

PEACE WITH SYRIA: NO MARGIN FOR ERROR

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Trading vital strategic tangible assets for a piece of paper backed by intangible, reversible collaterals, offered by a tyrant who is supposed to start behaving in a way he never did before – how would a normal (US) businessman handle such a proposal?

1. A Cause For Concern: The Assymetries

1.1 Under the emotional impact of the French Revolution, Immanuel Kant wrote his **Perpetual Peace** in 1797. Comparing two types of ruling regimes, he says:¹

[A state governed according to] a constitution...[which] is republican²...established (first)...by principles of the freedom of the members of a society (as men); secondly, by principles of dependence of all upon a simple common legislation (as subjects) and thirdly, by the law of their equality (as citizens)...gives a favorable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. The reason is this: If the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than to be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war. Among the latter would be having to fight, having to pay the costs of war from their own resources, and having to repair the devastation war leaves behind.

Of the opposite type of regime he warns:

But, on the other hand, in a constitution which is not republican, and under which the subjects are not citizens, a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require the ruler, who is the proprietor and not a member of the state, the least sacrifice of the pleasures of his table, the chase, his country houses, his court functions and the like. He may therefore resolve on war as on a

pleasure party for the most trivial reasons, and with perfect indifference leave the justification which decency requires to the diplomatic corps, who are ever ready to provide it.

During the 200 years since **Eternal Peace** was published, Kant's observations were constantly proven right, from Napoleon Bonaparte to Hitler, Stalin and the Arab dictators fighting among themselves and, together, fighting Israel.

This is the number one asymmetry between Israel and Arabia, to be reckoned with when negotiating peace.

1.2 Before May 15, 1948, the Israel-Arab conflict was limited to Jewish-Western-Palestinian-Arab skirmishes, with the Arabs receiving ample support from their Middle Eastern (and other) brethren.

Since May 15, 1948, to this day, all Israel's existential major wars were conducted between Israel and various coalitions of the Arab states (except the Sinai campaign of 1956). One has to accept the fact that the conflict is between Israel and Pan-Arabia, i.e., the Arab Nation as mentioned in the Palestinian Covenant. These are not separate, "stand alone" conflicts between Israel and Palestinians, Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Iraq, etc., which may be handled one-by-one as if there were no interdependence among them all.

Logic dictates that when peace between Israel and Syria is discussed, it would be an exercise in self-delusion to look upon the Israeli-Syrian military balance as a separate matter to be considered. The Israeli-Syrian military balance, serious enough as it is,³ is only one component of the Israeli-Arabian picture. Who will be able to prevent the present or coming Syrian tyrant from concluding a military alliance with, say, the present or coming Iraqi tyrant and/or any other? A piece of paper? US and UN guarantees and/or observers? We have been through that in 1967.

Relations with Syria, as much as the present "consensus" would wish to forget it, are only one part of the wider, Israeli-Arabic picture.

As a reminder:

- i. Israel-Arabia area ratio is about 1:500.

- ii. Israel-Arabia population ratio is about 1:80.
- iii. Border to vital targets distance (air-defense penetration):
 - in Israel 3-100 km or less.
 - in Arabia, 40-1,000 km and more.
- iv. UN and other diplomatic ratio among states: Israel: 1; Arabia: 22+.
- v. Natural resources:
 - Arabia: 60% of world oil in the Middle East.
 - Israel: some potash, bromide and phosphates; = ± nil.

This is asymmetry number two, conveniently overlooked by Israeli “general consensus”. It is clearly the basis of policy making in the Arab world. National amnesia?

1.3 Kissinger wrote that “A prerogative of independence of a state is that its government can change its mind.” True, indeed.

While democratic Israel is chained by its Jewish and Western norms and practices, Arab totalitarian states are not, nor are, to a great extent, the super-powers.

This is asymmetry number three, a heavy weight to carry. What if the Syrian tyrant changes his mind and goes at it bit-by-bit, with the west censuring Israel for being oversensitive, hence unduly aggressive?

1.4 The worst asymmetry, however, is the asymmetry of aims:

- i. **Israel’s aims are peaceful co-existence and development.** As Kant says, “the government is a tool of the people.”
- ii. **Arabia’s dictators’, medieval princes’, military-revolutionary tyrants’ or theocratic Islamic despots’, *declared aim is the elimination of the Israeli Western, infidel foothold in the Middle East.*** This is not a mystical-ideological-religious-emotional whim, but rather a very concrete political interest. Doing away with Israel is a condition *sine-qua-non* for continued totalitarian rule in the Middle East, especially in this world embracing media age.

Unless they dispose of it, Middle East tyrants may be asked by their subjects, for example, to explain why arid, resourceless, miniature Israel, “thrown” among the Arabs, drained by their violence and constantly absorbing new, poor immigrants, has a GNP more than double that of all its so much larger neighbors put together? Creation of wealth and a better life may be assumed to be a result of the Jewish infidel, “twisted”, Western ways. They must be uprooted before bringing about that social violent change feared by dictators.

Peace loving, good willing liberals who preach brotherly love, should realize that Israel, the US, and other democracies, are “negotiating peace” with the despots whose basic openly stated interest is the destruction of Israel in order to prevent or delay a Middle East version of a French Revolution or an implosion á la Soviet Union that may, God forbid, sow the seed of democracy in the region.

- iii. The aim(s) of the Arab Middle Eastern masses, its populations, are disregarded, irrelevant. The Arab population is not part of the Israeli and Western Democracies’ “peacemaking”. Democracies team with their oppressors. They may want peace and a better life, but neither the Western liberal governments and media, nor the democratic Israelis, take them into account. Their oppressors are accepted as speakers on their behalf.

Asymmetry number four is the deep-rooted disparity of peace or “peace” aims between Israel (as a whole: people & government) and the Arab totalitarian despots.

There are, of course, so many other asymmetries that provide so many other reasons for skepticism. Peace negotiations cannot dismiss them.

2. A Cause for Concern: The Ambiguity of Peace Definition

An Israeli leader defined peace with Syria as the fulfillment of his dream of visiting Damascus and eating humus in its restaurants which he did not do since he was 14 years. A prince’s wish. He even threatened to resign if the people will not let him do it. Some definition! MK Uri Savir, a major peace

promoter, declared that peace is, insofar as he is concerned, “a bus line linking Haifa to Damascus”.⁴

Others, lacking such originality, ask for peace, real peace, really real peace, with embassies, flags and tourism. When invited by Prime Minister Shamir to participate, as a Member of Knesset, in the Madrid comprehensive peace talks in October 1991,⁵ the writer, attempting to apply the Cartesian logic acquired in the military, asked for “the purpose of the maneuver”, i.e., the definition of peace.

He did not get one, so he turned to the dictionaries from which all others shied away, inadvertently or, maybe, on purpose.⁶

Dictionaries define peace, as basically one of two situations:

- i. “A state of harmony between people or groups.”
- ii. “A state existing during the absence of war.” (Collins, La Rousse).

The picture becomes clearer: There are two distinct types of peace. There is no bridging between them.

- A “state of harmony”, which is the type of peace between, say, the US and Canada. Its “building blocks” are commonality of political (democratic⁷) regimes, of culture, of economic principles and practices of ethics, of *Weltanschauung*, of norms and aspirations, etc., with no real conflict of interests and, of course, no aggressive motivation. The US and Canada do not need peace agreements, nor armies deployed “to protect the peace”. Across borders movements of people, wares and ideas are free, natural and continuous.
- A “state of no war” would be the “de facto” peace, the Cold War between the US and the now defunct USSR. The clash among the diametrically opposed political regimes, the culture, the economic principles and practices, the ethics, etc., the conflicts of interests and the militant, aggressive motivation of communist expansionism created a war prone reality, with war being averted by the introduction of a new factor offsetting all others, namely: **deterrence**.

A number of treaties were signed and huge military forces were poised to “protect the peace”. Across borders, movements of people, wares, and especially ideas, were limited to a minimum.

It does not take long to analyze the Middle East parameters of peace in order to conclude that peace between Israel and Syria will, per force, be similar to the US-USSR peace or the peace with Egypt. Israel’s peace with Jordan is a unique exception,⁸ not logically unlike the US-Mexican peace. Peace with Syria, if concluded the way it is being negotiated, will be founded on third parties’ “goodwill”, protected by military forces, limited in scope, uneasy, totally dependent on the Syrian ruling tyrant’s whim or evaluation of the situation, i.e., looking for a “window of opportunity” to achieve his basic interest, namely, the elimination of Israel.

Interaction between Syria and Israel, as viewed by Assad, will be kept (of course) to a minimum, which is sure to generate friction, meaning that old sores may be reinfected.

Far from becoming the political quantum jump from war to a “peace of harmony”, the Syrian-Israeli peace, like Peres’ “New Middle East”,⁹ shows all the characteristic signs of the US-USSR Cold War, which means that the mechanism of preventing war in this basically war-prone situation, is DETERRENCE, even though the bullet ridden walls of antagonisms may be papered over by numerous pages of peace agreements.

3. A Cause for Concern: “No War” Peace Agreements that Harm Deterrence

- 3.1 On October 27, 1997, the writer was invited to formally testify before the Joint Economic Committee of the US Senate and House of Representatives in Washington, in order to elaborate on a position paper named “Israel 2,000 – How Will it Fare if Shrunk to its 1967 Borders”, written within the framework of the “Ariel Center for Policy Research”.

The general idea was to analyze the possibility of revalidation of the US State Department’s Rogers Plan of 1969 (Israel: withdrawal to the 1967 lines “with minor modifications”) which, as it is well known,

was furiously rejected at the time by Golda Meir, the then Labor Party Prime Minister.¹⁰

The logic followed by the writer was:

- i. Establish the “Red Lines” and “War Strategy” developed during Ben-Gurion’s time, as expressed in (then) Deputy Prime Minister’s Yigal Allon’s formal defense policy declaration of February 22, 1967.¹¹

Ben-Gurion’s strategy of “carrying the war over to enemy territory”, tacitly recognized as legitimate by the international community because of Israel’s miniature area and indefensible shape and topography, was elaborated on by Allon who declared that: “In order to win a war or, **in some cases, survive one, Israel should**, when war becomes imminent, **preempt by surprise.**”

- ii. Review the changes in Arab “Aims of War” and “Order of Battle” between 1967 and 1997.¹²
- iii. Review the revolutionary developments in Weapons’ Technology between 1967 and 1997.¹³
- iv. Review of the Lessons of Wars between 1967 and 1997.¹⁴
- v. Review the changes in the world and Middle East geopolitical realities, for good or ill, and their bearing on Israel during that same period.¹⁵

3.2 The conclusion, as presented by the writer on Capitol Hill, was that the Ben-Gurion strategy as elaborated by Yigal Allon (as executed during the Six Day War of June 1967), cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be carried out in present circumstances from the 1967 (Rogers) borders.¹⁶ Yet, if Israel will again be confined to the 1967 lines, Allon’s statement that preemption by surprise is vital “in order to win a war or, in some cases, survive one”, remains as true as ever – **only that this is practically impossible to execute. The one factor that may substitute for preemption by surprise is terrain (topography). Up to the present, no real substitute has been found for the “terrain” factor in the Golan Height’s context.**

Military power, the major component of deterrence, is composed of a trained, supplied, controlled, informed, cunning maneuvering of

firepower, mobility *and terrain*. Where “terrain” is almost insignificant in size and topography is dominant on enemy’s side, there is a lid on the firepower and mobility that may be brought to bear. Hence, the level of deterrence is dangerously lowered, *which increases the probability of war* (in a “peace of no war” situation).

For example: Preempting by surprise, means achieving instant air superiority, possible in 1967, given the anti-aircraft defense intensity and control sophistication of the time, and the fact that the enemy aircraft were openly lined up on their aprons, along fewer runways.¹⁷

Two to four days may be required today to “clean” the battle area of the so much more sophisticated air defense in order to achieve the imperative air superiority. This means that the timing and location of the attack become known and no tactical surprise, as requested by Allon, may be achieved. The attack of anti-aircraft weapons sites and/or their Command, Control, Communications, Computer & Intelligence (C⁴I) is an act of war, to which the Syrian almost instant response may be the ballistic missile bombardment of Israel’s urban centers, i.e, the disruption of reserves mobilization, their outfitting, transport and deployment to the battle front (modern intelligence prevents efficient, prior, secret mobilization and deployment of reserves).

No capability of preempting by surprise – no winning of a war or, in some instances, no survival for Israel within the 1967 borders.

Being absolutely unable to trade off terrain for the wearing out of the enemy’s firepower and mobility (which was the case on a small scale during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 that started on the Golan and the Suez Canal and, of course, the case on a grand scale during the Russian Napoleonic and Soviet-German Wars) requires a substantial increase in firepower and mobility, which as said, has its limits.

As it turns out, Israel’s deterrence at terror/guerrilla, conventional and non-conventional levels will be negatively affected by the loss of its topographic assets, first and foremost the Golan,¹⁸ enhancing the probability of war (in a peace of “no war”).

4. A Cause for Concern – The Proposed Substitutes

The “standard” substitutes for the Golan Heights that are proposed by the “instant peace” protagonists raise more questions about their seriousness than provide answers. For example:

- 4.1 “American military presence on the Golan as observers and international guarantees will assure the Golan (and beyond) demilitarization.”

We have tasted US guaranties and UN troops in the Sinai and their flight in 1967 that brought about the Six Day War.¹⁹

Czechoslovakia received French-British guaranties for the integrity of its mutilated borders to facilitate the “Territories for Peace” ceding of the Sudetenland to Germany. Six months later, Czechoslovakia did not exist and the rest is history. The US guaranteed the status of Taiwan as “the real China”, etc. There is no case in history where third party guarantees were valid for long, unless desired by both sides, as is the present case between Egypt and Israel. Until when?

- 4.2 “Why insist on deterrence and war talk if you sign peace?”

The facts are that most wars started from a “contracted peace” situation. To illustrate:

The two World Wars of the century did. The 1941 Nazi surprise attack against the Soviet Union started trampling on a “Treaty of Alliance” (not “only” peace), i.e., the Molotov-Ribentropp pact of 1939.

Iraq’s tensions with Iran were relieved by a five year negotiated peace treaty signed in 1978. In 1980, the Iraqis launched an eight year war against Iran where over one million people lost their lives and ballistic missiles, as well as chemical weapons, were used.

Between Iraq and Kuwait, there were tons of agreements. Kuwait saved Iraq during its Iranian war by providing a bypass to the Iranian held-only navigable access to Iraq. So what?

Syria signed an Armistice Pact pointing to peace with Israel in 1949. It started shooting the following day – continuously between 1949 and 1967, breaking over 400 cease-fires it signed, using the Golan as a launching pad.

Syria's "reliable" tyrant, Assad, signed three agreements to withdraw from Lebanon, which he never attempted to honor.

This is why one should insist on deterrence and, as the old and militarily wise Romans used to say, "*Si vis pacem, pare bellum*".

- 4.3 "Today's technology, especially electronics, provide safe substitutes for the Golan."

As a former Head of AF Operational Requirements, a Member of RAPHAEL (Armament Development Authority) Advisory Board until 1995, etc., may I suggest that I agree with General Amnon Lipkin-Shakak's statement as Chief of the General Staff in December 1995 that, "There is no military substitute for the Golan, technological or other."

As the Gulf War and Kosovo proved, the more data links and computers one has to use for a certain mission, the more prone he is to enemy interference with inputs of disinformation and waging of computer warfare. The "shelf life" of Electronic Warfare (EW) arsenals is similar to that of a PC computer. **There is no substitute for the company or battalion commander's hold on his own hill.** High ground provides for defense, for communication and control, for visual and optical, including infra-red, enhanced observation, for radar, for signals interception and most important, when the Air Force may be away fighting missiles, for "look-down shoot-down" anti-aircraft missile batteries. There are hardly any valid substitutes for these aboard aircraft hundreds of miles away, "platforms" that require protection themselves and whose data links and numerous steps to reach the battalion are penetrable.

- 4.4 "We are strong enough to deter and react, if necessary."

Not if you are losing your high ground, especially on the Golan where not only Syria, but also Iraq and Jordan, have in the past, made contact with us at close quarters. Remember: 1,000 tanks in Tel Aviv are either a parade or a target. Deployed in adequate topographical conditions, they are a formidable force.

- 4.5 "To deter, let's take the nukes out of the closet." (Assuming that they are there.)

Nukes would be a worst possible solution. Changing the present situation would mean legitimization of the nuclearization of the Middle East. With the ratios and relationships involved, all conflict with Syria will turn into a general nuclear war in the Middle East, where a 50:1 Israeli superiority is required for a “Samson’s Choice”.

With its micro-miniature area that may be devastated by 2-4 nuclear devices, its arid area open to satellite spying and surveillance that permits no siting of a reliable second strike capability within its borders, Israel is at a total disadvantage in nuclear confrontation and should do its best to avoid such a situation rather than promote it. The suggestion of “let’s sign peace before they have nukes,” is absolutely unrealistic. Iraq and Iran, and possibly others, attempt to acquire nuclear arms for the reason of hegemony, i.e., control of the M.E. oil. Unfortunately, a quest for hegemony is supposed to be legitimate if, like the Iraqi scuds, it is used to threaten Israel. Arab nuclear efforts do not depend on Israel’s peace efforts.

There is a reason for deep concern when the “protagonists of peace”, US, Israelis or others, offer hollow substitutes for an answer.

5. The Question of Legitimacy

- 5.1 According to the Allied Middle East partition of the Ottoman (not Arab) Empire at the end of the First World War, **Palestine, including the Golan Heights**, were subjected to the British Mandate which was to be instrumental in creating a Jewish National Home. That was the international trend that created Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Czechoslovakia, recreated Poland, etc. (as states, not as “fuzzy” homelands).

Trans-Jordan, today’s Jordan, was torn off the Mandate by the British in 1921 to satisfy British Imperial interests, i.e., regardless of “natives” inputs. The Golan Heights were separated from Palestine and offered to the French Mandate of Syria, seemingly in exchange for some areas in Northern Iraq that were transferred by the French to the British (oil). Jewish history and security that suggested, in the first place, that the Golan be part of the Mandate were discarded to satisfy

imperial manipulations. There never was a “sacred” fusion between Syria and the Golan.

- 5.2 The UN partition plan of November 1947 (Resolution 181) has not been accepted by the Arabs who waged war with Israel and lost (except Syria which gained some ground). Therefore, Resolution 181 is as good as dead, superseded by the results of the war. (Syria affirms that Assad requests Israel to withdraw to the June 4, 1967 lines which are **not** the “181 lines”.)
- 5.3 All Arab countries, with the exception of Iraq (that has no common border with Israel), signed the Rhodes, UN sponsored Armistice Agreements of 1949. The agreements, unlimited in time, stated that they are an introduction to peace. (Jordan acted for the Arab Palestinians.) All Arab countries reneged on all of the Armistice Agreements.
- 5.4 In flagrant disregard of the Armistice, Syria started a continuous disruption of life on the Israeli side of its border by firing artillery, mining and raiding the Israeli side more than 400 times between 1949 and 1967. In 1951, a Syrian incursion launched from the Golan went as far west as to threaten the Tiberias-Rosh Pina road. Israel had to use the Air Force to eject them. Then Syria occupied the El Hamma Springs in the Golan which Israel had to evacuate under pressure. In 1964, Syria attempted to divert the Jordan River sources that were in its area, but whose waters were, according to the Armistice, to be used by Israel. The “Water War” resulted, with the Syrians being prevented by force from diverting the Jordan through the Golan Heights (to be wasted, de facto). A series of clashes, including major air battles, resulted.
- 5.5 In 1967, Syria joined Egypt and Jordan in an openly declared attempt to annihilate the State of Israel (with Soviet support), while the West stepped aside in the best Munich (1938) fashion. All paper agreements signed prior to June 1967 were thus annulled by the erupting war as were, for instance, the Versailles or Brest-Litowsk treaties, etc.

In the Six Day War of June 1967, Israel achieved what was considered a “mission impossible” by the Arabs and by the world at large, and took the ever-threatening Golan Heights.

The 20 year uninterrupted Syrian warlike acts carried out from the Golan Heights in breach of the Armistice and 400 “cease fires”, in face of the civilized world’s indifference, are a de-legitimization of Syrian rule over the Golan and a legitimate reason for Israel keeping it. The international *laissez-faire* when Israel had the rope around its neck, disqualifies all those who presently insist upon its withdrawal.

5.6 Syria possessed the Golan for **20 years**, using it as a springboard for war against Israel, with no real peaceful development envisaged. Israel (re)possesses the Golan and for the **last 32 years** it has enriched it with a solid economy, with a per-capita income similar to that of Europe.

Denying Syrians the overwhelming topographic superiority of the Golan and deterring the Syrians by Israel’s proximity to Damascus, resulted in real stability, i.e., a “no war” situation de facto.

Unlike East Prussia, Silesia and other very large chunks of Germany that changed hands when Germany lost World War II, or the Japanese substantial territorial loss, the wars constantly initiated by Syria, should cost it only 0.5 percent of its pre-wars territory (the Golan) to ensure a durable peace. What is not legitimate about it?

5.7 Unlike the status of Judea, Samaria and Gaza with their large Arab populations, the Golan Heights, with no Arab population, has been legally annexed by Israel. An Israeli legal disposing of its sovereignty over the Golan will certainly provide a legitimate precedent with regard to other areas that were accepted worldwide, including the Arab world, as Israeli although they are situated outside the map drawn by UN Resolution 181 of 1947.

The 1947 partition will be on the agenda again, with a fair chance to renew that war again, with Arab firepower, mobility and terrain crushing superiority.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Transferring the Golan Heights to Syria within the framework of a “peace of no war” will gravely harm Israel in more than one aspect. It may even become a mortal danger.

- Instead of the regional power, the asset Israel is to the West, which is facing a raising Islam, uncertainty about the final

affiliation of the seven C.I.S. northern republics in Central Asia, the necessity to buttress Turkish resolve, a huge Arab-Islamic conventional and mass destruction arms build up, world-wide Islamic terrorism from China to Chechniya and from Paris to Pakistan and probable Russian revisionism, Israel will turn into a liability and be treated like one. Nobody bets on a dying horse more than on a dead one.

- The costs of the operation, assessed by the writer to be in the order of (more than) \$30 billion, plus about \$5 billion a year to ensure readiness for as long as one foresees, have not been seriously considered by the “peacemakers”, who accepted the amount as an order of magnitude. Who will bear the costs?

If it is the US, it will be a tough problem for the Congress, a rather strange occurrence, to have the US pay such a sum in order to downgrade its traditional, unconditional, democratic ally from an asset into a liability, an invalid at the mercy of some of the most backward tyrants.

If Israel will have to foot the bill, the drain on its economy will become overwhelming, the result being the country’s economic stagnation and, maybe, paralysis with all that bears on its security. Guess who will be asked to bail it out?

If the peace with Egypt will serve as a model, more billions of US dollars will have to be spent on Syrian armed forces’ modernization, an additional threat to Israel.

- The concerns mentioned above and those which were not, leave absolutely no room for error. Either Assad and his successor behave the way they are supposed to by the Israeli peacemakers, or a devastating costly war will ensue, with Israel at a terrible disadvantage.
- Trading (let’s face it) the Golan Heights for a tyrant’s piece of paper backed by makeshift collaterals that never worked in the past, thereby opening, as Gur said, Israel’s Eastern, most sensitive flank to a potential attack by a Syrian-Iraqi alliance (and, in different circumstances, with Jordan and the Palestinian entity participation), will be remembered in history as one of the major

blunders of the Jewish people, something like Massarik's and Benés' acceptance of the Chamberlain-Hitler Munich dictate (with no disrespect for President Clinton).

- Speaking on the Israeli radio on January 3, 2000, at about 08:20, Professor Itamar Rabinowitz, former Israeli Ambassador to the US and one of the “architects of peace”, commented on the Shepherdstown, West Virginia talks, explaining that the difficulties raise from the asymmetry between the democratic Israeli team and the Syrian team appointed by its dictator, Assad, who has no intention of actively participating until a **positive** agreement has been concluded. “This” he said, “is why we have to be more accommodating than in normal negotiations.” (Quoted from memory.) I wonder whether Rabinowitz learned Chamberlain's reasoning by heart.

6.2 Some examples:

- Let it be known that, playing big, politicians and Generals make big mistakes.
- The French and British governments were mistaken when tolerating Hitler's malfesance, starting with the occupation of the Ruhr in 1936. Were they (then they had the capability) to react by force, there would probably not have been a World War II.
- The US politicians and armed forces misread the Japanese, with the resulting bombing of Pearl Harbor. But Pearl Harbor was thousands of miles away from Washington.
- Stalin trusted Hitler's friendship (!) in 1941. Twenty-three million Soviets lost their lives. Some say 50 million.
- Hitler was certain he would win the war. Over 11 million Germans were killed and Germany was dismembered.
- Ben-Gurion was certain that the 1949 Armistice would bring peace. Egypt and Syria taught him he was wrong.
- The US denied the French “Imperialists” the aircraft they needed to tilt the anti-communist war in their favor in Vietnam during the late 1940s and early 1950s (Dien-Bien-Phu). The US replaced the French and lost the Vietnam War shamefully, with the Soviets

taking one big step further in the free world. Vietnam was half the world away from the US, yet its long shadow is still darkening its skies and judgment.

- Generals Zeira (Chief of Israeli Military Intelligence) and Dayan (his mentor and Minister of Defense) were certain, in October 1973, that war would not break out in spite of Mossad and other warnings (including King Hussein's, it is said). They carried the day in the government, reserves were not mobilized in time and no preemption requested by the Israeli Air Force was authorized.

Unlike Vietnam, this was on home's doorstep. Israel lost about 3,000 men, a US equivalent of 187,500, in the few days required to redress the situation and to win the biggest armor battle the world has ever seen... but it lost the war on the home and diplomatic fronts.

6.3 The "moral of the story" is that not unlike the old Western intellectuals' communist sympathies, with writers and philosophers (Sartre) heading the crowd, today's liberals, moralists, artists, peaceniks, and "greens" (and yellows), the world over have joined hands to protect the "dear" Arab tyrants and help them recover ground lost to "bad" democratic Israel in wars of aggression.

This delayed, out of place, Vietnam hangover (flower power?) fixation is an easily digested, politically palatable, populist, short-lived act easy to sell, hence adopted by "pragmatic" politicians and the ubiquitous media. Let us only hope that the Israeli public and the US Congress and people will refuse to be carried away by dictators' vague promises.

In a nutshell, Israel is torn between the "peace-right-now" options put forth by those who accept taking a (existentialist) risk gamble tied to a very low probability of success in the hope of hitting the (peace) jackpot and, the sedate, careful, skeptical approach that history warrants.

After all, the "window of opportunity" has been open for the last nine years and, anyway, it turns out that it has no pane.

Clinton's and Assad's style in stepping off the stage of history should not prejudice the fate of Israel's recovery from the ashes of the recent past.

Let us hope that President Clinton, “the locomotive of peace”, will realize that he is about to commit a very costly mistake, gravely endangering Israel’s existence at a charge to be carried by the US taxpayer.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Quoted from: **Despots, Democrats and the Determinants of International Conflict**, by Martin Sherman. McMillan, St. Martin's Press 1998 pp. 61-62.
- ² "Republican" in Kant's 18th century wording should read "democratic".
- ³ Arsenals may be upgraded which will probably be the case if "peace" will bring about US modernization of Syria's armed forces. But, even in its present state, Syria presents a formidable challenge to Israel. With its considerable stock of SCUD ballistic missiles and non-conventional warheads, Syria, when its ruler will so desire, may paralyze the mobilization of Israel's reserves, its major force, through the systematic bombardment of urban concentrations. This may buy it the time to concentrate and deploy its "obsolescent" but considerable forces and strike at the token standing forces deployed on the demarcation lines, 1973 (Yom Kippur) fashion. Let's not get caught again in the "politico-generals' consensus syndrome", as we did in 1973.
- ⁴ "Ambassadors Forum", Tel Aviv University, Dept. of Political Science on November 29, 1999 – "The Israeli-Syrian Peace Process", Round Table Discussion attended by both Savir and the writer (Y.T.C.).
- ⁵ Charged with what I define "enlightenment", which is neither propaganda, nor information and surely not PR, but the presentation of our case as if it were in front of a jury, in a court of justice, which I believe, is a battle of minds that may, in many circumstances, replace a battle in the field.
- ⁶ Kissinger's **Constructive Ambiguity?** It reminds one of the celebrated "Balfour Declaration" of November 2, 1917, endorsed by the League of Nations, the UN Predecessor: "A Jewish National Home in Palestine". For almost a century Jews

and Arabs spill blood to decide what is a National Home, what is Palestine. Was the Home meant to be in the whole of Palestine or part thereof? If part, which part? Vague definitions are the seeds of war.

⁷ The writer did not find a case of war between two veritable democracies during the 20th century.

⁸ The Israeli-Jordan peace may in spite of its opposing parameters, become a stable peace because of the predominant commonality of strategic interests of both countries. Jordan wishes to stay independent and its best guarantee is Israel's adamant insistence on preventing the deployment of powerful Iraqi, Syrian or Saudi troops along its longest, twisting border that is just steps away from its vital strategic objectives.

⁹ Mr. Shimon Peres, the politician who coined the verbiage "New Middle East", defended this brainchild of his by stating that it may be useful to dismiss history as a source of wisdom so as to be unchained when creating a better future. Given Mr. Peres' socialist upbringing, it is no wonder that he drew his disdain of history ("disregard history, we'll write a new one") from the "Internationale" anthem of the communists and socialists, where mention is made of destroying the old world in order to create a new one – with probably the same success (what source of wisdom is there without history?)

¹⁰ Mrs. Meir answered Mr. Rogers' offer of US military support in case of Arab breach of peace with an angry: "Mr. Rogers, by the time you'll be here, we won't be here anymore."

Looking at the time factor of the US buildup to confront Iraq, following Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait (six months), Golda Meir did not exaggerate. Imagine what would have been the Kuwaiti's fate, were they Jewish!

¹¹ This policy was applied "ad lettera" some three months later, when Egypt (allied with Syria and Jordan) broke, in May 1967, the agreement on Sinai's demilitarization and blockaded the shipping to the Israeli Red Seaport of Eilat.

The said agreement was signed by Egypt in 1957 in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and was guaranteed by the US and "secured" by the presence of UN troops in the Sinai, with both guarantees and troops "evaporating" at Nasser's request.

¹² Customarily, the Arab Middle East is the major arms purchaser in the world, its acquisitions accounting for about 40 percent of the world's arms trade, excluding major powers. Between the years 1993-1997, the height of the Oslo Euphoria, the Arab reported arms purchases were \$100 billion against Israel's \$3 billion.

¹³ Including standoff weapons, weapon delivery systems, electronic warfare, anti-aircraft and ballistic missiles, mass destruction weapons, satellite intelligence, etc., and their bearing on the conduct of war. Nothing short of a total revolution.

¹⁴ Like:

- i. Six Day War Lesson: – Israel’s level of deterrence was not clear enough to Egypt and the Soviets.
- ii. Yom Kippur (1973) Lesson: – All coming peace agreements have to include margins for Israeli government and defense establishment errors. Errors are human and the People of Israel should not be threatened with Capital Punishment for errors committed by its government.
- iii. Gulf War (1991) Lesson: – The major concern of Israel, in case of a sustained ballistic missile attack against urban concentrations, should be the disruption these attacks may create, resulting in delays or obstruction of the mobilization of Israel’s reserves, which are the major component of its military, thus subjecting the thin standing forces holding the lines to the onslaught of major Syrian (Arab) formations that may be deployed under the (time) cover of the ballistic missiles, etc.

¹⁵ Like:

- i. Is Israel still a US strategic asset in the post-Soviet world?
- ii. US versus Soviet arms in Egypt and, potentially, in Syria.
- iii. The failure of US/UN containment of mass destruction weaponry.
- iv. The fading away of the Soviet Union disciplining power over its rogue client states to prevent local conflicts turning into major power confrontations.
- v. Islamic fundamentalism and its bearing on Israel.
- vi. Arab and/or Iranian quest for Middle East (oil) hegemony and its direct, negative bearing on Israel. Islamic bids for leadership traditionally start by assuming a militant, aggressive, “breast-beating” stand vis-a-vis Israel.
- vii. The Western threat interpretation of Iran’s aiming at the development of missiles of global range along with its SCUD “B” arsenal that reaches the Arabian oil fields only. Is that to provide an anti-Western deterrence to preempt a Western Gulf War II type reaction to an Iranian bid for Arabia’s oil? The missiles’ ranges are below and beyond “Israel proper”.
- viii. The geostrategic position of Turkey and the seven formerly Soviet Moslem republics, etc.

¹⁶ Which are still the borders viewed as legitimate by the State Department and the Clinton Administration, unlike the Pentagon, whose maps have been classified

by state because professional truth was unpalatable to political virtuality practiced by Foggy Bottom.

- ¹⁷ The operational concept has been presented by the writer, at the time Chief of Operational Requirements and Chief of Planning of the Israeli Air Force, in his then top secret paper named “Attacks of Airfields”, dated August 1964. With a 2.83:1 enemy superiority in strike aircraft, a ridiculous Israeli depth of air-defense (given the topography around and country’s size) and ranges of up to hundreds of miles to reach some main enemy airfields, the Israeli Air Force reached, already in 1964, the conclusion that there is no alternative to preemption by surprise.

The enemy numerical superiority has increased, weapons range and precision have increased, the enemy aircraft are well dug in, the number of runways has increased, the anti-aircraft defenses are “airtight” unless receiving prior attention, yet the topography and size of Allon’s time remain the same. There is no valid technological answer to this situation, especially where the Golan Heights are concerned.

- ¹⁸ In his book **Chief of General Staff** (Hebrew), published by the Ministry of Defense Publishers in 1998, the late General and Labor Party Minister (“pristine dove”, as he stated) Mordechai (Motta) Gur writes, among others, that “the State of Israel cannot defend its eastern flank without the Golan and cannot defend the Golan without keeping the line of ridges it holds, from the Hermon Mountain in the north to the Rokadde River in the south”.

- ¹⁹ See **Head On**, by Meir Amit, (the Head of the Mossad at the time) published by Hed-Arzi, 1999 (Hebrew). On page 235, he relates the story of the US guarantees turned threat: John Hadden, the CIA head representative in Israel, is mentioned by Amit to have said, on May 25, 1967: “If you are going to strike, the US will land forces to protect the Egyptians.”