

**PEACE WITH SYRIA:  
NO MARGIN FOR ERROR**

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NO MARGIN FOR ERROR**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>Executive Summaries</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>Peace With Syria: No Margin for Error</b>	<i>Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>Preparing for Peace? Syrian Defense Expenditures and Its Drive For Regional Hegemony</b>	<i>Shawn Pine</i>	<b>33</b>
<b>The Syrian Occupation of Lebanon</b>	<i>Mordechai Nisan</i>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chemical and Biological Weapons in Syria</b>	<i>Dany Shoham</i>	<b>71</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>		<b>99</b>
<b>Participating Authors</b>		<b>109</b>
<b>ACPR Publications and Activities</b>		<b>111</b>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

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### PEACE WITH SYRIA: NO MARGIN FOR ERROR

*Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto*

Immanuel Kant wrote his **Perpetual Peace** in 1797, claiming that a democracy is less prone to go to war since its voters are the ones to bear the brunt of the fighting and the costs of damages.

Kant claims that, for dictators, going to war is a relatively simple decision. He has been proven right over the last 200 years. Democratic Israel versus Arab tyrannies is a major Middle East asymmetry, as are the resulting aims, secure growth for one, Israel's demise for the other.

Other asymmetries include the ratios of 500:1 geographical area, 80:1 population, 22:1 UN votes, 4.19:1 tanks, 6.45:1 combat aircraft, and 60% of world oil production (by volume) to none. All these favor the Arab dictatorships.

Weapons technology has undergone nothing short of a revolution since 1967 and the lessons of war have taught that Israeli deterrence has not always been adequate. The Iraqi "trickling" of ballistic missiles on Israel (39 missiles in 14 days) during the Gulf War has taught a major lesson: missile attacks on urban areas, even with conventional warheads, can disrupt and badly delay Israeli mobilization of its reserves and its main forces, creating a situation on the front line akin to that of the Yom Kippur of 1973.

In spite of the demise of the Soviet Union and the peace agreements signed with Egypt and Jordan, the geopolitical situation has not changed realistically for the better since 1967.

Considering all these said changes, Israel, if attacked, is not capable of defending itself any more within its 1967 borders. The protection of the high ground, all of it situated beyond the "green line" (pre-1967 demarcation), becomes a vital condition for Israel's survival, the Golan Heights being more important than all other high ground.

The advocates of “instant peace”, prodded with a heavy hand by the US administration, claim that Israel may withdraw from the Golan – this, against all its own advice, that of the Pentagon, Russian, and others’ military “if peace is agreed upon”, provided the Golan and parts of Syria will be demilitarized under UN/US “observers” and with US guarantees and the Israeli defense bolstered to the tune of some US \$20 billion.

The requirement to “have a strong force to protect the peace” as the US and Israeli governments demand, is proof that the peace anticipated will be a “peace of no war”, or a cold war, US-USSR or Israel-Egypt style, meaning that the lowering of Israel’s level of deterrence increases the probability of war.

Handing the Golan to Syria is equivalent to a catastrophic lowering of Israeli deterrence, broadly characterized by loss of control of 35% of Israel’s water, an unbearable defense burden that will reflect on Israel’s economy and worse, the cracking of the claims of Zionist legitimacy and weakening of Israel’s national and moral fiber. The “window of opportunity”, on which President Clinton insists, is “unique” (for the last ten years) and has no glass pane anyway – it is a virtual window.

There are simply not enough safety margins in an Israeli-Syrian “peace” agreement because demilitarization, third party guarantees, and the rest, have always proven to be valid only when both parties desire them to be so (for example US guarantees and UN troops in Sinai, 1967).

Signing a peace treaty is no guarantee of peace, as, for instance, shown by the case of the Iraqi-Iranian War that erupted in 1980 after a five year negotiated peace was signed in 1978 (among a number of such examples).

Technology is not a substitute for the Golan, as declared by General Amnon Lipkin-Shahak on December 10, 1995, an opinion shared by this writer, who has been involved most of his life in weaponry.

“We are strong enough to afford withdrawal,” claim some. But we are not strong if we lose the high ground of the Golan, which represents the “terrain” asset of the “firepower”, “mobility” and “terrain” triad of which military strength is composed.

Finally, there are the advocates of nuclear deterrence, assuming Israel has this “in the closet”.

Israel may be destroyed completely by 2-4 nuclear charges due to its minute size. For the same reason, given present satellite surveillance, it cannot house a secure second strike capability which has to have a ratio of about 50:1 in Israel's favor. Deploying nuclear deterrence means the legitimization of the Middle East going nuclear, a sphere in which Israel is at its weakest. Nuclear deterrence may also be weakened by international pressures.

The conclusion is that Israel cannot succumb to the "instant peace syndrome" even if a friendly US president insists upon it. This is especially the case when Assad may not be in power for long.

As Motta Gur, former Chief of the General Staff and Labor Party Minister, said in his book **Chief of General Staff** (Ministry of Defense Publishers, 1998): "Israel cannot defend its Eastern flank without the Golan Heights and it cannot defend the Golan Heights without the line of ridges it presently holds."

As Joseph Sisco said at the time: "The (large) areas Israel vacated in 1974 are withdrawal according to 242 and the line retained represents 'secure borders' according to the same 242 (UN resolution)." The writer witnessed the delivery of this statement.

## **PREPARING FOR PEACE? SYRIAN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AND ITS DRIVE FOR REGIONAL HEGEMONY**

*Shawn Pine*

Both supporters and opponents of the peace process agree that for Israel to take the requisite risks for peace it needs to understand the intentions of its neighbors. A critical component towards understanding their neighbors' intentions can be found in how much these countries are spending on defense. Supporters of the peace process claim that it is ameliorating the prospects for future conflict between Israel and its neighbors. If this is true, then we should expect a simultaneous reduction in arms expenditures by these countries as they divert resources from their military to attend to their acute social and economic problems.

Unfortunately, the peace process, rather than providing a peace dividend, has augured in an unprecedented era of weapons proliferation in the region. Most notable has been the proliferation of weapons from the West which has been precipitated by competition among these western countries for lucrative sales contracts from Israel's Arab neighbors. This proliferation seems to cast doubt on the contention that the Gulf War and the subsequent Oslo peace process have ushered in a new era of peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

More important, it appears that Israeli strategic planners are making a fatal error in their strategic threat assessments of their two biggest contiguous neighbors, Syria and Egypt. Indeed, actual military spending by these two countries far exceeds that reported in standard sources such as "The Military Balance"; the Jaffee Center's "Middle East Military Balance"; and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. For example, these sources report that Syria spends approximately \$1.7 billion in military expenditures. However, a cursory review of the size of Syria's military reflects that these figures are grossly underestimated and that actual expenditures are far greater than those reported. This paper analyzes Syrian military expenditures and examines these expenditures in the context of its declared willingness to make peace with Israel.



## THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION OF LEBANON

*Mordechai Nisan*

The struggle of Lebanon to preserve its national identity and political independence has, in particular, faced the hegemonic ambition of Syria. Since the 1970s, Damascus has succeeded to implement an incremental, yet systematic policy of occupation over Lebanon that has transformed the political, social, and economic character of the country. The Syrian occupation, calling it by its proper appellation, was consummated in 1989 with the Taif Accord and in 1990 with the removal of General (and Prime Minister) Michel Aoun from the Ba'abda presidential palace and with the full conquest of Beirut, Lebanon's capital.

Syrian occupation employed a wide range of policy means to transform Lebanon into a "client state" and a Syrian political satellite. By means of military control and political penetration, media repression and alien colonization, Lebanon has lost its independence. Under foreign rule within the matrix of a foreign-manipulated police state, the Lebanese suffer from Arabization and Syrianization that deny the people, especially the Maronite Christians, their freedom and dignity. Many have been forced into exile across the countries and continents of the Lebanese diaspora.

Syria's occupation regime in Lebanon suggests comparison with the Anschluss of 1936, the Munich capitulation of 1938, and the setting up of the Vichy regime of 1940. Stalinism as a terror state model is also evocative of Lebanon's pitiful subjugation about which, however, the international community shows hardly any concern.

The collapse of a free Lebanon is part of the expanding sweep of Islamic power and the decay of Christian civilization in the Middle East. Perhaps, under circumstances of upheaval in Syria, Israeli military policy, and revivalism among the Lebanese, foreign occupation of Lebanon may come to an end.

## **CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS IN SYRIA**

*Dany Shoham*

For about two decades, Syria has a consistent policy of chemical and biological arms acquisition that is systematic and determined – and that has never been actually denied by Syria. More than any other country, Syria has a policy of seeking strategic parity with Israel which, in military terms, means getting biological and chemical weapons, given that nuclear weapons are not attainable for now. This pattern was seen by the chemical weapons procured by Syria from Egypt in their joint preparations for the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, and even today, Assad, Mubarak and other Arab leaders coordinate positions on refusing to adhere to the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

Moreover, Syria possibly cooperates with Egypt in biological and chemical arms acquisition today, and it certainly does with Iran and probably with Libya. It has been aided – though not necessarily through institutionalized channels – by Russia, China and North Korea, in efforts to enlarge its longer-range surface-to-surface missiles that carry operational chemical and biological warheads, among them the Scud-C, the M-9 and the No-Dhong. Assistance in upgrading and scaling up its chemical-biological capabilities is given also by other formerly soviet countries, India and, still, European firms. Several facilities located in different sites in Syria are involved in these efforts and are in part disguised as civilian buyers.

During recent years, Syria has switched from above-ground missiles and non-conventional weapons facilities to underground storage and production, thereby significantly limiting Israel's ability to monitor and destroy those strategic facilities.

The first and by far only Syrian employment of a chemical warfare agent took place in 1982 – it was the lethal cyanide gas used by the Syrian regime in the slaughter of some 18,000 Sunni residents of the city of Hama, in Syria itself.

Ever since then, Syria has made a very significant progress in the area of chemical and biological weapons, which has various implications of major importance. It built up an elaborate, large arsenal of sarin and VX nerve agents containing aerial bombs and missiles warheads, and formed a delivery

realignment that is capable of instantly launching those deadly weapons at a variety of targets and objects in Israel, both strategic and tactical. Biological warfare agents – anthrax, botulinum and others – have recently been added to the Syrian inventory.