained to me that we were facing a new era of liberalism and progress that would wash away the old order... I said that we wish those things would come true but despite all of our hopes chances are that an Islamic wave will wash through the Arab countries, an

6   Benjamin Netanyahu, A Place among the Nations (New York: Bantam, 1993), pp. 248-249. See also: Piki Ish-Shalom, "The Rhetorical Capital of Theories: The Democratic Peace and the Road to the Roadmap", International Political Science Review 29(3), 2008, pp. 281-301.

7   See: www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1996/7/PM+Netanyahu-+Speech+to+US+Congress-+July+10-+1996.htm

8   Jacky Hougi, "Netanyahu: Tunisia - proof we must protect our security", IDF Radio, 16 January 2011.

9   Eli Bardenstein, "Netanyahu: Afraid of the development of a fanatical regime in Egypt", NRG, 31 January 2011.

10   Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech at the opening of the 2011 Knesset winter session, 31 October 2011.

anti-Western wave, an anti-liberal wave, an anti-Israeli wave and ultimately an anti-democratic wave. They said I was trying to scare the public and I didn't see, I didn't understand which way things were moving. They are moving but they are not moving forward towards progress, they are moving backwards. I chose to adjust our policy to reality and not to our dreams. I ask you today: who did not understand the reality? Who does not understand history?"[11] In September 2012 Netanyahu repeated those comments and said: "I am the last dinosaur who did not make the mistake of seeing in the Arab Spring progress and brotherhood rushing towards us at full speed".[12]

The spirit of Netanyahu's statements to the citizens of Israel is clear and unmistakable but at the same time Netanyahu spoke in a different voice to the outside world. In messages directed outwards Netanyahu presented a more optimistic approach to the changes and expressed appreciation and empathy for those who caused them. It appears that in those statements Netanyahu returned to the spirit of what he said and wrote in the 1990s. For example, in February 2011 Netanyahu told diplomatic parties that "Israel is a democracy that encourages the promotion of free and democratic values in the Middle East and the promotion of such values will benefit peace".[13] In reports about this statement, "government sources in Jerusalem" explained that Netanyahu "felt he had to narrow the gap between him and the international community" and that "the Prime Minister, as the leader of the only democracy in the Middle East, understood he could not ignore international criticism of Mubarak and therefore this time addressed the issue of promoting democracy in the region".[14]

In his UN address in September 2011, Netanyahu's reference to the Arab Spring was positive and he declared that he was reaching a hand to "the people of Libya and Tunisia, with appreciation for those who are trying to build a democratic future... (and) the people of Syria, Lebanon and Iran, with awe for the bravery of those fighting cruel oppression".[15] Statements to that effect were also made on occasions when Netanyahu addressed Arab audiences. For instance, when Netanyahu responded to questions by Internet surfers from the Arab world, he said in response to a question about the Arab Spring that "increasing the freedom within the countries will promote their prosperity and the increased freedom of information can help the cause of peace".[16]

Likewise, in an interview he gave the *al-Arabiya* network Netanyahu said: "If there is true democracy in the Arab world... Then there will be true peace. Because true democracy reflects the will of the people, and most peoples - Arabs, Jews, everyone - do not want to see their sons and daughters dying in the battlefield. They want peace. That is why the spread of democracy is good for peace. It might be hard. There might be a period of vibrations, of

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11   Prime Minister's comments at the Knesset's "forty signature discussion", 23 November 2011.

12   Yossi Verter, "Gentlemen, history is repeating itself", Haaretz, 21 September 2012.

13   Hezky Ezra, "Netanyahu: Promoting democracy and freedom will benefit peace", Arutz 7, 1 February 2011.

14   Arik Bender, "Netanyahu: Egypt might follow Iran and threaten its neighbors", NRG, 7 February 2011.

15   Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to the UN General Assembly, 23 September 2011.

16   "The Prime Minister for the first time answers through Facebook questions of surfers from the Arab world", website of the Prime Minister's Office, 30 January 2012, www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/Spokesman/2012/01/spokechat300112.htm

turmoil, but ultimately it will lead in a good direction". When Netanyahu was asked about the fear of the rise of Islamists in the wake of the Arab Spring he replied that he believed the Arab people "want a world of progress...(and) a world of real reform. They do not want to return to the dark ages, they want a different world".[17] These statements are very different from the assessments Netanyahu presented at the Knesset, where he claimed that "in most of the countries around us the Islamist movements are the most organized and strongest force whereas the liberal forces, who strive for freedom and progress, as we understand those concepts, those forces are divided and weak".[18]

We can see a certain duality in Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman as well. For example, in a letter he wrote to Netanyahu in April 2012 - a letter leaked to the press - Lieberman described a nightmare scenario of the consequences of the Arab Spring in Egypt. "The Egyptian issue is much more disturbing than the Iranian issue", wrote Lieberman, and added: "We cannot rule out that after a new president is elected in Egypt, Egypt will violate the peace treaty materially and pour significant forces into Sinai". Lieberman called in the letter "to take a brave political decision, to rebuild the southern command by re-establishing the southern corps that was dismantled after the peace treaty".[19] Conversely, on a trip to France Lieberman spoke in a different voice, saying: "Despite the strengthening of radical elements, the Arab Spring has brought out new, young, educated and liberal forces". Lieberman asked France to help build a dialogue between Israel and those forces, which could "create understanding based on humanistic and universal values".[20]

Scrutiny of the public diplomacy arguments put forth by senior Israeli spokesmen in the context of the Arab Spring portrays a system surrounding four main arguments. The first argument asserts that the events prove the region is unstable and emphasize that Israel is an island of stability and democracy in the region. Netanyahu declared, for example, in an interview in which he responded to questions of international Internet surfers through YouTube, that "the ground is shaking everywhere, from the West Indies to the Straits of Gibraltar. Everything is shaking and rocking and the only stable place, the only stable country, is democratic Israel".[21]

The second argument attacks claims that present the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the heart of the problem in the region and asserts that the events prove that the root of the problem is within the Arab world and stems from the absence of democracy and from economic problems, not from Israel or the conflict. Thus, for example, Foreign Minister Lieberman said at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that Israel suffers in the world from many misunderstandings and one of them is the claim that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is the heart of the problem in the Middle East. "I see

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17 "Interview with the Prime Minister for the al-Arabiya network", website of the Prime Minister's Office, 24 July 2011, www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Interviews/Pages/interviewalarabiya240711.aspx

18 Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech at opening of the 2011 Knesset winter session, 31 October 2011.

19 Ben Caspit, "Lieberman warns Netanyahu: Egypt a greater worry than Iran", NRG, 22 April 2012.

20 Tal Shalev, "Lieberman to France: mediate between us and the 'Arab Spring' countries", Walla, 23 July 2012.

21 "YouTube World View interview with PM Benjamin Netanyahu", MFA website, 30 March 2011, www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2011/YouTube_World_View_interview_PM_Netanyahu_30-Mar-2011

no connection", said Lieberman, "between our conflict with the Palestinians and the riots in Bahrain, the uprising in Tunisia, what is happening in Libya or in other countries".[22]

The third public diplomacy argument is related to the peace process and the pressures exerted on the Netanyahu government in that context. According to this argument, the Arab Spring led the region into a state of uncertainty and under such conditions Israel cannot take the risks that come with diplomatic processes with the Palestinians. It was also argued that the new situation justifies the Israeli insistence on demands connected to security arrangements. So, for example, Netanyahu declared after the Tunisian revolution that "the lesson from the revolution is that it is important to maintain security in any peace agreement". And following the attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo, Netanyahu said: "At this time we must maintain security. That is the anchor of our existence, especially during times of turmoil... I believe that today many people in Israel and the world who see the events in the region understand much better our justified insistence on defending Israel's security needs in any future settlement".[23] In his speech at the Conference of Presidents, Netanyahu said: "There is tremendous pressure on our security and that makes it harder to reach an agreement with the Palestinian Authority".[24]

The fourth argument is linkage between the Arab Spring and the Iranian question and a warning against Iranian intervention in the events and exploitation of the events in its favor. Thus for example Netanyahu declared in an interview with the French network *AFP* that "we might find the Arab Spring turning into an Iranian winter".[25]

Along with Netanyahu, a number of parties in different systems in Israel adopted the pessimistic view and reinforced the negative framing given to the events, primarily players from the IDF and the security establishment. For example, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Amos Gilad, head of the political military staff in the Defense Ministry, claimed that "the Arab Spring is leading to the establishment of an Islamic empire". The Commander of the Home Front Corps, Eyal Eisenberg, said "it is called the Arab Spring of the Nations, but it can turn into a radical Islamic winter, and this raises the likelihood of total war".[26] Another example is Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Yoav Galant, who said that "the Arab Spring might turn out to be a long and cold Islamic winter".[27] A negative forecast was also presented by the head of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, who said in August 2012 that "next year Israel is going to find itself in an unstable regional environment, much tenser and Islamist than before. It is an environment dealing with

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22   Foreign Minister Lieberman's comments at the Fourth Israeli Presidential Conference, 21 June 2012.

23   "Prime Minister Netanyahu's comments following the events in Cairo", website of the Prime Minister's Office, 10 September 2011, www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Pages/speechcairo100911.aspx

24   "Netanyahu: 'the Arab Spring' makes it difficult to reach agreement with the Palestinians", Ynet, 19 February 2012.

25   Shlomo Cezana, Boaz Bismuth and Daniel Sirioti, "Prime Minister: the Arab Spring might turn into an Iranian winter", Yisrael Hayom, 20 April 2011.

26   Yoav Zeitun, "General Eisenberg: the risk of total war has grown", Ynet, 5 September 2011; "Amos Gilad: the Arab Spring is leading to the establishment of an Islamic empire", Makor Rishon, 15 June 2012. In November 2012, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Amos Gilad stated that out of a desire for democracy, a terrible dictatorship has emerged in Egypt.

27   Amos Harel and Natasha Mozgovaya, "Galant: The changes in the Middle East complicate Israel", Haaretz, 15 June 2012.

a series of regional and internal crises", said Kochavi, "which raise the sensitivity threshold of all of the players and could lead, even without prior planning, to conflagrations".[28]

A similar approach was voiced by ministers and politicians from the coalition. Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon (*Yisrael Beiteinu*) said: "This is not a spring but more of an Arab winter. Anyone who thought the Arab Spring was going to repair problems in the Arab countries was wrong... Observers might entertain the fantasy that the Islamic parties in the Arab countries are moderate, but their leaders are not moderate and the expectation that fundamental flaws that characterize the Arab societies will be corrected under the rule of the Islamic parties is not going to be fulfilled".[29] Minister Ya'alon also use the term "Arab winter" and criticized the parties who expressed enthusiasm over the events and claimed that "this is in fact the collapse of a Western conception. The conception was based on ignorance, naiveté and a tendency towards wishful thinking... This conception was also based on Western patronizing".[30]

"More opportunity than risk"

On the other hand, there were also parties in the Israeli establishment who challenged the negative hegemonic framing given to the Arab Spring events. There were two kinds of these: the first included parties who radically challenged the framing and suggested an alternative positive and more optimistic framing. Within the official and institutional establishments in Israel there were two main figures leading this approach. The first of them was president Shimon Peres. In April 2011 Peres penned an article in *The Guardian* entitled "We in Israel welcome the Arab Spring". Peres wrote in the article that "Israel welcomes the wind of change, and sees a window of opportunity".[31] In his address to the Israeli Presidential Conference Peres argued that the Arab Spring was not necessarily an Israeli winter. "A spring of youth is a blessing to us all", he said. "We are willing to pitch in and give a hand to their success, not out of arrogance but because we are freedom lovers".[32] In a speech to the Knesset Peres said: "There is no doubt that the good of the entire region, including Israel, is for a new alignment to arrive, a reconstruction of the Middle East so that it has food to eat and freedom to breath. The struggle is still young, it must not be judged by the first act or by a single act". In these words Peres was subtly criticizing the skeptics and calling for an evaluation of the events as a long-term process. Peres paid tribute to the young generation in the Arab world leading the events and asserted that they were "more educated, more open, more modern". He admitted there was a doubt as to their ability to achieve their wishes "in one go" and that in the first round the Muslim Brotherhood might win, but explained that they did not offer real solutions to the problems and if poverty and oppression continued, "hunger will overpower such a victory... the young people will not be able to calm down".[33] This prediction seemed

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28 Yoav Zeitun, "Military Intelligence Branch: The region is becoming less stable, conflagration possible", Ynet, 27 August 2012.

29 Ayala Or-El, "The visit of the deputy minister", Ynet, 15 May 2012.

30 Yoni Kampinski, "The Arab Spring - collapse of the Western conception", Arutz 7, 14 June 2012.

31 Shimon Peres, "We in Israel welcome the Arab Spring", The Guardian, 1 April 2011.

32 President Peres's address at the opening session of the Fourth Israeli Presidential Conference, 19 June 2012.

33 President Peres's speech at the opening of 2011 Knesset winter session, 31 October 2011.

to turn into reality in June 2013. The anti-Morsi mass protest movement collected more than 22 million signatures calling for his downfall ,and initiated a wave of demonstrations across Egypt that eventually led the military to intervene against the regime.

The second figure was Natan Sharansky ,chairman of the Jewish Agency .Like Netanyahu, Sharansky had called for years to promote democracy in the Arab world and created an association between democracy and peace.[34] Sharansky maintained that position even after the events of the Arab Spring .In an article published in *The Washington Post* in December 2011, entitled "The West should bet on freedom in Egypt", Sharansky criticized the position that called to support dictators in the name of stability and called on the West to "bet" on the demands and slogans calling for freedom in Tahrir Square.[35] Sharansky argued in comments he made and wrote that in politics "nothing is immediate" and called on the West to act to strengthen the civil society and democratic structures in the Arab countries, and even to use economic aid as a tool to promote those objectives.[36] Sharansky directed his comments mainly outwards and they appeared only in the foreign press and could not be found in the Israeli discourse. Furthermore, he focused on giving advice to the Western countries led by the US, and made no reference to the Israeli context.

The second kind of challenge to the reigning narrative included parties who largely accepted the negative framing as a frame of analysis but tried to propose a more complex picture with additional angles and offer a different reading of the consequences and conclusions. Those who adopted this approach pointed for example to the fact that the Arab Spring also had some positive consequences for Israel. An example of this can be found in the words of Amos Yadlin, former head of military intelligence, who declared that the wave of protests in the Arab world was "more of an opportunity than a risk". "What is happening today in the Arab world", explained Yadlin, "weakens the radical alliance that was working against Israel".[37] Meir Dagan, the former Mossad chief, also argued that following the Arab Spring the military challenge to Israel had disappeared for the next three to five years.[38] It is worth mention that both Dagan and Yadlin had been critical of the Netanyahu administration in other political and diplomatic contexts as well and their words should be read in that light.

Minister of Intelligence Affairs Dan Meridor can also be seen as a leader of this approach. For example, in an interview in December 2011 Meridor called "to seek opportunities in the changes occurring in the Arab world" and argued that "new opportunities for alliances have arisen, most of which are secret".[39] Elements in the foreign ministry can also be classified as players in this group. For example, Yitzhak Levanon, Israel's ambassador to Egypt until November 2011, explained in an interview that "we must not look only at the empty half

34   In this regard, see also: Piki Ish-Shalom, "The Rhetorical Capital of Theories: The Democratic Peace and the Road to the Roadmap", International Political Science Review 29(3), 2008, pp. 281-301.
35   Natan Sharansky, "The West should bet on freedom in Egypt", The Washington Post, 17 December 2011.
36   Justin Jacobs, "Sharansky speaks", The Jewish Chronicle, 20 May 2011.
37   Boaz Feiler, "Yadlin: 'The Arab Spring,' more opportunity than risk", Ynet, 20 June 2011.
38   Lior Guttman, "Meir Dagan: 'The military risk to Israel has dissipated for the next 3-5 years'", Calcalist, 10 July 2012.
39   Mazal Mualem, "Meridor: 'Egypt has no interest in canceling the peace treaty'", NRG, 4 December 2011.

of the glass", and pointed to the fact that for the first time in Egypt transparent and free elections were held, and that Egypt had transitioned from the rule of a single party to an era of coalitions. Levanon offered soothing messages: he asserted that the Muslim Brotherhood "is less dangerous and much more pragmatic than they are being portrayed in Israel", and estimated that they could have a positive influence on Hamas.[40]

The media reported that the Foreign Ministry had rejected a request by Levanon to launch a dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood, but that position changed after the elections for parliament. Levanon's successor, Yaacov Amitay, received a green light to go forward.[41] In June 2012 an initiative emerged for a meeting in Washington between Israeli members of Knesset and Egyptian members of parliament, including representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood, but the news leaked and the meeting was cancelled.[42] Another voice that can be grouped in this category is that of Tzipi Livni, who served as chair of the opposition until March 2012. In her comments on the subject Livni accepted the pessimistic assumption about the Arab Spring but strongly criticized Netanyahu's conduct surrounding the events. This is evident for example in her appeal to Netanyahu in a Knesset speech as follows: "We all know that the Arab Spring can be the beginning of a radical and cold Islamic winter, Mr. Prime Minister, but what are you doing about it except for warning the public?"[43]

The Arab Spring and Israeli public opinion

Public opinion polls by "The Peace Index"[44] allow us to analyze the positions of the Israeli public towards the Arab Spring. A poll taken in March 2011 found that 48% of Israelis viewed the events in the Arab world as positive for Israel versus 30% who viewed them as negative developments. Fifty-five percent responded that they viewed them as positive developments for the people of the region, versus 29% who saw them as negative developments. The survey found that the Arab public in Israel had a more positive outlook: 55% saw the events as positive for Israel (versus 47% of Jews) and 65% saw them as positive for the people of the region (versus 53%). But along with the survey we can find other results that indicate signs of concern and worry as to the consequences for Israel.

In February 2011, 46% of Israelis estimated that the Egyptian Revolution would negatively impact relations with Israel, 21% estimated it would have no impact and only 9% envisioned a positive impact. In May 2011, 44% responded that they thought Israel's status in the region was worse following the changes of regime in the Arab world, 41% responded that its status had not changed and only 10% thought that its status was better; and in November 2011, 68% claimed that following the changes in the Arab world Israel's national security was worse. The high rate in this answer can be explained by the timing (after the violent attack on the Israeli

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40   Eli Bardenstein, "We should encourage dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood", NRG, 18 December 2012.

41   Eli Bardenstein, "Change in Israel's position: permission to talk to Muslim Brotherhood", NRG, 4 January 2012.

42   Moran Azulai, "MK meeting with Muslim Brotherhood canceled", Ynet, 12 June 2012.

43   Tzipi Livni at opening of 2011 Knesset winter session, 31 October 2011.

44   The data of the Peace Index surveys can be found at www.peaceindex.org. I would like to thank Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Yasmin Alkelai for their help.

embassy in Cairo and the victory of the *al-Nahda* party in Tunisia), as well as by the wording of the question that focused on the security angle and mentioned the rise in the power of the Islamists.

An analysis of the initial reactions to the Egyptian Revolution indicates differences of approach between the Jewish and Arab publics in Israel. For instance, a large majority of Jews (70%) estimated in February 2011 that the chances for a democratic regime to emerge in Egypt in the foreseeable future was low compared to a large majority of Arabs (74%) who claimed that chances for that were high. Furthermore, half of the Jews assessed there was a high chance that a radical Islamic regime would emerge in Egypt while among the Arabs only 28% thought so. There were also differences surrounding the Obama administration's policy on the subject. While 52% of Jews thought that the US had been wrong to support the demonstrators against Mubarak, 70% of Arabs thought it was a correct step. The critical attitude in Israel towards the Obama administration's treatment of Mubarak was evident in the media and public discourse. For instance, *Yedioth Ahronoth* chose to give the report about the Obama administration's declaration during the Egyptian Revolution of its support of "a credible transition in Egypt" the following headline: "The US turns the knife". Former minister Ben Eliezer declared: "The Americans do not yet understand the disaster into which they pushed the Middle East". And *Yated Ne'eman* wrote in response: "Does anyone still believe that the US administration will stand by Israel in a time of need?"[45]

After Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi won the elections for the Egyptian presidency in June 2012, the Israeli newspaper headlines reflected grave fears. "Plague of darkness" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*), "Following with concern" (*Yisrael Hayom*), and "The Muslim Brotherhood Empire" (*Makor Rishon*). However, figures from a survey held at that time showed that after Morsi's victory there was a certain abatement of the public's fears of future consequences. This could be seen by comparison between answers to a question about the future of the peace agreement in the event the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in Egypt asked both in November 2011, before the elections for parliament and the presidency in Egypt, and in June 2012, after the Muslim Brotherhood's success in the parliamentary elections and the victory of their candidate for president. In June 2012 the rate of Israelis who believed the treaty would not be cancelled rose from 63% to 74% (among Jews alone the rate rose from 60% to 74%).[46]

Meanwhile, the rate of Israelis who anticipated the worst-case scenario of cancellation of the treaty and a return to a state of war dropped from 13% to 6%. A segmentation by voting patterns found that this trend crossed political lines and occurred both on the right and on the

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45   Yedioth Ahronoth's Washington correspondent and Smadar Peri, "The U.S. turns the knife", Yedioth Ahronoth, 31 January 2011, p. 4; "Ben Eliezer: Obama does not understand what a disaster he pushed the Middle East into", Globes, 2 February 2011; A. Yitzhaki, "A broken reed", Yated Ne'eman, 1 February 2011.

46   June 2012 survey: the 74% was comprised of 27% who assessed the treaty would remain as it was and 47% who assessed the treaty would not be cancelled but the relationship would deteriorate. The second figure of 20% was comprised of 14% who assessed it would be cancelled and there would be a state of neither peace nor war, and 6% who expected it to be cancelled and that Egypt would go back to a state of war with Israel.

left and the rise in the rate of respondents who estimated the treaty would not be cancelled (June 2012 compared to November 2011) was particularly dramatic among right-wing voters: among National Religious Party voters it rose from 20% to 82% and among National Union voters it rose from 52% to 92%. Among *Yisrael Beiteinu* voters it rose from 47% to 85%. It can be assumed that the transformation of the possibility of a Muslim Brotherhood victory from an abstract and uncertain nightmare scenario to a concrete reality, as well as the calming messages conveyed by Morsi and other Egyptian figures, influenced the public and alleviated its concerns.

As for Israel's policy following the Arab Spring, the surveys indicated unequivocal public support of a policy of non-intervention .83% of the public was supportive of Israel not having expressed support during the Egyptian Revolution either of Mubarak or of the demonstrators (February 2011) and 79% supported a similar approach to the struggle in Syria (February 2012). As for the policy required from the West, it is evident that public opinion changes depending on the country in question. Concerning the events in Egypt, a majority of Jews (52%) opposed the American policy of support for the demonstrators and a majority of Arabs (70%) supported that policy.[47]

But when it came to the events in Libya, a majority both of the Jewish public (52%) and the Arab public (62%) supported Western intervention in support of the rebels.[48] As for the events in Syria, half of the Israeli public supported Western support for the Syrian opposition and one third supported non-intervention (survey from February 2012). It seems that given the anti-Israeli policy of Gadhafi and Assad and their cruel treatment of their citizens, the Israeli public was more supportive of Western assistance to depose them, but it is still interesting to note that despite the aforesaid the level of support for Western intervention was only half of the public and not more. The reason might be the fear that the deposition of those leaders would lead to worse regimes. The survey about Syria was conducted in February 2012 and positions may have changed since then. The survey also shows in the Syrian context that 36% of the public thought that the fall of the Assad regime was good for the Israeli interest, 31% thought it would be bad and 22% thought it did not matter. A majority of the public (55%) also thought that Israel should not receive Syrian refugees even if their lives were in real danger.

To conclude this section, it is interesting to note that on many questions about the Arab Spring, segmentation by voting patterns (the data in this regard refers only to the Jewish public) indicates that voters for religious and ultra-Orthodox parties tended to interpret the events more negatively. But when a principled question was presented about the probability of a government with a majority of religious parties governing democratically and protecting minority rights, freedom of expression and equality, it was the voters for the religious and ultra-Orthodox parties who responded by a significant majority that such a scenario was

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47 After Morsi's electoral victory the rate of Jews who opposed the US policy rose to 58% and the rate of Arabs who supported that policy dropped to 67% (June 2012).

48 The survey about Libya was held in March 2011.

likely,[49] whereas among voters for secular parties a majority of respondents answered that they did not believe in such a possibility.[50]

The Arab Spring and the political and public discourse in Israel

The dramatic events in the Arab world penetrated and influenced the political and public discourse in Israel in different arenas and contexts. One example is the question of the consequences for the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Journalist Ari Shavit defined the dilemma in an article in *Haaretz* in which he wrote that "with the Middle East boiling, the occupation cannot be ended peacefully. But with the Middle East boiling, there is no way to cling to the status quo either".[51] Surveys at the outset of the process showed that the public was divided on the subject: 35% assessed that the events would not impact the peace process with the Palestinians, 28% assessed it would have a negative impact and 26% assessed it would have a positive impact.[52]

Right-wing speakers, led by Netanyahu, pointed to the events as a reason to justify avoidance of a political initiative in the Palestinian context. Netanyahu explained that "Israel is facing a period of instability and uncertainty in the region", and that "this is surely not the time to listen to those who say... follow your dreams";[53] Minister of Education Gideon Saar claimed that the upheaval in the Arab world "requires a thorough examination of the Israeli political discourse" and that "the margins of risk that Israel can afford to take today are very narrow".[54] Journalist David Merhav from the *Makor Rishon* newspaper wrote that "with Mubarak's fall, the last nail was driven into the coffin of the left's political fantasies... Israel cannot afford even a single political adventure".[55] There were other voices on the right that used the events as a tool to attack regional leaders: MK Arieh Eldad (*National Union*) called on King Abdallah to declare Jordan the Palestinian nation state and explained that if he did not do so "he might find himself very soon facing masses of Jordanian citizens demanding he do so in the streets and squares" (his comments ignited fury in Jordan and drew a condemnation from the Foreign Ministry);[56] and Foreign Minister Lieberman aimed his arrows at Abu Mazen and said: "We saw that betting on dictators in the Middle East helps no one; in the end they're going to throw out Abu Mazen too".[57]

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49   95% of Shas voters, 82% of Torah Judaism voters and 80% of National Religious Party and National Union voters.

50   The largest majority was among Meretz voters - 91% - and the lowest was among Likud voters - 53%.

51   Ari Shavit, "A political Iron Dome", Haaretz, 31 March 2011.

52   The Peace Index, March 2011. Internal segmentation found that among voters of right-wing parties the rate of those who anticipated a negative impact was higher (54% of National Religious Party voters, 50% of National Union voters) whereas among voters of left-wing parties the rate who anticipated a positive impact was higher (42% of Meretz voters, 39% of Kadima voters) and among Arabs the rate of those who anticipated a positive impact (48%) was higher than the rate among the Jewish public (22%).

53   Prime Minister Netanyahu at the Knesset's "forty signature session", 23 November 2011.

54   Sophia Ron Moria, "Minister of Education against principles of Bar Ilan speech", Makor Rishon, 25 December 2011.

55   David Merhav, "The decline of the West and the new war of civilizations", Makor Rishon, 8 February 2011.

56   Pinkhas Wolf, "MK Eldad to submit petition to Jordanian ambassador: 'You Are Palestine'", Walla, 23 May 2012; Barak Ravid and Yuval Azulai, "Jordan protests vigorously MK Eldad's comments to Knesset", Haaretz, 26 May 2012.

57   Barak Ravid, "Lieberman: Betting on dictators helps no one, even Abu Mazen will be thrown out in the end", Haaretz, 26 August 2012.

Meanwhile, speakers on the left read the map differently and claimed that the upheavals in the region emphasized the need to work towards an agreement with the Palestinians and strengthen alliances with moderate parties in the region. Tzipi Livni said "the Zionist movement through all of its years always took the initiative in tough situations";[58] and President Peres explained that "uncertainty is part of our lives... The tendency to wait with closed eyes until the storm calms is naive... What we need is the daring to make decisions in states of uncertainty";[59] The Geneva Initiative claimed that with a peace agreement with the Palestinians, Israel would have a better standing in relation to the events of the Arab Spring;[60] and journalist Ron Ben-Yishai claimed that one of the conclusions from the events in the region was that Israel must do everything to maintain the stability of Abu Mazen's regime, and called on Israel to make gestures towards him and take actions to cultivate economic prosperity in the West Bank.[61] In the face of voices from the right calling to avoid "political adventures", the left argued that in light of the events, and in light of the growing influence of the public in the Arab world, Israel must avoid military adventures and pursue measures that would change the Arab street's attitude towards Israel. Journalist Gideon Levy wrote in *Haaretz*: "From now on the people are speaking and they will not tolerate violent or colonialist behavior towards Arabs and their leaders will have to take that into consideration... Israel no longer has the option to live solely by the sword".[62]

The events of the Arab spring also raised for re-discussion the question of Israel's relationship with Turkey. Many voices claimed that considering the regional instability and the increase of Israel's isolation, it was necessary to repair relations with Turkey because of its being an important and stable party in the region and because of the convergence of many interests between the countries. This trend was highlighted by Turkey's renunciation of the Assad regime and in the context of the tension between it and Iran.[63] A discussion developed around the question of the chances the processes would result in democracy in the Arab world and orientalists posed differing assessments.[64] In relation to this issue, Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security advisor in the Bush administration, argued that "the Israelis do not believe in the universality of democracy... (They) believe Arab culture does not allow democracy". He compared that to American "experts" who used the claim that democracy does not suit

58 Yossi Verter, "An island of stability", Haaretz, 16 December 2011.

59 President Peres at the opening session of the Fourth Israeli Presidential Conference, 19 June 2012. In another speech Peres said that "we must act to renew negotiations with the Palestinians and reach the end of the conflict, which will remove the grounds for incitement and radicalization by the radical fanatics". From President Peres's speech at the opening of the 2011 Knesset winter session, 31 October 2011.

60 See Geneva Initiative website: www.heskem.org.il/yozma.asp?id=6.

61 Ron Ben Yishai, "Protect Abu Mazen and get through the Arab Spring", Ynet, 28 November 2011.

62 Gidon Levy, "Hate of Egypt", Haaretz, 20 August 2011

63 See for example: Ilil Shachar, "The Israel-Turkey relationship: on the way to recovery?" IDF Radio, 25 July 2012; Adi Sagi, "Shelly Yachimovich: the Labor Party to form the next government", Magazine Hamoshavot, 9 August 2012; Itzik Wolf, "Livni: Turkey felt Israel was isolated and weak", News1, 7 September 2011. Also, see results of a public opinion poll on this topic, initiated by Mitvim: http://mitvim.org.il/images/Israel-Turkey_Poll_September_2012.pdf

64 See for instance: Guy Bechor, "The menorah of the Arab spring", Gplanet, 19 December 2011; Uriah Shavit, "Islamotopia: Democracy, Muslim Brotherhood style", Tchelet 45, 2011; Elie Podeh, "The revolution is not over yet", Haaretz, 31 July 2012; Uri Goldberg, "This too is democracy", Haaretz, 3 January 2012.

Latinos and Asians.[65] Israeli journalist Ofer Shelah claimed that he had come across many people who argued to him that "democracy is not for Arabs" and he argued that such an approach came out of fear but also arrogance.[66]

In different circles of discourse and different groups of the population the discussion of the Arab Spring received different emphases and references and raised different issues and questions. For example, in the ultra-orthodox press there was criticism and dismissal of analysts and experts who tried to explain the events and predict the future. It was argued that "devout Jews... understand that things have meaning that goes well beyond their immediate perception" *(Hamodia)*[67] and that "everything goes according to divine providence, it is not commentary" *(Yated Ne'eman)*.[68] Likewise, in an editorial in *Yated Ne'eman*, a unique positive angle was found in the Arab Spring in the fact that on the backdrop of these events there had been a lull in "the ongoing assault against the public of believers and Torah students".[69]

Another article worth mention is one by Yaacov Schonfeld that appeared in the *Hamodia* newspaper, in which Schonfeld analyzes the world picture and distinguishes between the Christian world - which he claims became indifferent to its religion and found a new idol in money - and the Muslim world - where a religious revival is occurring. Schonfeld draws a parallel between that division and the situation of the Jewish people, where on the one hand there is the left, which "carries the banner of Western culture...with all of its filth and decadence", and on the other are "the masses joining the keepers of the holy guard and slowly accepting the yoke of the Torah and commandments and streaming to the synagogues".[70] A different approach could also be found among the Arab public, with the general attitude to the events being more positive (there were also voices of criticism of Israel's negative attitude),[71] as well as unique issues that came up such as a fierce argument over the interpretation of the events in Syria, which caused a deep split in the Arab public[72] and demonstrations by parties on either side of the debate.[73]

The events in the Arab world also seeped into the public discussion of domestic Israeli affairs. For instance, in the context of the Israeli discussion about expressions of religious radicalization and the exclusion of women, and following events such as the "price tag" operations and the "rabbis' letter" against renting apartments to Arabs, there were speakers who pointed to an

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65   Ran Dagoni, "Israel's friends in the US: Why do you fear the fall of Mubarak?" Globes, 8 February 2011.

66   Ofer Shelah, "Democracy is not for Arabs", NRG, 1 February 2011.

67   "The Day's Echo", Hamodia, 30 January 2011.

68   P. Hovav, "On the agenda", Yated Ne'eman, 2 February 2011.

69   "Yated Today", Yated Ne'eman, 4 March 2011.

70   Y. Schonfeld, "Why do the heathen rage?" Hamodia, 4 February 2011.

71   See for instance: Oudeh Basharat, "The Arabs are not the same Arabs", Haaretz, 4 September 2012; Zoheir Andreus, "Why is Israel afraid of democracy in Egypt?" Ynet, 7 February 2011.

72   For instance, the Peace Index of February 2012 found that in the Arab public in Israel, 43% supported Western support of the Syrian opposition whereas 23% supported Western support of the Assad regime.

73   In February 2012, a support rally for the Syrian regime was held in Haifa, with representatives of the Balad and Hadash parties, and in Tamra in June 2012 there was a demonstration against the Assad regime organized by the Islamic movement. See: Hasan Shalan, "Demonstration in Tamra: Assad is a criminal massacring his people", Ynet, 9 June 2012; Hasan Shalam, "Conference in Haifa for Assad: Israel enjoys the killing", Ynet, 26 February 2012.

association between the rise of political Islam and a similar trend in Israel. Yossi Gurvitz, for example, wrote that "while the Israelis pay a lot of attention to their fear of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, they consistently ignore the rise of the 'Jewish brotherhood'".[74] The subject even came up in the traditional argument over the size of the defense budget, with both sides (Defense Minister Ehud Barak on the one hand and Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz on the other) using the events as tools to justify their positions.[75] Some even argued that the subject was going to play a role in the impending elections and a senior *Likud* official said his party was going to use the events in its election campaign.[76]

The Arab Spring and the Israeli summer

With the public awakening in the Arab world, a discussion began in Israel over whether such protest events could happen in Israel as well. Shuki Sadeh wrote in *Haaretz* in February 2011: "The question 'when will people start going out onto the streets here' has been heard again and again in different variations in the last two weeks". And Yair Nativ wrote in *Ynet* the same month that "the residents of the Arab countries are protesting their living conditions and making revolutions. And here? Most of the complaints are being addressed to the television set during the news".[77]

When in July 2011 broad public protests broke out in Israel demanding "social justice", there were many references to the protests in the Arab world, including signs carried at demonstrations saying: "The corner of Rothschild and Tahrir", "Mubarak, Assad, Netanyahu", "ارحل (step down) Egypt is here", and in statements by activists who threatened the "Tahrirization" of the social protest.[78] Even the main slogan of the protest movement - "The people demand social justice" echoed the slogan of the demonstrations in the Arab world: "The people demand to topple the regime". Many pointed to the connection between the events. Roy Jarani wrote in an article in *Mako* that "no one doubts that what happened in Egypt in January 2011 woke us up from our winter slumber and by summer we too were on the streets". And Yonatan Gur wrote in an article in *Common Ground*: "I have no doubt that if it weren't for Mohamed Bouazizi, if it weren't for Tahrir, the name Rothschild too would still be identified with a fashionable and

74   Yossi Gurevitz, "The Jewish Brotherhood charges forward", Friends of George (blog), 5 February 2011. Neri Livneh made a similar argument, writing in Haaretz that "instead of worrying about the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab countries we should start worrying about the Jewish brotherhood that is about to take over Israel". From Neri Livneh, "The Jewish Brotherhood", Haaretz, 27 February 2011.

75   See: Gili Cohen, "Defense Minister Barak: A nuclear Iran is more dangerous than bombing the facilities", Haaretz, 26 July 2012; Omri Nachmias, "Steinitz in favor of cutting defense spending: 'the Arab countries are weaker', Mofaz: 'The budget is being managed behind your back'", Nana, 21 November 2011.

76   Yossi Verter, "An island of stability", Haaretz, 16 December 2011.

77   Shuki Sadeh, "Nobody stood up", Haaretz, 9 February 2011; Yair Nativ, "So why don't we go out to the streets?" Ynet, 24 February 2011. For examples of articles in a similar vein in the haredi press see: "Yated Hayom: abuse without reaction", Yated Ne'eman, 2 February 2011; A. Margalit, "The rulers' seats on a volcano", Hamodia, 4 February 2011. The question was also asked in the Peace Index of February 2011 and a majority of 86% of respondents estimated that the chances that the Israeli public would take to the streets and use civil disobedience to change the government were low.

78   See for instance: "Protest activists demonstrate against Huldai: We are going to do a Tahrir on you", Walla, 25 June 2012.

sleepy boulevard, as it was until just a little while ago".[79] That connection was also the subject of an exhibit by photographer Yaira Yasmin, under the title: "Revolutions: Corner of Rothchild and Tahrir".[80] It was also reflected by a letter written by activists from the Israeli *Maabara* movement to activists in the Arab world.[81] Furthermore, after Moshe Silman set himself on fire at a demonstration in Tel Aviv, many in the Israeli media and the Arab world drew a parallel between him and Mohamed Bouazizi.[82]

Summary and proposals for an alternative framework of discourse

The events of the Arab Spring at first created a feeling of change in the patterns of public discourse and media coverage in Israel regarding the Arab world. Those patterns had previously focused solely on negative contexts of the conflict with Israel and usually only in reference to the leaders, and for the first time Israel took a close look at internal developments that did not have direct relevance to Israel. It was also the first time Israel looked at the people of the Arab world, sometimes even with sympathy. At first the events drew a high level of interest and for the first time the Israeli public en masse watched direct broadcasts from the city squares of the neighboring countries. A survey in March 2011 found that 76% of the Israeli public was interested in the events.[83]

An analysis of the reporting throughout the relevant period found that the discussion of the Arab Spring focused almost completely, naturally, on the points of interface between those events and Israel, and the subject entered the agenda mainly due to events such as the explosion of the gas pipe in the Sinai or the attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo. As a result, those were the events that reflected and shaped for the average Israeli the meaning of the entire process. Furthermore, the events in the closer circle of countries to Israel, Egypt and Syria, drew more interest than the events in the further countries such as Tunisia, Libya and Bahrain.

Analysis of the Israeli discourse finds that although the hegemonic framing is largely negative, the picture is complex and dynamic and has different characteristics when referring to different stages in the events in the process, different players, different groups and sectors and different places of events. Likewise one can distinguish between the analysis of assessments in different contexts: short-term versus long-term consequences; implications for different issues such as impact on the security situation, impact on the Iranian issue, impact on the chances for peace with the Palestinians, impact on Israel's military freedom and the argument over practical conclusions.

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79 Roy Jarani, "The corner of Tahrir and Rothschild", Mako, 27 December 2011; Yonatan Gur, "The Corner of Rothschild and Tahrir", Common Ground, 16 September 2011. Members of the Hadag Nachash band also referred to that angle in a song they wrote about the protest in Israel, including this line: "I will not give in/I got heaps of inspiration from my neighbors/everyone deserves four walls and a ceiling". See: Or Barnea, "Hadag Nachash in new song following tent protest", Ynet, 7 August 2011. In this regard, see also Hillel Schenker's article in the Palestine-Israel Journal, http://pij.org/details.php?id=1424

80 See: Elad Ben Elul, "Revolutions: Exhibit between Rothschild and Tahrir Square", Achbar Ha'ir, 30 August 2011.

81 Moshe Heller, "Heads of protests in Jerusalem to activists in Tahrir Square: We are all Middle Eastern", NRG, 16 February 2012.

82 See for instance: www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4257382,00.html, www.alwafd.org/'D1J'6)/241523

83 Peace Index, March 2011.

In summary, while recognizing the limitations and problems in the Israeli discourse on the subject, we might ask how a more complex conversation can be pursued and how alternative frames of analysis to the existing framing can be offered.

Regional phenomenon, different arenas: A deep and serious discussion of the Arab spring requires the understanding that while there is a connection and mutual influence between the events in the different countries, they are still particular arenas and different societies undergoing different processes. Therefore we must beware of generalized and simplistic conclusions that fail to recognize the differences. The discussion of the phenomenon must emphasize that in each arena there are differences of players, different motives for the protest, different social, political and economic conditions and of course also differences in the outcomes and consequences. The Tunisian model is different from the Libyan model and the events in Egypt are different from the events in Syria.[84]

Know the new players: We must welcome the fact that as a result of the events, Israel began to understand (including its intelligence branch)[85] that discussion of the Arab world has to move from focusing on the leaders to an analysis that recognizes an array of new players in the field: politicians, military commanders, political parties, extra-parliamentary movements. However, there are signs of a convergence of the discourse to a dichotomous and simplistic view of "Islamists" versus "non-Islamists". We must beware of this approach and act to increase the public's familiarity with a wide array of players and forces. For instance, Tunisia is no longer only Bin Ali but it is also not only "the Islamists", as it was presented by the media, but includes different players such as President Moncef Marzouki, a human rights activist from a secular party, Prime Minister Hamadi al-Jabali, from the moderate religious party *al-Nahda*, Minister of Education Abdellatif Abid, of a center-left party, and opposition leader Maya Jribi, who heads a secular liberal party.

Complex facts: Despite the understandable wish to simplify a complex and volatile reality, we must make room for information and facts that help analyze the picture better and recognize the influencing structures and processes rather than being limited merely to the bottom line. For instance, along with the bottom line of the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian presidential elections, and viewing this fact as a clear sign of the rise of political Islam in the Arab world, there is also room to mention that an analysis of the results of the elections for president in Egypt portrays a more complex picture. For example, in the first round of elections most voters (55%) voted for secular candidates (Ahmed Shafiq, Hamdeen Sabahi and Amr Moussa). Similarly, in the second round, Morsi defeated his rival Shafiq by a small margin of 51.7% to 48.3%.

Coverage gaps: Monitoring developments and trends in societies undergoing transitions and regime changes (transitional states) is a difficult and complicated task that requires a deep and slow examination of processes on different levels and in different areas. These

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84   An example can be seen in the article by Elie Podeh, "Four seasons in the Arab world", Haaretz, 10 June 2011.

85   Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "Intelligence modesty", Haaretz, 16 December 2011.

countries are simultaneously undergoing a series of complicated and sensitive processes of democratization, building new government systems, transformation of their law and justice systems, changes in their educational and cultural systems and attempts to deal as a nation with past events. In such cases, press reports, going by the rules and standards of the press, can be expected to naturally provide a distorted and partial picture. By its nature the media tends to cover extreme events extensively and prominently, usually including acts of violence and intimidation, and is less adept at giving equal coverage to slow and complex processes that may draw less public interest and are also sometimes difficult to document with clear television images.

Therefore, the murderous act of the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi and the murder of the US ambassador gained front page headlines and reached every average Israeli news consumer, whereas simultaneous events that occurred in Libya, such as the victory of the liberal NFA party and the defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood in the elections, the appointment of a moderate and liberal president, the condemnation and apology of the Libyan president following the ambassador's murder and the protest demonstrations in Libya against the event - hardly received any press coverage and reached only those who showed special interest in the subject. Ultimately, it is the events that are covered that will shape public opinion and frame the public's interpretation and might lead to the development of a partial picture. Therefore it would be advisable to act to include additional events and processes in the media agenda, even if that is not an easy task.

Personification: Sometimes it is easier to understand and become interested in major historic developments through the personification of the process and humanization of the events. Looking at processes like revolutions and regime changes from the point of view of the simple citizen gives the events a concrete and simple translation and provides a character with whom the viewer can identify. Of course this is no substitute for an analysis based on additional sources and angles but an encounter with such characters would help the Israeli viewer better understand how macro processes are expressed on the micro level.[86]

New thinking about political Islam: Political Islamic movements in the Arab world are perceived in the Israeli view as dangerous and radical parties which must not be legitimized and with which dialogue is impossible, and are associated in Israeli thinking with terror organizations and Iran. In reality the picture is more complex and since those movements have become key players on the new Arab stage and have moved from the benches of the opposition to government frameworks, there is cause to develop a discourse that proposes a new, serious and less one-dimensional reading of the subject, discuss ways and tools to deal with the new reality and pursue official or unofficial dialogue with those parties.

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86 A good example can be seen in Itay Engel's movie about the revolution in Tahrir Square, broadcasted on Israeli TV Channel 2: www.mako.co.il/tv-ilana_dayan/2011-8815731c7cfdc210/Article-fe95f38b9943e21006.htm. Another example is Heba Hamdi Abo Seif - an Egyptian journalist and political activist who speaks fluent Hebrew. She has been reporting live from Tahrir Square for Israeli TV Channel 10 in June\July 2013. See: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozZiUmF-xh8.

Such a conversation might for example refer to the fact that inclusion of such movements in the government in many cases leads to their moderation and forces them to give up radical rhetoric in favor of recognition of the existing reality. It must also address the argument that a dialogue with regimes that include such elements would achieve broader legitimacy and give the diplomatic process greater validity.[87]

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87 A good example of a commentary article in this spirit is: Assaf David, "Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas: Room for dialogue?" Can Think, 16 March 2012 [Hebrew].

The Arab Spring and the Palestinians of Israel | Ghaida Rinawie-Zoabi[1]

The Arab world has suffered for decades from intolerable economic, social and political conditions, severe restrictions on human rights and dictators who controlled its countries, its citizens, its infrastructures and its resources. In late 2010 a sweeping wave of revolutions and demonstrations started in the Arab world in protest against those problems, primarily the poverty, the corruption, the political disenfranchisement and the dictatorship. Those revolutions were led by young people and were typically nonviolent, with the exception of the cases of Libya and Syria.

The wave of protests began with the action by Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor who set himself on fire in front of the government offices to protest the poor social and economic conditions and the difficulty to make a decent living. Bouazizi's action started a popular revolution in Tunisia, leading to the departure of president Zein al-Abidine bin Ali on January 14, 2012. The protests spread to other countries and created a tremendous wave of uprising in the Arab world, which came to be known as the Arab Spring.

After the fall of the Bin Ali regime, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Muammar Gadhafi of Libya also fell. The president of Yemen stepped down after reaching an agreement with the revolutionaries and in Syria the process is still underway. These protests used similar slogans in different Arab countries, such as the slogan "the people want to topple the regime". There was also extensive use of advanced technological means with which social groups were created and supported by millions of young people. These groups produced a concerted effort that brought down regimes that had been stable for decades. The Arab Spring broke the fear barrier imposed by the Arab dictators, which they used to secure their rule.

This article will discuss how the Palestinians in Israel relate to the Arab Spring and the consequences of the revolutions in the Arab world for them. The article presents a general background about the Palestinians in Israel, examines how the Arab Spring is covered by the Palestinian media in Israel and presents findings of a public opinion survey conducted among young Palestinians in Israel in relation to the Arab Spring.

Background about the Palestinians in Israel

The Palestinians of Israel are a local native minority constituting 20% of Israel's citizens. They live mainly in small cities and villages throughout Israel and have a separate education system. The Palestinian population is very young and occupies a low socioeconomic status. In 1948 most of the members of the Palestinian people became refugees, some of whom settled in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while the Palestinians who remained received Israeli citizenship but lived under a military government until 1966. Since 1967 the Palestinian leadership of Israel has presented two demands: ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state, and equal civil rights for the Palestinian community in Israel.

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Serious events in the last two decades have shaken the Palestinian population in Israel and led it to reconsider its relationship with the state: the failure of the Oslo process in the 1990s; the October 2000 riots in which 13 young Palestinian-Israeli demonstrators were killed by Israeli security forces; and the 2006 Lebanon war, in which most of the casualties from the Hezbollah missiles were Arab citizens, as a result of the lack of emergency preparedness in the Arab settlements. After all of these events the Palestinian population of Israel understood it was on a crossroads: it had no backing from Israel, the Palestinian Authority or the international community. Therefore, the Palestinian community of Israel decided in the last decade to take responsibility for its fate and to launch a proactive initiative.

In 2006 they published "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel", a document that marked the first joint public decision to initiate a dialogue with the state about the legal and mandatory status of the Palestinian community in Israel. The Palestinian citizens of Israel want to advance their civil status and influence the political-economic decision-making system in Israel. They decided that they must do so by self-empowerment of their civil institutions.

Three subgroups in the Palestinian community of Israel are most influenced by external factors: women, youth and leaders. The main factors that influence these three subgroups are the Internet and social networks, satellite television, Jordan as the gate to the Arab world, globalization and of course the events of the Arab Spring.

Questions among the Palestinians of Israel about the Arab Spring

The influence of the Arab Spring - and the changes it wrought in the regimes of the Arab countries - did not skip over the Palestinian residents of Israel. The conversation among the Palestinians in Israel about the Arab Spring has been extremely lively and has addressed a number of key moral, political and social dilemmas. Until the advent of the Arab Spring the pride of the Palestinians of Israel focused on their ability to lead a public campaign against racism and prejudice in Israel, while the Arab public in the Arab world remained oppressed and passive. Now they lost that advantage. However, the Arab Spring proved that a nonviolent struggle to change reality and governments is possible.

During the revolutions in Tunisia and then Egypt people were astonished, excited and inspired by the very act of Arab residents of the Arab world rising up against the "king", and forcing that "king" to give up his throne - without military intervention. The public sphere filled with a general sense of pride in our being Arabs. No questions were asked about the "day after".

The case of Libya was different because it raised several dilemmas:

- Geopolitically: What is and what should be the role of international/Western/American intervention? Will Libya become another Iraq?

- In terms of internal politics: Why did a nonviolent revolution in Libya fail whereas it succeeded in Tunisia and Egypt?

- Morally: Did the horrific lynch of Gadhafi reflect the face of the Libyan revolution?

These questions were compounded by the chaos in Syria. Since international intervention in

Syria is perceived as biased, there are many question marks about it and the public discussion about the events in Syria is much more complex and therefore more mature. This applies also to the discussion of questions of greater concern to the Palestinians in Israel, such as the Palestinian relationship with the Arab world and with Israel, and domestic questions such as social and religious values and gender equality:

- What are the moral boundaries of a public campaign? Where are the red lines?

- What will our relations with the Arab world be in the future? Will we be an influential party in the future geopolitical reality?

- How will the "new voices" in the political parties impact the traditional leadership? Will the internal criticism being voiced have an impact on the defective functioning of the traditional leadership?

- What will the role of women be in the public campaign? Will it be behind the scenes or overt?

- How will all this influence our social character: in terms of religious divides - Islam vs. Christianity, Sunni vs. Alawi/Shiite; gender - women in the public sphere; and the role of young people in changing reality?

The Arab Spring as reflected by the Palestinian media in Israel

The Palestinian media in Israel has written much about the Arab Spring and addressed many of the questions mentioned above. It asked whether it really was a new spring that would bring prosperity or perhaps a dreary and dark fall with nebulous results. The media played a very important role in presenting a comprehensive picture of the events to the Arab public in Israel. In the Arab Spring, new media and social networks also played a central role, especially Facebook, which reported and included the public in developments to an exceptional degree, especially by exposing the corrupt regimes that perpetuated the injustice and oppression in their countries.

Among the Palestinian media and Israel, the newspaper *Kul al-Arab* played a key role in relation to the Arab Spring. It wrote extensively about the subject, especially about the developments in Egypt and Syria, while emphasizing the morality of the revolution and the need to protect human dignity. This subject was addressed by Dr. Shukri Hazal, who presented the moral concept of resistance to a depriving regime and the right of nations to resist, whether through quiet revolution or armed resistance: "Such a revolution must be run according to moral standards that determine its course, on the principle that the occurrence of a revolution is an alternative to the existing arrangements, an alternative to dictatorship, and therefore the revolution must not use oppression and deprivation, not even against the symbols of the previous regime".

The author went on to describe the brutality of the Arab revolutions with the following words: "Unfortunately, the Arab revolutions have adopted extremely cruel practices against the other side, just like the regimes that preceded the revolution, in which mercenaries were central

elements. That cruelty has seeped into the ranks of the revolutionaries in the Arab world and colored them in a negative light. This led to skepticism among the Arab peoples in the world as to the credibility of the revolutions of the Arab Spring movement". The author went on to note in his writings that there was a huge gap between the democratic regime the Syrian people had yearned for for generations and the democratic Syria sought by the US, the UK, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey - a destructive democracy, in his words, whose ultimate goal is the destruction of the Assad regime without any consideration of the dimensions of the destruction and injustice that will be caused to the Syrian population.

After the crisis in Syria, many of the Arab media channels in Israel attempted to withdraw and not express their opinions about the Arab Spring. They tended to limit themselves to presenting figures about the developments.

The local newspaper *Hadith al-Nas* presented the events of the Arab Spring in a weekly column through public opinion interviews, asking especially about the massacre in Syria: do the respondents oppose or support the Assad regime, with a focus on the question of the responsibility of President Assad's regime for the events, the involvement of Western countries, responsibility of the Arab media such as *al-Jazeera* and the responsibility of the Arab League.

On August 26, 2012 *Hadith* published an article saying that the Syrian priest Francois had announced at the inauguration of a mosque in Kafr Kana that the Syrians and Syria were in excellent shape and that most of the reports broadcast on *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiya* were false. The figures present at the ceremony (including Kamal Khatib, MK Masoud Ganayem and Sheikh Akrama Sabri) left those comments unanswered.

The newspaper of the northern faction of the Islamic movement, *Sawt al-Haq wal-Huriyya*, which wrote a lot about the Arab Spring, usually attacked the Syrian regime and presented it as bearing exclusive responsibility for the events in Syria. The newspaper also encouraged the election for the Egyptian presidency of Mohamed Morsi, emphasized the complexity of the Libyan regime and strongly criticized the Salah regime in Yemen for its evasion and bargaining over immunity from the Gulf States.

Many articles and reports analyzed the Syrian case. On the one hand they criticized the regime's corruption and deprivation but on the other hand they expressed strong resistance to Western intervention in Syria. They also criticized the association made between the Syrians, Syria as a homeland and the Assad regime in Syria. The articles usually called for cautious distinction between the internal revolutionary forces and external intervention in the area's internal affairs by the West, the Iranians and the Turks.

The Arab press in Israel did not express a uniform opinion about the events in the Arab countries in the Arab Spring. It did voice concern that the Arab Spring would turn into an Arab fall - that the revolution would destroy the revolutionaries and subject them to the interests of the Western countries, whether directly or through Arab countries such as Qatar, which have close ties with the West and especially with the US. The Western intervention in

the Arab countries was presented as such that could eliminate all of the hope created by the Arab Spring, and neutralize the revolutionary spirit among the young. The fear was that the fall of the corrupt Arab regimes that cooperate with the West would ultimately lead to the emergence of regimes that would be dependent on and loyal to Western countries. This would be a complete disaster for Arab nationalism because it would create mental, logistic and economic dependence on the West and enslave the Arab countries to the West's interests.

Israel, Turkey and the Arab Spring: Opportunities for Reconciliation | Nimrod Goren[1]

Among the first opportunities that the Arab Spring brought to Israel, was the opportunity to mend relations with Turkey - relations that were significantly strained following the May 2010 flotilla incident.[2] While many of the Arab Spring opportunities required Israel to make progress in the peace process with the Palestinians for their fulfillment, this was not necessarily the case regarding Israel and Turkey. Although the lack of a peace process does negatively impact Israel-Turkey relations, the major crisis between them at the time was a bi-lateral one, which could be solved through a mutual agreement.

The crisis between Israel and Turkey, however, did not begin with the flotilla incident. It has flared up in light of Israel's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, which started in late December 2008.[3] Operation Cast Lead was a turning point in Turkey-Israeli relations. It put a halt to Turkey's intense mediation efforts between Israel and Syria, and led to strong Turkish condemnation of Israel's policy in Gaza and its consequences. Erdoğan's clash with Peres in the Davos Summit, in January 2009, and his walking off the Davos stage with anger symbolized the beginning of a new era of crisis. This was further fuelled by the public humiliation of the Turkish Ambassador to Israel by Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Ayalon, in January 2010, in an attempt to protest an anti-Israeli TV series that was aired in Turkey. It was in this context - of an Israeli siege on Gaza and of a highly visible Israel-Turkey crisis -that the flotilla incident took place.

It is thus clear that the Israel-Turkey crisis is not all about the flotilla. It already began before. However, once the flotilla incident happened, it overshadowed other pending issues between Israel and Turkey. Finding a formula that will enable the two countries to move beyond this incident became a prerequisite for any effort to restore normal bi-lateral ties between them and to move towards reconciliation. Not only at the official governmental level but also at the societal level. Early attempts at resolving the flotilla incident did not bear fruit. Israel's Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Benyamin Ben-Eliezer met in late June 2010 with Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu to discuss ways of resolving the crisis between Israel and Turkey.[4] This meeting, as well as other efforts held in the second half of 2010, did not lead to a breakthrough.

Things seemed to be stuck. But, 2011 brought a new opportunity for Israel and Turkey to mend their bi-lateral relations. The re-election of Erdoğan in the June 2011 Turkish general elections, coupled with the dramatic events of the Arab Spring, provided a new political and regional

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2   A Mitvim task-team identified four major fields of Arab Spring opportunities for Israel: viable and sustainable peace, new regional alliances, new channels to the Arab world, and a new Israeli understanding of the Middle East.

3   Since the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party in 2002 and until late 2008, Turkey and Israel had maintained cooperation and normal relations between them despite Turkey's increased support for the Palestinians and criticism of Israel.

4   Barak Ravid, "Ben-Eliezer meets with Turkish FM in effort to resolve bilateral crisis", Haaretz, 1 July 2010.

context in which the relations could be re-evaluated. This context contributed to Turkey and Israel, with US mediation, making progress towards drafting an agreement between them. However, this agreement was eventually rejected by Israel in August 2011 leading to the eruption of a new cycle of escalating tension between the two countries.

The aim of this article is to analyze the Israeli decision-making process and discourse regarding the crisis with Turkey in 2011. It will first examine the changing circumstances of 2011, including the impact of the Arab Spring and the different manners in which Israel and Turkey reacted to it. Afterwards, it will focus on the Israeli decision to reject the draft agreement with Turkey and on the different phases of the Israeli reaction to the new crisis with Turkey that followed.

An Opportunity for Reconciliation

During the first half of 2011, it was common to hear from Turkish and Israeli pundits that once the June 2011 elections in Turkey are over, Erdoğan may very well move towards mending relations with Israel. Despite the fact that Israel was not a major issue in the election campaign, this assessment was based on the assumption that upon being free from electoral considerations, Erdoğan would have more room and political will to manoeuver towards fixing the Israel-Turkey crisis. Indeed, following the elections and AKP's landslide victory, there was an effort by both sides to create some better atmosphere between the countries.[5]

A few days after the elections, the Turkish organization IHH announced that it would not take part in another planned flotilla to Gaza. This was apparently decided upon due to pressure from Turkish government officials, and was regarded in Jerusalem (together with Turkey's assistance to Israel regarding the December 2010 Mt. Carmel fire), as an indication that Turkey was pursuing a more constructive approach towards Israel.[6] Netanyahu responded with a letter to Erdoğan, which congratulated him on his elections victory, and which stressed that the Israeli government "will be happy to work with the new Turkish government on finding a resolution to all outstanding issues between our countries, in the hope of reestablishing our cooperation and renewing the spirit of friendship which has characterized the relations between our peoples for many generations".[7]

Even Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Ayalon took part in the efforts to express renewed warmth between the countries. Ayalon met in Jerusalem with a group of Turkish journalists that decided to visit Israel, and claimed that he actually did not intend on humiliating the Turkish Ambassador in early 2010. Ayalon told the Turkish journalists that "the incident [in which the Ambassador was seated in a low chair] was a joke that was blown out of proportion", that he has sent a letter of apology to the Turkish Ambassador, and that the cancellation of the second flotilla is a good opportunity for Turkey and Israel to restore their relations.[8] He

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5   Towards the elections in Turkey, the common hope in Israel was that Erdoğan would be in need to form a coalition with one of the secular parties, which traditionally hold more positive attitudes towards Israel.

6   Alon Ben-Meir, "Is a Turkish-Israeli reconciliation imminent?", Today's Zaman, 11 July 2011

7   "Israel's Netanyahu reaches out to Turkey", Today's Zaman, 21 June 2011.

8   Barak Ravid, "Ayalon to Turkey: I never intended to humiliate your ambassador", Haaretz, 24 June 2011.

also posed for a Turkish journalist while sitting in a lower chair than her. Ayalon, though, did not change his hawkish position regarding the flotilla incident. He still hoped that the flotilla incident would be shelved by Turkey. This was unrealistic.

In parallel to these public diplomacy acts, the US had publicly encouraged the governments of Turkey and of Israel to work closely together. Reports began to appear claiming that the US was also mediating secret negotiations between Israeli and Turkish representatives.[9] For the US, having its two major allies in the region at odds with each other was a strategic hardship it was willing to put strenuous efforts to resolve.[10]

It was not only the Turkish elections that enabled this attempt at Turkish-Israeli reconciliation. While the elections did provide a more favorable political context for the sides to get closer together, it was the Arab Spring that provided a more favorable regional context. Turkey's pro-active decision to side with the protesters in the different Arab countries and its aim at playing a central role in assisting peaceful transformations was of importance in this regard. It led to the collapse of the alliance between Turkey and Assad's Syria, which was a key factor in Turkey regional foreign policies in recent years and which brought Turkey closer to the region's radicals, such as Hamas and Iran; it led to a significant improvement in the relations and coordination between Turkey and the US in light of their mutual interests in the changing region; and it enabled Turkey to try and position itself as part of a new regional alliance of moderate (albeit critical of Israel) countries that work to prove that Islam and democracy are compatible. Turkey had to re-evaluate its ties in the region.

Turkey and Israel seemed to have more joint regional interests than before. Both countries aspire for regional stability and security (albeit holding often diverging views on the means to achieve this). The events in Syria brought the regional instability to the borders of Israel and Turkey, with some incidents of cross-border spill-over already taking place - including sporadic shootings, the flow of Syrian refugees towards Turkey ,and the attempt by Syrian protestors to cross the border into Israel in the Golan Heights.[11] In such a period of change and uncertainty ,Israel and Turkey - the democratic and pro-Western countries in the region - could have benefitted from coordination and dialogue mechanisms enabling a joint look at the changing region, much like Turkey-US relations evolved for the better during the Arab Spring.

The improvement in Turkey-US relations ,and the increased coordination between their leaders[12],enabled the US to have more leverage on Turkey to push it towards reconciliation with Israel. Moreover, Turkey's continued interest to assume a mediator role between Israel and the Palestinians, as expressed by Abdullah Gül, also gave Turkey a reason to improve ties

9   US Department of State, Daily Press Briefing, 21 June 2011.

10 Martin Indyk, "US strategy towards a region in turmoil", Lecture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 10 January 2012.

11 Sebnem Arsu and Liam Stack, "Fearing Assault, More Syrians Flee Into Turkey", New York Times, 9 June 2011; Jack Khoury and Anshel Pfeffer, "Eight said killed as IDF fires on infiltrators from Syria and Lebanon", Haaretz, 15 May 2011.

12 Alyson Neel, "Erdoğan and Obama's phone chats reveal Turkey's ascent", Today's Zaman, 16 October 2011.

with Israel.[13] In order to be a mediator, Turkey has to have good relations with both sides and open communication channels to them. These were assets that Turkey had in the past, and that previously helped it bring Israelis and Arabs closer together.[14]

For Israel, the Arab Spring brought new reasons for mending relations with Turkey. In light of a region in turmoil, of fear from further isolation and from rising radicalism, of concerns from possible implications of the Palestinian approach to the UN and from the Iranian nuclear project - Israel should have been more interested in having at least normal relations with Turkey. Turkey is a significant regional power, one of the only Muslim countries willing at all to engage with Israel, a source of stability, and a country that can have a moderating effect on some regional actors and can serve as a channel between Israel and the new regimes in the Arab world.

However, the first year of the Arab Spring did not lead Israel to try and get closer to Turkey. Israel and Turkey differed in the way they viewed the changes in the Arab world. In contrast to Turkey's pro-active and supportive approach to the Arab Spring, Israel adopted a passive approach that was preoccupied with threats and concerns. Israelis looked around them and saw the regional status quo, which they have grown to know and to feel relatively at ease with, collapse. They saw Muslim parties and movements grow stronger. They saw the fall of Hosni Mubarak, a strategic ally of Israel. They also saw demonstrations in front of Israeli embassies in Egypt and Jordan. Israelis began to doubt whether the existing peace agreements would survive the regional changes. They also feared that the Assad regime might initiate an Israeli-Syrian escalation in order to divert attention from the domestic unrest in Syria.

In light of this approach, the Israeli government decided to follow regional developments with a wait-and-see policy. It refrained from issuing statements of support to the Arab protesters and from calling on Arab leaders to step down. The Israeli government believed that until the region stabilizes - and even if this is to take several years - Israel should not initiate major diplomatic initiatives or take bold regional or pro-peace steps. By taking such an approach, Israel - unlike Turkey - gave up on the opportunity to play a role in the re-shaping of the region. It chose to try and dis-engage itself from Middle Eastern affairs and to seek new alliances in its periphery as a compensation for its lost regional alliances, including its relations with Turkey. Thus, Israel turned to develop increased cooperation with Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. Netanyahu's visit to Cyprus in February 2012, the first-ever visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to the neighboring island, was a clear manifestation of this policy.

These official Israeli attitudes and policies were echoed in Israel's public opinion. In February 2011, 46% of the Israeli public thought that Egypt's revolution will have a negative effect on Israel-Egypt relations (while only 9% thought the opposite); 70% thought that the chance for democracy in Egypt in the foreseeable future was low; 46% though that there were high

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13   Abdullah Gul, "The Revolution's Missing Peace", New York Times, 20 April 2011.
14   Meliha Altunisik and Esra Cuhadar, "Turkey's Search for a Third Party Role in Arab-Israeli Conflicts: A Neutral Facilitator or a Principal Power Mediator?", Mediterranean Politics 15(3), 2010, pp. 371-392.

chances for an Iranian-style Islamic regime forming in Egypt; and 48% thought that Egypt's revolution will strengthen Hamas (while only 13% thought the opposite).[15] Attitudes did not change for the better as time went by. In November 2011, 68% of Israelis believed that their country's national security situation was worse than it was before the process of change in the Arab world started.[16]

These negative beliefs regarding the Arab Spring were coupled with a belief that Turkey is aspiring for leadership in the changing Middle East and that it is bolstering its popularity in the Arab world through criticism of Israel. This combination had a negative impact on prospects for mending Israel-Turkey ties, and it overshadowed the above-mentioned joint interests that the two countries shared in light of the regional turmoil. Israelis were skeptic as to whether Turkey is at all willing to have better relations with Israel at this point in time.

The opportunity that emerged in 2011 for Israel-Turkey reconciliation was eventually left unfulfilled. The two countries held secret negotiations under US auspice, and senior representatives sent by both governments joined these talks. The aim was to agree on a formula, on an agreement, that would fix relations and that would lead to the shelving of the Palmer report. The Palmer Report was drafted by an UN-appointed committee that was supposed to assist in fixing the Israel-Turkey crisis. The report's publication was postponed several times, in order to give the negotiators more leeway to try and reach an agreement.

With each delay, it became more apparent that the report - if and when published - would be used by both sides to reinforce a blame game between them. The report was gradually perceived as a verdict as to which side was guilty in the flotilla incident, rather than as a tool to promote a solution to the Israeli-Turkish crisis. Nevertheless, the fact that both sides came to realize that the report did not fully support their views became an incentive for progress in the negotiations. The report was to claim that Israel's blockade of Gaza was legal - despite Turkey's claims, while arguing that the IDF used unreasonable and excessive force in the takeover of the flotilla - despite Israel's claims.[17]

Eventually, the Israel-Turkey negotiations led to a draft agreement, which is said to have included an Israeli apology for operational mistakes that may have occurred during the takeover of the flotilla, Israeli compensation to the victims' families, a restoration of full diplomatic ties between Israel and Turkey, and a guarantee by the Turkish government not to prosecute Israelis involved in the flotilla incident. Israel, however, decided to reject the agreement. In August 2011, following deliberations in the Israeli cabinet and despite US pressure, Netanyahu notified Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Israel would not apologize to Turkey. Shortly afterwards, the Palmer report was leaked to the press,[18] putting a halt to any attempts for reconciliation and leading to a renewed escalation of tensions between Israel and Turkey.

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15   The Peace Index - February 2011, The Israel Democracy Institute and Tel Aviv University.
16   The Peace Index - November 2011, ibid.
17   Herb Keinon, "'Palmer report: Gaza blockade legal, IDF force excessive'", Jerusalem Post, 1 September 2011.
18   Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu to Clinton: Israel won't apologize to Turkey for Gaza flotilla raid", Haaretz, 17 August 2011; The full version of the Palmer Report can be accessed at: http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/Palmer-Committee-Final-report.pdf

The draft reconciliation agreement that was rejected by Netanyahu, did in fact address Israel's major concerns and interests - it included only a low-key and conditional version of an apology, it protected to a significant extent Israeli soldiers from law suits, it did not demand any change of Israeli policy regarding Gaza (as was demanded by Turkey before), and it ensured normal diplomatic ties between the countries. If so, why was such an agreement eventually rejected?

The Israeli Decision

In major Israeli state circles there was support for the reconciliation agreement. Israel's Attorney General, Yehuda Weinstein, has reportedly advised Netanyahu to reach an understanding with Turkey, even if that meant issuing a general apology for operational mistakes and misuse of force in order to prevent lawsuits against Israeli soldiers.[19] Within the defense establishment there was increased support for resolving the crisis even at the price of an apology to Ankara, as "Israel has a major stake in improving relations with Turkey in light of Turkey's standing in the region, its past economic relationship with Israel, and the opportunity to renew defense-related export to Turkey".[20] Also, among Israel's diplomatic circles there was support for such a move.

However, the voices within the bureaucracy and the establishment that supported an agreement with Turkey were usually not voiced in the public domain, and did not spark a public discourse on the issue. The negotiation process with Turkey was conducted behind closed doors, and the eventual Israeli decision was shaped by only a few political leaders, based on political considerations as well as their personal beliefs and ideology. There was no real public pressure on the issue, although the possible reaction of the public was definitely part of the political considerations that were actually taken into account.

Israelis did not understand the significance of the flotilla event for Turks. While Davutoğlu labeled the flotilla incident as "Turkey's 9/11",[21] Israel dismissed the incident as an event used by Erdoğan to humiliate Israel and to improve Turkey's standing in the Arab and Muslim world. Israelis were offended by the fact that Turkey did not stop the flotilla from sailing. They did not grasp the intensity of public emotions in Turkey regarding the killing of the Turkish citizens (which was seen in Israel as a legitimate act of self-defense) and that the demand for an apology was a consensual issue in Turkey, also shared by Israel's friends there. Israeli officials wanted to believe that an expression of sorrow, without an apology, would be enough to satisfy Turkey. This was not the case. Moreover, Israelis were not aware of the nuances of the proposed agreement. The public debate focused on whether or not to apologize to Turkey, while there was very little understanding of what the agreement called Israel to actually apologize about, of the broader context in which such an apology will be made, and of what Israel was about to get in return.

The prevailing attitude in Israel was that relations with Turkey are doomed and that further

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19   Brak Ravid, "AG to Netanyahu: Apologize to Turkey or face indictments for IDF troops", Haaretz, 21 July 2011.

20   Amos Harel, "Defense officials: Israel considering apology to Turkey over deadly Gaza flotilla raid", Haaretz, 17 July 2011.

21   Yitzhak Benhorin, "Turkish FM likens flotilla raid to 9/11", Ynetnews, 1 June 2010.

deterioration is inevitable due to Erdoğan's policies and statements, especially as the crisis between the countries began before the flotilla incident. Thus, an agreement was seen as being of no use, as Turkey would later come up with other demands and with other sorts of criticism. Turkey, in turn, did not do enough to address the Israeli concerns and to help convince the Israeli public that should Israel take the needed actions to repair the relations, then these will actually bear fruit and will lead to the restoration of normal ties between the countries.[22]

Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman framed the debate about a possible Israeli apology around the issue of national pride. He claimed that national pride should be a guiding principle in Israel's foreign policy making, and that an apology will undermine this pride and will thus weaken Israel's strategic position in the region. This position was not shared by all members of the Israeli government. Minister Matan Vilnai, who took part in the negotiations with Turkey, clearly stated that "whoever refers to the crisis with Turkey in terms of national pride does not understand the strategic reality in the Middle East".[23] Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor were also supportive of mending ties with Turkey. Netanyahu himself was reported to have already agreed on several instances to apologize to Turkey, before backing off due to domestic political reasons, namely the fear of criticism by major coalition partners or by key members of his government.[24] It was the fierce objection by hard-liners Vice Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon (who represented the government in the negotiations with Turkey) and Lieberman that eventually pushed Netanyahu to oppose the agreement, perhaps as an attempt not to alienate his right-wing constituency, in which Lieberman was enjoying increased popularity.

The Turkish response to the Israeli decision was extremely harsh. It was to serve as proof to those in Israel that opposed the reconciliation agreement that Turkey was in no way ready to once again actually become a friend of Israel. Erdoğan and his government, which promised in advance to sanction Israel should it refuse to take the actions Turkey has expected, embarked on a series of tough anti-Israeli statements and policies. In an interview to *al-Jazeera*, Erdoğan stated that the flotilla incident could have justified going to war if it was not for Turkey's restraint.[25] The Turkish Prime Minister announced a series of sanctions against Israel. Israeli diplomats were expelled and diplomatic relations were downgraded to second-secretary level, what has remained of the Israel-Turkey military cooperation was put on halt, official trade between the countries was frozen, Turkey tried to block Israel in multi-national institutions, Turkey announced that it plans to have a military presence in the eastern Mediterranean Sea to escort future flotillas and to challenge Israel's natural gas drillings, that it will support lawsuits against Israeli soldiers, and that it will consider further sanctions. Erdoğan also declared that

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22 There was no realistic expectation in Israel that relations with Turkey can return back to the level in which they were during the alliance of the 1990s. The question was whether normal working relations are at all possible to obtain, or whether Turkey has made a strategic decision to distance itself from Israel, no matter what Israel does.

23 Hanan Greenberg, "Vilnai slams Lieberman's stance on Turkey ties", Ynet News, 25 July 2011.

24 "Israel backed out of flotilla apology three times, report says", Hürriyet Daily News, 27 June 2011.

25 Rueters and Associated Press, "Turkey: Israel's raid on Gaza flotilla was 'cause for war'", Haaretz, 12 September 2011.

he is planning to challenge the Israeli blockade on Gaza by visiting the Gaza Strip in adjacent to a scheduled visit to Egypt. In a specific incident that was not included in the sanctions declared by Erdoğan, Israeli tourists were detained in the Istanbul airport, discouraging those Israelis who were still considering Turkey as a tourist destination. In early September 2011, not a day has passed without further escalation in the crisis. Turkey was trying to put a concrete, visible and high price tag on Israel's decision to reject the reconciliation agreement. There was concern that things might get out of control.

The Israeli Discourse

The Israeli reaction to the crisis that has flared up with Turkey had several phases and aspects to it. The initial public response was one of confusion mixed with concern, even fear. Israelis could not understand Erdoğan's conduct. The Turkish Prime Minister was portrayed in the Israeli media as an irrational, extremist and radical leader, who does not play according to international diplomatic norms. Erdoğan was occasionally compared to Israel's worst enemies in the present and in the past, and was depicted as someone who is inherently against Israel and with whom cooperation or reconciliation are impossible. Israelis were amazed at what they saw as a disproportionate over-reaction. Some sought to explain it with frustration by Erdoğan over the legitimacy given by the Palmer Report to the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Questions started to pop up in the Israeli media about whether Turkey plans to carry out actual acts of warfare against Israel.

In light of the Turkish reaction, public opinion polls revealed at the time a striking consensus within the Israeli public against any apology to Turkey. There were also public calls to boycott Turkish products, and to refrain from visiting the country. In the past, Turkey was a country that so many Israelis used to visit and towards which Israelis had such warm feelings. It was the only country in Israel's neighborhood that embraced Israelis, and accepted them. Now it was seen in Israel as a country that changed course and that sided with Israel's enemies. Israelis felt deeply betrayed by Turkey, claiming that it is Turkey that needs to apologize for enabling the *IHH* (Humanitarian Relief Foundation) flotilla to set sail in the first place. While Turkey declared that its measures are directed against the current Israeli government and not against Israel or the Israeli public, this did not lead things to be seen more favorably in Israel. Reconciliation seemed far-fetched, with relations hitting rock-bottom.

In parallel, a different kind of Israeli discourse has begun to emerge. One that was critical of the Israeli government's handling of the diplomatic crisis with Turkey, questioning Netanyahu's decision to reject the reconciliation agreement, and stressing the importance of having good ties with Turkey. Traditional supporters of the relations with Turkey spoke up once again, and new voices - that were not heard prior to the Netanyahu's decision about the agreement - came forth. These included political opposition figures, as Tzipi Livni and Tzachi Hanegbi from the *Kadima* party, but also public figures as the Governor of the Bank of Israel Stanley Fischer, and former-Minister Prof. Amnon Rubinstein.[26]

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26   See for example Lahav Harkov, "Livni: Government at fault for crash in Ankara relations", Jerusalem Post, 5 September 2011; Lilach Weissmann, "Fischer warns of damage to Israel-Turkish trade", Globes, 5 September 2011.

This trend, which by-far did not represent the mainstream Israeli discourse, was somewhat empowered by some op-eds in the media,[27] and especially by a column published by Nahum Barnea of *Yediot Ahronoth*, one of Israel's most influential journalists. In September 2011, Barnea published an account of the secret negotiations between Israel and Turkey, publishing for the first time the actual content of the draft reconciliation agreement. His column made clear what was on the table and what Israel had missed out on. "Very few in Israel asked what Israel actually has to apologize about", wrote Barnea, adding that "if you ask the Israeli on the street he will say confidently: Israel is asked to apologize on the IDF operation. This is not true". According to the draft agreement, Israel had to apologize only for the very same operational mistakes that it already acknowledged through its self-appointment investigation committee.[28]

The official Israeli policy towards Turkey in light of the heightened conflict was one of containment. Israeli government members kept quiet and did not retaliate towards Erdoğan's statements and policies. The logic was to let Erdoğan play his game on his own, without reacting to his provocations. Israel believed that time will take its toll, and eventually Turkey would move on to other issues. Moreover, there was the expectation that the Barack Obama administration would help Israel in containing Erdoğan and in limiting his anti-Israeli rhetoric and actions. The Egyptian decision not to facilitate Erdoğan's request to visit Gaza in September 2011 was perceived in the Israeli public as a direct outcome of American pressure.

The Israeli policy of keeping a low profile regarding the Turkish sanctions did not hold for all. It was Lieberman, in an attempt to make political gain among Israel's right-wing constituency, who was reportedly planning an Israeli diplomatic retaliation against Turkey. Lieberman wanted to prove that it is Turkey who has much to lose from its policy towards Israel, and to portray himself as taking care of Israel's national pride. It was leaked to the press that he was assessing different ideas on how to embarrass Turkey on the Armenian, Kurdish, and human rights issues.[29]

However, the Netanyahu government opposed this initiative. The official Israeli discourse was trying to devalue the crisis with Turkey, and it was doing so by using two contradictory arguments. One argument held that Israel-Turkey relations had already deteriorated so much in recent years that they could not get much worse. The second was citing the fact that economic relations between the countries surprisingly reached a peak after the flotilla crisis,

meaning that political tensions between the governments do not have an impact on the actual conduct of relations between the two societies.[30]

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27   See for example Zvi Bar'el, "To end diplomatic crisis with Turkey, Israel must apologize", Haaretz, 3 September 2011.

28   Nahum Barnea, "The pride parade", Yediot Ahronoth, 9 September 2011 [Hebrew].

29   Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu's office distances itself from Lieberman's planned measures against Turkey", Haaretz, 9 September 2011.

30   Burcu Gültekin-Punsmann, "Turkey-Israel: toward a decoupling of economics from politics", Hürriyet Daily News, 7 September 2011; "Turkey Israel Hit Peak Point on Trade", Business Turkey Today, 3 April 2011.

The Path to the Israeli Apology

The last couple of months of 2011 have brought more calm to Israel-Turkey relations. The regional focus has been redirected towards Syria, where Turkey has assumed a leading role against the Assad regime. Erdoğan's "megaphone diplomacy"[31] against Israel has been put to a relative halt, probably also due to American pressure. Moreover, there have been some renewed positive public diplomacy moves - Israel's acknowledgement of a supportive Turkish role in the reaching Israel's prisoners swap deal with Hamas, Israel's offering of aid following the October 2011 earthquake in Van and Turkey's willingness to accept it (that made the top news in Israel), and Netanyahu's conversation with Erdoğan (for the first time in ten months) following the passing away of Erdoğan's mother.[32] Nevertheless, the January 2012 visit of Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh to Turkey and the manner in which he was embraced by the Turkish leadership reinforced the negative image that many in Israel currently hold towards Turkey's policies.

In parallel to these political aspects, Turkey-Israel relations began to draw the attention of civil society organizations, which have been gradually trying to become involved in attempts to mend the relations. Think tanks, NGOs, and even youth movements have begun seeking ways to bring together Israelis and Turks, something that was not sufficiently done even when the official relations between the countries were strong. For example, in September 2012, Mitvim and the Global Political Trends (*GPoT*) Center held a policy dialogue in Turkey, in order to enable experts from both countries to jointly analyze the events of the Arab Spring and the possibilities to mend Israel-Turkey relations.[33] In parallel ,the US continued to express its support and desire for improving Israel-Turkey relations ,with occasional media reports on discrete channels or on new bridging proposals.[34]

In parallel to these attempts ,and due to the changing geo-political realities in the Middle East, there has been a significant shift in the Israeli public opinion .A public opinion poll initiated by Mitvim in August 2012, revealed that a majority of Israelis believed that Israel should take action in order to improve relations with Turkey, including the issuing of an apology on operational mistakes that took place during the flotilla takeover, as part of an agreement between the two countries.[35] The Iranian threat, the ongoing crisis in Syria, and the victory of Mohamed Morsi in the Egyptian elections, caused the Israeli public to better understand the importance of resuming the strategic ties with Turkey.

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31 If negotiations between countries or parties are held through press releases and announcements, this is "megaphone diplomacy", aiming to force the other party into adopting a desired position.

32 Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu offers condolences, earthquake relief in phone call with Erdogan", Haaretz, 24 October 2011.

33 The summary of the policy dialogue is at:
     http://mitvim.org.il/images/Israel-Turkey_Policy_Dialogue_-_A_Summary_of_Turkish_Perspectives.pdf, November 2011.

34 Chana Ya'ar, "David Meidan's Next Mission: Thaw Israel-Turkey Relations?" Arutz Sheva, 3 November 2011; "US proposes Israel-Turkey compromise – Maariv", Globes, 12 December 2011.

35 The poll's findings are at: http://mitvim.org.il/images/Israel-Turkey_Poll_September_2012.pdf.

These processes can create a more positive environment for politicians to act towards the mending of ties between the countries. Of much importance is also the renewal of security coordination between Israel and Turkey, even if in a limited manner. The Israeli and Turkish air forces reactivated their ties in December 2011 in order to dismantle the danger of unwanted incidents that will lead to further deterioration.[36] During Operation Pillar of Defense that Israel has carried out in the Gaza Strip in November 2012, further progress was made. As part of attempts to promote a cease-fire, a meeting was held in Cairo between the Mossad chief and the head of Turkish intelligence. In parallel, it was reported that Israel and Turkey have renewed official talks to end the diplomatic crisis between them. The talks were participated by Yosef Chiechanover and Feridun Sinirlioğlu, who also represented Israel and Turkey in the Palmer Committee.[37]

An Israeli decision to embrace the draft reconciliation agreement of summer 2011 can create a breakthrough towards normalization between Israel and Turkey .Progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will also significantly contribute to this, especially due to the Turkish demand that Israel removes its blockade on Gaza as a precondition for mending relations .In the meantime, from the Israeli side, it is essential to educate the public and policy-makers that better ties with Turkey are both feasible and desirable.[38]

Turkey-Israel relations have a long history of ups and downs. These were mostly linked to developments in Israeli-Arab relations, and not to bi-lateral crises resembling the flotilla incident. People tend to remember the Turkey-Israel "honeymoon" of the 1990s, but to forget the cold relations of the 1980s. As a new reality unfolds in the Middle East, with Turkey playing a central role in the re-shaping of Israel's neighborhood, Israel and Turkey should strive to mend their bi-lateral relations. The 2011 opportunity for reconciliation was left unfulfilled, but the regional conditions that enabled this opportunity are still out there. It may not be long before another opportunity for reconciliation appears, due to a political change in Israel or to further regional realignments. Should this happen, Israel, Turkey, and their international allies should seize the opportunity and not let it sail past them, once again.

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36   Yaakov Katz, "Israel, Turkey reactivate air force ties", Jerusalem Post, 21 December 2011.

37   Barak Ravid, "Israel and Turkey resume talks to end the diplomatic crisis", Haaretz, 23 November 2012;
     www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-and-turkey-resume-talks-to-end-diplomatic-crisis.premium-1.480143

38   "Time to talk with Turkey", editorial, Haaretz, 25 November 2012

Political Islam and the Arab Spring | Moshe Ma'oz[1]

I

The rise of political-ideological Islamic parties and trends in the Middle East and North Africa in the heat of the Arab Spring turmoil has reignited debate among researchers, politicians, journalists and religious leaders as to the nature, direction and goals of Islam in our age, especially political Islam. On the one hand there is a sort of Islamophobic school of thought, comprised mainly of Jewish and Christian figures who posit a sweeping, superficial theory, namely that Islam as a whole - and not only its radical factions - is militant, fanatical, evil, violent, anti-western and anti-Israeli/anti-Semitic. It is striving to take over the region and beyond, remove all Western influence, introduce the *Sharia* (Muslim law) and re-establish a strong Muslim caliphate to fight against Judeo-Christian civilization.

On the other hand, scholars of Islam, Muslim leaders and others present a more complex and balanced picture, which distinguishes between radical-fanatical-political Islam and a reformist, partly political, pluralistic, and even moderate Islam. The militant streams of Islam are indeed aggressive, domineering and dangerous not only for the West and Israel but for most of the Muslim regimes in the world. But despite their inherent dangers, the radical Islamic factions do not represent the main movements in Islam but rather give them a bad reputation. The radical factions are extremely marginal, divided and at odds with each other, especially the Sunni and Shiite organizations: the Shiites - primarily the Lebanese Hezbollah and a few organizations in Iraq - are connected to only one Muslim regime, that of Iran. In the Sunni camp the only regime that might be called radical is that of (Northern) Sudan, to which could be added al-Qaeda, global Jihad, the Salafis, parts of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. But even those parties are to some extent in conflict over ideology and practice, such as the "Brotherhood" versus al-Qaeda.

Moreover, most of the regimes in the Muslim world - a total of 57 - which rely on political, military and economic elites, as well as Muslim religious leaders and peoples, take a realistic-pragmatic approach, sometimes even democratic, secular and pluralistic, on questions of religion and state and their attitude towards the West and Israel. Most of them have strategic, military and economic ties with the West and some even with Israel. Some of these countries recognize Israel and others are willing to recognize it and cooperate with it, on one critical condition: solution of the Palestinian problem based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API). Which is to say, establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel on the 1967 lines, with a capital in East Jerusalem and a just and agreed solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. Solution of the Palestinian problem would help the moderate-pragmatic Muslim regimes fight the fanatical-Muslim organizations and their potential influence on the Muslim public in their countries. Furthermore, an agreed solution of the Palestinian problem would contribute

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to the reduction or neutralization of the motivation and/or excuses for the hatred of the West and Israel and anti-Semitism in the Muslim countries (possibly even in Iran) as well as in Europe (amongst both Muslims and Christians). However, in order to fight fanatical Islam and its influence, the pragmatic Muslim regimes must uproot their own centers of corruption and introduce social-economic reforms, including progressive and pluralistic education and adequate representation of their populations. These regimes must also fight the fanatical Islamic elements and their public influence by offering a pluralistic and moderate Islamic alternative. Furthermore, they must coordinate strategic and tactical measures with other Muslim regimes to reduce or neutralize the activity of fanatic Muslim groups. Unfortunately, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), despite its usually pluralistic-pragmatic approach, is not cut out for action against radical Islamist groups.

II

As for the Arab Spring uprisings that began in Tunisia in early 2011 and spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, they ignited disputes between different schools of thought about the directions and goals of the Muslim parties and movements that gathered strength and came to power in the Arab countries. Israeli politicians and academics and others hurried to define the Arab Spring as an "Islamic winter" or "Iranian winter", which was taking over the region according to an Iranian model and under its influence. For instance, according to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: "Iran is already here... The trends...are Islamic, anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-Israeli and anti-democratic".[2]

But the reality created in the area is less one-dimensional, more complex and less threatening. In Tunisia, the pioneer of the revolutions ("the Jasmine Revolution"), dozens of parties and figures (including a Jew) competed in the elections of October 2011, and the party that won most of the vote (41%) was *al-Nahda* ("the revival") headed by Rashid al-Ghannoushi, who defeated two secular parties that garnered fewer votes. That party, which formed a new government, is a moderate modern Islamic party that includes women without head coverings, partly as an expression of the status, education and modern-liberal views of women in Tunisia.[3] Despite vocal protests by a radical anti-Semitic Salafi group, the new Islamic regime tends to be pro-Western and not anti-Israeli, and continues a tradition of sympathy towards the Jews (the new president-elect even visited the synagogue in Djerba).

In neighboring Libya, despite dark forecasts as to the rise of radical Islam, a moderate Islamic party came to power, *the National Forces Alliance*, headed by Mahmoud Jibril (it is known also as a secular party) in the July 2012 elections. The party gained 39 of the 80 seats reserved for parties, versus only 17 seats for the Muslim Brotherhood,[4] and might yet develop a pro-Western orientation in the long run, despite the assassination of the US Ambassador in Libya on September 17, 2012 by fanatic Muslims. Meantime, the domestic political and security instability continues, in parallel to ongoing tribal struggles.

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2   The Daily Telegraph, 24 November 2011; Haaretz, 24 November 2011; AFP, 17 April 2011.
3   Haaretz, 28 October 2011 (via Reuters).
4   Haaretz, 29 July 2012 (via Reuters).

Even in Algeria, the largest country in North Africa - which did not join the Arab Spring revolts - the Islamic parties failed in the 2012 elections, winning only 10% of the seats in parliament. In neighboring Morocco, with the only monarchy in North Africa, the regime of King Mohammed VI was not toppled thanks to his religious legitimacy - his descent from the prophet Mohammed - and his balanced policy. He included in the government one Brotherhood movement while neutralizing another. In the spring of 2011 the king made changes in the Moroccan constitution in order to give it a seemingly democratic character, in the context of a pro-Western moderate Islamic regime with a positive attitude towards the Jews and Israel.

III

As opposed to those countries, Egypt - the largest Arab country in the region - experienced a far-reaching Islamic revolution. In the free democratic elections in the winter of 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood - *the Freedom and Justice Party* - won 45% of the seats in parliament while the more fanatical Salafi party, *al-Nur*, gained 28% of the seats. Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi was elected president of Egypt by 52% of the vote and a few days later, on August 12 2012, deposed the top military command - the opposing stronghold of power - thereby completing the Brotherhood's takeover of the Egyptian government institutions.

Considering the radical Islamist ideology of the Brotherhood on both domestic and external affairs, one could expect the development of an extreme regime in Egypt, both on issues of society and law, and towards the West and Israel. In the worst-case scenario, the new regime could adopt the Iranian model as a state based on Muslim law and forge an ideological-strategic alliance with Iran against the West and Israel. Indeed, such trends have been seen among the Brotherhood's leadership in Egypt since it came to power, especially the demand to Islamize both society and institutions, build relations with Iran and cancel the peace agreement with Israel. But on the other hand, alongside that fanatical faction of the Brotherhood in Egypt, there is also a strong realistic-pragmatic faction, which seemed to be led by former President Morsi. This faction advocates establishing an Islamic democracy in Egypt, with certain Western features such as tolerance for religious minorities and a foreign policy based on national interests rather than solely on ideology. On these issues Morsi did have to consider certain constraints and given situations, such as the power of the liberal-civilian secular camp as well as the members of the previous establishments whose representative, Ahmad Shafik, won 48% of the vote for president. Nor could he ignore the very difficult economic situation of Egypt (population 85 million), which depends on annual US aid, the supply of advanced weaponry and Western tourism, as well as taking into account Egypt's military inferiority versus Israel.

Morsi has taken a set of steps, which can be defined as ambivalent with a tendency towards pragmatism. For instance, on the one hand he fired 53 newspaper editors and appointed others - mostly "brothers" - in their place, in order to control the Egyptian media, and has appointed a new defense minister, Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who is not considered a supporter of the US and Israel. Morsi also made some overtures to renew diplomatic ties with Iran, and he

made a short visit to Tehran at the end of August 2012 as part of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit. On the other hand, during the election campaign he promised the Egyptian people "full freedom and true democracy", equality for all citizens and the appointment of a Coptic Christian and a woman as vice presidents. He also issued an order on August 25, 2012, banning the arrest of citizens for press crimes.

In the area of foreign relations, Morsi has maintained a balanced policy between the global and the regional powers, in which he has developed good relations with the US. Morsi did not cancel or change the peace agreement with Israel and has even cooperated with it in his efforts to fight terrorist elements - Salafi and Jihadi - who control parts of the Sinai Peninsula. Defense Minister al-Sisi even called Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak on August 26, 2012, and conveyed a calming message to him about Egyptian military activity in the Sinai. A week earlier Morsi answered positively to a letter of greeting from Israeli President Shimon Peres for his election as president and for the Ramadan fast. And in early September 2012 Morsi appointed a new Egyptian ambassador to Israel. At the Teheran convention Morsi strongly assailed the Syrian regime - Iran's protégé - implicitly also strongly criticizing Iran.

Based on these positive pragmatic measures, the new Egypt headed by Morsi and the realistic-reformist faction of the Muslim Brotherhood could have been expected to develop a pluralistic democratic Islamic regime, similar to democratic Islamic regimes in other parts of the Arab and Muslim world, which are not identical to Western democracies but do have democratic institutions, representation and equality for all citizens, tolerance for religious minorities and possibly even good relations - if only passive - with the West and Israel (in some cases).[5] The overthrow of Morsi's regime left these issues uncertain and ambiguous.

The US and Israel can go a long way to help these important positive trends, not only by way of American economic aid but also by advancing the peace process with the Palestinians and resolving the Palestinian problem as a whole. Such a solution would greatly reduce or neutralize hostility towards Israel and the Jews (and the US) among parts of the Egyptian public and parts of other Muslim publics in the region and beyond. We could have learned about the importance of the Palestinian problem for Morsi's regime (as well as its predecessor) from Morsi's statements on at least two occasions. At the OIC in Mecca on August 15, 2012 he said that "the Palestinian issue is paramount for Egypt and the other Arab and Muslim countries". And in a speech at Cairo University on June 30, 2012 Morsi said: "We shall support the Palestinian people until they obtain their legitimate rights".[6] The new Egyptian Minister of Information also declared in August 2012 that "Egypt will not allow normalization with Israel before the occupied territories (including East Jerusalem), are liberated". In this context we must again mention the 2002 API, which was ratified by all the Islamic countries and has not been cancelled to this day.

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5 This refers to Tunisia and Libya in their new forms, the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Senegal as well as Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Balkans.

6 BBC News, 30 June 2012.

During Morsi's lone year in office, he neither addressed the Palestinian issue nor improved Egypt's desperate economic situation. Furthermore, despite making numerous statements that were deemed moderate at the time, Morsi's efforts to overtake Egypt's legal and military institutions by firing hundreds of judges, infusion of an Islamic character into the new constitution, and repeated rejection of secular demands were counterproductive and drove deep wedges in the country's political fabric. Consequently, in June 2013, massive demonstrations and rallies took place across the country, all calling for Morsi's resignation. Whether these demonstrations were coordinated with the military or not, General al-Sisi (Minister of Defense and Supreme Commander in Chief of the Egyptian army) seized the opportunity to oust Morsi in military coup d'état and established a temporary government responsible for formulating a new constitution and re-electing a new parliament.

IV

As opposed to Egypt and Tunisia, which both underwent Islamic revolutions with different results, other Arab countries experienced varying degrees of turmoil during the Arab Spring, but none of them experienced radical Islamic revolutions. In Yemen, amid mass demonstrations against the regime's domestic policy in early 2011, members of the al-Ahmar tribe, the rivals of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, revolted and tried to depose him in the summer of 2011. After a series of violent clashes the president conceded to transfer his power to his deputy Abd Rabbu Mansour al-Hadi in February 2012. But two militant radical Islamic groups, which had emerged in Yemen even before the Arab Spring, took advantage of the governmental turmoil to tighten their grip on parts of Yemen: one is *Ansar al-Sharia*, a radical Sunni organization linked to al-Qaeda, which took over the city of Abayan and its environs in southern Yemen near the Gulf of Aden. The other is the radical Shiite al-Houthi tribe that controls the Saada region in the north and is supported by Iran. Both groups threatened the stability of Yemen and Saudi Arabia and US strategic interests in the area.

Likewise, the Shiites of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, who constitute the majority in that kingdom (70%) and are influenced by Iran, pose a certain threat to the Sunni minority rule, to the neighboring Saudi Arabia and to the US Fifth Fleet base in the area. During the Arab Spring events, Shiites rose up against the regime in Bahrain as they had done in the past but were fiercely crushed with the help of Saudi military forces. Despite the Iranian demand to annex it as Iran's 14th district, Bahrain remains a Sunni outpost in a Shiite environment, a close US ally and a moderate and pluralistic Islamic regime that treats Jews well (for instance, in 2009 Bahrain appointed a Jewish woman as its ambassador to Washington).

The same is true for the neighboring Sunni Muslim monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Hashemite Jordan, which maintain a distinct pro-American policy, strategic ties with Israel (especially Jordan) and a positive attitude towards Jews. For instance, in 2002 the Saudi King Abdullah (then Crown Prince) initiated the Arab Peace Initiative with Israel. In 2008 and 2009 he initiated three interfaith encounters, including Jews in Europe and the US, and in April 2009 he awarded

the Arab "Nobel Prize" to the American Jewish scientist Dr. Ronald Levy, who came to the ceremony in Riyadh with his Israeli wife.[7]

However, the Islamic regime in Saudi Arabia belongs to the extreme Wahhabi Sunni stream, and is known for its support of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, including Hamas. On the other hand, it is somewhat threatened by yet more extreme Sunni Salafi groups such as al-Qaeda as well as the Shiite minority (8%) living in the oil-rich districts of al-Qatif and al-Ahsa. Additional potential threats to the regime are the king's advanced age and poor health on the one hand and the ambition of hundreds of Saudi princes to seize government, on the other. Yet today, despite the turmoil of the Arab Spring in the region, the regime has not been shaken thanks to its Islamic legitimacy that stems from the control of the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina, as well as its tough means of surveillance and oppression. Just in case, King Abdullah announced at the beginning of the Arab Spring events that he was granting a series of benefits to the citizens of the kingdom, in wages and housing, in the amount of $130 billion over five years.

It was more difficult for Jordanian King Abdullah II to overcome the mass demonstrations against his social-economic policy as part of the Arab Spring in early 2011. He had to fire three prime ministers and declare "a process of political reform… to bolster democracy… and civil liberties". His constitutional monarchy still enjoys a high degree of Islamic legitimacy thanks to his family pedigree tracing back to the Prophet Mohammed. However, pockets of resistance to the Hashemite regime have recently proliferated not only on the part of Palestinians and Salafis but also among senior Jordanian officials. The most significant challenge to the regime is the Muslim Brotherhood, which is divided into two groups: the radical *Islamic Action Front* with its Jihadist-Salafi orientation and considerable influence on the Jordanian street, and the moderate factions of the Brotherhood, which have been integrated in the regime for many years including as members of the Jordanian parliament, and which support the government.[8] But the Brotherhood's control of Egypt, and possibly of Syria as well in the future, could have an effect on the competition between the Brotherhood groups in Jordan. Possibly even Hamas can influence radical Muslim groups in Jordan but King Abdullah II has so far managed to prevent such a danger. By the way, the Arab Spring events did not cause any significant transformations in Hamas in the Gaza Strip or the PLO in the West Bank. Just like the Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas has different branches - radical and pragmatic - and there is actually extensive economic cooperation between Hamas and Israel. Hamas has even offered a "Hudna" (cease-fire) agreement with Israel, but without recognition.

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7   Haaretz, 12 and 13 August 2012; BBC News, Ibid.

8   Shmuel Bar, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: 'From loyal opposition to threat to the Hashemite entity,'" in Meir Hatina and Uri M. Kupferschmidt (eds.), The Muslim Brothers: A Religious Vision in a Changing Reality (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2012), p. 186 onwards.

V

Like the PLO and Jordan, the main challenge to Bashar al-Assad's regime is the Muslim Brotherhood, which in Syria too is divided between radicals and moderates. But there are significant differences between Syria and Jordan as far as the Syrian regime's approach to confronting the Brotherhood and other Sunni Muslims. First of all, the Ba'ath regime in Syria, which came to power in March 1963 through a military coup, was never considered legitimate by many Sunni Muslims because it is controlled by members of the Alawite minority (since 1966), which is considered "heretical" to Islam, and introduced unpopular secular and socialist reforms that harmed many Sunnis. The Alawite regime presents itself as Shiite and is tied in a strategic alliance with the Shiite Iran and Hezbollah, sworn enemies of the Sunni Muslim regimes and even the Brotherhood.

The long-standing Muslim Brotherhood movement in Syria (since the 1930s) fought publicly and violently against the regime since 1964, and was met with an extremely violent and cruel response. The peak was the Hama massacre in February 1982 in which 30,000 Sunni Muslims were killed, including many women and children. Perhaps fear of government violence prevented the Brotherhood from instigating the recent uprising in Syria, which began on March 15, 2011. They joined it later and have since constituted an important rebel stronghold because of their efficient organization, clear ideology and high motivation, as well as substantial propaganda potential through hundreds of mosques throughout Syria. However, it is doubtful the Brotherhood controls the rebel army, comprised of defecting Sunni soldiers and officers. This irregular army is also confronting more radical groups than the Brotherhood, namely al-Qaeda and global Jihad elements that have apparently infiltrated the ranks of the rebels. Because of these and other factors it is hard to estimate if and when the rebels will succeed in ousting Bashar and taking control of Syria, and what status and influence of the Brotherhood and the more radical Islamic groups will be in the new regime.

However, as part of a tentative evaluation of the chances of the establishment of a Sunni Muslim regime in Syria in the future, it must be taken into account that unlike Egypt, Syria has for generations had a secular tradition with substantial non-Sunni Muslim minorities (Alawites - 12%, Christians - 10%, Druze - 4%, and others); secondly, the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Syria, before the Ba'ath Revolution, was relatively small and moderate, participated in democratic elections for parliament and was even represented in several Syrian governments; and third, many of the "brothers" in Syria support a pluralistic civil society and a representative democracy with a separation of powers, freedom of thought, speech and assembly, direct elections and protection of minority rights. However, the model of Islamic democracy conceived by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood remains "different from the liberal model on one central point: the right of oversight it grants the religious faithful over legislation and elections".[9]

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9   Yitzhak Weissman, "Fundamentalism and Democracy in the Muslim Brotherhood Discourse in Syria", in Hatina and Kupferschmidt, Ibid., pp. 141, 125-142; see also Moshe Ma'oz, Asad, the Sphinx of Damascus, a Political Biography (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1988), p. 158 onwards.

Based on the aforesaid, one can assume that if the Brotherhood comes to power in Syria over the ruins of the Assad regime, then in an optimistic scenario they will not introduce a fanatic Islamic regime but join Tunisia and Egypt (?), Turkey, Indonesia and other countries on the road to establishing a pluralist Islamic democratic regime, although not according to Western models. In such a case one can expect an impingement on the military armament and political influence of Hezbollah in Lebanon as well as the regional status of Shiite Iran, and for Syria to join a regional Sunni Muslim coalition including Turkey and Saudi Arabia (and Israel?), in the interest of blocking the Shiite danger. However, as long as Bashar al-Assad's regime survives, Iran and Hezbollah are likely to maintain their influence while the violent conflicts between Sunnis and Alawites in Lebanon and Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq continue and escalate.

VI

In conclusion and under careful examination, it appears that the Arab Spring uprisings since early 2011 did not bring radical Islamic regimes to power in the region but actually helped bring forth new democratic or pragmatic Islamic regimes in Tunisia, Libya and possibly Egypt, while older pro-Western conservative Islamic regimes survived at different levels of success, namely: the monarchies of Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Furthermore, most of these Islamic regimes oppose and are fighting even harder against radical Islamic groups operating in their countries such as the Sunni al-Qaeda, Salafis and Jihadists as well as militant Shiites in Yemen, Bahrain and Lebanon. These radical groups - Sunni and Shiite alike - along with the radical Shiite regime in Iran and radical Sunni regime in Sudan have considerable influence on various Islamic parties. However, they do not represent mainstream Islam today, neither with their ideological messages nor with their radical fanatical actions. They speak in the name of Islam but distort its messages and give it a bad reputation throughout the world. They even threaten many conservative, moderate and pluralistic Muslim regimes, including political and economic elites that represent the mainstream factions of Islam today.

Of all the 57 Muslim regimes today, one third are in various stages of democratization while many others are indeed authoritarian, corrupt and violators of human rights and women's rights, but most do not maintain radical Islamic views either on domestic or foreign policy. Most of them take pragmatic approaches to religion and society and are open to dialogue, cooperation with Western countries (and Israel) as well as with Christians and Jews, while rejecting Muslim violence and terror. These many Muslims thereby defy the Islamophobic theories of researchers, writers and Christian and Jewish religious leaders such as Prof. Samuel Huntington who argued in his book "The Clash of Civilizations", published in 1996, that "Islam's borders are bloody and so are its innards"; Prof. Jeane Kilpatrick, former US ambassador to the UN, declared that same year that "Islam is a violence-breeding civilization"; Pope Benedict XVI endorsed an ancient Christian canard that the Prophet Mohammed brought only "evil

and inhuman" things to the world. Similarly, Israeli Jewish researchers and politicians believe that all of Islam is "fundamentally anti-Semitic, terrorist and Nazi".[10]

There is no doubt that these generalized, superficial and false perceptions, along with grave terrorist attacks by fanatical, anti-Christian and anti-Semitic Muslims, only increase strong Islamophobic feelings among Christians and Jews in Europe, Israel and the US. These feelings have been expressed in anti-Muslim cartoons, articles and legislation in Europe and the burning of Korans and mosques in Israel and the Palestinian territories by Jewish fanatics. A gross example of such provocation has been the recently produced extremely anti-Muslim film "Innocence of Muslims", which reportedly was directed by an Israeli Jew. There is no doubt that such expressions and actions on both sides might, in the worst-case scenario, lead to a religious war of Muslims against Jews and Christians in the region and beyond.

VII

In order to avoid this horror scenario, Israel must take vigorous action to neutralize Islamophobic proclamations by radical Jews in Israel and the occupied territories - voiced by rabbis and politicians and realized by arsonists of mosques and Korans. Meanwhile, Israel must continue to denounce expressions of Muslim anti-Semitism in our region and beyond, which include anti-Israeli positions, and are demonstrated through terrorism, violence, incitement and indoctrination by Muslim clergy and politicians. However, it must emphasize that this violent anti-Semitism, which is also active in Europe, does not represent the religion, tradition and culture of Islam, nor even the positions of most of the regimes and elites in the Muslim and Arab world. Their positions are more pragmatic and even moderate as reflected for example in the Saudi/Arab League peace initiative of 2002, which was re-ratified in 2012. It offered Israel peace, security and normal relations, on the condition that Israel agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the pre-1967 lines, with a capital in East Jerusalem and a just and agreed solution of the Palestinian refugee problem based on UN resolution 194 (from 1948). This important, unprecedented initiative was accepted by all 22 Arab countries and all the Muslim countries (57, including the Arab countries, and even including Iran under the rule of Khatami, although it later withdrew its support). Israel, which has not formally responded to the initiative to this day, must now respond to it in the affirmative as a basis for negotiations to resolve the Palestinian (and Syrian) problem by establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. An Israeli position of that nature would undoubtedly contribute to a significant improvement in the attitude of the Arab and Muslim countries to Israel and the Jews, and neutralize the motives or excuses of the radical Muslims to hate Israel and the Jews.

An Israeli position of that sort is also necessary today in the context of the Arab Spring, which among other things has placed the resolution of the Palestinian problem at the top of the agenda - mainly for Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, by resolving the Palestinian problem, which is an Israeli national interest, Israel would also contribute to strengthening

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10   Quotes and sources in Moshe Ma'oz (ed.), The Meeting of Civilizations (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), p. VII, Moshe Ma'oz (ed.), Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), p.VI.

the Sunni Muslim coalition in the region in its struggle against the Iranian-Shiite challenge or danger, which threatens the security, status and oil reserves of Sunni Muslim countries, as well as Israel. Israel's strategic interest is to join that coalition, not publicly but in coordination with the US, to block the Iranian threat and improve relations with the Sunni Muslim world. This strengthening of relations can be achieved not only by the Israeli apology to Turkey over the Marmara affair, but also by supporting the Sunni Muslim rebels against the pseudo-Shiite Alawite regime in Syria. Above all, Israel must renew peace negotiations with the Palestinians. To that end it can be helped by the mediation of Egypt and Turkey, which can also help achieve reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah as a step towards a future Palestinian-Israeli settlement.

The Intra-Palestinian Reconciliation Process and the Arab Spring | Ido Zelkovitz[1]

The Arab Spring that erupted with a storm fundamentally realigned the citizen-state relationship in the Middle East. The authoritarian character of many of the Arab regimes was faced with a political challenge as the masses began demanding their share in national decision-making and the shaping of their future as citizens.

The Arab Spring and its array of revolutions throughout the Arab world found Palestinian society divided, weak and split into two competing centers of power. The first center is the Palestinian Authority (PA), which has official international status and is under the control of PA Chairman Abu Mazen. The other is the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip.

Fatah, which controls the PA in the West Bank, and Hamas, found themselves in a deadlock on the question of the division of power and the possibility of dialogue. The two movements, each operating under different geopolitical conditions in its area of control, viewed the Arab Spring as an opportunity to change the status quo and meet the challenges they are facing.

The Palestinian Spring versus the Arab Spring

When we compare the events of the Arab Spring with those occurring in the Palestinian realm we see fundamental differences. As opposed to their brethren in the Arab world, the Palestinians never had a fully independent government, not to speak of a state. Therefore they never developed independent governmental patterns of full civilian oppression and control by mechanisms of force. This may have begun to change when the PA was established in 1994 and began to develop somewhat unitarian patterns of government. However, the Palestinian struggle has, by and large, been devoted to state building and the struggle (in its various forms) to achieve full independence and sovereignty. Not to mention the internal debate between the various political factions over the borders of the future state.

The Arab Spring found the Palestinian Authority in the midst of a search for international support for a Declaration of Independence at the UN. The Palestinian public was mobilized in support of that goal: in contrast with the Arab countries where the masses rose up against the regimes, the Palestinian street was supportive of Abu Mazen's moves. It should be noted that as opposed to the tendency of the Arab masses to blame their regimes for all their problems, the Palestinian tendency is, first of all, to blame the external factor, namely Israel, for their problems, before aiming their criticism at their own government. That is why despite the economic problems in the West Bank, blame for the situation was placed primarily on Israel and only then on Salam Fayyad. The presidency headed by Abu Mazen managed to keep itself outside of the circles of economic protest that broke out in the West Bank in September 2012. That protest contradicted the figures Abu Mazen presented only a year earlier in his

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appeal to the UN, where he tried to portray a picture of economic stability, which is a vital condition for the development of an independent economy.[2]

The regional changes brought about by the Arab Spring affected the Palestinians as well. The young people who saw the regional demand for a redistribution of power between the citizens and the government came up with their own demands. The first and most critical demand by the young generation was to put an end to the political divide between Fatah and Hamas and initiate a real reconciliation process.

That call was supported by an Internet campaign on the social networks and controlled street protests by young people. In Ramallah the administration embraced them cautiously and a token protest tent was erected in the city center, whereas in the Gaza Strip the Hamas police forcefully prevented similar attempts.

The beginning of a reconciliation process: Causes and a descriptive analysis

The voices of the young generation did not fall on deaf ears. The veteran leadership, fearing the emergence of a united front that might confront it with an intergenerational conflict, preferred to enter a dialogue process towards reconciliation. The beginning of the process was made possible by the geopolitical changes that resulted from the Arab Spring.

As for the PA, Abu Mazen was sympathetic but still smarting with disappointment after his effort to achieve UN recognition in September 2011 was thwarted by the Security Council. However, the public was aware of the international sympathy he succeeded in garnering for the Palestinians in the UN corridors. Furthermore, the admission of Palestine as a full member of UNESCO despite US opposition and the economic sanctions it initiated in protest against the move were considered a national achievement. It is important to mention here that not only is the US not considered an honest broker by many Palestinians but it is actually perceived as a representative of global imperialism.

Hamas is also undergoing significant changes as a result of the Arabs Spring, which influenced its traditional positions regarding the management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first blow the movement suffered resulted from the Syrian uprising against the Bashar al-Assad regime, which evolved into civil war. Bashar al-Assad was long considered a strategic ally of Hamas. The bloody war Assad is waging against the Syrian opposition, large contingents of which are identified with the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas's parent organization, made it impossible for Hamas leader Khaled Mashal not to take a stand.

After a long period of calm, Hamas began evacuating its Damascus offices (although not completely - many military operatives are still present in Syria) and look for a new home. The unrest and bloodshed in Syria pushed Hamas to seek a new strategic ally. Egypt, where the Arab Spring led to a regime change and democratic elections that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power, was the destination.

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2   "Macroeconomics and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Seventh Review of Progress", International Monetary Fund, Brussels, 13 April 2011.

The regime change in Egypt created an opportunity for Hamas. One of the movement's top priorities is seeking recognition that would lead to achieving legitimacy on the international level. In order to achieve that goal, Hamas must first of all gain legitimacy in the Arab world. The road to that goal goes through tightening relations with Egypt. The toppling of the Muslim Brotherhood regime by the Egyptian military distanced Hamas ideologically from Egypt and reassured the military's prestige as the most important political factor in the country.

The Egyptian army, suddenly forced to fight over strongholds of political power and required to share its power with the public, had to prove to the world it was still in control of the country and could be trusted, despite the way the West treated Mubarak, who was abandoned to the mercy of the court. The intelligence heads in charge of managing relations with Hamas recognized its troubles and initiated a dialogue with it, leading among other things to the signing of the Shalit deal as well as a memorandum of understanding between Fatah and Hamas, which began a dialogue process between the parties towards reconciliation.[3]

The entry of Fatah and Hamas into a reconciliation process derived from Hamas's political weakness before the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Actually, the memorandum of understanding the Egyptian intelligence presented to Hamas was no different from a previous proposal presented to the movement in October 2010.

In addition to the uncertainty surrounding the Hamas leadership abroad, when the movement took over the Gaza Strip it began undergoing a process of institutionalization. Once the reins of government were placed in the hands of Hamas, it had to develop tools to enable it to provide the residents of the Gaza Strip with a normal life. This required the movement to develop a more pragmatic political line, abandoning military resistance to Israel as a sole political element and combining it with others.

The institutionalization of Hamas, which has no independent economic resources, made the movement increasingly dependent on external economic resources. One of the prices it had to pay for the increasing support it received from Iran before the Arab Spring was acceptance of the Islamic Jihad's process of armament and military and political strengthening in Gaza. Today the Islamic Jihad is positioned as an opposition to the more pragmatic Hamas and an instrument of Iran to secure its geopolitical interests vis-à-vis Hamas and Israel.

Hamas is contending with the turbulence of the Arab Spring and attempting to achieve intra-Arab legitimacy as a springboard towards international recognition. The rise of political Islam in Egypt and Tunisia has given it a shot of encouragement, hoping that those regimes could provide the movement with both the legitimacy it seeks and financial support. Following the collapse of the Morsi regime in Egypt, Hamas may turn again to Turkey for international legitimacy. A firm bond between Erdoğan and Mashal already exists. On September, 30 2012 Mashal was a guest of honor at the AKP congress, alongside Morsi.[4] Since then, Mashal and Ismail Haniyeh held several meetings with Erdoğan on the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process and on Turkey's potential role as mediator in it.

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3   Ron Ben Yishai, "IDF investigation: Egyptians took part in the attack near Eilat", Ynet, 24 August 2011.
4   "Meshaal: Erdogan is Not Only Turkey's Leader; He is also a Leader of the Muslim World", Sabah, 1 October, 2012.

The search for legitimacy is critical for understanding Hamas's conduct. Entry into the PLO would give the movement political status and the ability to take part in the national decision-making processes from which it is presently excluded. After all, the PLO is recognized by the Arab League as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and as such also enjoys observer status in the UN.

Hamas made tremendous efforts to shatter the PLO's constitutional status. The visit to the Gaza Strip by the Emir of Qatar Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani was a significant diplomatic achievement for the organization. It was a complete breach of the political siege of the Gaza Strip, which had psychological effects too: after all, it was not a visit by a minister or member of the Muslim Brotherhood to see the difficult situation in Gaza, but an official visit by a head of state that is not only legitimate but has strategic influence. It could change the whole attitude toward Hamas in other countries.

Furthermore, the Qatari visit and lifting of the diplomatic siege of Gaza is another stage in widening the rift between Fatah and Hamas. The diplomatic recognition of Hamas harms the political standing of the PLO and reinforces the belief among the movement's leadership that it can offer a real leadership alternative for the Palestinians.

Paradoxically, political recognition of Hamas increased following the results of Operation Pillar of Defense, which began after the assassination of the head of the Hamas military wing and continued with an eight-day exchange of blows between Israel and Hamas on 15-21 November 2012. Hamas managed to manufacture political gains in this campaign and became the de facto negotiating partner of the Israeli and US leadership through Egyptian mediation. The war helped Hamas finally break the siege on the Gaza Strip, which suddenly turned into a sort of "Mecca", after all of the foreign ministers of the Arab League, the Prime Minister of Egypt and the Turkish foreign minister made pilgrimages to it.

For Hamas, the outcome of Operation Pillar of Defense was the closing of a circle from the beginning of the Arab Spring. If the Arab Spring found Hamas with its back against the wall and politically weak, the Islamic spirit carried by the regimes of the Arab countries, along with the results of Operation Pillar of Defense, turned the tables. Hamas succeeded in turning its resistance over the eight days of fighting into a myth and leveraged the awareness in the Arab arena that it had succeeded to upset the balance of terror with Israel. At the end of the fighting, Hamas had achieved an internationally guaranteed agreement, while providing itself with the image of the representative of the Palestinian issue and becoming a legitimate and important political player in the regional system.

The consequences for Israel

The reconciliation process between the Palestinian movements is going to be long, exhausting and mainly technical. The purpose of the reconciliation process appears to be mainly to satisfy public opinion on the Palestinian street following the Arab Spring. Fatah is not eager to share with Hamas its centers of power in the PLO, which are backed by many economic strongholds. Furthermore, the heads of Fatah remember well how they took over the PLO from within in

1969, after serving as an opposition to the organization. They are afraid Hamas is planning a similar manoeuver. Despite wishing to present the public with an achievement, the mistrust between the movements is only growing. Recently Hamas even decided to mark the day of its takeover of the Gaza Strip as Police Day, a day celebrating the restoration of order to the Strip. Parties from Fatah protested that initiative.

Until Operation Pillar of Defense it appeared that the reconciliation process was not ripe for signature. Fatah does not want to include Hamas in the PLO mechanisms. There are fundamental disputes between the sides over the division of military power and the process appears to be deliberately cumbersome in order to buy time.

A new window of opportunity has opened for the sides to reach a reconciliation agreement. The process of tactical moderation that Hamas is undergoing has an impact on the inter-Palestinian reconciliation process. Abu Mazen, who is leading negotiations with Israel, is not alone. Actually, channels of communication have opened between Hamas and Israel and the tightening of the Egyptian mediation between the sides can drive a process in which Abu Mazen leads a diplomatic effort and Hamas is committed to it as part of inter-Palestinian understandings.

Hamas's political pragmatism, along with the system of guarantees created through the mediation of President Obama as part of the efforts to achieve a cease-fire, could provide Israel with an opportunity to reach an informal agreement on a long-term cease-fire on the Southern front. Maybe even Turkey could play the role of mediator between Israel and Hamas. Even though Israel perceives Turkey as a non-honest broker, and even as a hostile state, were Israel to ask Turkey - which views itself as a regional superpower - to play the role of mediator between it and the Palestinians, that could be the beginning of building a new trusting relationship between the parties.

As for Hamas, despite the pragmatic steps it is taking, we must remember that the boundaries of its discourse are limited and that it is a fundamentalist movement with a clear doctrine as to the place and future of Israel. The pragmatization of Hamas does not indicate changes in its ideological approach to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hamas's recognition of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders is a tactical measure meant to provide the movement's leadership with wiggle room in order to give a horizon of hope to its public that longs for the establishment of a sovereign state. As far as Hamas is concerned, the PLO can go ahead and conduct political negotiations with Israel. From Hamas's point of view, failure of the negotiations would strengthen the path of armed resistance, which the movement wishes to adopt as its constitutional ethos. It should be stressed that the fragmentation processes are not accepted by all members of the movement's leadership and create various centers of tension. These processes are opposed by many members of the movement and especially the young generation and the military wing. This strengthens the prestige of the Islamic Jihad and the salafi factions in the Gaza Strip, who present more militarist and radical positions than Hamas.

This is the place to mention that Islamic Jihad, which is strengthening militarily, is also developing a functioning political bureau and seeking regions of influence. In any future agreement between Fatah and Hamas or between the PA and Israel, Hamas will be required to be the party that contains and modifies the Islamic Jihad.

From Israel's point of view, any process of direct dialogue with Hamas could cause real harm to the peace process with the PLO, because if Israel decided that the pragmatic approach presented by Hamas makes it a legitimate negotiating partner, the PA under Abu Mazen would lose its main asset and become irrelevant. The initiation of direct talks between Israel and Hamas, which began in practice in the negotiations for cease-fire in Operation Pillar of Defense, could spur unrest in the West Bank by Abu Mazen's loyalists. Such dialogue could be a death blow to the PA's diplomatic efforts and lead it to initiate violent incidents against Israel.

The relative weakness of both parties, Fatah and Hamas, could provide Israel with a golden opportunity to renew accelerated negotiations leading to a two-state agreement, while ensuring Israel's security interests and leaving the large settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty. That is because Abu Mazen has his back to the wall and needs to show a real political achievement and not just a virtual one such as Palestine's admission to UNESCO as a full member. That need has only increased in the wake of the results of Operation Pillar of Defense, which gave Hamas psychological achievements on the Palestinian street and in the Arab world. Abu Mazen intends to continue focusing his efforts on the diplomatic scene, and after Operation Pillar of Defense, Hamas and Islamic Jihad announced they intended to fully support Abu Mazen's appeal to the UN General Assembly on 29 November 2012 to receive recognition of Palestine as a non-member state.[5]

The economic crisis the PA is experiencing could be used as leverage to pressure Abu Mazen into accelerated and serious negotiations, in the understanding that a political settlement would strengthen the PA's economy and create a new horizon for its economic and political development. If Abu Mazen manages to create a significant political achievement it will also have an effect on the Gaza Strip.

Israel must understand that at the moment the Palestinian rift is a given. It can be treated as an independent variable, which means advancing dialogue and trying to reach a comprehensive agreement with the West Bank. The Gaza Strip will decide how to act depending on the PA's achievements in the West Bank.

If an agreement is indeed signed between the parties, Israel must treat the reconciliation process as an opportunity rather than a threat. The signing of a reconciliation agreement would mean entrusting Abu Mazen with the portfolio of negotiations with Israel, but the even greater significance of reconciliation is restoring the PA's control over the Gaza Strip, at least on the legal and declarative level. If the Palestinian reconciliation agreement is signed,

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5   "Abbas hails Gaza PM 'victory' in phonecall: Hamas", The Daily Star, 22 November 2012, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Nov-22/195920-abbas-hails-gaza-pm-victory-in-phonecall-hamas.ashx#axzz2dXoFfRft.

any political process led by Abu Mazen would also bind Hamas. If that happens, it would be wrong to ignore the outcome of the reconciliation process and give the PLO an ultimatum such as "either negotiations with Israel or intra-Palestinian reconciliation". Perhaps it would be more apt to use the results of the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process in order to promote Israel's interests and commitments in the international diplomatic arena.

Israel and Weak Neighboring States:
Lessons from the Israeli Experience in Lebanon | Ehud Eiran[1]

Regime instability in a number of states in the Middle-East created a new challenge to Israel: the adverse spillover effects of weak neighboring governments.[2] In this paper I review Israel's 1965-2012 involvement with a weak state, Lebanon; and draw relevant lessons. The Lebanon experience is instructive. First, the length of time allowed Israel to experiment with a variety of strategies. It therefore charts the spectrum of potential responses whilst providing a test for their efficacy. Second, the Lebanon experience is the formative military experience of Israel's current military leadership. Both the current and previous chiefs of staff served in the 1990s as commanding officers of Israel's Lebanon Division. Third, using the specific case of Lebanon allows focusing the discussion around a concrete example despite the differences between the cases.

The paper continues in four parts. First, I outline the nature of the new threat. Second, I explore the reasons for Lebanon's weakness. Third, I analyze Israel's experience of dealing with the challenges of the weak Lebanese state. In the last part I summarize possible relevant lessons from Israel's Lebanon experience to the emerging threat of weak states.

A. Old and New Threats

Israel's security doctrine was developed to deal with the threat of strong states. However, the political instability in the region created a new set of threats: those that result from its neighbors' weaknesses. State weakness is a continuum that spans from difficulties in providing some services within a functioning state, to failed states. Weakness could be measured, in the order of significance as: (1) the state's inability to control the means of violence in its territory, (2) the rejection of the state's legitimacy by the majority of its citizens, (3) the state's inability to provide basic public goods to its citizens due to a resource gap, or due to institutional failures.[3]

Three weak states - Egypt, Syria, and Libya - present an immediate challenge to Israel. Two other states with a history of weakness - Lebanon and Jordan - might also join the challengers. At the same time, weakness in all these states presents Israel also with opportunities.

The challenges for Israel in three-fold. Strategically, Israeli doctrine is based on deterrence. However, disintegration of the central authority eliminates clear targets to be deterred.

Operationally, existing or new Middle East regimes under threat might initiate armed action against Israel in an effort to buttress public legitimacy. Moreover, the collapse of strongly armed states such as Libya and Syria may lead to transfers of arms, including non-conventional weapons, to radicals including non-state actors. Finally, the difficulties our neighbors are facing in exerting effective control over their border areas with Israel have the potential of creating spheres of action against Israel, most notably, terror attacks into its territory. Israel already faced a number of armed attacks from Sinai in the summers of 2011 and 2012 but a similar threat may evolve from the Golan Heights front.[4] Ineffective law enforcement in border regions may lead to further challenges such as easier transit of illegal labor immigrants, drugs, and criminal elements. Israel may also have to deal with the flow of refugees.[5]

As these lines are written in the summer of 2012 early signs of the "threat of the weak" emanates primarily from Egyptian Sinai. However, as noted, Israeli officials warned that that the Syria may soon pose a similar challenge to Israel. Israel's two other neighbors, Lebanon and Jordan are stable for now, but as they face significant internal challenges they may present Israel with a similar problem. The challenge of the weak is not limited to Israel's immediate neighbors, but also extends to other regional actors. For example, the collapse of the Libyan regime, over a thousand miles away from the Jewish state's borders, released large quantities of advanced weapons that according to Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister, "upgraded Hamas' abilities".[6]

B. Lebanon as a Weak State: A Brief Overview

The weakness of the Lebanese state is primarily a result of its inability to create a collective identity that would supersede the continued significance of communal-religious identities; and the failure of state institutions to adapt to power shifts between these communal-religious groups.[7] The more traditional religious and ethnic identities of Lebanon's diverse population kept their central role throughout the postcolonial evolution of the state.[8] Moreover, Lebanon absorbed in 1948-1949 a large Palestinian refugee population that both added to the ethnic mix and imported the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the fragile Lebanese context. The institutional arrangement of the state, a sect-based power sharing, allowed for effective management but also replicated the state's weakness by maintaining the political role of the various communities. Moreover, the institutional architecture did not adapt to the changing demographic reality by which the previous dominant group - the Christian Maronites - was no longer in the plurality. This led to the development of another weak state attribute: the state's loss of control over the means of violence. First, under the 1969 Cairo accords that

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4   See for example: Ahikam Moshe David, "Concern about Penetrations from Syria to Israel", NRG, 20 July 2012.

5   "Barak Touring the North: If There Will be Need to Stop Waves of Immigrants from Syria, They will be Stopped", Walla, 19 July 2012.

6   "Remarks by DFM Ayalon following the escalation in the south", Israeli MFA website, 10 March 2012, www.mfa.gov.il/MFAHeb/ Diplomatic+updates/Events/Remarks_by_DFM_Ayalon_100312.htm?wbc_purpose=Basic&WBCMODE=PresentationUnpublishedIsra el-medical-Japan-21-Mar-11.

7   Latif Abul-Husn, The Lebanese Conflict: Looking inward (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), p. 9.

8   For a detailed analysis of the process see: Meir Zamir, The Formation of Modern Lebanon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

allowed the PLO extra-territorial rights in Lebanon,[9] and then in the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war.[10] This further lead to partial occupation of Lebanon by Syria and Israel until 2000 and 2005 respectively.

C. Israel in Lebanon

<u>Early Days: 1967-1982</u>

Beginning in 1965, but especially following the 1967 War and the ejection of the Palestinian armed groups from Jordan by 1971, Palestinian groups began to launch attacks from south-Lebanon into Israel. As noted, the 1969 Cairo agreement between Lebanon and the PLO gave the latter a de-facto right to attack Israel from Lebanon.[11] Between June 2, 1965 and May 9, 1982, the Israeli media reported 587 attacks from Lebanon by various Palestinian armed groups on targets in Israel.[12] Most of the attacks were on the civilian settlements in Israel's northern region, the Galilee.[13] South-Lebanon was attractive as a base for action against Israel for a number of reasons. Beyond the weakness of the Lebanese state, Lebanon offered favorable human[14] and geographical[15] terrain as well as proximity to the Palestinian political leadership that was situated in Beirut.

In the 1970's Israel tried a number of strategies to deflect the threat. First, Israel punished the Lebanese state for Palestinian actions. Perhaps most notably, Israel did so in the 1968 attack on Beirut's airport. Israel also tried denial as its forces routinely raided Palestinian bases in Lebanon. In that period Israel also tried targeted assassinations, most notably in an April 1973 attack on the private residences of senior PLO officials. In 1978 Israel escalated its response. Following an attack on a bus in Israel that killed 37 civilians, Israeli forces entered southern-Lebanon for a few weeks (operation Litani) and dismantled Palestinian armed infrastructure killing some 300 Palestinian combatants. Israel withdrew back to the international border within a few weeks, only after the United Nations deployed there a Peacekeeping Force, UNIFIL.[16] During the 1970's Israel further used a local Lebanese militia that opposed the Palestinians and established by 1978 three small enclaves near the Israeli border. However, further rounds of Palestinian attacks and Israeli retaliation continued and by the early 1980's the 6,000 strong PLO force in Lebanon as well as smaller forces from other Palestinian armed

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9   For an interesting comparison between Jordan and Lebanon's handing of the challenge posed by the PLO in the late 1960s see: Farid El Khazen, The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967-1976 (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 2000), pp. 110-127.

10   For a detailed description and analysis of the war see: Adam Arnon, To Die in Beirut: The Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990 (Hod Hasharon: Astrolog, 2007) [Hebrew].

11   Walid Khalidi, Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle-East (Cambridge: Center for International Affairs, 1979), pp. 80-81; Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martel, Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1986), p. 29.

12   This data does not include two types of attacks when they did not cause to casualties: mines that were planted in Israeli territory and attacks with firearms. See: Ofer Ben-David, The Lebanon Campaign (Technoseder, location unknown, 1985) , pp. 117-137 [Hebrew].

13   Benny Morris, Righteous Victim: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2003), p. 468 [Hebrew].

14   Morris, Ibid, pp. 467-469.

15   Moshe Bar-Kochba, "Operation Kalahat 2", Ma'arachot 14, August 1988, pp. 312-313; Moshe Tamir, Undeclared War (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arachot, 2005), pp. 73-74 [Hebrew].

16   Morris, Ibid, p. 470; Willem-Jan van der Wolf and Claudia Tofan (eds.) The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (Nijmegen, the Netherlands: Wolf Legal Publishing, 2010).

groups[17] were effective enough to force Israel to agree to a formal US brokered cease-fire with the organization.[18]

War: 1982-1985

Israel perceived the 1981 cease-fire as a temporary measure, and sought a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian threat via war.[19] On June 6, 1982 Israeli forces invaded Lebanon.[20] Formally, the Israeli government declared that the attack (named operation Peace for the Galilee) was to "remove the Galilee settlements from the range of [the] terrorists in Lebanon".[21] Later it the summer it emerged that Israel had wider war goals: to eject the political leadership of the Palestinian national movement from its seat in Lebanon's capital, possibly annihilating it as a significant political actor;[22] and to secure the election of a pro-Israeli Lebanese President that would sign a peace agreement with Israel. It seems that Israeli officials also hoped that the war would force the Syrians to leave Lebanon.[23]

By the end of the summer Israel achieved almost all its goals. By mid-June, 1982 Israeli forces secured their control over south and central Lebanon including the outskirts of the capital Beirut. On August 23, 1982 Israel's ally, Bashir Gemayel, was elected President of Lebanon. .By September 1, 1982, and following US and French intervention, the PLO's political and military operatives left Lebanon. Syria - bruised by clashes with Israeli forces - vacated the capital Beirut.

Yet, Israel's success was short lived. On September 14, 1982 President Gemayel was assassinated and replaced by his pro-Syrian brother, Amin Gemayel. While the Lebanese government signed on May 17, 1983 an end-of-hostilities-agreement with Israel, it cancelled it under Syrian pressure on March 5, 1984.[24] The prolongation of the Lebanese civil war in areas under Israeli control forced Israel to invest resources in controlling the various fractions.

In 1984 Israel left its positions near Beirut and withdrew south, to the line of the Awali river. Israel still held on to southern and parts of central Lebanon with the hope of guaranteeing at least limited security arrangements in return for withdrawal. Yet, the Nakure talks (November 1984-January 1985) between Israel and Lebanon also failed.

The Security Zone: the Unintended Campaign 1985-1990

By early 1985 Israel realized that it will not be able to secure its northern sector through an agreement with Lebanon. As a result, Jerusalem adopted a unilateral defensive strategy that was intended to prevent penetrations (but not shelling) into Israeli territory. The new

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17   Reuven Avi-Ran, The Lebanon War: Arab Documents Volume II (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arachot, 1997), p. 13 [Hebrew].

18   Morris, Ibid, p. 475.

19   Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, Israel's Lebanon War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 37; Yehuda Vagman, "One Goal Too Many", Ma'arachot 413, July 2007, p. 5 [Hebrew].

20   The immediate impetuous was an attempt on the life of Israel's Ambassador in London.

21   Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, War of Deceit (Tel-Aviv: Schoken, 1984), p. 389.

22   Fredric C. Hof, Galilee Divided: The Israel-Lebanon Frontier 1916-1984 (Boulder: Westview, 1984), p. 98.

23   Morris, Ibid, p. 486.

24   Kristen E. Shulze, Israel's Covert Diplomacy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 142.

approach included three elements: (1) A strong defensive posture alongside the international border, (2) the deployment of a pro-Israeli Lebanese militia (the SLA), [25] in a "security zone"[26] north of the border, and Israeli military support in the "security zone" for the SLA.[27]

In the first few months of the redeployment, significant aspects of the new defensive posture advanced as planned. However, by 1986 the 2,700 soldiers strong SLA was crumbling under a renewed wave of attacks by Shiite organizations, mostly Amal and Hezbollah.[28]

This crisis led to further policy readjustment. Israel reoccupied some of the fire bases it transferred earlier to the SLA and began attacking Hezbollah posts in an effort to ease the pressure of the SLA. The Israeli military presence will remain in place until 2000. Israel also launched a "hearts and minds effort" that included modest material support for the local population including permits for locals to work in Israel. The combination of a renewed Israeli efforts and the internal Amal-Hezbollah fighting in the late 1980's led to a dramatic decline in the number and effect of Hezbollah's attacks in south Lebanon in the years 1989-1990. During those years Israel still dealt with, and responded to, a small number of Palestinian attacks. On November 25th 1987, for example, a Palestinian operative glided from Lebanon and attacked an Israeli army base close to the border, killing 6 soldiers.

A Renewed Hezbollah Effort: 1990-1997

In late 1990, Hezbollah renewed its efforts against Israel. The organization transformed its approach and adopted a more traditional guerrilla tactics. It constructed small and well concealed outposts, ambushed Israeli forces, made extensive use of mortar fire and later anti-tank missiles. Hezbollah was also effective in using the media. The organization was also able to deter Israel from targeted assassinations, after it punished Jerusalem Hezbollah's Secretary General by staging two attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets in Argentina. In 1993 the number of Hezbollah attacks went up 80% and Israel sought a systemic response to Hezbollah's challenge Israel's strategy[29] was to force Syria to contain the organization. The Israeli method included the use of firepower not only to destroy Hezbollah targets but mostly some three hundred thousand Lebanese from south and central Lebanon (beyond the "security zone") to flee their homes.

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25   The idea had its formal origins in the defunct 17 May 1983 Israeli-Lebanese agreement In the annex to the agreement the Lebanese government undertook to create a "security region" in south Lebanon in which it would: "Enforce special security measures aimed at detecting and preventing hostile activities as well as the introduction into or movement through the security region of unauthorized armed men or military equipment. See: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Agreement Between Israel and Lebanon - 17 May 1983, www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1982-1984/114%20Agreement%20between%20Israel%20and%20Lebanon-%2017%20May%201.

26   The area, some 1,000 Sq. KM, was about 10% of Lebanon's territory see: Augustus Richard Norton, Hezbollah: A Short History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 22.

27   Israel considered other options including long term deployment in Lebanon (in different formations). A third option was to withdraw to the international border. See: Reuven Erlich, The Concept of the Security Zone and the Test of Reality, in: The Security Zone in Lebanon: A Reconsideration (Jerusalem: Davis Institute for international Affairs 1997), p. 13 [Hebrew].

28   Yossi Peled (with Ronit Vardi), Ish Tsava (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 1993), p. 338 [Hebrew].

29   Operation Accountability, 25-31 July 1993.

Israeli planners hoped that the humanitarian crisis will force the Lebanese government to ask the Syrian one to contain Hezbollah. Despite the questionable moral strength of this strategy, it did lead to an American arbitrated informal agreement in which Israel and Hezbollah agreed not attack civilians (in Israel or in Hezbollah controlled areas). Attacks on Israeli military targets in the security zone were, in effect, permitted. A similar operation in April 1996 was concluded by a written agreement, in effect, between Israel and Hezbollah, in which both parties agreed to accept rules of the game, similar to the ones agreed upon in 1993. This time, the rules were accompanied with a four way monitoring committee (Lebanese-Syrian-Israeli-French). In the meantime Israel also made some changes to its operations on the ground, and adopted a more aggressive posture towards Hezbollah by developing a combat capacity tailored to the Hezbollah challenge.[30]

In the Shadow of withdrawal: 1997-2000

Although in immediate military terms Israel had become more effective against Hezbollah, some aspects of Israeli civil society began questioning Israeli policy there. This was a result of a large number of causalities in 1997 (mostly due to a helicopter accident that killed 73 soldiers). To this point, the IDF controlled public critique, mostly conducting Lebanon operations by a small number of mostly conscription soldiers, coupled by a limited and controlled access to media. A number of grass roots movements (*Four mothers, the movement for leaving Lebanon*) combined forces and gained greater public traction. In 1998, the *Likud* led cabinet announced that Israel is willing to accept the 1978 UNSCR 425, which called for Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Its implementation however was delayed until the security measures could be worked out. The debate now was not about leaving Lebanon, but under what conditions. The killing of Israel's most senior officer in Lebanon in February 1999 in the midst of a bitter political campaign led the candidate that would eventually win the elections, Ehud Barak, to commit himself to leave Lebanon when elected. Israel tried again to secure its northern border as part of a broader agreement with Syria (1999-2000), but one the negotiation failed in early 2000 Israel completed its withdrawal by May 2000.

2000-2012: Containment and then War

Upon its withdrawal Israel moved to a stated policy of deterrence, but effectively practiced containment.[31] Despite the strong warnings by Prime-Minister Barak and the Chief of Staff Lt. General Shaul Mofaz, Israel responded in a measured way to an October 2000 abduction of three Israeli soldiers that were patrolling the border with Lebanon. Israel held on to this policy even when five Israeli civilians (as well as one military person) were killed by Palestinians that

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30   Changes were made both on the general staff HQ as well as in the northern command. More resources were directed towards the forces on the ground and a special unit - Egoz - was set up especially to fight Hezbollah. Its existence was kept a secret for over a year. On the Northern command level, General Levine encouraged special operations, including long range attacks on Hezbollah targets deep in Lebanon. He also appointed a social assistant for special Ops, Moshe Tamir. Levine further changed his approach to operation independence on the ground and gave preference to initiative over strict adherence to standard procedures, even in cases where imitative led to casualties.

31   The Commission for the Review of the events of the 2006 Lebanon Campaign (the Winograd Report): Partial Report, April 2007, p. 44.

penetrated from Lebanon.[32] Israel adopted containment as its preferred policy for a number of reasons: (1) its desire to focus on the security challenge posed by the second Palestinian Intifada and not open a second front; (2) the deterrent posture of Hezbollah; (3) a desire not to get embroiled in another ground assault on Lebanon; (4) a preference not to interrupt internal processes in Lebanon that seemed favorable to Israel.[33]

Yet, in the summer of 2006 Israel, unexpectedly, launched into a 33 day operation (later named the second Lebanon war) against Hezbollah. Yet, a massive air and a limited ground operation did not end effective Hezbollah shelling on Israel's northern sector. However, since 2006 Hezbollah was careful not to provoke Israel and did not initiate attacks against it. Looking back then from 2012, the 2006 operation did create a deterrent effect against Hezbollah.

D. Lessons

Caveats: Paraphrasing Tolstoy, if all strong states are strong in the same way, every weak state is weak in its own way. And so, while the lessons of Israel's engagement in Lebanon are instructive they should be adapted to the realities created by the Arab Spring. First, Syria and Egypt offer different types of weakness. While Syria is torn by a civil war, Egypt's government is legitimate but suffers from an under-resourced and ineffective force in Sinai. Another important difference is that Israel and Egypt are parties to a 1979 peace agreement; and that Israel and Syria are parties to a 1974 disengagement agreement.

Weakness invites other challengers: The Lebanese experience shows that the most significant problem emerging out of a weak neighboring state is the arrival of other foes into the spaces the state abandoned. The PLO in the 1970's and Iran via Hezbollah posed over the years the gravest danger to Israel from the Lebanon. Indeed, Israel's biggest current concern, for example, is that Hezbollah will be used by Iran to deter Israel from attacking Iran. The emerging threat from Egypt, and possibly from Syria,[34] suggests that global Jihadi elements might do the same.

Manage the problem - do not expect to resolve it: Israel's experience in Lebanon shows that a weak neighbor is a challenge that defies permanent solutions. Israel's attempts to solve the militarized challenge posed to it from a weak Lebanon spans more than four decades. During this time Israel tried, as noted above, to coerce the Lebanese state, Israel's non state challengers, and strong states that supported the non-state actors. It used a variety of tactics including attacks on the assets on the weak state (1968), assassinations of leaders of challenging groups (both PLO and Hezbollah in 1973 and 1992 respectively), the creation of a local militia (1976-2000), small militarized incursions (1970s), and large scale invasions (1978, 1982), deployment of international forces: both UN mission (1978-) and actual Western combat forces (1982-1983). Israel also tried to secure a us brokered cease-fire (1981-1982)

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32 Ibid. p. 41.

33 Ibid. p. 45.

34 Syria's Deputy Prime Minister stated recently that his country had become a "base" of al-Qaeda. See: "Syria's Deputy Prime-Minister: We have become a Base for al-Qaeda", Globes, 24 August 2012 [Hebrew].

a peace agreement (1983), a military agreement (1984) and to inflict a humanitarian crisis (1993, 1996). Only two types of activities led to a decline in the threat Israel faced: third party brokered cease-fire (1981-1982), and large scale invasions (in 1978 and 1982). The latter, however, created a new set of threats that ultimately dwarfed the original threat they removed.

Variables out of Israel's control have a major effect: Moreover, the magnitude of the threat posed to Israel over time was not simply a result of the clash between Israel and its foes. Indeed, the internal constraints these foes faced - like the late 1980s Hezbollah-Amal conflict - had a significant effect on their ability to attack Israel. This is a lesson in humility and the limits of Israeli force. It also means that Israel can secure some of its goals by diplomatically (or otherwise) developing internal constraints on the freedom of action of non-state actors in a weak state. The immediate implication is that Israel should develop as many channels as possible to understand, and maybe even effect, internal developments in Syria and Egypt. Israel should re-engage Turkey as Ankara is perhaps best positioned to understand and affect internal events in Syria. In the Egyptian context Israel should gain a better understand and access to the international actors that Cairo is engaging in order to solve its internal economic crisis.

Beware of grand solutions: Israel's most dramatic effort to resolve the adverse security effects of a weal Lebanese state - the 1982 invasion - ended in a strategic blunder. While the PLO was removed from the Lebanon, Syria got stronger. More significantly, Hezbollah was created as a result of the war, rose to national leadership position and created an ongoing security challenge for Israel. Looking back from 2012, the greatest challenge posed by Hezbollah - an indeed the most undesirable outcome of the 1982 war - is the fact that the organization plays an important part on Iranian deterrence against Israel. In other words, a 1980s operational problem had become a strategic issue by the first decade of the 2000s. This change was unexpected from a 1982 Israeli perspective, demonstrating that in the unstable multivariable environment of weak states grand moves have a greater chance to backfire. In the context of Egypt and Syria this lesson highlights, for example, the extreme caution Israel should exercise in taking action that might endanger the peace agreement with Egypt.

International actors can help, but will not resolve problem: Since 1975 a number of international actors tried to stabilize the Lebanese system, or aspects of it. These included a Syrian force authorized by other Arab countries, the United Nations force in south Lebanon (UNIFIL), and direct deployment of American and French forces in the country in 1983. With the exception of the Syrian intervention, none of these forces was able to deliver security. With the exception of UNIFIL, they were all dragged into internal Lebanese fighting. The immediate implication is that Israel should be realistic regarding Washington's ability to guarantee its interest in Egypt. More specifically, continued attacks on the multinational force on the Sinai might lead to its withdrawal. Similarly, if Syria will experience militarized international intervention, we should accept that it will not necessarily secure our northern border.

Temporary institutions and arrangements can last and can be transformed: This is perhaps most obvious I the case of UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon. It was created in 1978 by the UN following Israel Operation Litani. In 2006 it was expanded and strengthened following the 2006 Second Lebanon war. As in Lebanon, both in Egyptian Sinai and the Israeli-Syrian Golan front, there are international peace keeping organizations: The Multinational Force and observers (MFO) and the Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) respectively. Despite the limitations of both[35] the Lebanese experience shows that they can be altered in a way that could adjust them to the new emerging security realities. The immediate implications are that Israel should develop ideas regarding possible adaptation of the existing international forces in Sinai (MFO) and the Golan (UNDOF) in a way that could mitigate the new threats. These could include ideas about a new force structure or new types of operations.

Need for constant attention: Israel's fundamental failure since the early 1990's is that it did not adjust its security posture, the one based on the self-declared security zone, to the changing reality. The security zone was constructed in order to deflect the pre-1982 threats of Palestinian attempts to shell or to penetrate Israel. However, by the early 1990s the main foe that evolved was Hezbollah that focused its efforts on Israeli forces in Lebanon, rather than on Israel's civilian population. Israeli forces on the ground were slow in adapting to the new challenge, and the political leadership changes its position only in 2000 when it ordered an Israeli withdrawal from the region. At least in part, Israel's failure is a result of inattention by the political leadership and the higher military levels. The main threat during this decade was still Syria, and more broadly Israel was busy with the peace process and the possibility of a political arrangement with Damascus which will include a Lebanese component. With a similar instability in Egypt and Syria, Israel might benefit from a more constant and rigorous policy process which will include a periodical review of the nature of the challenge, the options for meeting it, and for the relevance of existing solutions.

Policy agility: Similarly, the unstable nature of the challenge further warrants a willingness to develop and execute policy changes in short order much as Israel experienced in Lebanon.

Look at the opportunities: Alongside the complex set of problems that a weak state inflicts on its neighbors, these states also provide opportunities for the latter. In the case of Lebanon, Israel was able to develop a relationship with a significant element on the Lebanese society, the Maronites. Though this relationship may have contributed to the debacle of the 1982 invasion, they nevertheless allowed Israel access to an elite group in a neighboring country, which has been an old goal of Zionism. The challenge of the weak further creates an internal institutional opportunity, namely, openness to new ideas both in framing the challenge as well as in developing ideas to respond to it. In the context of the current weakness in Syria and Egypt, there are a number of opportunities:

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35 Aharon Levran, The UN as an element in the security arrangement in the northern border, Memo 13, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel-Aviv, February 1985 [Hebrew].

The possibility to develop new sets of mutual interests with regional and international players. Most notably with Turkey over Syria, with the Egyptian government (and especially with its military army) over its effective control in Sinai and the movement of African immigrants, and with the Arab monarchies that are concerned of political Islam.

The possibility of new opportunities to communicate with a wider set of actors in the Arab world, including former elites, and challengers to the existing regimes. The massive political and social dislocation in both societies may allow some of its members to be willing to explore talks with Israel and Israelis.

In the internal Israeli arena the weakness in Syria in Lebanon could be used by the progressive camp to highlight Israel's strength when compared to the crumbling Syria and Egypt. In turn, a greater sense of security might allow a future Israeli leader to take greater risks, at least in the Palestinian front.

In the internal Israeli front, the need to re-shape Israeli policy in the face of the Syrian and Egyptian weakness will most likely create a rare moment of openness in the foreign and security establishments. This creates an opportunity, including for progressives to affect policy.

Finally, the nature of the challenge of the weak, entails many times a regional solution such as the one Israel sought with Syria and the US in the late 1990s regarding Lebanon. This creates an opportunity for progressives prefer a higher level of regional involvement to advance their agenda.

Develop wide analytical frameworks: As noted above, some of Israel's failures were a result of a limited understating of the nature of the challenge as was the case in the self-declared security zone in the 1990s. Similarly, Israel did not understand the possible effects of its 1982 invasion on the internal Lebanese dynamics, and in particular of the Shiites. Therefore, going forward, Israel will benefit from analyzing the problems of a weak state with the widest possible lens well beyond a limited military view. This conversation will benefit from opening it up to scholars and practitioners who may lack military understanding have a good sense, for example, of the human terrain in the places under review. In the context of the questions at hand such an analysis inter alia should include an in-depth understating of the nature of state weakness, the local society and cleavages, nature of external actors, and set of constraints. Israel will benefit if it will engage experts and civil society actors in the formulation of its policies regarding its neighboring states.

The Mass Media and Israeli–Arab Relations following the Arab Spring | Ksenia Svetlova[1]

It was called the "Arab Spring" during the first half of 2011, while toward the end of the year, when the parliamentary elections in both Tunisia and Egypt took place, some in Israel began applying the term "Islamic winter"[2] on the fascinating wave of changes that was and still is sweeping throughout the Middle East. While the optimists were counting on the revolutions to produce fresh democracies in the Arab region,[3] the pessimists predicted the reign of Sharia and collapse of existing relations between the Arab world and Israel. However, reality proved that both were wrong.

The changes were unique to every Arab country, and the results mostly unpredictable in terms of political calculations. At the same time, there is no doubt whatsoever that apart from speedy political changes, a slower and perhaps much more significant change is building up in Arab societies across the region. The urge for stability and peace did not undermine the urge for transparency and freedom but rather it was vice versa. The young vibrant societies are struggling to find their ways in the raging sea of changes; the old structures are falling apart while the new ones have not emerged yet. How did the revolutions affect the views, the opinions and the attitudes towards Israel in the Arab world? And what will be the place of Israel in the brand new geopolitical Middle Eastern structure? As usual, the picture is not black and white. There are plenty of nuances and details that must be explored thoroughly to set the necessary course of action.

This article will examine Arab-Israeli relations through the prism of mass media in the Arab world and Israel. The article will conclude that the nature of relations between the Israeli government and Arab states did not change significantly during this period, while the negative coverage of Israel in the Arab media had decreased.

Israeli Media and Establishment versus Change: The Fear of Tomorrow

During the last fifty years, Israel was accustomed to dealing with familiar and largely predictable actors in the region. It is easy to understand why Israeli political elites are so afraid of change across Israel's borders - the Stockholm syndrome[4] runs deep under the skin, enters the blood stream and it is virtually impossible to get rid of. Israel was ready to deal with the reality of

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2   Michael J. Totten, "Arab spring or Islamist winter", World of Affairs, January-February 2012, www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/arab-spring-or-islamist-winter
3   Tiku Nitasha, "President Obama addresses Egypt's revolution", New York Magazine, 2 November 2011, http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2011/02/president_obama_addresses_egyp.html
4   The Stockholm syndrome is a psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy and have positive feelings towards their captors, sometimes to the point of defending them.

animosity, boycotts, and revelations of Anti-Semitism[5] that were often heard in both Jordan and Egypt - the only public partners of Israel to regional peace agreements - while maintaining stable relationship with well-known figures who were not replaced along the years, but rather rotated among themselves in key positions. The defrosting of the cold peace, however, was literally impossible, due to anti-normalization legislation and public agenda in these countries. The latter were in many cases promoted by the same power brokers who gladly shook hands and exchanged hugs with their Israeli partners on private occasions.

At the same time, the individuals or organizations which tried to promote establishing bridges with Israel or with specific segments of the Israeli society (even with the Arab-Israeli sector) were often persecuted or punished by state security services and eventually were silenced or pushed into immigration. Egyptian screenplay writer Ali Salem, journalist Hala Mustafa,[6] and sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim and many others paid the price of getting too close to Israel and were forced by the regime itself to back off. But nevertheless their voices were heard. Activists came to participate in joint seminars abroad, in which Israelis also participated, and some fearlessly visited Israel and came back to spread their knowledge about the country which is viewed by overwhelming majority of the Egyptians as "the enemy".

Naturally, the Arab regimes nurtured the idea of their exclusiveness, warning Israel and the West that the regimes are the sole guardians of secular nationalism against the Islamists. While these regimes were maintaining their own truces with the Muslim Brotherhood, they were picturing doomsday scenarios of Islamist rise to power. So, it is no wonder that since early 2011 the military and political prognosis on Israel-Egypt relations focused on dangers and risks. Negative events, such as burning Israeli and American flags, as well as break-ins to Israeli and American embassies in Cairo and Tripoli, continued to feed the beast of fear.

The fear had reached its culmination on 6 August 2012, soon after the deadly attack on Egyptian troops in Rafah, where 17 servicemen lost their lives. Morsi ordered a high-scale military operation in Sinai and pushed the Egyptian troops into the demilitarized zone, allegedly violating the terms of the Camp David peace accords.[7] In a week's time, he also fired the chief of intelligence, General Murad Muwafi, and literally got rid of the Higher Military Council, making Field Marshal Omar Suleiman and General Sami Anan resign along with many other Mubarak-era key military figures. At that time, the Israeli media exploded with war-time headlines such as "Blatant violations of the Camp David treaty", "Building up pressure in Sinai", and "Why did Egypt increase its military force in the peninsula". By 29 August 2012, the Israeli government notified the Knesset that there were no violations of the Camp David agreements and that all the Egyptian moves were coordinated with Israel.[8]

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5   "Anti-Semitism in Egyptian media: February 2001-February 2002", Anti-defamation League, www.adl.org/egyptian_media/media_2002/default.asp

6   "Israeli ambassador breaks bread with Hala Mustafa", Bikya Masr, 17 September 2009.

7   "Egypt beefs up troops in Sinai", al-Arabiya, 10 August 2012, http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/08/10/231454.html

8   Tzvi Zinger, "Government to Knesset: there is no Camp David violation in Sinai", Megafon, 29 August 2012, http://megafon-news.co.il/asys/archives/76533

During the first days of September 2012, every media outlet in Egypt reported that the last "extra" Egyptian tank had left the Sinai Peninsula. However, this news item was not covered in Israel as widely as the previous news on possible violations of the Camp David treaty. Despite the negative prognosis, it soon became clear that there are still viable and strong ties between the Israeli and Egyptian intelligence services, that the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt was closed time and again, and that the Egyptian army is now energetically closing up the underground tunnels to Gaza that were wide open during Mubarak times.

To sum it up, most Israeli and Western analysts were wrong in their ability to foresee the imminent changes conducted by Morsi in the army and intelligence ranks, as well as the tempo and characteristics of relations between post-Mubarak Egypt and Israel. For now, both the Egyptian Embassy in Tel-Aviv and the Israeli Embassy in Cairo (as well as the Israeli Academic Center there) function as usual. Egypt and Jordan even successfully nominated new ambassadors to Israel during that time. Israeli and Egyptian military and intelligence circles continue their intensive level of cooperation. Israeli politicians from both the coalition and the opposition are making efforts to engage in some kind of contact with the Muslim Brotherhood. Prior to the presidential elections in Egypt, a delegation of Israeli MP's was supposed to meet with a Muslim Brotherhood delegation in Washington.[9]

The logical conclusion of this experience must be that a more objective and detailed media coverage of the events is needed. The wider public, as well as the political establishment, should be offered additional types of analysis to these events and their possible implications. It is obvious that the Arab-Israeli conflict and the situation in the Middle East in general are not popular issues in the Israeli public agenda. No political party apart for left-wing *Meretz* had made the political settlement with the Palestinians its priority. There is need to bring it back on the agenda and to raise awareness to regional developments and to the importance of clear Israeli positions regarding them.

The Arab Media and Israel in the Post-Arab Spring World

It is hard to anticipate that the barrier of hatred will fall at once, and it is not likely that even progress towards peace with Palestinians will end the mutual animosity and suspicions. There are still many in the region who oppose the mere existence of a Jewish state in the Middle-East.[10] Nevertheless, in an atmosphere of change, it became easier for both official and unofficial actors interested in ties and contacts with Israel to act, especially since the attention of the Arab media today is diverted from the Israeli-Palestinian issue towards ongoing developments in Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and other countries.

"The Israeli-Arab conflict is definitely out of the spotlight today. Events that are far more dramatic are taking place in many Arab countries, so Palestinian affairs do not make it anymore into the top five or even top ten news items. It is no longer in prime time", says

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9   Moran Azulay, "A summit in US: Knesset members will meet Muslim Brotherhood men", Ynet, 11 June 2012, www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4241113,00.html

10   "A free Palestine, free from the river to the sea", The Uprooted Palestinians, 24 September 2011.

Walid al-Omari, director general of al-Jazeera bureau in Israel and the Palestinian Authority.[11] Al-Omari also admitted that following the dramatic unfolding of events in Syria, the ratings of top Arab networks such as *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiya* were dropping tremendously, while local traditional media (print and broadcast) as well as social media were on the rise.

The Jasmine revolution in Tunisia and the Tahrir revolution in Egypt proved that despite the illiteracy and the lack of personal computers, social networks and the new media are immensely powerful and popular in these countries, as well as in many other Arab countries. Whereas most of Egyptians still get their daily portion of news reading the *al-Ahram* or *al-Masry al-Youm* newspapers, in desperate times the new media may become the only source of news for wide segments of the public. The traditional media quickly adapted to the changes that followed the revolutions in Egypt and in Tunisia. However it is difficult to say that the media in those countries is not subject to censorship anymore or that it fully enjoys the privilege of free speech. During his first 100 days in power, Morsi cracked down on many journalistic freedoms, firing editors of *Tahrir* and *Doustor* publications. Charges were pressed against Tawfiq Okasha, the owner of *Faraeen* TV for "instigating to murder the president".[12] The Egyptian court released Okasha on bail and later ruled that he is not guilty.

While on the governmental and the security levels Israeli-Arab ties are developing in the same pace as before the revolutions, a few cracks started to show in the seemingly unbreakable wall of hostility and animosity towards Israel in civil societies in Arab countries. Israeli organizations supplied humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan, while Israeli MP's succeeded in building ties with Syrian opposition leaders on the ground and abroad. During 2012, a record number of artists, writers and filmmakers from Morocco,[13] Tunisia[14] and Algeria[15] visited Israel - despite the intimidations, threats and boycotts. An official Moroccan delegation visited Israel for the first time since 2000 in April 2012,[16] and a number of unofficial visits by Egyptian businessmen and political figures took place. Radical Islamist and nationalist circles in the respective countries condemned the visitors, of course, and some were ostracized by trade unions, etc. However, the mere fact that such visits took place, despite the gruesome prognosis, are of much importance. Interestingly enough, since early 2011, Israel's name was heard in increased positive rather than negative connotations in the Arab world.[17] In Syria, for example, the angry refugees shouted that "even Israel does not slaughter the Syrians as much as Bashar al-Assad".[18]

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11   Interview with Walid al-Omari, aired on Israel TV Channel 9, 16 September 2012.

12   "Press crackdown: Egypt's Morsi slammed for censorship", Russia Today TV, 18 August 2012, http://rt.com/news/press-crackdown-egypt-mursi-996/

13   Their visit was to the Haifa International Film Festival.

14   Elhanan Miller, "Exiled Tunisian filmmaker comes to Tel Aviv", Times of Israel, 8 June 2012, www.timesofisrael.com/tunisian-filmmaker-i-used-to-believe-in-boycotts-but-no-longer-do/

15   Itamar Eichner, "Algerian author suffers boycott", Ynetnews, 24 July 2012, www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4259415,00.html

16   "Official Moroccan delegation visits Israel", Al-Resalah, quoted in Elder of Ziyon, 15 April 2012, http://elderofziyon.blogspot.co.il/2012/04/official-moroccan-delegation-visits.html

17   Abdulateef Al-Mulhim, "Arab spring and the Israeli enemy", Arab News, 6 October 2012, www.arabnews.com/arab-spring-and-israeli-enemy

18   Ksenia Svetlova, "What will happen to Syria", Slon.ru, 28 April 2011, http://slon.ru/world/chto_budet_s_siriey-587496.xhtml

Therefore, for Israelis who are interested in reaching out to the Arab press, the option of integrating into social media in Arabic language, meaning the blogosphere, Facebook and Twitter must also be considered. On a more detailed level, influential bloggers (some of them are professional journalists while others are not) can be easily identified and possibly approached directly or through a third party. At the same time, the Gulf-based media (or, better yet said the London-based Gulf media such as Saudi owned *al-Arabiya*, *Ash-Sharq al-Awsat* and *al-Hayat* in addition to *al-Jazeera*) might be significantly easier to approach.

After the dramatic fall of the Mubarak regime, it is clear for many in the Arab Gulf states that Israel is a constant and stable element in the region, in both security and economic terms, and given the common fear of Iranian hegemony, this relationship can be fostered even more. Lately, many Gulf newspapers and TV stations (all of them controlled by the state or owned by power brokers close to the regime) published interviews with Israeli officials, among them Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman. The Saudi *Elaph* (online newspaper) had published for more than three years the memoirs of Prof. Shmuel Moreh from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

It seems that in the post-revolutionary countries the new media might be easier to approach and establish connections with, whereas in the conservative countries of the Gulf - where the internet is heavily restricted and censored - the traditional media outlets must be approached. Furthermore, the Arab-Israeli media, which now enjoys improved relations with the larger Arab world, must be considered as a mediator and partner in possible media-related initiatives between Israel and the Arab world.

Conclusions

So far, the Israeli academia, media, and think tanks continue to analyze the unprecedented events of the Arab Spring along the well-known security lines, feeding public fears and insecurities. Although it is still early to make final conclusions, it is already quite clear that for now the Arab Spring did not change tremendously the nature of relations between Arab regimes and Israel, while the negative coverage of Israel in Arab media significantly decreased.

The changes in the Arab world allowed the opening of small windows of opportunity, allowing some new actors on the Arab arena to reassess the possibility of ties with some circles within the Israeli society or the Israeli government. These windows of opportunities must not be missed. New opportunities should also be explored in order to best make use of the flexibility that the current period of change enables. Many actors in the Arab world - emerging power brokers such as current Syrian opposition leaders, Gulf States politicians, writers, journalists and filmmakers - are now ready to explore new possibilities and opportunities. However, just a tiny fracture are ready to admit ties with Israelis and to face the furious criticism, since the anti-Israeli circles also feel that they are free to act in absence of strong central power. Attacks and assassinations on liberals are nothing new to the Arab world,[19] but now those

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19   Sasson Somech, "Memories of Mahfouz", Haaretz, 22 April 2011,
     www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/memories-of-mahfouz-1.357582

who individually seek rapprochement with Israel might experience more of physical and brutal violence.

The current period should be used to privately reach out and explore new possibilities for ties and connections. As for Israeli media coverage of the Arab spring and its consequences - the Israeli public is entitled to know more about the unfolding events of post-revolutionary Arab societies, in order to make up its individual opinion of them. More interviews, op-eds and analysis on a different note than what is supplied by the mainstream media should be provided to both the Israeli public and political establishment.

The New Kingdom of Forces: Research Institutes in the Middle East | Kamal Ali-Hassan[1]

At the dawn of the Arab democratic era several countries in the Middle Eastern have experienced a series of dramatic events. This continues to change the balance of power inside and between them. These changes require a reassessment of the distribution of power within each country and its impact on the fabric of relationships inside the country, between Middle Eastern countries and between them and the rest of the world.

One of the main characteristics of this new era is the prominence of Arab research institutes or think tanks on the local and international levels. Representatives of those institutes are seen at major events and conferences around the world and in the Middle East. This fact may be an indication of the dramatic change of the Arab countries' vision of themselves and others. The efforts by Arab scholars to explain, analyze and detect future changes in the Middle East demand we acquaint ourselves with these research institutes and learn about them in depth.

The purpose of this article is to shed light on the think tanks in the Arab world and through them to highlight the emerging potential balance of power in the Arab countries in the wake of the Arab Spring. The article is based on three main sources of information: familiarity with the research literature in the field, the websites of leading Middle East think tanks, and meetings and conversations I had with representatives of Arab institutions at international conferences in the last two years.

Independent research institutes in the Middle East began to emerge in the shadow of authoritarian regimes and served as instruments for the governments to legitimize their rule. In his global ranking of think tanks for 2011, Dr. James McGann,[2] one of the leading researchers on the subject in the world, listed 6,545 think tanks. 323 of them (5%) were in Middle Eastern countries (excluding Cyprus, although the ranking does include it in the Middle East despite its EU membership). 113 of the Middle Eastern institutes were in non-Arab countries: 54 in Israel, 32 in Iran and 27 in Turkey. This leaves 210 institutes in the Arab world (3% of the institutes in the world), most of which are concentrated in five countries: 34 in Egypt, 29 in Iraq, 28 Palestinian institutes, 18 in Tunisia and 16 in Jordan.

These figures reflect the trend that prevailed in the Arab world until recently and indicate the dictatorships' lack of support of the research institutes as well as their long-standing oppression of intellectuals and prevention of study and research of domestic, regional or global affairs. The state of research in the Arab world, as reflected by the figures, is very poor. There are huge gaps between it and the rest of the world, both in terms of knowledge and the research and advancement of democratization processes, as was seen in the Arab

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2   James G. McGann, "The Global Go-To Think Tanks 2011", January 2012, University of Pennsylvania, USA;
     http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=think_tanks

Spring events beginning at the end of 2010. In the absence of research institutes and civil society organizations, many countries of the Middle East suffer from problems that they were prevented from addressing during the rule of the dictatorships.

Following the Arab Spring we have seen a significant emergence of think tanks, intellectuals and civil society organizations in the Middle East. There has not been a comprehensive mapping of these think tanks yet because many organizations and institutions are still under construction and developing their organizational or research identities. However, we are witnessing a growing need of Arab organizations, institutes and intellectuals to take part in democratization processes and develop the conversation and common knowledge of democratic and civic values. This development can be expected to produce social mobility and help democratize countries that develop their civil societies, think tanks, and political cultures based on democratic values like human rights and pluralism.[3]

The joint initiative by the UN and Kuwait to establish the Arab Planning Institute (API)[4] in 1966 motivated other countries in the region to establish research institutes along the Western model, reflected by their goals, activities and scientific approaches to domestic issues and later to strategic and regional issues as well. In 1980 the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) was established in Saudi Arabia. The center serves more than 400 Arab cities from 22 countries in the Middle East.

Other institutes have served as platforms for the dissemination of pan-Arab ideas and ideologies or the promotion of the idea of the unification of Arab countries as a reaction to the defeat of the Arab armies by Israel in the 1967 war. One of the institutes initiated as a response to that war was the Center for Arab Unity Studies,[5] founded in Beirut in 1975. The center was founded by more than 30 Arab intellectuals who believed that the lack of Arab unity in a joint effort against Israel was the reason for the Arab defeat in the war. Through the institute they sought to advance the idea of Arab unity and activity against the Zionist movement and Western imperialism in the Middle East.

Alongside extensive research activities, the center holds conferences and lectures and grants awards for the promotion of the pan-Arab idea, such as the prestigious prize named after the late Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The prize is awarded to people who advocate the nationalist ideas of Abdel Nasser, as the person who both conceived and implemented the idea of Arab unity and national renaissance in the East. Furthermore, a large part of the center's activity is devoted to increasing the internal Arab discourse on Western thought and its effects. Likewise, the center also studies the dimensions of Western rule and its characteristics and especially Israeli policy in the occupied territories, while using Arabic translations of the writings of Israeli experts.

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3   Larry Diamond, The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World (New York: Holt paperbacks, 2008), pp. 154-168.

4   http://www.arab-api.org/default.aspx

5   www.caus.org.lb/Home/index.php?Lang=en

The center has published 439 books about Arab, regional and global politics; 224 books about Arab nationalism; and 163 books about economics.[6] The center also publishes the best periodical in the Arab world, *al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi* (The Arab Future).

Thus, in 2012, the Middle East Studies Center,[7] founded in Jordan in 1991, announced the first translation into the Arabic language of the Babylonian Talmud, as part of its goal of learning the Jewish narrative and heritage, of which the center claims the Arab world knows but little. The translation project, described as one of the most important projects of the 21st century, is the fruit of the strenuous labor of dozens of researchers from a range of disciplines for some five years and is considered a tremendous breakthrough for the Arab world in terms of knowing the "other" in the region.

One of the leading research institutes of Israeli affairs is in Ramallah. The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR)[8] was founded in 2000 and employs Palestinian researchers from both Israel and the occupied territories. Furthermore, the center has been directed for the last ten years by Palestinian experts from Israel. Dr. Huneida Ghanem, who currently directs the institute, has a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Likewise, the author and literary scholar from Acre, Anton Shalhat, heads the center's Israeli department. The center focuses on the study and research of Israeli society and politics. The center also focuses on the translation into Arabic of Israeli op-ed pieces and terminology stressing the divisions within Israeli society and government as to a permanent agreement and the founding of a Palestinian state. The center provides an opportunity for Palestinians to learn about Israeli society and politics. It also serves as a center for the dissemination of information about Israel from a Palestinian perspective, as most of its researchers are Palestinian residents of Israel who know both the Hebrew language and the Israeli context first-hand.

After the revolutions in the Arab world in early 2011 the number of institutes grew drastically. Meanwhile, think tanks from the pre-revolutionary era have initiated drastic changes, both on the organizational and research levels. One of the leading think tanks in the Arab world is Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS) in Egypt.[9] The center was founded in 1968 and focused on studies of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Since 1972 its activity has expanded to include the study of international affairs with an emphasis on the Arab world. The center has published more than 150 books and has a team of more than 35 researchers. It was rated as one of the 50 best research institutes in the world.[10] The institute's publications include weekly, monthly and annual strategic reports covering global, regional and local issues. Since the revolution, the institute has been undergoing significant reorganization. In March 2012 it began its process of restructuring and hiring of new and young staff.[11]

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6   www.caus.org.lb/Home/publication_categories.php?OrganizationId=2

7   www.mesc.com.jo/NewActiv.html

8   www.madarcenter.org/madar-en.php

9   http://acpss.ahram.org.eg/eng/ahram/2004/7/5/abot0.htm

10   McGann, Ibid., p. 34. The figure does not include research institutes in the US.

11   From a meeting with a senior researcher at the Al-Ahram Center.

Another example of the change of perception and research agenda is the Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies *(ITES)*.[12] It was founded in 1993 during the regime of ousted President Zein al-Abidine bin Ali. In 2011, after the first revolution in the Arab world, the institute's homepage was re-launched. It presents a grim picture that for the first time describes the relationship that existed between the dictator and the institute, and how its activity had been curtailed according to the dictator's political and governmental needs. Bin Ali is described as having destroyed the country and paving the way for the people to revolt. This case tells us about the system of oppression the Arab rulers used against research institutes, intellectuals and reformers in the Arab world. The institute redefined its mission following the revolution and focused it on three main goals: (1) Bread: nutritional security, social justice and economic solidarity; (2) Liberty: civil liberty, participatory democracy, government, and; (3) National dignity: the right to housing, education and work.

Meanwhile the existing institutes entered a process of revision and reconstruction to incorporate new and young experts in research projects they were previously unable to conduct freely. For instance ,an expert at a leading think tank in Egypt told me the following: "Now we have a much harder job that requires tremendous efforts :to study and investigate domestic issues which we were forbidden to deal with during the Mubarak regime ,such as corruption and the quality of public services in Egypt".[13] The researcher said they have what to learn from the Israeli experience and therefore his institute is showing interest in Israeli science, technology, society and politics.

The biggest research and study project was instituted in Egypt in 2011: Zewail City of Science and Technology - Egypt's National Project for Scientific Renaissance (Mshroa' misr al-qawmy lenahd'a al-a'lmiy). The foundations of the project were laid during the Mubarak regime in 2000, and in 2011 the first phase of the project was launched. It is named after Prof. Ahmed Zewail, who won the 1999 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.[14] Zewail City was given 113,000 m² in the first phase. It conducts extensive research in seven research institutes in science, economics and international relations.

The development of the think tanks led to the establishment of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.[15] The center was founded in 2011 and is headed by Dr. Azmi Bishara, who runs its offices from Qatar. The center's staff includes 50 researchers and translators, in addition to policy analysts and writers of position papers and articles that are published on its website and presented at conferences. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the institute's focuses of research and among the writers on the subject are Palestinian researchers and intellectuals from Israel. The center also focuses on social and historic research and the study of applied policy.

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12   www.strategie.tn/index.php/en/
13   From a meeting with a senior researcher at the Al-Ahram Center.
14   www.zewailcity.edu.eg/
15   http://english.dohainstitute.org

New think tanks specialize in different subjects, with most of the new institutes being oriented towards democracy and the development of civil society. For instance, the Vision Institute for Civil Society Studies was founded in Jordan in 2010.[16] It focuses on the connection between civil society organizations in Jordan and the Arab world. In 2011 the center issued a current manual on think tanks in the Arab world. The 88-page manual contains a comprehensive analysis of the research institutes in the Arab world before the Arab Spring and offers options for cooperation between Arab organizations, think tanks and intellectuals by joining the Network of Democrats in the Arab World.[17] The network was created in 2006 in the UK and began enlisting members so that Arab civil society organizations, think tanks and intellectuals could work together to promote democracy and human and civil rights in the Arab world. Today the network provides consulting and guidance services and probably also financial support to more than 30 organizations and think tanks in the Arab world. Dozens of the organizations and institutes in the network are new, having been established after 2010.[18] As part of the network's activity, it launched the Arab Spring Center, which defined its goals as studying phenomena connected to the Arab Spring in the Arab world and their connection to the regional and global system.

Think tanks are the basis for information and the promotion of democratic discourse in countries still experiencing bloody struggles between their citizens and governments. For example, the Syrian Institute for Studies and Research[19] seeks to promote a future democratic and civil discourse between the people of Syria in the era after the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime. The institute operates outside of Syria but presents the writings and publications of exiled Syrian intellectuals, lecturers and researchers.

Many of the new and old institutes in the Arab world work together with other institutes in the Arab world or on the international level. One of the most prominent among them is the Arab Reform Initiative, an organization that combines the activity of 16 leading research institutes in the Arab world.[20] The organization promotes democracy, transparency and civil and social justice in the Arab world. It also promotes cooperation between Arab and international research institutes on security affairs and issues of governmental control mechanisms in the Arab countries in the era of the Arab Spring.

This trend of the development of research institutes in the Arab world in the new age is a vital source for the emergence of a dialogue between the countries of the region, and especially between Israel and the Arab countries, for the following reasons:

Important political science theorists such as John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber consider civil organizations, based on the active participation of citizens, to be bodies that support and strengthen democracy. The number of research institutes in the Arab world

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16 http://www.vicss.org.jo/
17 http://vicss.org.jo/GUI/news/ViewNewsDetails.aspx?nid=104
18 www.ndaworld.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=85&Itemid=268
19 www.dirasat.ws
20 www.arab-reform.net/arab-securitocracies-and-security-sector-reform

is growing steadily, as is their influence on shaping the domestic Arab discourse. This is a result of the democratization and freedom of the Arab world following the wave of protests and revolutions, in which the research institutes have great importance and a key role in shaping the internal and external discourse.[21]

We have detected a change in the attitude of the research institutes towards Israel. The interest and desire to learn about Israel's society, politics and technology have become an important axis in the work of the Arab institutes in the Middle East.

New institutes that developed since 2011, and old institutes undergoing reorganization, reflect an emerging trend in the Arab world: the promotion of democratization processes, the development of civil society, fundamental changes in research approaches, increasing interest in science and technology and a more open and liberal attitude towards Middle Eastern countries, including Israel. This can be seen in the new conversation coming out of the institutes towards Israel, which is considered a technological superpower and democratic country that advances its citizens and cares about their rights as citizens and human beings.

There is no question that the contribution of the research institutes is growing as a result of the interest and intention in the Arab world to see a drastic change in daily life. As a result there is a new willingness to accept recommendations and conclusions generated by research institutes that were previously controlled by the state and served the regime more than the citizens.

The volume of research in the Arab institutes and its quality are both increasing as a result of the many issues that opened to public discussion following the waves of protest. I can see in these institutions noteworthy efforts to redefine their goals and activities and to incorporate young forces and new experts, who constitute a powerful force in the Arab world today. The willingness to cooperate with Israeli researchers has also become part of the discourse in the Arab world. At a conference in Morocco under the auspices of Syracuse University from the state of New York I met more than 20 Arab researchers, some of whom supported or even suggested conducting joint research with Israeli research institutes and intellectuals.

In summary, in an age of change the ability of a person or institution to be open, creative and practical are considered vital qualities for the development of dialogue and the exchange of information and knowledge management. In the case of the research institutes in the Arab world, this task appears to be of particular importance and a powerful source for far-reaching change in the area. To date there have not been comprehensive in-depth studies of the research institutes in the Arab world. These institutes have been surveyed and mapped but there has not been an in-depth effort to learn about the intellectual streams to which they belong; the level of their researchers' expertise, education and experience; there annual budgets or mapping of their overall activities to assess the volume of their activity in quantitative terms; their target audiences; the connection of those institutes with Western institutes, and

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21   Donald E. Abelson, Do Think Tanks Matter? Assessing the Impact of Public Policy Institutes, 2nd Edition (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

their connections with the decision-makers in their respective countries. Furthermore, the orientation towards Israel of the experts in the Arab research institutes is also worthy of study. This effort might cast light on dark corners and make a real contribution at a time of change and the appearance of new opportunities on the horizon.

From the perspective of developing dialogue between the think tanks in the Middle East to support and promote democracy, and strengthening our connection to our environment, we identify tremendous potential for the integration and contribution of Israeli intellectuals and experts in the new processes in the Middle East. One of the main routes for such integration is the development of relations between think tanks in Israel and in the Arab world, with the relations centering on the exchange of knowledge and use of new methods tailored to different target populations to promote democracy and civil society in the area for a more promising and democratic present and future in this region.

The Israeli Peace Organizations and the Arab Spring | Yael Patir[1]

In Israel, the public feeling towards the Arab Spring, as shaped by the political and military leadership, was not of hope but of concern and suspicion. The result of the difficulty to predict what had happened and what was going to happen was that of confusion in the various state security and political systems and an apparent decision not to take a stand or develop a policy. The developments in the Arab world also caught the Israeli peace organizations[2] by surprise. Accordingly, in the first months of the uprisings, we did not witness reactions or initiatives by the organizations. In fact, the main difference between the response of the organizations and that of the government was that the organizations experienced lesser degree of suspicion and a willingness to examine the regional developments in a positive light.

The Gush Shalom organization ads that appear every Friday in the *Haaretz* newspaper give us a certain index of the temperature in the Israeli peace camp towards the Arab Spring. An examination of these ads from January 2011 to June 2012 indicates that only two of them referred to the Arab Spring. One, on February 18, 2011, hailed the heroism of the Egyptian people, and the other, in February 2012, called to link the peace with Egypt with peace with the Palestinians. Indeed, the atmosphere of the first ad reflects a feeling that was shared by some of the peace organizations: excitement over the democratic spirit and courage demonstrated by the Tunisian and then the Egyptian demonstrators. Some hoped this would lead to new courses of action and partnerships, which were not possible when government permission was needed to participate in such activity. Others hoped that the democratic spirit would soften Israeli public opinion and elicit feelings of solidarity with the Arab neighbors. Some even hoped that the spirit of protest would seep into the Palestinian territories and give the Palestinian struggle a tailwind.

The small number of ads also indicates the difficulty the Israeli peace organizations had to draw a positive connection between their feelings in light of the regional developments and the agenda they advocate. The difficulty grew with the election results in Tunisia and Egypt, which further increased Israeli suspicion and challenged the ability to draw the developments in positive terms of opportunity. To a certain extent, the developments actually highlighted the problem of signing peace agreements with leaderships that might be replaced by different ones who might not respect them, and mainly, with leaderships that do not represent the will of the people.

The Israeli organizations did not remain indifferent to the Arab neighbors' struggle for freedom and justice. Some welcomed it, and most held internal strategic discussions, public events and roundtables, and wrote a few articles. However, hardly any initiative came forth and, as a whole, modes of operation were not changed. In conversations I had with central leaders of the Israeli peace organizations, most testified that after consideration, internal discussion and evaluation of the new situation they concluded it did not affect the basic assumptions of the organization's activity and therefore that activity did not need to be changed.

There are a few reasons for that. First, the Israeli peace organizations are concerned primarily with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which did not play a central role in the Arab uprisings, which focused on internal calls to change the regime in each country. For many peace organizations who treat the pursuit of peace as a matter of foreign policy and security (as opposed, for example, to internal Israeli peace between different sectors of society), the model of the Arab Spring is irrelevant. On the other hand, it did serve as a source of inspiration for Palestinian protests calling for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, or, as leaders of the "tent protests" attested, for last summer's demonstrations in Israel.

Secondly, the new situation, namely regional instability, destabilization of Israel's old alliances, the appearance of new and unfamiliar leaders, and exposure to the feelings of the neighboring peoples that had been hidden from the Israeli public, manufactured a lot of unknowns. Given the uncertainty, it is difficult for the peace organizations to create positive and/or credible arguments to make a connection between the developments and the chances for peace. Furthermore, the suspicious public atmosphere and the framing of the regional developments as dangerous for Israel create a media challenge difficult for the organizations to overcome. Some even admit they simply don't know what is going to happen and therefore cannot draw a line between the Arab Spring and peace between Israel and its neighbors.

These difficulties, as formulated by leaders of the Israeli peace camp, explain why the vast majority of the peace organizations, after discussions, found no reason to change their strategy of operations. On the contrary, the regional developments created difficulties for the organizations and therefore they preferred to ignore them.

Opportunities

When setting out to examine the opportunities the Arab uprising presents for the Israeli peace organizations, we need to recognize that peace activity is not made of one cloth and therefore is not a single arena of activity. We need to make a distinction between two main concepts of peace. One comes from the world of diplomacy and international relations and means the absence of war, and therefore refers to the relations between countries (or popular movements). The other concept is broader and describes a condition of human security, justice, relief and prosperity.[3]

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3   Baruch Spinoza described it well in his famous line: "Peace is not the absence of war. It is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice".

Israeli peace organizations advocate both the narrow and the broad concepts of peace as described above by various means. I looked at organizations that use strategies aimed at ending the conflict between Israel and its neighbors through peace agreements and cooperation between countries (on the diplomatic, economic and educational levels, for instance)[4] and strategies of establishing relations of peace and respect between people (in and outside of Israel).[5]

In light of these goals and strategies and considering the consequences of the Arab Spring, I suggest looking at the following opportunities that exist for the Israeli peace organizations.

In every change there is opportunity. There seems to be no dispute that the Middle East (and the whole world) is undergoing unprecedented upheavals that are changing its character (the economic crisis, the erosion of the nation state, the anti-globalization movement, the environmental movement and so on) - things are not going to be as they were. On the other hand, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is at a standstill. There exists an equilibrium that allows the sides to stay in a new chapter of conflict management instead of moving towards its solution. Even though it seems as if the status quo is being maintained, actually the reality on the ground and in people's awareness is constantly changing. The peace organizations must first of all see the regional changes as an opportunity to re-examine the assumptions that drive them. The technological revolution and liberation from the shackles of government provide direct access to all and sundry. We can see that in Facebook campaigns such as We Love You Iran,[6] which succeeded in record time to connect hundreds of thousands of people from enemy countries under a joint platform. This is a genuine opportunity for open and active listening to different people and groups within the neighboring countries, which might give rise to new perceptions and ways of operation.

An alternative discourse and new partnerships. Anyone listening to the feelings of the residents of the region will notice that a rights discourse (welfare, women's, workers' rights etc.) is replacing the political discourse. It is a border-crossing discourse based on common concepts of justice, equality and freedom and can serve as a basis to shape the struggle for peace in terms that are accessible to large audiences. A new discourse might undo old partnership that compartmentalized or excluded segments of the population and replace them with partnerships based on new identities and identifications. Such a discourse would present the opportunity to create coalitions surrounding non-political issues that are also related to peace such as the fight against corruption, job security, the war on hunger and so on.

Regional thinking and models. The Arab Spring proved that a fire that starts in Tunisia can very quickly spread to the rest of the Middle East. The Arab Spring demonstrated not

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4 They might take different forms of activity such as track two negotiations, research and information dissemination, extra-parliamentary political activity, lobbying and advocacy.

5 They use educational practices, dialogue activities, civil cooperation projects (in business, economics, academe, health, activism etc.) and unique activities to build trust and foster humanization, reconciliation, conflict mediation, overcoming violence, improving communication patterns etc.

6 www.indiegogo.com/israeliran

only historic and cultural similarity, or a common awareness or identity of the people of the region, but also the regional context of their political condition (which is not always evident to Israelis). Meanwhile, Israel's disconnection from the region and in fact its inability to affect developments or seize opportunities also became clear. The main reason for that disconnection is Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. Therefore there is no doubt that Israel will not be able to integrate in the region without ending the conflict, but also that ending the conflict depends on other countries in the region (primarily solution of the refugee problem). In light of the aforesaid there is a clear need to think about the solution to the conflict in regional terms as well as thinking about Israel's integration. Just like we cannot separate the plight of Hamas from the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the weakening of Assad in Syria, we cannot separate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the developments in the region. Today there is a single joint regional basis initiated by the Arab countries which is the Arab Peace Initiative (API). The initiative provides the opportunity to move from a bi-lateral approach to making peace between Israel and its neighbors to a multi-lateral approach. Ultimately, solution of the conflict must take into consideration, provide solutions for and especially involve as many players in the Middle East as possible.

The importance of cooperation and dialogue on the civil society level. The events in the Arab world generated an openness of civil society and a freedom of action that did not previously exist. The change is the result of a revolution that is not only political but one of awareness: it consists of liberation from the fear that was the lot of anyone living under a regime devoid of the considerable personal freedom and questioning of conventions that come from access to a free press; disillusionment with what the regime says (because the regime's messages did not withstand the test of reality) and curiosity to learn about others and be exposed to them. The change is very evident on the social networks. The ability of citizens in some of the countries to create an actual revolution and in others to generate significant reforms strengthens the power and role of civil society and the belief in its ability to influence and change.

A new generation. One of the moving changes created by the developments in the Arab world is the awakening on the Arab street and especially the role young people played in it. The Arab world has 100 million young people ages 15-29 who are different from their parents because they are more exposed to the world and to the "rights discourse" and have a developed cultural and political awareness. This change leaves out no one including, of course, the religious or conservative elements. We must examine how to find our place in this generation change or make room for new players who can do so.

Strengthening moderates or liberals. Within the events of the Arab Spring, voices to which we had not previously been exposed to stood out. Between the governing elites and the Islamic forces a new, liberal third power emerged. This power may not have taken the reins of government but it exists, is organizing and can gain momentum. This is an opportunity to find and build relations with new forces.

Recommendations for the peace organizations vis-à-vis Israeli public opinion

To a very great extent, since public support in Israel of the two state solution became the majority position, the Israeli peace camp lost its attractiveness and its ability to recruit masses to that agenda. Since the second intifada and the entrenchment of the idea that there is no partner on the other side, and with the rise of the mistrust between the parties, things only got worse. In the current atmosphere the peace organizations have difficulty manufacturing a mobilizing agenda, certainly one of hope. In that respect the Arab Spring provides the peace organizations with a number of opportunities to start a new public conversation. The organizations might consider how to integrate and advance the following messages in their activity:

Emphasizing the dangers of the status quo in a changing reality in the midst of regional changes. In light of those changes, the organizations might encourage Israel to take the initiative in shaping its future in the region instead of being led by regional developments over which it has no control. It is precisely the insight that Israel's status in the region does not enable it to intervene and take part in the developments around it that might encourage the government to initiate a process in relation to the Palestinians that could help strengthen Israel and position it more positively in the region.

The democratization process means peace agreements must now stand the test of public opinion. The neighboring Arab countries are concerned and committed to the Palestinian issue. The Israeli public must understand that it can now achieve a more stable and warmer peace with all the nations of the region, but the price will definitely have to be ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

It can be argued that since the Arab regimes will be more representative and will need to be more considerate of public opinion, and since they are not yet secure in their control, it would be hard for them to launch foreign attacks or wars at this time. This is an opportunity for Israel to seize the chance to shape a reality that best suits its interests.

The security calm and separation between Israelis and Palestinians makes it difficult to persuade the Israeli public of the benefit it would gain from an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, which is widely perceived as a concession and compromise. The combination between the new conditions created by the Arab Spring and the API increases the circle of reference to the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The API makes it possible to enlarge the pie in the sense that Israel has more to gain or lose. The offer gives Israel, in exchange for ending the conflict with the Palestinians, a new status in the region and normalization with the countries of the region, which would open many opportunities for Israel on the level of development, economy and business.

Recommendations for the peace organizations to deepen dialogue and cooperation with the neighbors

In light of the analysis of opportunities I hereby propose a number of suggestions for new activities or work with new audiences:

To expand the goals and banners the organizations carry on the regional level. When doing so they ought to think of new solutions and implement ways Israel can exert a positive influence on regional developments and reinforce its legitimacy in the region. The peace organizations can expand their activity beyond campaigning for a Palestinian state or against the occupation regime and support the struggles for liberty and justice on the regional level. This may not be able to be direct involvement since an Israeli contribution in the present circumstances might only harm the struggles and make them illegitimate but we may think of creative solutions. An example of this was given by Dr. Alon Liel,[7] head of the Israel-Syria Peace Society, who suggested in an article from March 2012 that Israel offer humanitarian aid to Syrians wishing to escape to Israel. In his proposal, Liel emphasized both the ability to provide a concrete solution to a neighbor's crisis and a show of goodwill. Such activities would also bolster the legitimacy of the peace organizations in Israel by demonstrating they are not interested solely in the good of the Palestinians but are guided by concern for the good of humanity at large and of Israel in particular.

To identify opportunities for collaboration with liberal forces or change-oriented forces in the region which would be cultivated discreetly, most likely outside of the Middle East (as was done in the past with the Palestinians). Such partnerships might grow on the basis of joint business or academic interests with cultural figures, business people, retired diplomats and so on. In any case we must find those who are willing to talk, initiate an open dialogue with them and leave it undefined so that it can generate organic outcomes. It should be seen as an opportunity to help those forces and strengthen them according to their wishes and non-coercively.

Due to global and regional changes there is cause for the emergence of new groups offering a basis for new partnerships crossing sectors and borders based on a joint struggle. One example is a group of Israeli descendants of immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries who connect the struggle for Mizrahi and Arab identity in Israel with the struggle against oppressive and exploitative regimes in the Middle East. The background for its rise is the Ashkenazi dominance of the Israeli peace camp along with accusations that Israeli peace advocacy is not authentic because it is motivated by economic interests or because it is too conciliatory and is not connected to the cultural, religious and historic context of the region. Indeed, the Ashkenazi elite has a limited ability to relate as equals to parts of Israeli society and the Arabs in the neighboring countries.

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7   Alon Liel, "Bashar Can Forget about the Golan", Haaretz, 5 March 2012.

New groups might be able to shatter those old boundaries. Thus the group "Ruh Jedida: A New Spirit for 2011", which in April 2011 published a letter to "members of our generation in the Middle East and North Africa", offering the new generation in the Arab, Muslim and Jewish worlds to bridge across the walls of hostility on the basis of a new identity. The letter said: "We believe that, as Mizrahi Jews in Israel, our struggle for economic, social, and cultural rights rests on the understanding that political change cannot depend on the Western powers who have exploited our region and its residents for many generations. True change can only come from an intra-regional and inter-religious dialog that is in connection with the different struggles and movements currently active in the Arab world. Specifically, we must be in dialog and solidarity with struggles of the Palestinian citizens of Israel who are fighting for equal political and economic rights and for the termination of racist laws, and the struggle of the Palestinian people living under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank and in Gaza in their demand to end the occupation and to gain Palestinian national independence".[8] For some of the peace organizations the transition to advocating a policy of struggle against the West or the global capitalist arrangement is light years away. They do not have to change but make room for new groups to enter the fray and have an influence.

It is important to identify civil society and peace organizations in the Middle East (including in Turkey) and try to create joint platforms with them, especially with civil society organizations from other places in the world to allow border- and nation-crossing cooperation for concrete goals such as fighting governmental corruption, promoting women's rights and so on.

Alongside more "natural" partnerships based on common cause with liberal elements, an effort must also be made to connect with religious and especially Islamic elements. Such contacts are less customary and therefore harder to realize but can be made on a concrete basis, such as lifting the restrictions on Gaza. A good example of this was the involvement of Israeli peace activist Dr. Gershon Baskin in the release of abducted soldier Gilad Shalit as a result of contacts he had with senior Hamas officials.

The rise of the middle class in the Arab countries provides opportunities for business collaborations. This is a platform where there exists a common language and it is easy to find overlapping interests. Business collaboration should be geared towards the economic development of the Middle East as a joint interest. Israeli motivation to integrate in the region can be an engine to do this.

Finally, the Israeli peace organizations must take advantage of the new opportunities that opened and the openness that came with them in order to communicate and convey messages of peace to the people of the region. These messages must emphasize Israeli support of the Arab struggle for liberation and honor, what we have in common, Israel's wish to integrate in the region from a position of respect (and not from a position of arrogance and domination), the joint Jewish-Arab struggles in Israel to promote social justice and against the occupation,

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8   Ruh Jedida: A New Spirit for 2011, http://arabjews.wordpress.com/young-mizrahi-israelis%E2%80%99-open-letter-to-arab-peers/.

the humanist side of Israel and so on. An example of such activity is the support clip Israelis made for the Egyptian people following the revolution, "We are with Egypt".[9]

The developments that were given the name the Arab Spring do not change the basic assumptions of the peace organizations or provide new foundations for action. However, they open many windows of opportunity to formulate and reinforce messages or revise perceptions and partnerships. Either way, they signal the arrival of a new agenda for which we must all prepare, including the Israeli peace organizations.

9   Children of Liberty, 11 February 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6eW_V3ph94.

An Alternative Model of Israeli–Arab Encounters | Ronen Zeidel[1]

This article will attempt to propose a new concept of organizing encounters between Israelis and colleagues from Arab countries, based on personal experience. For obvious reasons I prefer not to reveal details about the experience in question or the country in question. I will use the Oslo outline in its initial stages when it was, from the Israeli side, an encounter between academics, as a point of reference for developing the model. The alternative model has several pronounced advantages: it focuses on a single country each time, brings together intellectuals for in-depth meetings and through them makes it possible to reach broad sectors of that country's society. The proposed model is an alternative both to meetings with politicians from the particular country and to multi-lateral encounters as part of international conferences or other unique events, because it provides its participants with the freedom to engage in depth issues and stimulates their curiosity to learn from the other side. The other kind of event is hardly conducive to either.

The Arab Spring opens new opportunities precisely in countries whose previous regimes were strongly anti-Israeli: Syria, Libya and Iraq (the latter may not have experienced the Arab Spring but has undergone far reaching changes since 2003). In countries that did not undergo drastic changes, connections can be made on the basis of the Jewish past and Jewish association with the country (Morocco), questions of identity and secularity (Algeria) and regional development (the Gulf states). It is precisely in the core countries of the Arab Spring (Egypt and Tunisia) where resistance can presently be expected on part of the liberal intellectuals. The latter are steeped in forging the future image of their countries. If the question of Israel comes up at all, it is associated in their minds with the previous regime. In Egypt the post-revolutionary stage included fierce anti-Israeli tones from all quarters, including the liberal intellectuals, culminating in the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Cairo. In Tunisia the new constitution might forbid contact with Israelis. However, two important factors that might change the situation in those countries must not be overlooked:

The emergence of a democratic system in which it might be easier to deviate from the mainstream. The disappearance of state oppression and the emergence of an elected political system open an array of channels of influence that will no longer be limited to government circles alone. The new system allows turnover of the forces who govern politics and therefore, looking forward, there could be a dramatic change of the political map as a result of disappointment from the Islamic parties.

In both countries the struggle between the Islamists and the modernists has come into sharp focus. Almost 50% of voters in Egypt voted for Ahmad Shafik in a protest vote against the Muslim Brotherhood. The Coptic public is full of fear of the future. In Tunisia, advocates of secularity and gender equality, who were previously accustomed to a comfortable environment

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dictated by an authoritarian government, are coming out in defense of the status quo. This is a large, strong and influential public, which still controls the media, for example. I am not advocating seeking out those parties, which could be seen as an Israeli attempt to instigate dissent, but if they contact us we should respond in the affirmative.

Oslo as a point of reference

As far as we know, the steps that began the "Oslo process" were taken spontaneously without early planning and therefore apparently set a precedent. Once the official and senior political Israeli echelon come into the picture, it was harder to go back to the beginning point I have in mind. For our purposes, Oslo was a secret bi-lateral process between Israelis and Palestinians from the PLO. It was held in a neutral and distant location that did not attract attention, namely Oslo. It was funded by a neutral party: the government of Norway. The encounters began, from the Israeli side, as low-level "academic" encounters, while conveying messages to the senior echelons but with an opting out strategy including denial of the very encounters in the case of failure.

Oslo posed an alternative from a number of aspects: the bi-lateral encounters with the Palestinians stood in contrast to multi-lateral meetings that had been held with them earlier or simultaneously (the Madrid and Washington talks). The location of the distant Oslo contrasted with other, more central venues of talks (Geneva, Madrid, London, Washington). The Norwegian auspices did not exist previously: the Norwegians were careful not to interfere or try to influence either side to achieve an outcome. All of those elements can serve as models of emulation for the proposed track. The main difference is that the talks went up a notch in Oslo, when the Israeli political echelon joined them and the academics retreated. In the model proposed here the talks between the intellectuals would continue even if they led to talks on the political level.

The proposed model

Like Oslo, the proposed model includes bi-lateral talks between Israelis and colleagues from a single Arab country. It is surprising to see how little has so far been invested in organizing such talks with most of the Arab countries. For well-known reasons no such talks have been held with the conflict countries with which other bi-lateral issues have been discussed. We must seek to establish teams to work simultaneously on organizing bi-lateral meetings in the proposed model with colleagues from the different countries.

Bi-lateral encounters are by far preferable to periodical multi-lateral forums (such as the Mediterranean Sea Basin encounter) where Israeli representatives meet colleagues from a number of Arab countries. Those encounters, which I do not rule out, are not a comfortable stage for in-depth talks and encounters between Israeli and Arab representatives are not always possible. The latter are often not able to conduct talks with Israelis independently, whether because they are official representatives of their countries or because representatives of other Arab countries are present. Therefore, the benefits for us as Israelis and for the organizers, who surely want to promote Israeli-Arab rapprochement at these conferences, is

extremely marginal. By moving the talks to the bi-lateral level I disengage, if only temporarily, the discussion from "disruptive contexts" and especially the pan-Arab solidarity on the Palestinian issue. That disengagement is necessary to achieve progress in the talks.

From my familiarity with the think tanks in the Arab world (as opposed to the situation in Turkey, possibly), I do not see the practical advantage of meeting their people. First of all, many of them are nothing but funding channels for cronies of the regime and do not conduct ongoing intellectual activity, to say nothing of their lack of a public basis of support. No Arab regime, whether it underwent a change or not, is influenced by these think tanks and they have no status in the decision-making processes. The independent research institutes, such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim's *Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies* in Cairo, are more important, but their dependence on foreign funding makes them very vulnerable in the current situation. They have no influence on decision-making either and are quite disconnected from the public. I do not rule out holding talks with institutes that are interested, but I tend to minimize their importance. We must be picky and invest our limited time, funding and energy in more profitable directions. In general, I think it makes more sense to focus on independent intellectuals rather than a group of researchers from a research institute with all of their restrictions.

I am talking about confidential bi-lateral meetings. The confidentiality is absolutely necessary. Without it the representatives of the other side will not show up. It allows even prominent figures on the other side to attend and reflects the other side's curiosity to get to know Israel. We Israelis must be very strict about that. Our Arab colleagues will not leak the fact of the meeting because it could cost them their lives. Past experience points to leaks from the Israeli side which led to the cancellation of similar encounters: for example, recently a meeting between Israeli and Egyptian members of parliament that was supposed to take place in Washington at the initiative of the Washington Institute was cancelled because of a leak from the Israeli side. The damage was even wider: the Washington Institute announced that it would hold no further such encounters. We must appreciate the great risk the other side is taking and the price it might pay.

The meetings must be held at a neutral venue and thought must be given to finding a suitable location. The Middle East is not a neutral place and many believe neither is the US. Europe and other continents can provide neutral locations far from the limelight. We as Israelis should actively seek a venue to meet at and not wait for a neutral party to offer itself or for the Arab side to bring up its own proposals. The choice of a meeting place in the particular country should be examined carefully: we must avoid places identified with Israel, the Zionist movement or institutions that are problematic for the Israeli side, such as countries that do not accept Israeli passports (Malaysia, Indonesia).

The question of funding is extremely important. We must see not only to a source of funding - a fraught issue in its own right - but also make sure the money comes from a neutral source. Neutral funding means credibility. We must avoid attempts, direct or indirect, to use sources of funding that are not neutral (the Israeli Foreign Ministry, research funds in Israeli universities

and so on) even if that means postponing or even cancelling a meeting. If a source of funding that is not neutral is exposed, it could cause as much damage as cancelling the confidentiality, undermine our credibility, put our colleagues at risk and eliminate the possibility of renewing the encounters in the future. On this issue too it is we (as Israelis) who are responsible for finding neutral funding. Naturally, neutrality works both ways. An Arab source of funding might appear to the Israeli side not to be neutral, limit the subject of discussion and maybe even implicate our representative with the Israeli legal authorities.

In the proposed model the Israeli side is the initiator. Any initiative from the other side will be examined and if it is found suitable (according to criteria which will be stated below) it will be welcomed. It is important for the initiative to come from the involved parties. Proposals from neutral parties will not be ruled out but we must understand they were not born "naturally" and may serve the interests of the summoning party.

It is recommended to plan a series of encounters at the same venue or in a number of locations once or twice a year. The time between the encounters could be devoted to learning the lessons and organizing the next encounter. In internal communications between the organizers we may exchange reports about the contribution of the discussions at the encounter to the participants' products but this is not necessary. In other words, in contrast with other kinds of meetings, the participants will not be required to submit a report about the encounter's impact on them. We can hope that the commitment will evolve by itself. We should try for each meeting to have a larger number of participants surrounding the core organizers. If it is impossible to expand, we should encourage turnover within each of the sides, all surrounding the original core of organizers. The number of participants on each side must be equal.

Who should participate?

First we must identify the sectors in each country that are open to dialogue. I do not mean those who are willing to talk but those who will engage in a dialogue. The difference is not semantic: past experience shows that those willing to talk are sometimes delusional characters with no status, who are willing to talk to promote their own agendas. Unfortunately, you have to be weird or bold in the Arab world today to talk to Israelis. We must sift out the weirdoes. Defining the target audience as "people who are open to dialogue" would address a broader audience that shares common values and has avoided contact with Israelis in the past. I am not talking about encounters with diplomats or members of parliament, who are extremely sensitive and could undermine such encounters. Often they are not very influential and they are harder to engage in the kind of in-depth encounters I wish to propose.

Some claim that a new political elite is rising in the Arab countries that is more conservative and more religious. This elite, which is required to take leadership positions and lead policy on the international level, lacks experience in foreign policy, diplomacy and geopolitics and therefore will have an interest in learning more about issues related to Israel, through us. This may be true for Turkey. In the Arab world, unfortunately, the point of departure of the Muslim

Brotherhood and their Salafi colleagues is anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-feminists and anti-Israeli, and that is just a partial list. That is why it is hard to view their representatives as partners in any talks, let alone in-depth discussions. If these circles become more moderate, the more apt forum will be professional diplomatic talks rather than the proposed model.

Preparation of an encounter of this sort requires basic knowledge of the intellectual world in the target countries. In the Israeli academic world researchers maintain ongoing contact with colleagues in the various Arab countries. More than a few Israeli researchers have specialized in the intellectual environments of those countries and maintain contact with leading intellectuals. In the country that I study I have identified a relatively broad constitutional willingness to engage in dialogue and get to know Israel and Israelis, stemming from much broader reasons. We must understand that willingness, which exists in other countries as well, in its local context: in Syria and Libya (and in the non-Arab world possibly also in Iran) it could be a challenge to the declared anti-Israeli position of the previous or current regime. In other countries it could be curiosity "to taste the forbidden fruit" and learn firsthand the Israeli model of democracy.

The way to an encounter begins with finding a local contact person and through him building ties with other intellectuals. The local contact person should be almost as committed as us or even more so. The contact with him is the "main artery" for organizing the encounter. In my case, that person connected me with other leading intellectuals but chose the list of participants in the planned meeting himself. We must respect the other side's choice and not interfere in it. Certainly, the contact person must be well-connected and not everybody is. We must get a sense of that person before we suggest organizing a meeting.

We may and should be selective. Unfortunately, many important sectors in the Arab world are not ready yet to meet Israelis. The political Islamic element is one of them. Even if there are a few exceptions in those sectors, they are not harbingers of change. It would be preferable to focus on the representatives of sectors that are better prepared for dialogue. One such sector is the liberal intellectuals. There are such people in each one of the countries who more or less share common values but also common fears. Some of them are bold and nonconformist. This group has been neglected by Israel despite its great importance. Intellectuals are seen and heard in all of the media.

The common definition of a liberal intellectual is anyone who supports two kinds of freedom: "freedom from..." and "freedom to..." Freedom from all kinds of tyranny and freedom to express your opinion in any area and live your life however you please without breaking the law or hurting others. In the Arab world many of the liberal intellectuals have a problem with the second kind of freedom. A liberal intellectual will support freedom of speech, the defense of human rights and the extension of minority rights in his country, and will act to build a political system based on pluralism. These intellectuals are the public opinion makers and originators of the discourse in the Arab countries. They can gradually introduce new ideas. These are the writers, poets, journalists, media people, academics, human rights activists, thinkers, clergy from all religions, lawyers and others.

However, not all intellectuals are liberal. Not everyone who defines himself as a liberal intellectual in the Arab world meets the accepted definition of a liberal intellectual in the West and the rest of the world (this is particularly relevant on the question of their attitude towards the very existence of Israel). Furthermore, there is a difference between a liberal intellectual in Egypt and his colleague in Iraq, for instance. For our purposes, all of the liberal intellectuals, even if they are hostile to Israel, are the target audience.

Once an encounter has been agreed upon, each side chooses its own participants. Compatibility between the sides and within the sides is very important. When choosing the Israeli delegation, it is important to include people who get along with each other. The unfortunately common sight of an Israeli delegation bickering in front of the other side is not pleasant to behold. The selection of the delegation by the organizer reflects how the organizer wants Israel to appear to the other side. The delegation ought to include intellectuals who represent different shades of the political and cultural discourse in Israel. A delegation I composed included academics, leading intellectuals, leading authors, publicists and activists. Selection of the Israeli side is difficult because many will want to participate. It should be done carefully, especially before the first encounter, knowing that there will be further encounters for those who did not participate.

It is not desirable for there to be a large number of researchers of the other country in the delegation. The ratio I chose was two out of eight. Too many researchers of that country could create the appearance that the Israelis are taking advantage of the encounter to study the Arab country. The discussions might be one-sided: the Libyans would talk about Libya while the Israelis also talk about Libya. As I shall demonstrate as follows, the purpose of the encounters is to be bi-lateral, with each side learning from the other's experience. Moreover, having too many experts on the Israeli side would create a knowledge gap on that side and alienate some of the Israeli participants.

In the case in which I am involved, the other side chose not to include intellectuals from an important group in that country. We, of course, did not interfere with their choice and respected their decision, which apparently stemmed from internal dynamics in that country. Likewise, we expect the other side to respect our decisions as to the composition of the delegation. The question of including Palestinian citizens of Israel came up. I approached several prominent Palestinian intellectuals and was met with reservations, mainly because of the complexity of the subject of the encounter: identity. I decided that at this stage, the initial stage, the delegation would include only Jews. The main reason was the curiosity of the other side to meet Israeli Jews in their array of identities and see how Jewish identity contends with its sub-identities and contains them. Palestinian citizens of Israel will of course be included later on.

At least in the first stage, it is recommended to include in the delegation Israeli Jews born in the Arab country in question (if there are any) and others whose families hail from there. Their inclusion creates a common background and a pleasant atmosphere. In several Arab countries today there is growing interest in their Jewish history, which also draws intellectuals

to participate in the encounters. Including such Jews in the delegation motivates the other side and creates closeness between the sides. It also allows the other side to gauge how those Jews were absorbed in Israel, beyond familiar clichés. Of course in this case as well one should avoid including confrontational Jews and prefer people who are willing to listen and speak out.

The contents of the encounters

Even though the encounters are defined as "bi-lateral", they do not deal openly with the relations between the two countries. The participants are not diplomats and it is not their job to discuss that relationship in the past, the present or to chart its course for the future. Each encounter should be devoted to a single "depth issue": culture, identity, pluralism, democracy, nationalism and more. One might want to prepare such a list of subjects for the future. The subject is agreed between all the parties (Israelis, Arabs, hosts) well in advance and together the parties prepare a facilitated and structured encounter surrounding the selected subject. We chose the subject of identity. The other side accepted it with enthusiasm and even sent us its "credo" on the subject. The hosting party helped build the program surrounding the subject, contributed speakers and facilitators and even demanded to participate in the discussions. It is advisable for the Israeli delegation to hold a preparation meeting before the event.

My assumption is that depth issues elicit attention and patience on both sides, whereas political issues might instigate arguments that are not helpful. These issues satisfy the honest intellectual curiosity at the basis of the desire to meet. They expose both sides to issues that are not emphasized in the media, as opposed to the political issues. The Arab intellectuals do not come to the encounter because they identify with Israel or the Palestinians. What they are interested in is a first-hand look at the "Israeli model" to check the feasibility of its implementation in their countries. In a facilitated and structured meeting surrounding a depth issue, the common points between the countries can be explored, thereby building a connection. However, if a political issue arises in the encounter or at its edges, such as in the form of a question from the Arab side, it can be channeled to a constructive and helpful direction.

The central rule of the discussions themselves is that each side speaks only about itself. There are three reasons: to avoid arguments and preaching; to get to know the other side; to learn from the other side.

The assumption is that each side is ignorant of the other side, and susceptible to stereotypes. The other side of ignorance is the curiosity that draws both the Arab and the Israeli participants to come to the meeting. The participants from the Arab side know something about Israel. They might even know more about Israel than the Israeli intellectuals know about their countries. We must understand that they want to learn about the Israeli experience first-hand in order to implement it in their country and we have to help them do so.

The advantage of depth issues such as pluralism or identity is that they place intellectuals from different places on an equal footing. The subjects are relevant to Israel and all the Arab

countries. Both our side and the other side have had impressive successes in certain areas and resounding failures in others. Exchanging experiences about dealing with the issues and problems is a central objective of the encounters and makes them more than narrow political and diplomatic discussions. We also avoid the propaganda trap of choosing more focused subjects like high-tech, technology, education and others that emphasize how developed Israel is and how backward the Arab countries are.

Encounters of this kind should have follow-up beyond the formal series of encounters. Exchanges of publications between the participants should be encouraged during the encounter: authors should bring their books and those of others, academics should bring their publications. Translation of the works into Hebrew and Arabic and their publication by local publishers in the respective countries should be encouraged. So should maintaining contact between all of the participants after the encounter via e-mail and social networks. Other initiatives by the participants should be welcomed.

Are we aiming for the next stage: talks in official channels?

As opposed to Oslo, the proposed model does not aim at moving the talks to official channels. Such a step would necessitate engaging in political subjects from the outset and contradicts the program. A move to official channels might occur as a direct or indirect outcome of the proposed outline or independent of it. Unlike in the case of Oslo, the proposed model does not aim at abandoning the cultural channel in favor of political outcomes. Even if an official process develops, the encounters should continue. An overly hasty transition to the formal stage could compromise the process.

The intellectuals who attend these meetings are public opinion makers. The idea is to reach a large number of intellectuals in each country who will influence growing segments of the public. With this dynamic, if it succeeds, the core initiators become increasingly involved and invested in the process and go on to recruit additional participants in their country. This lays the groundwork for political change so that if it comes it will stand on a more solid basis. The initiators of the process do the planting, watering and fertilizing, and nature does the rest.

Postscript:
Israel in the Wake of the Arab Spring | Elie Podeh and Nimrod Goren

The Arab Spring - a term referring to the recent revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the civil war in Syria, as well as the reforms launched by various Arab regimes - was initially embraced with much enthusiasm and hope in the West. In Israel, however, it has been generally perceived as a threat to national security, as the start of a possibly-long era of instability characterized by a menacing process of Islamization of society and regimes. Here, "Arab Spring" was rather quickly replaced by the term "Arab/Islamic winter", which expresses the Israeli negative reading of regional events.

Israel's official policy towards the Arab Spring reflects these concerns: it aims at maintaining the status quo; it refrains from expressing political or moral support to the protestors in the different Arab countries; it is passive in nature - preferring to wait and see how developments unfold before taking any significant action; it lacks belief in the possibility of promoting peace and regional integration; and it seeks new partnerships with countries in Israel's non-Middle Eastern periphery. But the risks and threats that the Arab Spring presumably hold for Israel form only part of a larger and more complex picture: recent developments also offer important opportunities for Israel's regional foreign policies and for its standing in the Arab and Muslim worlds. The significant changes in the region should not be seen only through a negative lens but should also be used to promote some long-sought Israeli interests. The question is whether Israeli decision makers will identify these opportunities and attempt to act on them. While not ignoring the risks and challenges facing Israel, this paper will attempt to look at the opportunities which the present situation in the Middle East offers to Israel.

An analysis of Israeli official and public voices with regard to the Arab Spring reveals the existence of three schools of thought: The first, and dominant one, perceives it as a negative phenomenon with grave implications for Israel. Its main proponents are Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other right-wing politicians, who paint a very harsh and threatening picture of regional developments. The second school - represented by actors within the security and diplomatic establishments - accepts the overall negative framing but outlines a more complex picture with a different reading of the potential consequences and conclusions. The third school - represented by President Shimon Peres and Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency - challenges the negative framing, attempting to illuminate the potential for positive gains. These voices, however, are not common, and are often presented only in the international, rather than in the Israeli, media.[1]

Polls indicate that the Israeli public, in general, tends to support the first school, seeing the Arab Spring as a threat to the country's national security. A more positive view could be found among the Palestinian citizens of Israel, although they too have their share of confusion.[2]

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1   See the article by Lior Lehrs in this book.
2   See the article by Ghaida Rinawie-Zoabi in this book.

Even Israeli peace organizations have not easily embraced the regional movement calling for democracy. They have mostly reacted in a passive way that generally corresponded to that of Israel's government.[3] These trends in the Israeli discourse are by and large the result of the traditional manner in which Israelis view the Middle East; negative images regarding Islam and Arabs are widespread, and represent a significant component of the dominant Israeli ethos of the conflict. The Arab world is often seen as homogeneous; nuances and complexities, not to mention differences between countries, societies and cultures, often go unobserved.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Arab Spring is not an event but rather a process, one which may take years and spill over to neighboring states. To date, what we have seen is an overwhelming rejection of dictatorship and authoritarianism, although democracy, while seemingly the goal, has not yet been fully embraced. Arab societies are struggling to find their own political model. As different segments of society have disparate - and sometimes antagonistic - aims, this struggle may well bring further instability and volatility to the Arab region. In this age of changing realities, Israel will have to cope with the following challenges and opportunities:

1. *Engaging with Political Islam*: The major challenge confronting Israel in the post-Arab Spring era is the emergence of new political regimes dominated by Islamic parties. The coming to power through free democratic elections of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, *al-Nahda* in Tunisia, and the rise of other Islamic forces in Libya, Yemen and Syria, seemed to herald the strengthening of anti-Western, anti-Israeli and perhaps anti-Semitic rhetoric in the Arab world, to the point of posing a threat to the existence of the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. In contrast to alarming predictions, however, the new Islamic regimes have thus far been moderate or pragmatic in their domestic and foreign policies, including their attitudes to Israel and Jews.[4] The adoption of pragmatic policies in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya is the result of political and economic necessities, as well as ideological shifts within the Islamic parties.[5] Yet, the Arab Spring also gave rise to militant Salafist and Jihadist elements that are not willing to recognize Israel and are bent on its destruction.

The de-facto moderation of political Islamic groups that have seized power opens opportunities for Israel to engage with these new regimes. Egypt, the most important regional country for Israel, has upheld their peace treaty under Muslim Brotherhood leadership; President Mohamed Mursi has not only developed good relations with the US, but also appointed a new ambassador to Israel, exchanged greetings with President Peres, expressed his interest in helping to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and cooperated with Israel in reaching an informal agreement with Hamas (following Operation Pillar of Defense, last November) and in his efforts to fight terrorist elements in the Sinai Peninsula.

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3   See the article by Yael Patir in this book.
4   See the article by Moshe Ma'oz in this book.
5   See, for example, Elie Podeh, "Egypt's President Morsi Moves to a Pragmatic Policy on Israel",
    http://www.geopolitical-info.com/en/geopolitics/egypt-s-president-morsi-moves-to-a-pragmatic-policy-on-israel

In the collision between ideology and interests the Muslim Brotherhood regime tends to adopt a pragmatic policy, which stems partially from the country's economic hardships and deep reliance on foreign - mainly Western - loans. Interestingly, under an Islamic regime, Egypt has more leverage than did the previous regime, headed by Hosni Mubarak, to exert on Hamas in its dealings with Israel. No less important is the fact that a treaty honored by the Brotherhood sends a message across the Muslim world that peace with Israel is not anathema and this might affect the position of Hamas in the long run. Thus, though Israeli-Egyptian formal relations will probably remain cold, behind-the-scenes contacts (particularly between the two military and security establishments) will likely continue to flourish and might even open news vistas in the realm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2. *Benefitting from the Crisis in Syria:* The civil war in Syria has been going on for more than two years and an end is still not in sight. The process of Bashar al-Assad's regime downfall is longer than initially predicted. It brings chaos and instability, with ripple effects in the neighborhood, in countries as Jordan and Lebanon. Apart from lingering instability, the main Israeli concern is the potential of al-Qaeda-type groups to exploit the regime's weakness in order to carry out terrorist activities in the Golan area. Otherwise, however, the Syrian enigma offers some opportunities to Israel: first, in the long run, is the likely rise to power of a Sunni legitimate regime that might be more amenable to peaceful relations to Israel. Second, in the more immediate future, it signals the weakening of the anti-Israeli axis, led by Iran and Syria. Iran's ability to project power on Israel's immediate environment has undoubtedly declined; the weakening of Iran and Syria is also taking a toll on the non-state players in the "resistance" camp, Hamas and Hezbollah. Moreover, the fact that the latter continue supporting Assad's brutal atrocities further stigmatizes the Shiite organization in the Sunni world.[6]

The Syrian crisis offers Israel two additional opportunities, which have been partially exploited: First, Jordan's apprehension of the possible spillover effect within its borders - in terms of terrorism, instability and refugees - creates a potential for warmer Israeli-Jordanian relations. Indeed, there are indications that Prime Minister Netanyahu and King 'Abdallah II are tacitly coordinating their policy vis-à-vis the Syrian front.[7] Second, the deteriorating Turkish-Syrian ties may serve Israeli-Turkish ties. The opportunity to mending these ties, which were damaged severely as a result of the Gaza flotilla crisis (May-June 2010), presented itself with the re-election of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in June 2011, coupled with the dramatic events of the Arab Spring. Yet, a draft reconciliation agreement, which was prepared with US mediation, was rejected by Netanyahu in summer 2011. It was only in March 2013, during President Barack Obama's visit to Israel that the two countries actually embarked on a new - albeit rocky - path toward reconciliation.[8]

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6   Ehud Eiran, "The Arab Spring: Opportunities", Palestine-Israel Journal, 18(1), 2012.

7   King 'Abdallah II himself stated in March 2013 that his relations with Netanyahu have improved. Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Modern King in the Arab Spring", The Atlantic, 18 March 2013.

8   Nimrod Goren, "Israel and Turkey during the Arab Spring: An Unfulfilled Opportunity for Reconciliation", Insight Turkey, 14(2), 2012, pp. 121-135; Nimrod Goren, "Time for an Overture to Turkey", Haaretz - English edition, 28 February 2013.

The Israeli willingness to apologize to Turkey may indicate that Jerusalem has begun to internalize the implications of the changing realities in the region. Rather than looking for allies elsewhere - such as Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria - Israel must find ways to tap into regional processes and to establish ties and working relations with its neighbors as well as with regional powers.

3. *A New Sunni Coalition:* The rise of Islamic Sunni-Arab forces in the Arab world changed the balance of power between the Sunnis and Shiites. The growing Iranian role in the Middle East, which in recent years was supported by Syria and Hezbollah, and largely encouraged by the changing role of the Shiites in Iraq, received a blow by the Arab Spring. Consequently, a new Sunni coalition seemed to be emerging in the region, with Turkey and Egypt being central players in its formation, backed by the moderate monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco. This Sunni axis and Israel have several common interests in the region: first, diminishing the Iranian nuclear challenge, which threatens the security, status and economic interests of the Sunni Muslim countries; second, containing the looming threats from Syria, and possibly even assisting in deposing the Bashar regime; and third, ending the stalemate on the Palestinian front, which might deteriorate into a third Intifada.

4. *Engaging with the Arab Street:* In the past, Israel has dealt mainly with Arab rulers and elites. Yet, the Arab Spring accentuated the role of the masses in decision making; not only was the "street" important in toppling established orders, the new regimes found themselves accountable to the wishes, desires - and sometimes even the whims - of the gathering masses in the main squares of the big cities. Though Israel has not been a major issue on the agenda of the Arab Spring, still it suffers from a negative image in the public eye. Granted, reaching out to the Arab masses - be they secular or Islamic - is difficult for Israel. Yet, because of the importance of these voices in triggering changes in the Arab world and their impact on the decision makers, Israel should attempt - publicly or behind the scenes - to reach out to different parties and associations within Arab civil society. As the Arab Spring empowered the common people, it also created an opportunity for self-expression of groups and communities. In the "new" Arab world, there is growing curiosity and readiness to challenge the conventions of the old regimes. These circumstances might just enable a new discourse on Israel and with Israelis.

The opening of the political sphere in Arab countries provides a chance to introduce the peoples of the Middle East to Israeli voices committed to peace and regional belonging via Arab new media, TV stations and newspapers. It is an opportunity to deepen Arab knowledge and understanding of Israel, its society and politics. It is also possible for Israeli policy institutes to engage in forward-looking regional policy dialogue with emerging think tanks in the Arab world. New opportunities for second-track diplomacy also exist - whether these are conducted with liberals that feel greater freedom to talk with Israeli counterparts or with emerging Islamist elites that are coming to positions of power and feel a need to broaden their foreign policy expertise, including in regards to Israel.[9] Undoubtedly, progress

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9   See the articles by Ksenia Svetlova, Kamal Ali-Hassan, and Ronen Zeidel in this book.

on the Israeli-Palestinian track (see below) would serve Israel in reaching out to different Arab civil society groups.

5. *Promoting and Maintaining Peace:* The Arab Spring has stymied one opportunity for Israeli-Arab peace, at least in the short-term - that of reaching peace with Syria. Given Assad's loss of domestic control and the extreme violence he uses against his own people, he can no longer be considered a partner for peace. The Israeli-Palestinian track, by default, remains the only possible track for negotiations. The lack of trust and the conviction, on both sides of the conflict, that there is no partner to negotiate with, seems to impede any progress. The Palestinian achievement in the UN, influenced to a certain extent by the Arab Spring, gave the Palestinians a sense of empowerment that eases their way back to the negotiating table. Yet, the Fatah-Hamas rift seems to be undermining the ability of Mahmoud 'Abbas to reach an agreement. Progress towards Palestinian reconciliation may thus assist the negotiation process in the long run.[10] The composition of a new Israeli government, as well as the new US mediation role, may facilitate both sides' return to the negotiation table. However, without a determination to solve the conflict on the basis of a two-state solution the deadlock will continue.

In the absence of a breakthrough in the bilateral talks, Israel may want to use the Arab Peace Initiative (API) - which was launched as early as March 2002 - to break the ice. The allegation that the changes of regimes during the Arab Spring has in fact rendered the API meaningless is untrue as the annual summit of the Arab League, convened in Qatar in March 2013, clearly re-affirmed it. The results of the meeting between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Arab League leaders in May 2013 have also made this evident. This indicates that the new Islamist regimes are also committed to the implementation of the API.[11] Clearly, significant progress in the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli peace process is the key to improving Israel's standing in the Middle East: it would mitigate the anti-Israeli rhetoric of Arab regimes and civil society elements; open opportunities for cooperation with Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and possibly other Arab Sunni states; and allow Israel to concentrate on confronting threats posed by Iran, Hezbollah and Jihadist-type-organizations.

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In sum, the Arab Spring - in contrast to the prevailing Israeli view - does not only offer risks, threats and challenges, but provides opportunities for Israel as well. The Arab Spring may have led Israelis to alter some longstanding beliefs and images regarding the Arab peoples - from passive citizens willing to live for decades under dictatorships, to active, courageous and capable citizens standing up for their rights and risking their lives in a demand for change. In this context, it is worth noting that it was not a coincidence that the Israeli social protest of summer 2011 adopted slogans that originated in the Arab Spring states. Israeli decision makers may take advantage of these developments in order to introduce a change in the traditional Israeli policy toward the Middle East, which has thus far been characterized by a policy of "prevention" rather than "initiation".

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10   See the article by Ido Zelkovitz in this book.

About the Partner Organizations

Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies is a progressive foreign policy think tank that envisions a fresh start for Israel among the nations. It aims to reshape Israel's relations in the Middle East, Europe and the Mediterranean. Mitvim was established in May 2011, and its objectives and goals are:

1. To promote a paradigm shift in Israel's foreign policy - introduce a coherent peace-oriented and multilateral foreign policy paradigm; make foreign policy considerations more prominent in Israeli decision-making, and Transform Israel's inward-looking culture;

2. To promote regional-belonging for Israel - enhance knowledge and understanding of regional issues; define Israel's desired relations with its adjacent regions, and; advance regional-belonging possibilities;

3. To promote Israeli-Arab peace - engage in policy dialogue with Arab and Muslim think-tanks; identify, create and maximize opportunities for peace, and; provide process-expertise to support peace-making efforts.

Mitvim works at the political, diplomatic and public levels. It is comprised of Israeli experts, strategists, scholars, and journalists, who bring fresh and innovative thinking. Mitvim engages in the various phases of the policymaking-cycle and promotes the actual crafting of the regional realities it aspires for. Mitvim generates knowledge, articulates ideas, plans policies, advocates recommendations, and facilitates implementation .

The Friedrich-Ebert Foundation (FES) is a German political foundation committed to social democracy, pluralism and international cooperation. It was established in 1925 as the political legacy of Germany's first democratically elected president, Friedrich Ebert. Banned in 1933 and re-established in 1947, the FES today continues to promote social democracy and political education. The main fields in which the foundation is active are: social cohesion, democratic culture, innovation and participation, and globalization based on solidarity. The FES maintains more than eighty offices around the globe, ten of them in the Middle East and North Africa. Active in Israel since the 1960s, the FES opened its own office in 1978. Since then, the FES has been committed to strong German-Israeli relations, remembrance of the past, global social justice, and the promotion of social democracy. To this end the FES cooperates closely with local partner organizations to jointly develop projects in the spirit of democracy, gender equality and peaceful co-existence. The FES employs various methods and instruments to achieve its goals: dialogue and debate through public events and encounter programs; political and socio-economic research and analyses; civic education and leadership training; and political consulting.

Israel and the Arab Spring: Opportunities in Change, edited by Dr. Nimrod Goren and Jenia Yudkevich, assumes that the dramatic events that shook the Middle East starting in 2011 hold important opportunities for Israel's regional foreign policies and for its ability to develop ties with Arab and Muslim countries.

This book is a product of the "Opportunities in Change" project of Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. It includes a series of articles written by the project's task-team members, experts from the fields of Middle Eastern studies, international relations, media, civil society and policy-making.

The articles in **Israel and the Arab Spring: Opportunities in Change** vary in style, and combine policy-analysis with evidence-based research. They provide a broad overview of the opportunities for Israel in the Arab Spring, and spell out concrete policy paths towards their implementation.

Israeli policy-makers can make use of the insights and recommendations included in **Israel and the Arab Spring: Opportunities in Change** in order to make a genuine shift in Israel's traditional policies towards the Middle East - from a policy of prevention to a policy of initiation, from a policy of isolation to a policy of integration, and from a policy of conflict to a policy of peace.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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