

# INTRODUCTION: RESTORING A SECURITY- FIRST PEACE POLICY

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Israel's vital security requirements and a conditional endorsement of a Palestinian state were laid out by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his first major policy speech at Bar-Ilan University, just two months after he took office in April 2009. Though at first glance it may appear as though Netanyahu articulated a major shift in Israel's policy, the ideas he endorsed represent a restoration of Israel's traditional security-based approach to achieving a lasting peace. This policy has been based on the government's understanding of the strategic environment in the Middle East and the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. That is, since the beginning of the conflict, even before the founding of the state and all the way through the Oslo Accords, the readiness of the Zionist leadership to reach an historic compromise has failed to convince the Palestinians to forgo their commitment to "armed struggle" and other forms of opposition to the right of the Jewish people to live peacefully in a nation-state of their own in their historic home, the Land of Israel.

This background supports this urgently needed policy study, *Israel's Critical Security Needs for a Viable Peace*. Israel's security requirements in any agreement with the Palestinians are presented here by some of Israel's best military minds, who have

experienced first-hand the dangers the Jewish state faces on all fronts, particularly in Gaza and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), and from groups and regimes sponsored by Iran.

Throughout my military career, that included the Oslo "peace process" in the 1990s, I dealt with Palestinian and radical Islamic terror as an IDF officer in a variety of posts. I served as head of Military Intelligence, Deputy Chief of Staff, and then as Chief of Staff of the IDF during operations against the Palestinian Authority's paramilitary forces, Fatah militias, and Hamas forces in Gaza and Judea and Samaria from 2000 to 2005. The hard reality of these experiences taught me the importance of confronting security threats, ensuring the appropriate security protection systems, and not succumbing to wishful thinking about Israel's enemies. Today, the relative calm on Israel's borders and in Judea and Samaria should not be misinterpreted. Notwithstanding security improvements by the Palestinian National Security Forces trained by Lt.-Gen. Keith Dayton under the U.S.-backed security reform program, the IDF has been working around the clock to uproot the terror infrastructure in many Palestinian areas, while Iranian-backed Hamas has rebuilt its military capabilities in Gaza, as has Iran's Hezbollah proxy throughout Lebanon. It

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin launched a marathon Knesset debate in September 1993 following the Oslo Peace Accord signed with PLO leader Yasser Arafat at the White House.

Until his assassination in 1995, Rabin took a "security-first" approach, insisting on defensible borders for Israel and a demilitarized Palestinian entity that "would be less than a state."



is with these considerations in mind that Israel must approach the establishment of a prospective Palestinian state.

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This study is a corrective to the widely-held view in many international quarters and even in limited circles in Israel about the “need” and even the “inevitability” that peace requires Israel to withdraw to the perilous 1949 armistice lines (erroneously called the 1967 “borders”). These borders would not achieve peace – they would weaken Israel and invite war by denying the Jewish state strategic depth and topographical protection against Palestinian rocket and other attacks. The 1949 armistice lines enabled Israel’s enemies to deploy and operate in dangerously close proximity to Israel’s main population centers to such an extent that they constituted an existential threat to Israel.

## **Brief Historical Context**

Israeli policy immediately following the Six-Day War in 1967, and up to the Oslo Accords in 1993, centered on finding a formula that would enable Israel to *avoid* ruling over the Palestinians, without returning to the unstable pre-war ‘67 lines. It was on this basis that Israel did not annex Judea, Samaria and Gaza, yet at the same time did not speak of a Palestinian state within those territories. In fact, nothing that Israel did or said in those years – including at the 1978 Camp David Accords between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, which called for “autonomy for the Palestinian people,” and later, in 1993, when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin entered into the Oslo Accords – constituted intent or consent to establish a Palestinian state

within the pre-war ‘67 lines. Those Israeli leaders understood that these lines were indefensible.

What Rabin envisioned for Judea and Samaria was something along the lines of the “Allon Plan,” originally drafted by Yigal Allon, Rabin’s former commander in the pre-state Palmach, and former foreign minister under Rabin. Drafted shortly after the Six-Day War, the Allon Plan called for Israel to retain sovereignty in some of the territories it came to control in Judea and Samaria, but not to settle in areas with large Arab populations. The plan delineated a security border extending from the Jordan Valley up the steep eastern slopes of the Judea-Samaria mountain ridge and retained sovereignty over Jerusalem as Israel’s united capital. The Allon Plan served as the security reference point for Israeli governments from 1967 until far into the 1990s.

Rabin was very clear on the need to provide Palestinian autonomy, yet maintain defensible borders for Israel. In his speech before the Knesset on October 5, 1995, on the ratification of the Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement – a month before he was assassinated – he stated: “We would like this to be an entity which is less than a state, and which will independently run the lives of the Palestinians under its authority. The borders of the State of Israel, during the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six-Day War. We will not return to the 4 June 1967 line.” In the same speech Rabin emphasized that “The security border of the State of Israel will be located in the Jordan Valley, in the broadest meaning of that term.”<sup>1</sup> He added that Jerusalem would remain Israel’s united capital.

The erosion of the concept of defensible borders began in 2000 when Prime Minister Ehud Barak went to the Camp David summit with PA Chairman Yasser Arafat and U.S. President Bill Clinton to negotiate an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Sensing that the Israeli public was ripe for substantial concessions in exchange for a peace agreement, Barak decided to put the Palestinians to the test. He did this by abandoning defensible borders and waiting to see whether Arafat would accept Israel’s



Israeli police and medics at the scene of a Palestinian suicide terror attack at the Sbarro Restaurant in downtown Jerusalem, August 9, 2001. This deadly assault was one of nearly 100 major Palestinian terror attacks in Israel's main cities that followed the failure of peace negotiations at Camp David in summer 2000 and Taba in January 2001.

unprecedented peace offer, and if not, "expose his true colors." The result was the latter.

However, in doing so, Israel paid a heavy price – one that it continues to pay today. Barak inaugurated a new land-for-peace paradigm that was not rooted in UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, which had governed all Arab-Israeli peace initiatives since the Six-Day War. Instead, from that point on, Israel

was expected to live within the curtailed borders that Barak had proposed. Even more far-reaching, the Palestinian leadership succeeded in establishing in the minds of Western policymakers the idea that the "1967 lines" – that is, the 1949 armistice lines – should be the new frame of reference for all future negotiations, as opposed to the notion of "secure and recognized boundaries" which had been unanimously approved by the UN Security Council after the Six-Day War.

In the aftermath of Arafat's rejection of Ehud Barak's peace offer, the Palestinian suicide bombing war that followed, Ariel Sharon's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the Second Lebanon War, the failed Annapolis talks, and the recent war in Gaza, the Netanyahu government is readopting the notion that safeguarding Israel's vital security requirements is the only path to a viable and durable peace with our Palestinian neighbors. This includes defensible borders, a demilitarized Palestinian entity, control of a unified airspace with Judea and Samaria, electromagnetic communications frequency security, and other guarantees. This marks a shift away from the previously held misperception that territorial withdrawals would make room for a peace deal, and that such a deal would bring security. Prime Minister Netanyahu is articulating a broad Israeli consensus that has been forged in the trauma of recent events for a security-first approach as the only avenue to real peace.

### **The return to a security-first approach is firmly rooted in Israel's longstanding commitment to defend itself by itself. Israel has never asked any foreign power to endanger its troops in its defense.**

Perhaps the most important element of a viable security framework is the requirement that the Palestinians at all levels of society inculcate in their people a culture of peace that forswears indoctrination and incitement to violence and terror, and accepts the Jewish people's 3,300-year connection to the Land of Israel and its right to live in Israel – the Jewish nation-state – in peace and security.

The return to a security-first approach is firmly rooted in Israel's longstanding commitment to defend itself without reliance on foreign forces. Israel has never asked any foreign power to endanger its troops in its defense. Israel's insistence on defensible borders, which was a central guarantee of the exchange of letters between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2004, will ensure that Israel will be able to defend itself in the future.

### **The Implosion of the Land for Peace Formula and its Consequences**

The idea of "land for peace" began a rapid deterioration during the Oslo years, in the mid-1990s, when the territory that was placed under Palestinian control was used to create terrorist cadres for attacks against Israel – a phenomenon which culminated in the outbreak of the suicide-bombing war commonly known as the Second (or Al-Aksa) Intifada. "Land for peace" was dealt another blow when Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 and was repaid with a Hamas takeover of the territory and a dramatic escalation of rocket attacks on Israeli cities.

The lessons learned in both cases is that the Palestinians have adhered to their historical narrative of armed struggle that denies Israel's right to exist as a Jewish nation-state, regardless of signed agreements or unilateral Israeli withdrawals. In short, the Palestinians have interpreted Israeli territorial withdrawals as signs of weakness and retreat that have energized their struggle to force additional Israeli territorial concessions

Rejecting the failed, concession-based formulas of previous governments is not the only about-face in Israeli strategy that the Netanyahu government has undertaken. Another element involves the expectations of Palestinian society. Until now, the Palestinians have only been asked for a "top-down" peace process, throughout which their leaders have held meetings, shaken hands, attended peace conferences, and even signed agreements with Israeli leaders. But none of this was supported from the "bottom-up."

When a peace process does not sprout from the grassroots of a society, it is both pointless and useless. Indeed, until three-year-old children in Ramallah stop being taught to idolize "martyrs" who blow themselves up for *jihad* against Israelis and Jews, ideas which are also broadcast on Palestinian television, radio and the Internet, there will only be a "peace process" in the imaginations of the self-deluded.

Had Israel's experience with the Palestinians been different – had Oslo led to peace instead



of suicide bombers; had disengagement led to a flourishing society within Gaza rather than a launching site for Hamas rockets and a destination for Iranian weapons – the Israeli government’s considerations on how to reach a compromise on the borders of a Palestinian state would be different. As the situation stands today, Israel’s security depends on its retaining defensible borders. This means maintaining control over key areas of Judea and Samaria and certainly over an undivided Jerusalem. Any division of Israel’s capital city will invite sniper attacks, and mortar and rocket fire on the country’s capital from the surrounding high ground. In the event that the Palestinians obtain full sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, those areas – as Gaza before them – may be quickly taken over by Hamas and become staging grounds for attacks on Israel. This would pose a particularly serious threat due to the topography of the territory, which includes high ground from which even relatively primitive rockets – and even mortars – could easily strike Ben-Gurion International Airport.

## Defensible Borders in the Age of Rocket Terror

The debate over defensible borders is primarily a debate about Judea and Samaria and the calamities that would befall Israel should this territory be captured by radical Fatah factions or, like Gaza, by Hamas. Maintaining defensible borders is primarily a strategy for ensuring that such events never take place – and that if they do, Israel can respond swiftly to the threat.

There are several specific threats that defensible borders can help prevent. The first is that of rockets. Today, Hamas possesses rockets with a range of more than 50 kilometers. If launched from the Judea-Samaria mountain ridge, these rockets could strike the center of Israel where more than 70 percent of the population resides. This is also why it is crucial for Israel to control the strategically vital Jordan Valley. If it does not do so, the situation along the Jordan border may become similar to that of the Gaza-Egyptian border, where weapons, terrorists and other forms of support are easily smuggled to Hamas.

*Palestinian girls from Islamic Jihad, which is financed and armed by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, carry toy guns in a demonstration at the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza City under the control of the Palestinian Authority, July 31, 2004.*

The second major threat that defensible borders helps reduce are possible attempts by radical Islamic elements to destabilize Jordan or exploit its territory as a launching pad for terror attacks and military operations against Israel via Palestinian territory. Israel's peace treaty with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a cornerstone of Israel's security, making Jordan's security of great importance to Israel.

### **For the sake of Israeli and Jordanian security - and indeed for the protection of moderate factions inside the Palestinian Authority - it is vital that the Jordan border retain an Israeli security presence.**

If the IDF were withdrawn to the 1949 lines, the conquest of Judea and Samaria would become easier and therefore assume even greater strategic value to Hamas and its Iranian patron, which would surely pour new resources into accomplishing this task. Much of this effort would concentrate on creating terror networks and hospitable conditions for arms smuggling on the Jordanian side of the border. Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom would thus both be threatened by the attempt to develop a "Hamastan" in Judea and Samaria.

Israel is prepared to negotiate the parameters of demilitarized Palestinian statehood with the present Fatah-led government in the Palestinian Authority. But Israel must take into account the reality that such a government would be fragile and that there would be a significant possibility that a Palestinian state could end up being ruled by hostile forces, such as one of the militant factions of Fatah or its Hamas adversaries. The threat is not just theoretical, particularly in view of the ongoing incitement and indoctrination to terror that takes place under the Palestinian Authority. For the sake of Israeli and Jordanian security – and indeed for the protection of moderate factions inside the Palestinian Authority – it is vital that the Jordan border retain an Israeli security presence.

## **Strategic Vulnerabilities**

Israel's situation prior to 1967 made it a "sitting duck" for enemy attack. Today, with all the new weaponry and technological developments available to its enemies – and with Hamas located approximately 70 km from Tel Aviv – for Israel to revert to having a 14-km waistline (the distance from Tulkarem to Netanya) would make it not only more vulnerable and inviting of attack, but virtually indefensible. Israel must be able to prevent hostile military forces and terror groups emanating from within and via a prospective Palestinian state from attacking Israel's narrow waistline, especially during a crisis that draws a large proportion of the IDF away from Israeli territory, such as into Lebanon or Syria. Maj.-Gen. (res.) Aharon Farkash, former head of IDF Intelligence, discusses these concerns at length in this study.

It must be emphasized that there are many unknowns when it comes to the future security of the Middle East and the stability of the regimes bordering Israel. This will become an especially grave concern should Iran achieve a nuclear weapons capability. Such a dramatic shift in the regional balance of power could destabilize Sunni regimes or compel them to cut deals with their new masters in Tehran that would compel them to join Iran in support of terror organizations. The terror groups themselves will be emboldened by their new nuclear patron and will speak about having acquired a protective nuclear umbrella for their attacks. Meanwhile, Hizbullah and Hamas are acquiring weapons with increasing range and lethality.

These terror groups are already penetrating land and sea barriers that had previously prevented states like Iran and Syria from transferring sophisticated weaponry. Israel must have robust borders in order to meet these possible challenges, including the threat of non-conventional attack, which cannot be ruled out. Israel is not alone in confronting these dangers, either currently or historically. The United States risked nuclear war to prevent the Soviet Union from deploying nuclear missiles 90 miles from its southern shore.

Israel's retaining control over its borders will make it more difficult for terror groups to use the territory of Israel's neighbors as a staging area for attacks. This will not only enhance Israel's security, but also the stability of neighboring governments and even distant Sunni regimes in the region. It is in the interest of all these actors for Israel to maintain defensible borders.

## Demilitarization

This brings us to an additional necessary condition for the establishment of a Palestinian state: that it be demilitarized.

Israel's past experience with peacemaking has been marked by failure and double-dealing. When Yasser Arafat first passed through the Rafah crossing into the Gaza Strip in May 1994 as part of the "Gaza and Jericho First" agreement with Israel, he violated the Oslo Accords from the first moment of his return by hiding prohibited weapons and a terrorist in his vehicle. From that moment to this day, the PA has established a track record of failure and bad faith that should make Israel reluctant to accept its promises at face value. The recent decline in Palestinian violence is not a generous response to Israeli gestures. Rather, greater calm has been accomplished largely because of the construction of the security barrier, ongoing IDF operations in Judea and Samaria that keep terrorists on the run, the increased rivalry between Fatah and Hamas, and a growing realization that Palestinian terror doesn't pay.

A militarized Palestinian state would actually be a standing invitation for terrorist groups to meddle and attack: on top of the hope of taking control of the territory would be the prospect of seizing valuable stockpiles of weapons that could be used against Israel. Moreover, in a militarized state, there would be few reliable safeguards preventing the transfer or shared use of weapons between legitimate Palestinian security forces and terror groups and militias, which today and in the past have had many shared members.

It is thus unsafe and unwise to place our hopes in the belief that future Israeli peace overtures and concessions will meet with

different results – at least not until Palestinian society reforms itself from within and embraces peaceful coexistence. Since this has not yet happened, Israel must insist on preventing the prospective Palestinian state from acquiring any arms or maintaining forces other than those necessary for internal Palestinian security and preventing terror attacks on Israel.

But even a demilitarized Palestinian entity does not mean that Israel can afford to fully relinquish security control. In fact, as Prime Minister Netanyahu has said publicly on a number of occasions, there will have to be a permanent IDF presence controlling the border crossings, particularly on the eastern side of any future Palestinian state, as well as the right of the IDF to enter the Palestinian entity when warranted.<sup>2</sup>

## Territorial Withdrawals Encourage Israel's Enemies

As for further evacuations of Jewish communities, similar to those of Gush Katif in Gaza and northern Samaria in 2005, this, too, has to be considered in a broader context – even beyond immediate security concerns relating to the Palestinians. The fact is that the mere discussion of removing Israeli settlements encourages *jihadists* across the globe. Their stated aim, after all, is not to establish a Palestinian state but to "wipe Israel off the map." Radical Islamist groups, even those whose ability to harm Israel is small, nevertheless envision the destruction of the Jewish state in stages: first Gaza, then Judea and Samaria, and after that, Tel Aviv. This is not mere semantics, but rather a strategic objective. We have learned from bitter experience that territorial withdrawals do not alleviate grievances; they indicate weakness and convince Israel's enemies that victory is possible.

With this in mind, Israel's counter-strategy must be based on strength. Instead of projecting that it is a country in a constant state of retreat, Israel must present itself as a country that stands up for itself and knows how to retaliate, so that its enemies will think twice before attacking.

## The Danger of International Forces

In this policy study, Maj.-Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror, former head of IDF intelligence assessment, addresses the proposed deployment of an international force as part of a peace agreement involving an Israeli withdrawal from further territories. Here, too, Israel's experience has been calamitous. This is not due to ill will on the part of such forces, but rather to the impossibility of their task of preventing and combating hostile activities along Israel's borders.

There are many reasons why international peacekeeping forces have such a prominent track record of inefficacy. UNIFIL, to take but one example, operates under a Chapter 6 UN mandate, which means that it cannot take an independent stance against Hizbullah; it must receive permission from the Lebanese government, in which Hizbullah is heavily represented. International peacekeepers tend not to be militarily equipped or organized to deal with the threats they face. Their bureaucratic incentives orient them toward cautious, risk-averse behavior – the exact opposite of the motives that drive a nation-state's military forces. These incentives also encourage the downplaying of threats and problems and an overestimation of the effectiveness of the peacekeeping forces. This is fine for the peacekeepers, but it endangers those whose lives hang in the balance of the peacekeepers' competence.

Peacekeepers are not strong or capable enough to prevent terrorist groups, which intentionally conceal their activities, from arming and organizing themselves – but they are enough of a presence to become a dangerous obstruction on the battlefield when war breaks out. This has been a great detriment to the IDF's ability to carry out crucial missions, since it has encountered friction with UNIFIL soldiers, rather than focusing solely on engaging the enemy.

So as not to antagonize the terrorist groups they fear, even when UN forces have intercepted weapons smugglers or uncovered terrorist cells, the most they have done is detain them temporarily, then release them and return their weapons. There was even a case of EU monitors stationed at the

Rafah crossing in Gaza who fled the area as soon as the security situation there began to deteriorate even before Hamas' violent takeover in June 2007.

It is for these reasons that Israel cannot and should not agree to the presence of foreign troops on its soil or the soil of a prospective demilitarized Palestinian state.

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Another change in Israeli strategy that the Netanyahu government considers critical is combating the incessant delegitimization of Israel that has become a major feature of the strategy to weaken and destroy the Jewish state. The notoriously biased, misleading, and vicious UN-sanctioned Goldstone Report proves the dangers that Israel and other liberal democracies face when forced to combat terror, particularly in heavily populated areas such as Gaza, where terrorist forces can operate easily from among civilians.

## Israel's National and Historical Rights

The final element that characterizes Israel's current policy is the emphasis it places on the national and historic rights of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. Without this component, arguments over security and borders have no context. One of the central challenges Israel has to confront in contending with Palestinian aggression is its successful "asymmetrical" battle in the international court of public opinion. This battlefield is characterized by the presence of a massive propaganda machine that attempts to convince the world of Israel's illegitimacy and that advocates its diplomatic and economic isolation.

Israel, for its part, has been so preoccupied with peace, on the one hand, and security,

on the other, that it has failed to remind itself and the world of the reason for its establishment in the first place – a reason other than the Holocaust. That Israel has been the Jewish homeland since time immemorial is not only clear from the yearning of Jews throughout history, expressed in the phrase repeated during Passover and as the last words said on Yom Kippur, “Next year in Jerusalem,” it is also substantiated by the ongoing archaeological discoveries proving the existence of Jewish national life in Israel going back more than three thousand years. It is further substantiated by the fact that there has always been a Jewish presence in Israel – sometimes smaller, sometimes larger, dwindling in the past because of persecution and expulsion – but always there. These facts are ignored or denied by the delegitimizers. Now is the time to put these axioms of Jewish rights and history at the forefront of the debate and use them as an integral part of Israel’s security strategy.

## Notes

1. [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990\\_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm).
2. “Netanyahu Demands Israeli Presence in West Bank,” AP, *Jerusalem Post*, January 20, 2010.