SPECIAL REPORT

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Regional Implications of Israeli-Arab Rapprochement

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LEBANON WITHDRAWAL PLACES ISRAELI-IRANIAN TIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Israel's imminent withdrawal from south Lebanon is setting into motion a number of changes in the regional strategic landscape, changes with the potential to create conditions for a historic dialogue or continuing confrontation between Israel and Iran.

On April 4 in a speech at Haifa University, Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin became the first top-level Israeli official to call for a rethinking of Israel's antipathy toward the Iranian Revolution. Beilin declared, "The Iran of President Khatemi and Iran after the [February] elections is a country with far more nuances and far more complexity than we have become accustomed to seeing. Due to the positive changes evidenced in Iran, there is a need to change our approach toward it. An opportunity for a new opening is at hand."

"We should examine our attitude towards Iran," he continued, "We had good and special relations with Iran until 1979, and we still have mutual regional interests. The problems began under Khomeini, who used Israel as glue to try and create social cohesion within his own country. I do not want to look at Iran with the same glasses that I was using 20 years ago."

Both the messenger and the message he conveyed are important. Beilin is probably the most thoughtful of Israel's political elite and the one most willing to entertain new ways of thinking about consolidating Israel's rapprochement with its neighbors. During the early 1990s, it was Beilin who created the secret Oslo track and who also tried, without success, to engineer similar progress with Syria. His dialogue with Palestinian official Abu Mazen resulted in the stillborn agreement that bears both their names, an understanding that remains a central reference point for negotiators today. Today Beilin is prominent among those seeking to realize a final status agreement with the Palestinians at a time when the momentum appears to be heading in the direction of yet another interim agreement. Finally, it was Beilin who sparked debate on Israel's occupation of

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COLD PEACE ON OFFER AS ISRAEL AND SYRIA PURSUE STRATEGIC AGENDAS

The rush of enthusiasm that greeted the renewal of talks in December 1999 between Syrian foreign minister Farouk as-Sharaa and Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak has all but dissipated, and formal negotiations between Israel and Syria have been suspended. Nevertheless, both Israel and Syria are looking beyond an agreement to the kind of peace in the region that will be established in its wake.

Ephraim Halevi, head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, offered his view of the nature of Israel's relations in the region in a recent address before Israeli diplomats posted in the Arab world.

On the prospect of an agreement with Syria, Halevi echoed the consensus view among Israeli policymakers, saying, "Everyone sitting in this rooms knows that a peace treaty with Syria will be signed, and soon." The spymaster noted that there will be no "New Middle East" with the end of Israel's state of war with its Arab neighbors. Peace agreements will prevent new wars, but Israel will continue to be viewed as an unnatural feature in the Middle East for a long time to come.

Halevi remarked that thirty years ago he went, at Moshe Dayan's instruction, to see "a young and self-assured" Faisal Husseini, who had expressed the same sentiments: Arabs will learn to live with Israel, Husseini told him, but Israel will remain a foreign element in the region.

Israel's demand for normalization will go unfulfilled, Halevi warned, because peace agreements are viewed by Israel's Arab partners as only a "cease-fire." Israelis will not be welcomed in Arab capitals with open arms, he cautioned. Rather, relations will be maintained within the narrow confines of

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Also in this issue:

A FRUSTRATED CALL FOR OPEN DEBATE ON ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES

By Geoffrey Aronson

The democratization of debate on nuclear weapons is one of the primary elements in their responsible use and deployment. However, the historic discussion of Israel's nuclear arsenal in the Knesset on February 2, 2000 was more a reflection of the prevailing official Israeli secrecy regarding nuclear issues than an informed policy debate.

The continuing refusal of Israeli policymakers to publicly address a host of issues, both military and environmental, relating to Israel's nuclear program is of concern not only to Israelis but also to peoples throughout the region and beyond. Sadly, but not surprisingly, an opportunity to lessen regional tensions on the nuclear front was missed.

Israel's leadership has always believed that the less said about the nuclear issue the better. In the Knesset, the opportunity for a rational, public exposition of Israel's atomic arsenal quickly, and purposefully, degenerated into a fiasco. In this drama, all parties, including the Knesset's articulate Arab opponents of Israel's nuclear policies, played their assigned roles. The Jewish majority simply refused to address the issue. Members who ordinarily cannot keep their opinions to themselves were rendered mute or chose to leave the chamber in protest when Israel's holy of holies was presented for discussion.

Arab members of the Knesset, led by Issam Makhoul, whether deliberately or not, reaffirmed their alienation from the central tenet of Israel's defense policy. Makhoul's introduction of the controversial motion to address Israel's nuclear capabilities, and the Arab monopoly on efforts to break the taboo on discussing the issue of Israel's nuclear policy on its merits, unfortunately reaffirmed the perception of Israel's Jewish majority that nuclear policy is yet another issue where Arab preferences pose a danger to Israel. In the wake of the abortive and rancorous debate, it will be harder in the future for Israeli Jews opposed to the nuclear status quo, whose numbers are growing, to reach out to Israel's Jewish public and challenge nuclear orthodoxy.

This is too bad. Israelis deserve an honest appraisal by their leaders of the country's massive investment in nuclear arms and technology—a necessary first step toward exercising their democratic right to evaluate and modify policies should they so choose.

The most basic elements of Israel's nuclear capabilities—the Dimona nuclear plant, which has been manufacturing plutonium for more than three decades and is close to the end of its useful life; the quantity, deployment, and type of Israel's nuclear weapons; and the doctrine regulating their use—remain the state's deepest secrets.

Many countries are within range of Israel's nuclear missiles or subject to potential contamination resulting from a nuclear accident at Dimona. Their interest in knowing more about Israel's nuclear industry is not only, or even principally, based on a desire to gather intelligence about Israel's nuclear capabilities. In the United States, for example, public concern about nuclear power was the critical factor in revealing risks to public health and the environment posed by nuclear power and weapons-producing plants.

On the critical question of the doctrine defining the circumstances under which nuclear weapons would be deployed or used, increased public scrutiny in Israel would force officials to lift the veil of secrecy, moving these issues out of the dark recesses of the Defense Ministry where a lack of public accountability contributes to the belief, widespread among Israelis, that decisions regarding nuclear weapons are none of the public's business. The Knesset debate has shown that Israel's political class is not at all interested in upsetting the status quo. ◆

KNESSET ADDRESSES NUCLEAR ISSUE

Following are excerpts from the February 2, 2000, speech by Knesset Member Issam Makhoul of the Democratic Hadash Front during the debate in the Knesset on Israel's nuclear policy.

This is a historic day. For the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel, the Knesset is holding a debate on the issue of nuclear weapons in Israel. This is also a sad day, because it reminds us that the Knesset shirked its responsibility in an area that threatens us with the next Holocaust if we do not come to our senses, pause, and stop in our tracks before the disaster. I hope that today's debate will symbolize the breaking of the wall of silence and the beginning of an intensive debate in the Knesset and among the public on this subject.

Thirty-nine years ago, on this very podium, on December 20, 1960, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion announced the construction of "a research reactor in Dimona, that is designed entirely for peaceful purposes, and that when it is completed, it will be open to researchers from other countries." When he made that statement, Ben-Gurion knew that the reactor was not built for "peaceful purposes" and that there was no intention to open it to researchers from around the world. Rather, we were presented with an Israeli atomic bomb factory, the work of which would be concealed from the citizens of Israel and from the citizens of the world.

I do not have the time to enter into the historic debate about whether the establishment of the reactor was a strategic blessing for Israel. Is the doomsday weapon a deterrent that guarantees Israel's existence? I believe not. However, even those people who do believe that this is the case cannot ignore the fact that what once appeared to them to be a blessing, a view which I do not share, is now a curse. Nuclear ambiguity is nothing but self-delusion and has long ago ceased to be effective. The entire world now knows that Israel has a huge stockpile of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and that it serves as the cornerstone for the nuclear arms race in the Middle East. In Israel there is frequent mention of the "Iranian and Iraqi danger," while ignoring the fact that it was Israel that introduced nuclear weapons to the Middle East in the first place and created the legitimacy for other states in the region to obtain nuclear weapons.

One obvious proof that the ambiguity and deterrence which formed the basis for Israel's nuclear policy have become redundant is Israel's acquisition of the German submarines that have recently arrived in this country and which, according to the media, will be equipped with nuclear missiles. The purpose of these submarines is to cruise deep in the sea and constitute the "second strike" force, in the event that Israel is attacked with nuclear weapons. That means that not only do the hundreds of nuclear bombs that Israel possesses not pose a defense, they actually caused the military establishment to fear a nuclear early strike, which escalates the spiral of the non-conventional arms race further and further, at the cost of billions of dollars.

Today the so-called ambiguity applies only to the citizens of Israel. They are unable to act as democratic critics of their government because the latter conceals from them the truth about an issue on which their lives depend. We have no information about the people who have their fingers on the nuclear button, what is their chain of command, or what is our defense if a nuclear Baruch Goldstein should infiltrate the system and, equipped with a religious sanction from some rabbi, launch a nuclear Armageddon.

Mr. Chairman, the dangers to the citizens of Israel and to our neighbors exist not only in the event of a nuclear war. Even without a war, we face the constant danger of the eruption of the nuclear volcano that we have built on our own doorstep. In the 40 years of the reactor's operation, a huge amount of nuclear waste has accumulated. This waste, if it leaks, could contaminate the land and water for centuries and millennia. I do not have to explain the significance of such a scenario in a country like ours that needs every drop of water it can get. How is the waste stored? There are different methods, some safer, some less, none perfectly safe. It is all a matter of financial investment.

Since everything in this area is cloaked in secrecy, extra-parliamentary ecological monitoring groups cannot supervise the government's actions. "Trust Big Bother," the government tells us. But we know from our experience, and from experience that has accumulated worldwide, that we must not rely on the government, and in the absence of supervision by non-governmental and independent organizations, the danger of negligence lurks at our doorstep. The reactor is old; the safety measures are kept secret from us. A mini-Chernobyl disaster as the result of human error or material stress would make this country unfit for human habitation.

I ask the prime minister: What is the condition of Israel's nuclear missile sites near Kfar Zechariah on the outskirts of Jerusalem and near Yodfat in the Galilee? Are there additional sites? Of course, these sites must be shut down, but until common sense prevails, they must be available to monitoring by parliamentary and extra-parliamentary ecological organizations from Israel and abroad. I ask the prime minister: How is it that plants in which the missiles are manufactured and atom bombs are made are located in the most densely populated areas in Israel, in the center and in Haifa? I ask the prime minister: Do you not understand that the Biological Institute in Nes Tsiona, which is where Israel manufactures its biological [weapons], is set in a residential area, which is a crime against the residents of Israel and the neighboring countries?

And what about the risk of an earthquake? The reactor in Dimona is located over the Syrian-African rift. An earthquake similar to the one that occurred in Turkey last year

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A CHANGING IRAN CHALLENGES THE STATUS QUO

Golamhosain Karbasi, former mayor of Tehran, was recently released from prison after serving eight months of a two-year sentence for bribery and corruption. The popular politician's release, like his incarceration, is understood by many to reflect the continuing struggle for power between the two broad political camps that rule Iran today in an often uneasy partnership.

Even Karbasi's detractors acknowledge the extraordinary rehabilitation he wrought in war-ravaged Tehran, as he had earlier done in Isfahan. A casual visitor to the Iranian capital today would be hard pressed to find much visual evidence of the destruction accompanying the eight-year "imposed war" with Iraq. Indeed, the city is experiencing something of a boom in new construction, symbolized by the cranes looming over building sites throughout the amorphous cityscape and the ever-worsening traffic, which remains one of the defining characteristics of the city.

Masses of Afghan refugees, hosted uneasily by Iran, have been drawn to the capital by the promise of work and better wages. Today they are the "drawers of water and hewers of wood," performing casual labor, mending streets and sidewalks and repairing Tehran's underperforming sewer system at wages too low even for Iranians, who themselves must be close to the bottom of the region's wage scale. Even university professors juggle more than one job in order to pay the rent, put food on the table, and purchase the reliable, ubiquitous Peykan, a British-designed car locally manufactured according to an almost unchanging standard for the last three decades.

The teeming city's residents were not spared the war's horrors, whether in physical destruction or loss of loved ones "martyred" in defense of the homeland. But Iranians today, particularly the young, who comprise the vast majority of the country's population of 60 million, look forward to a better and more prosperous future. Tehran University and the numerous other public colleges cannot educate all of those who would like to attend. Rigorous exams screen out most applicants, who have flocked to more expensive private schools staffed by moonlighting professors.

On a boisterous Thursday evening in North Tehran, the city's wealthiest quarter, families and young people bump up against the twenty-first century. Less than two decades ago, the area was a small village on the city's periphery, but today it has been sucked into the growing, urbanized metropolis. A children's indoor amusement park is teeming with young families out on the town. Some of the rides, like the helicopters that circle above the din or the little planes that circle around a turnstile, show the effects of decades of labor. Elsewhere on the crowded floor, however, young kids of all ages compete for a seat at a computer-generated race course or revel in the kick boxing of high-tech combatants. These are not the latest generation of diversions found in the West, but they are not far behind. These computer-game savvy kids, like kids everywhere, are having a ball. Parents look variously harassed by their children's insistent demands for yet another final ride and sublimely at peace in the reflected ecstacy of their children.

An overpowering sense of normality evident throughout the city greets a visitor to the capital of the Islamic Republic of Iran twenty-one years after the revolution that ousted the shah. This spirit is infused with a dynamism evidenced by the growing ranks of Iranian reformers and traditionalists alike as a harbinger of the future. The former welcome it as a sign of better days and a reconciliation with the outside world. The latter warn of the need to be wary of an increasingly restive civil society's corrosive influence on Iranian authenticity, of which they are the appointed guardians.

In the streets and in the vast majority of homes, hijab, or "modest covering," remains the universally followed standard of feminine virtue. Yet here too the popular desire is being acknowledged and tolerated by a regime less able to impose its most austere vision on a new generation. Many young girls and women express their individuality by modifying the standard attire, wearing jeans once deemed too tight, showing more than an errant lock of hair under a head scarf that is usually black but is sometimes a more fashionable shade of brown. In and of themselves, these variations on the still-acceptable theme of social modesty for women might not be significant. But in Tehran today, they are signs not just of a limited loosening of the reigns of social control that once characterized the revolutionary regime, but also of an insistent effort to create a civil society not dependent upon the arbitration of mullahs.

Upstairs from the children's amusements in North Tehran, an Internet café does a brisk business. Expatriates check stock portfolios and a young carpet merchant examines the Web pages of competitors worldwide. With the exception of the Internet's ubiquitous pornographic offerings, Iranians have unfettered access to its cornucopia of information, from NATO, to a U.S. computer seller, to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*. Satellite television, and the freedom of choice that it represents, remains restricted to those of means. One Iranian friend was surprised to hear that CNN was available at all in the city. He explained with a simple and unquestioning sense of finality that satellites were not permitted.

In the Tajrish bazaar, the most popular stores are the little shops selling computer equipment and software. Young boys and a few girls cluster around narrow shop windows displaying the latest computer games. Much of the technology on offer is secondhand—old CD ROMS and other peripherals that would not be worth selling in Europe or the United States. The software is mostly pirated; no WTO intellectual property rules yet apply. The resulting low prices make affordable the "price of entry" for these technology-hungry

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treaty obligations. This was also the message brought by Israel's diplomats in the Arab world.

Diplomats in Israel's Foreign Ministry have been instructed not to even use the word "normalization" to describe Israel's relations with Arab countries. The preferred expression is now "good neighbors." The change in terminology is not simply a concession to Arab sensibilities. It also reflects the now prevailing Israeli view that peace in the Middle East will be what Barak has called an "armed peace," characterized by a continuing cold war between the Arabs and the Jewish state.

This pessimistic assessment turns on its head the vision proposed by Israel's former Labor-led governments of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres at the outset of the Madrid process in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. Peres, in particular, won wide praise in the West, and much derision both in Israel and the Arab world, for his expansive concept of a New Middle East bound together, under Israel's direction, by economic ties and seamless social interaction. He even suggested that Israel join the Arab League. Such sentiments were given practical expression by Rabin and Peres' great concern to include wide-ranging normalization commitments in an agreement with Syria.

The views expressed by Syrian foreign minister al-Sharaa, in the most expansive and authoritative statements on Syria's view of its current diplomacy with Israel, confirm the minimalist view of post-agreement relations outlined by Halevi and shared widely in the region.

"If we turn the military conflict into a political, economic, commercial, and cultural competition, in all its aspects, and if we isolate the Israeli weapons and practically neutralize them then the results will be better, and the catastrophes [we may face will be] smaller," Sharaa explained. "Establishing a state of peace in the future would mean turning the state of [military] conflict into a [different] conflict—political, ideological, economical, commercial, etc.—that may give us a better standing. Therefore, we must give this type of conflict a chance, just as we gave a chance to the military conflict."

Barak believes that peace with Syria, and by extension with the Arab world, will change the nature of Israeli security by engaging its Arab neighbors, actively or more probably passively, in efforts to monitor and defend against non-conventional capabilities in Iran and Iraq.

According to (Ret.) Brigadier General Shlomo Brom, former chief of the Strategic Planning Division in the Planning Branch of the General Staff, "Israel cannot properly guard itself against the weapons of mass destruction threat from an Iran or Iraq without at least the passive assistance of nations bordering the aggressor. We cannot monitor Iraq from Israel but we can from Jordan. If Jordan gave us at least tacit permission to hover [with unmanned aerial vehicles] over Iraq from the Jordanian side of the border, we would know when something is going to happen and could strike. Having arrangements with Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians are a vital element in weapons of mass destruction defense."

An enhanced relationship with the United States is a critical means of acquiring both the technology and financial wherewithal to support such a deployment. For Barak, the most critical elements of this "armed peace" include tremendous qualitative improvements in Israel's war-fighting and intelligence gathering capabilities, especially as they relate to non-conventional and missile warfare. His new ambassador in Washington, David Ivri, a key security strategist himself, is already very actively promoting the need for a multi-billion dollar package of American "security assistance" for Israel—read military hardware and technology—to compensate it for taking "a risk for peace." An Israeli-Syrian agreement is the best political "hook" on which U.S. weapons and technologies for Israel is to be sold. However, much of the package is aimed not as specific compensation for a loss of military and intelligence assets following an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights but rather to arm Israel to pursue its enemies "over the horizon." These needs, Israeli leaders admit, will be pressed in the United States even if an agreement with Syria does not materialize. ◆

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young people, helping to spread computer literacy throughout the land.

The mullahs are not blind to the advantages of technology. In another era, mass-produced cassette tapes of Ayatollah Ruholleh Khomeini's latest speech helped mobilize the Iranian masses against the shah. Today, traditionalists are joining the battle for the minds of the children of their revolution. In Qom, CDs aimed at keeping today's generation on the religious "straight and narrow" are mass produced to compete with Game Boys and Doom.

The February 2000 elections for Iran's parliament offered the latest electoral expression of the transformation in Iranian society. The proponents of a civil society independent of religious coercion, an increasingly independent private sector, and the privatization of state enterprises, are confident that the still-dominant power of their opponents, who see themselves as the revolution's eternal executors, will continue the erosion begun with the election of President Mohamed Khatemi in 1997. This metamorphosis is characterized not only by the expectations of young people and the limitless horizons of a new, technology-driven economy. It is also defined by the growing tension created by a popular desire to live in a society that coexists with but is not subservient to an austere view of Islamic orthodoxy. ◆

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south Lebanon when he became the first Labor leader to call for a unilateral withdrawal.

Beilin's ideas do not always become policy, but they do have a record of defining Israel's policy agenda. His speech at Haifa University signals that Israel's policy toward Iran is now, or soon will be, high on the government's program.

Beilin's call for a rethinking of Israeli policy toward the ayatollahs is intimately related to his successful promotion of a withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Lebanon. It should be viewed as the first public, tentative step toward engaging Iran in a framework of relations aimed at establishing stability in the aftermath of Israel's anticipated withdrawal. Beilin, looking at the days and weeks after withdrawal, apparently realizes that Iran must be recognized as a player in the game and that if it is treated as an enemy it cannot be expected to act as a friend.

Al Fajr Missiles

The urgency of engaging Iran has been increased not only by Israel's decision to withdraw from Lebanon but also by the February shipment to Hizballah of surface-to-surface Al Fajr 3 and 5 missiles now in storage in Lebanon, most probably in the Beka. Various reports have placed these weapons under Iranian or Syrian control. According to Israeli defense officials, these missiles, with a range of up to 70km, can cover the entire northern sector of Israel, including the port city of Haifa. The shipments represent a change in the regional strategic equation, reflecting not only an Iranian policy of aggressively asserting its continuing interest in Lebanon in the aftermath of an Israeli retreat but also an attempt to create a strategic deterrent to massive Israeli attacks against Lebanon's infrastructure in the aftermath of an Israeli withdrawal.

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"This [missile] development is very dangerous and constitutes a direct and new threat on Israel," explained Shimon Shapira, a brigadier general who has been military adjutant or intelligence adviser to three Israeli prime ministers—Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Benjamin Netanyahu—and author of the recently published, *Hizbollah between Iran and Lebanon*.

"Unfortunately the Iranian missiles arrived in Lebanon, among other things, because of various people in Israel who in recent years threatened to attack targets deep inside Iran." One American official described Israel's concerns as "propaganda," noting that Syria has never permitted Iran to control the use of any weapons shipped to Lebanon.

In mid-March German foreign minister Joschka Fischer conveyed a message from Iran to Israeli foreign minister David Levy, who, like most of the professionals in his ministry, favors a lessening of tensions with Tehran. The message noted that a solution in Lebanon would bring a significant change in the atmosphere between Israel and Iran.

Iran-Israel Ties

While there has been no comparable public Iranian reassessment of views about Israel formulated during the early years of the revolution, it is taken for granted among Iranian academics, as well as some officials, that Israel continues to sell Iran military equipment and spare parts for its still largely U.S.-equipped military forces.

Israel, however, remains an enemy and, because of its array of sophisticated weapons and missiles, a strategic threat. Nevertheless, the idea of a "strategy of the periphery," an alliance of non-Arab countries in the region, "has quiet supporters in Iran," according to an Iranian associated with the reformers. "There is a need for a greater alliance vis-à-vis the Arabs."

Israel and Iran pursued such a relationship during much of the shah's reign. One of the most noteworthy and strategically significant collaborations was Operation Flower. By 1977 Israel and Iran had reached a secret agreement calling for the joint development of the Jericho II intermediate-range ballistic missile. According to the terms of Operation Flower, Iran paid Israel the equivalent of $260 million in oil and permitted test flights over Iranian territory. The fall of the shah ended the joint program.

When Israeli and Iranian academics and politicians meet in "track 2" talks around an academic conference table or quiet meeting, one Iranian participant in such affairs remarked that, "it is always portrayed in the Israeli press as somehow a signal of official Iranian relations with Israel. We need a 'track 3' quieter and more closed."

A tentative thaw between the two countries was, in fact, underway during the first months of 2000. Israel has released, in two waves, some of the Lebanese hostages it has held, ostensibly in order to determine the whereabouts of three of its soldiers lost during battles in Lebanon. In mid-March, the government of Ehud Barak condemned the assassination attempt on a close aide to President Khatemi. "These are terrorist acts which should be categorically and unequivocally denounced," explained Israeli officials. "Even though we have disagreements with the Iranian government and do not accept Iran's position on a variety of issues, this is not the way to protest its policies."

The Israeli press is closely following the trial of Iranian Jews imprisoned on suspicion of spying for Israel. It took note of the statement of a court spokesman who stated, "we hope

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that they are innocent and that none of them will be convicted. We must find them guilty only if the charges are clearly proven." It also reported an impromptu meeting in February between the Iranian and Israeli ambassadors to Finland, where the Iranian ambassador approached his Israeli counterpart and "engaged her in polite conversation."

Despite such indications, Beilin's speech is remarkable because it offers a reassessment of the prevailing, and still popular, hostility that remains the foundation of Israeli policy, and of Iranian policy toward Israel as well. Barak has maintained, if not advanced, the policy of his immediate predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, of lowering the level of anti-Iranian rhetoric. Today Israel classifies Iran as a "threat," no longer an "enemy." Officials have stopped telling American audiences, as Uri Lubrani did in 1996, "This [Iranian] regime can be overthrown if only we make the effort to do so," and no longer does the Israeli prime minister preach about Iran with fire and brimstone, as Shimon Peres once did.

Barak has rejected the use of Peres' bombast, yet he believes that the Iranians are not yet prepared to move relations to a different plane. Perhaps more important, however, Barak has inherited both the political and strategic mind set that argues against a refashioning of Israeli policy.

"As long as Iran continues arming itself with nuclear and non-conventional weapons, there is no room for a change in policy," noted Barak's spokesman after Beilin's speech.

Even those who, like Beilin, support a change in Israeli policy, and like Ambassador to Washington David Ivri, who fondly remember the ties that once bound Tehran and Jerusalem, remain part of a consensus, which includes anti-regime hawks like Lubrani and Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh. This consensus supports the modernization of Israel's missile, early warning, and deterrent forces in full coordination with Washington and a continuation of efforts to stem the flow from China, North Korea, and Russia and other CIS states, of sophisticated dual use and missile technology to Tehran. One of the central arguments made in internal deliberations against a lessening of tensions with Iran is the need not to reduce the momentum in the United States for deploying a new generation of sophisticated technologies and weapons systems against the missile and non-conventional threat of "rogue" nations, headed by Iran. Promoting Iran as an implacable enemy remains important to Israel's effort to win elements of the $17 billion "security package" that was to accompany a peace agreement with Syria. A large part of this material and technology is aimed at enhancing Israel's "over the horizon" capabilities and enabling it to dominate developments in countries "beyond its borders." If an agreement with Syria fails to materialize, Israel will need another rationale to make such an extraordinary transfer politically palatable to the Americans. ◆

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would crack the reactor, and Israel would be covered with radioactive dust. If that happens, there would be nothing left but to say goodbye and die a terrible death.

I refer you to the article by Professors Baruch Kimmerling and Kalman Altman, who wrote: "The public is unaware of the dangers that they face from the enormous amounts of plutonium in the area and from the difficulty in storing the nuclear waste. The 'nuclear option' was intended to be a response to security threats, but perhaps it should be examined whether the medicine is not more deadly than the disease" (*Ha'aretz*, May 11, 1999).

The international community has recognized that the nuclear issue is not an internal affair of any state, but has implications that reach beyond national and geographic borders and require international attention. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and other treaties relating to this issue are the sum total of worldwide human wisdom mobilized to defend us from nuclear holocaust. Israel has chosen to remain outside the realm of human wisdom. That was a dangerous choice. The mentality of 'a nation unto its own' entails, in the context of the issue at hand, the syndrome of national suicide. Our lives and our security will not be guaranteed by the reactor in Dimona, nor by the hundreds of atomic bombs, nor by the millions of biological warfare germs that are produced at the Biological Institute in Nes Tsiona, nor by the chemical weapons that Israel is developing. Rather, our security would come from an inspired initiative to make the Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction. Israel is the party that started the race, and it bears the responsibility for changing that course.

I call on the government of Israel to open all doors and windows and air the information. A certain change in the right direction took place in November 1999, when parts of the transcripts of the trial of Mordechai Vanunu were released. Naturally, that is not enough. The Dimona reactor must be opened to international inspection; a moratorium must be declared on the production of all weapons of mass destruction—nuclear, biological, and chemical; all information must be released about the quantity of bombs that Israel possesses. Israel must announce, as a confidence-building measure, its willingness to begin unilateral nuclear disarmament, to be completed in the framework of a general Middle East treaty.

We need to extend our hand to Egypt in its efforts to bring all countries in the Middle East into the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We must respond to the Syrian demand that the peace negotiations include the dismantling of weapons of mass destruction. The Dimona reactor must become a burial site, and that burial site should serve as a reminder to future generations of the foolishness of humankind on one hand, and also of its recognition of that foolishness before it was too late. ◆

A NEW GENERATION OF WEAPONS ACCOMPANY PROGRESS TOWARD AN ISRAELI-ARAB RAPPROCHEMENT

While international attention is focused on the final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians and the on-again, off-again talks between Israel and Syria, a far more fruitful, and in many respects more momentous, dialogue is being conducted between Israel and the Clinton administration on enhancing Israel's strategic deterrent capabilities.

The latest chapter of this story concerns an effort by the government of Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak to win reaffirmation of the "nuclear pledge" given by President Bill Clinton to then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the Wye talks in October 1998.

The progress on the Palestinian track at Wye—forcing Netanyahu to agree to a 13 percent redeployment in the West Bank—overshadowed what Netanyahu himself described as one of the most important achievements of his abbreviated tenure. The agreement, signed by the president of the United States, committed Washington not only to maintaining Israel's "qualitative edge" over any potential adversary—a promise that has been stated so often it is no longer deemed noteworthy—but also, for the first time, noted U.S. support for "enhancing Israel's defensive and deterrent capabilities."

No matter how much some U.S. officials try to deny it, this clause puts Washington closer to supporting the modernization of a whole host of military technologies and capabilities related to Israel's missile and nuclear programs. By recognizing the value of Israel's "deterrent capabilities"—a term synonymous with nuclear weapons—Netanyahu brought the long-evolving U.S. position on Israel's nuclear warfighting options a giant step closer to outright American endorsement.

While every line of the Wye understandings were parsed and dissected, this public memorandum was all but ignored. The memorandum also included what was meant to be a secret annex: a letter from Clinton to Netanyahu reaffirming a 1969 agreement concerning the nuclear quid pro quo reached between President Richard Nixon and Israeli premier Golda Meir in 1969. This U.S. commitment to maintain Israel's conventional superiority agreement in return for an Israeli pledge to keep its just-completed nuclear weapons "in the basement" and its policies governing their use ambiguous was symbolized at the time by the supply to Israel of American F-4 Phantoms.

Barak, as he establishes the outlines of Israel's nuclear posture in an era of peace with its immediate neighbors, dreams of a U.S. acknowledgement of Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and an end to polite efforts by Washington to establish control over Israel's nuclear arsenal. For example, the United States wants to win Israel's accession to the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, which commits signatories to stop production of material such as plutonium used in nuclear devises and to accept international supervision to validate adherence to treaty provisions.

David Ivri, Israel's ambassador in Washington, reportedly refused to even discuss the treaty with U.S. officials. Ivri, a former top Defense Ministry official and former head of Israel's national security council, remains a key player in the growing strategic dialogue between the two countries. The enormous interest of President Clinton himself in an Israeli-Syrian agreement has created what Barak views as an unprecedented opportunity for Israel to assure access to top U.S. anti-missile technology, part of a host of inter-related systems that Israel hopes to obtain in order to restore some of the strategic deterrent power it lost as a result of the creation of offensive ballistic missile capabilities in Iraq and Iran, two of eight countries in the region, aside from Israel, that Ivri claims are developing missiles.

U.S. support for the Arrow anti-missile system is aimed at improving Israel's "active defense"capabilities against incoming missiles. However, the kind of technology on offer—from satellite-based intelligence and early warning to recent efforts to perfect BPI (boost phase intercept) of missiles before they reach space—cannot but increase the sophistication of Israel's nuclear missile and targeting arsenal. The path being charted toward peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors appears to be encouraging a new and ever more dangerous nuclear and missile arms race throughout the region. ◆

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