



OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 1, Number 43: 17 October 2013

A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East

<http://www.sazionfed.co.za>

(1) The Middle East Pendulum

Roger Cohen, New York Times, 14 October 2013

Just two and a half years after the Arab Spring, talk of the future — any future — seems preposterous. Countries build futures on the basis of things that do not exist here: consensus as to the nature of the state, the rule of law, a concept of citizenship that overrides sectarian allegiance, and the ability to place the next generation's prosperity above the settling of past scores.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/15/opinion/the-middle-east-pendulum.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1381847648-Ui1CGpxbkN1Z9oam91p0qQ>

(2) It keeps tunneling, but Hamas doesn't want escalation... yet

Avi Issacharoff, The Times of Israel, 14 October 2013

Egypt has made it clear that there is to be no confrontation with Israel, but Hamas might initiate one if Gazans revolt.

http://www.timesofisrael.com/it-keeps-tunneling-but-hamas-doesnt-want-escalation-yet/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=cb174f3e55-2013_10_14&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-cb174f3e55-54389993

(3) The Persian Gulf power vacuum

Lee Smith, Weekly Standard, 14 October 2013

Relations between Israel and the Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have never been warmer. This strategic convergence has been a long time in the making.

http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/persian-gulf-power-vacuum_762275.html

(4) Rouhani's negotiating strategy: divide and isolate

Steven Ditto, Washington Institute, 9 October 2013

A new document reiterates Iran's likely approach to negotiations with the West: creating fissures between the United States and Europe in order to break international consensus and coordination

on nuclear sanctions.

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/rouhanis-negotiating-strategy-divide-and-isolate>

(5) Netanyahu's silent Middle East majority

Dan Diker, Jerusalem Post, 8 October 2013

The Middle East's silent Sunni majority backs Netanyahu's "distrust, dismantle, and verify" approach to Iran.

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Netanyahus-silent-Middle-East-majority-328186>

(6) The kindred values of the Chinese and the Jews

Michael Justin Lee, The Washington Times Neighbourhood, 8 October 2013

To say that China respects Israel would be a tremendous understatement. In fact, China greatly admires both the nation and State of Israel in many important areas with the notable exception of cuisine, in which case the admiration goes demonstrably the other way. If you doubt this, just think about the number of Jewish delis you've ever seen in any of the Chinatowns of the world. Now consider the number of Chinese restaurants in any Jewish neighborhood. I rest my case.

<http://communities.washingtontimes.com/neighborhood/capitalist-snark/2013/oct/8/lee-kindred-values-chinese-and-jews/>

(7) Jihad Tourism

Anat Berko, The Investigative Project on Terrorism, 2 October 2013

The overwhelming desire of many Muslim adolescent boys, even those educated in the West or who are converts to Islam, is excitement. To that end they stream into confrontation zones like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya, Libya, Iraq, Africa, and Syria to experience the excitement and promise of being a martyr for the sake of Allah as the ultimate in self-realization.

<http://www.investigativeproject.org/4180/guest-column-jihad-tourism>

(8) A Jewish Majority in the Land of Israel: The Resilient Jewish State

Yakov Faitelson, Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2013

The notion that the Jewish majority of Israel is in danger of being swamped by Arab fertility has repeatedly been used as a political and psychological weapon to extract territorial concessions from the Israeli government.

<http://www.meforum.org/3637/israel-jewish-majority>

(1) The Middle East Pendulum

The Middle Eastern strongmen are back. The counterrevolution is in full swing. Islamists and secular liberals do battle. The Shiite and Sunni worlds confront each other. A two-state Israeli-Palestinian

peace looks impossible. Freedom is equated with chaos. For this region there is no future, only endless rehearsals of the past.

Poisoned by colonialism, stymied by Islam's battle with modernity, inebriated by oil, blocked by the absence of institutions that can mediate the fury of tribe and ethnicity, Middle Eastern states turn in circles. Syria is now the regional emblem, a vacuum in which only the violent nihilism of the jihadi thrives.

Just two and a half years after the Arab Spring, talk of the future — any future — seems preposterous. Countries build futures on the basis of things that do not exist here: consensus as to the nature of the state, the rule of law, a concept of citizenship that overrides sectarian allegiance, and the ability to place the next generation's prosperity above the settling of past scores.

Syria's Bashar al-Assad has gassed his own people. Iraq is again engulfed in Sunni-Shiite violence. The U.S.-trained Egyptian Army has slaughtered members of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is hard to recall the heady season of 2011 when despots fell and Arabs spoke with passion of freedom and personal empowerment. The Arab security state has shown its resilience; it breeds extremism. As the political theorist Benjamin Barber has noted, "Fundamentalism is religion under siege."

A scenario of endless conflict is plausible. Yet there are glimmerings. Repressive systems have survived but mind-sets have changed. The young people of the region (the median age in Egypt, where nearly one quarter of all Arabs live, is 25) will not return to a state of submission. They have tasted what it is to bring change through protest. As in Iran, where the deep reformist current was crushed in 2009 only to resurface in 2013, these currents run deep and will reemerge.

Here in Turkey, the closest approximation to a liberal order in a Middle Eastern Muslim state exists. That is the region's core challenge: finding a model that reconciles Islam and modernity, religion with nonsectarian statehood. So it is worth recalling that Turkey's democracy is the fruit of 90 years of violent back-and-forth since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk founded the Republic in 1923, and imposed a Western culture.

Only over the past decade, with the arrival in power of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has the idea taken hold that Islam is compatible with a liberal order. For many secular Turks the swing of the pendulum has been excessive. The protests at Gezi Park this summer were about Erdoğan's invasion in the name of Islam of Turks' personal lives. This was democratic pushback from Turkey's secular coast against the conservative Anatolian heartland.

If in Turkey it has taken 90 years for a democracy to evolve that is not anti-Islamic, then the 30 months since the Arab Spring are a mere speck in time. Moreover, as Mustafa Akyol points out in his book "Islam Without Extremes," Turkey, unlike most other Muslim countries, was never colonized, with the result that political Islam did not take on a virulent anti-Western character. It was not a violent reaction against being the West's lackey, as in Iran.

Now Iran, under its new president, Hassan Rouhani, is trying again to build moderation into its theocracy and repair relations with the West. Such attempts have failed in the past. But the Middle Eastern future will look very different if the U.S. Embassy in Tehran — symbol of the violent entry into the American consciousness of the Islamic radical — reopens and the Islamic Republic becomes a freer polity.

Nothing inherent to Islam makes it anti-Western. History has. The Islamic revolution was an assertion of ideological independence from the West. As power in the world shifts away from the West, this idea has run its course. Iranians are drawn to America.

The United States can have cordial relations with Iran just as it does with China, while disagreeing with it on most things. A breakthrough would demonstrate that the vicious circles of the Middle East can be broken.

I believe the U.S. Embassy in Tehran will reopen within five years because the current impasse has become senseless. With Iran inside the tent rather than outside, anything would be possible, even an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

If Arabs could see in Israel not a Zionist oppressor but the region's most successful economy, a modern state built in 65 years, they would pose themselves the right questions about openness, innovation and progress. Israel, in turn, by getting out of the business of occupation and oppression, could ensure its future as a Jewish and democratic state.

There is another future for the Middle East, one glimpsed during the Arab Spring, but first it must be dragged from the insistent clutches of the past.

(2) It keeps tunneling, but Hamas doesn't want escalation... yet

The presence and sophistication of the tunnel that the IDF exposed last week did not surprise Shin Bet and IDF officials in the Southern Command. IDF commanders in the area, at almost every opportunity, stress that Hamas is involved in a major effort to dig more and more tunnels between Gaza and Israel in order to use in them in case of renewed escalation.

Hamas isn't even trying to hide its intentions. A statement from the Hamas military wing spokesman Sunday evening said that "the first tunnel will lead to a thousand more tunnels."

A cursory examination of the border area also suggests that the digging of such tunnels is not an especially complicated task for an organization that has managed in the last six years to create a virtual tunnel city under Rafah on the Egyptian border. Adjacent to the Gaza-Israel border fence, there are plenty of houses, some of them only a few hundred meters from the Israeli side, and in every one of them Hamas could put a tunnel entrance.

Many Palestinians move in broad daylight along plots of land next to the border. Most of them are innocent civilians, but others may be Hamas activists involved in tunnel construction or gathering intelligence on the Israeli side. Hamas' ability to dig tunnels is impressive, and it is no secret that under Gaza City, the organization built a network of trenches and tunnels that its leaders used to hide from the Israeli bombs during Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012 and even during Cast Lead in 2009. Hamas, it seems, has not stopped preparations for the next conflict with Israel for so much as a second, and the question about that next round is not one of "if" but of "when."

Yet make no mistake: Hamas has no interest in initiating a confrontation with Israel. Not right now, that is. On Sunday evening, Hamas's Gaza Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh hinted that the Strip's Islamist rulers are not interested in escalation. In a speech to the graduates of a Gaza police officers' course, Haniyeh said his forces are also concerned about Egypt's security, and will guard the border with Sinai. The Hamas prime minister knows that the unequivocal Egyptian demand from his organization and from Haniyeh himself is to avoid any military conflict with Israel, otherwise the Egyptians themselves will act against Hamas.

Still, it is not clear how long Hamas will continue to maintain the quiet against Israel.

The conclusion of K., a resident of the northern Strip, may sound exaggerated. He argued recently that the economic situation of Gaza is so bad it is only a question of time until Gaza burns.

“It will not be directed against Israel, but against Hamas,” he claimed. “The residents are fed up. In six years they [Hamas] haven’t managed in bringing about any change. Quite the opposite. We still don’t have enough electricity and the economy is destroyed. We are still under siege - and not because of Israel, but because the Egyptians had a quarrel with Hamas. But before we reach a confrontation with Hamas, they [Hamas] will initiate an escalation with Israel and will fire Qassams, so the protests against them will stop.”

K. is a small-business owner who has never been big fan of Hamas. But he isn’t especially fond of the Palestinian Authority or Fatah either.

“Those ones were corrupt, now we have these guys. And we’re the ones who get hurt. We have a holiday in two days, Eid al-Adha, and people don’t have money. All the goods are expensive now, there are no building materials.”

K’s words are not unusual in the current reality in the Strip.

Israel’s understanding of the potentially explosive situation in the Strip - given the tunnel closings and price inflation - has likely led to subtle messages from Jerusalem to Cairo about the need to ease the blockade on the Strip slightly.

And so, miraculously, in parallel to the Israeli announcement about stopping the transfer of building materials from Israel to Gaza in response to the tunnel building Sunday, the Egyptians allowed 51 trucks of building materials to pass from Sinai to Gaza.

Let’s call it coincidental scheduling

(3) The Persian Gulf power vacuum

Despite the administration’s hype of President Obama’s “historic” 15-minute phone call with ostensibly moderate Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, the looming prospect of direct engagement with the regime in Tehran over its nuclear weapons program, and all the other symptoms of Rouhani fever gripping Washington, the White House says it won’t be suckered by the Iranians. American allies aren’t buying it.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu made his skepticism public in his speech before the U.N. General Assembly two weeks ago, when he argued that the way to deal with the Iranians and their nuclear program is to “distrust, dismantle, and verify.” America’s allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC - Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman - are playing it closer to their vests than the Israelis, sharing their grievances with the administration in much less public settings. They are, after all, just across the Persian Gulf from Iran.

“There are no public statements from the GCC states detailing their position,” Tariq al-Homayed, a columnist for *Asharq al-Awsat*, the Saudi-owned London-based pan-Arab daily, told me. “GCC officials are all very diplomatic, but when you talk to some of them, they say it

clearly. They see the administration's approach to Iran in light of its confusing Syria policy. I asked one senior GCC official what he thought about Obama's Syria policy and he responded, 'What day is it today, what hour? Because in half an hour the White House will have another position.' With Iran, they're worried about the administration falling into the [Tehran] regime's game, and they're watching it very nervously." The prospect that Obama is taking Khamenei's supposed *fatwa* against nuclear weapons seriously is patently absurd to Iran's Arab neighbors.

American allies in the Middle East do not trust the Obama administration, but, says Brookings Institution scholar Michael Doran, "they are restrained in expressing it openly. Their fear is that if they show publicly how much they distrust the White House, they are likely to get even less of what they want. So whatever criticism we are hearing publicly, raise that to the power of 10 and you get a sense of where our allies are."

Behind the scenes, the GCC is preparing for the possibility that, after 70 years of dominance, America may be bowing out of the Persian Gulf. The Arabs, like many Israeli officials, now assume that the United States is withdrawing from the region, at least for the time being, and perhaps permanently. Some Gulf states are taking matters into their own hands. "The idea is that we did it with Egypt," explains Homayed, referring to the support and money the GCC states poured into Cairo after General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi overthrew Mohamed Morsi while the White House declined to stake out a position. "So why wait for Obama with Syria?" says Homayed.

Indeed, since taking over the Saudi National Security Council, Riyadh's former ambassador to Washington Prince Bandar bin Sultan has been eager to assert Saudi interests. With the White House leaving a vacuum in Syria, Bandar has wrested control of the rebel forces from Qatar and lined up the UAE and Jordan as useful allies. This is precisely the sort of alliance building that, up until now, had been the role of the US.

If some in the administration, including the president, believe that these are positive developments, that it's high time the Arabs learned to pull their own weight, the reality is the Arabs know they can't go it alone, and so should the White House. The GCC could manage Egypt, and is making a go of it in Syria, but with Iran it needs the United States. Without Washington, the Arabs are looking to hedge their bets. For instance, sources say that Kuwait has socked away several billion dollars as a future gift to ingratiate itself with either Iran or Russia, depending on who winds up winning the regional sweepstakes now that the White House doesn't want to play.

Even Bandar seems to understand that there is a limit to what the Arabs can do on their own. His much-publicized recent visit to Moscow, where he offered to buy \$15 billion worth of Russian arms if only Vladimir Putin would scale back his support for Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, was meant largely to get Obama's attention. The Saudis recognize that even if Putin has managed to enhance his position at Obama's expense, he doesn't have the capacity, or the blue-water navy, to replace the United States. Moreover, with Russia helping advance Iranian interests in Syria, it is not likely to work against Tehran, and on behalf of Saudi interests, in the Persian Gulf.

The GCC states also recognize who else sees the region the way they do - Israel. When Netanyahu announced in his U.N. speech that if Israel has to stand alone to prevent a nuclear Iran, "we will be defending many, many -others," he was referring to, among others, the GCC. Relations between Israel and the Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have never been warmer, with key, albeit unnamed, Arab officials reportedly visiting Jerusalem for high-level consultations on Iran. "Israel," says Homayed, "is the most important player in the Middle East right now regarding Iran. They are capable of

convincing Congress, and if anyone can convince Obama, it's Israel. They drew the red line on Iran, and that makes everyone in the region happy."

This strategic convergence has been a long time in the making. Dore Gold, president of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs and Israel's former ambassador to the U.N., explains that Israel and GCC relations need to be seen in a larger context. "Going back to the late 1990s, Saudi Arabia was the primary funder of Hamas," says Gold. "Thirty years earlier, Saudi Arabia had provided sanctuary for Muslim Brotherhood members fleeing from Egypt and Syria. But by 2005, Iran had replaced Saudi Arabia as the primary funder of Hamas, and leading members of the royal family, like Prince Nayef, repudiated the Muslim Brotherhood. This represented a huge shift in Saudi policy, which narrowed the degree of conflict it had with Israel."

As the Iranian threat became even more apparent, Gold explains, Israeli and Arab interests further converged. "The GCC countries face a situation very similar to Israel," says Gold, whose scholarly work has focused on Saudi Arabia. "Israel is encircled by Iranian-supported insurgencies - Hezbollah to the north, and Hamas to the south. In comparison, the GCC faces an Iranian-backed insurgency in Yemen, an Iranian-backed Shia government running Saudi Arabia's northern neighbour Iraq, while Bahrain's opposition is supported by Tehran, an arrangement that has implications for the Shia community in Saudi Arabia's eastern province."

The 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, says Gold, marked an important turning point. "While large parts of the Muslim Brotherhood fervently supported Hezbollah, the Gulf states were either silent or opposed to what Hezbollah was doing."

If some wags joke that Obama's legacy in the Middle East will be to have driven Israel and the GCC into each other's arms, the reality is that it's not clear how durable this relationship can be. After all, the much-heralded strategic alliance between Turkey and Israel that was forged in the '90s on the basis of military and security ties proved more fragile than was hoped, crashed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ambition to lead the region.

To be sure, as Homayed explains, "the Israeli and Arab positions are one - Iran cannot be allowed to have a nuclear weapon." But it's not clear what that means in practice. Even Homayed acknowledges that while Israel is the most important actor in the region right now, it still needs the White House on its side against Iran. Jerusalem's significance, from his perspective, is that only Israel has the ability to make its case to Congress and the president - like the Arabs, Israel can't do it alone.

"There are real limits to how far the GCC-Israel relationship can go," says Doran, who was Middle East director in the George W. Bush White House. There are cultural limits as well as operational ones. "Saudi textbooks are filled with anti-Semitic material," says Doran. "Whatever coordination that might exist must be clandestine because if it were in the open, Riyadh would come under attack regionally and domestically for making common cause with a people typically described as enemies of Islam." Further, asks Doran, "what does cooperation look like? What can the Saudis give the Israelis that they don't have already?"

Aside from perhaps granting Israeli jets tacit over-flight rights on their way to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, and maybe money for various clandestine projects, it's not obvious that the Saudis have anything Israel really needs. What Jerusalem wants above all, short of a US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, is the sort of political and diplomatic clout that only Washington can muster. However, by holding Rouhani in a close embrace as his partner in resolving the nuclear issue, Obama has effectively erected an antimissile defence system

around Iran's nuclear facilities. If Netanyahu gives the order to go, Israel isn't just going without the US, it's also undermining an Obama priority.

Sure, it would be a bonus to have quiet support from the GCC in the event of a strike. But what happens after that? These two American allies have been forced together by a reality that hasn't quite sunk in yet. A superpower they've counted on for decades has gone missing, perhaps never to return.

(4) Rouhani's negotiating strategy: divide and isolate

In August, the Iranian government released a document highlighting the focus of its nuclear negotiating strategy: sidelining the United States by isolating it from the other members of the P5+1 (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China). The emergence of this strategy -- explicitly articulated by President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, and in line with the former's extensive writings -- is at odds with Tehran's assurances of a "win-win" endgame in resolving the nuclear issue.

Zarif: "Break the coordination of major powers"

On August 7, four days after the new president's inauguration, Zarif released the "Program for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a Rouhani Government" to Iranian media outlets. Shortly thereafter, the document appeared on the Foreign Ministry website.

In it, Zarif enumerated the ministry's "short-medium-term operational strategy" for nuclear negotiations, including a pledge to "change the global security environment" by "breaking the coordination of major powers and neutralizing the Zionist-US efforts to build an international consensus against Iran." He reiterated this point twice more, noting that "global conditions" called for a strategy to "neutralize the leverage of US and the Zionist regime with countries and multilateral institutions vis-a-vis Iran."

To be sure, the document does contain some encouraging language. Along with specifying plans to "normalize and improve relations" with neighboring countries and "rebuild relations with traditional partners in Europe and Asia," Zarif speaks of a "gradual decrease in potential antagonism with America and turning to positive capabilities." He also notes that "instead of letting the US initiate," Iran should take "the initiative on all aspects of bilateral relations." But normalization of ties with America is not mentioned, and the intentions behind these seemingly positive initiatives are questionable given the troubling language in other parts of the document.

Rouhani: "Create gaps in the western front"

A survey of Rouhani's books and academic articles published over the past decade similarly reveals a strategy of creating exploitable divisions within the international coalition. In a December 2003 article published two months into negotiations with the EU-3 (i.e., Britain, France, and Germany), he wrote that a "foundational principle" in "Iran's relations with the United States" is to "prevent compatibility and consensus between America and other world powers -- especially Europe, Russia, and China -- over Iran." He explained that although none of these "three powers" can independently "stand up to America," they nonetheless do not accept U.S. "unilateralism." Yet they do accept Iran's "stabilizing" influence in the region, he argued. The article also described how Tehran would carry out its strategy: "To avoid this consensus [against Iran], responsibility falls upon the Foreign Ministry. Through diplomatic skills, and effective ambassadors, we are able to stand against the conspiracy. By creating a

distance between America and Zionism, and influential countries, we will be able to easily stand up against the conspiracies of America."

In his 2011 memoir covering his tenure as nuclear negotiator, Rouhani used the phrase "creating gaps in the Western front" to describe this strategy, which was originally conceived to keep Europe from referring Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council. He used the same phrase during the 2013 presidential campaign. More broadly, this seems to be how he views negotiation as a whole. "Diplomacy," he wrote in a 2009 book, "is the art of understanding a region, and the world, estimating its strength and position, and finding opportunities critical to exploit."

Rouhani's EU Offensive

Since his inauguration, Rouhani has met with four of the six P5+1 leaders and shown signs of driving a wedge between the EU and Washington's strategic outlooks. On the sidelines of the latest UN General Assembly session, he met with the leaders of five European countries: France, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Germany. This was in addition to meetings with Russia and China at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Kyrgyzstan two weeks prior.

Press reports from the UN session indicate a growing European amenability to Rouhani's diplomatic charm offensive. For instance, German chancellor Angela Merkel praised Tehran's role in "mediating" a diplomatic solution in Syria. Rouhani's growing clout was especially manifested in his exchange with Italian prime minister Enrico Letta, who publicly lamented that Italy had no role in the P5+1 despite being a "bridge between Iran and the West." At a September 28 press conference, Rouhani consoled Letta by mentioning the possibility of a "P5+2," stating, "All of those countries that have a certain influence over the nuclear program should take part in the negotiations, with Italy at the top of the list...Some people do not want the 5+2 group...It is not a matter of formulas...Italy, a strategic country in the EU, can make its contribution to the nuclear issue, involving Europe in order to have a region free of nuclear weapons and of weapons of mass destruction." Meanwhile, Letta pledged that when Italy assumes the rotating EU presidency in 2016, it will "try its utmost to further strengthen Rome-Tehran ties." And Rouhani noted that Iran is ready to meet Italy's energy needs, adding, "In this regard, bilateral ties can be expanded."

Why focus on Europe if it is secondary?

Despite his recent attention to the EU, Rouhani considers it a weak political power that lacks true autonomy from the USA -- a position he clearly articulated during his 2003-2005 tenure as nuclear negotiator. At a 2004 press conference, he famously called Europe a "Paykan" (a budget Iranian car model) while comparing the US to a Mercedes: "Talks with Europe alone might not be sufficient for our purposes...Sometimes you can't

afford to buy a Mercedes, so you buy a Paykan...In this case, you know what to expect from a Paykan and you lower your expectations accordingly. You should not complain and moan about it too much. You shouldn't complain about its speed, its mechanics, its petrol consumption, and the like, because you know it is a Paykan. You bought this car based on your budget in the first place."

Likewise, in a July 2005 interview with an Iranian newspaper concurrent with his resignation as nuclear negotiator, Rouhani stated that Europe was a "second-rate power," and that the "first power" (the United States) was preoccupied in Iraq: "We chose a second-rate power to negotiate with. Everyone knows that Europe is not the first and strongest power in the global arena. Europe is a second-rate power, and we are fully aware of this. We are negotiating with the world's second-largest power, while the first power is assessing and evaluating its interests."

Rouhani's negative perception of Europe's global role raises questions about his recent outreach to the EU. The optimistic view is that he sees better relations with Europe as an eventual bridge to Washington. But a more pessimistic interpretation is that he wants to use relations with Europe as a means of disrupting U.S. policy. That view seems consistent with what he wrote in his 2003 academic article: "Despite the close relationship between Europe and the US, on the other side of the curtain there are fundamental differences between them. Europe may require a decade of opportunity to stand on its own, but in the current circumstances is unable to seize the flag against America."

Conclusion

Both Zarif's August strategy document and Rouhani's recent and past rhetoric suggest that any new U.S.-Iranian negotiations will be tough, with Tehran focusing on how to gain advantage rather than finding areas of common interest. The Rouhani team seems to believe that the key to reaching an agreement is dividing the P5+1 and isolating the United States.

Washington may be able to preempt this strategy by pursuing robust bilateral dialogue with the Iranian government via the P5+1 framework, and by allaying European concerns in order to maintain a united international front against Iran's nuclear intentions. Doing so would clarify whether Tehran is serious about a deal, paving the way for a permanent and meaningful agreement while preserving Washington's preeminent role over the Iranian nuclear file.

(5) Netanyahu's silent Middle East majority

It's not easy being Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu these days. He has faced heavy criticism in western circles for his uncompromising stance on Iran's nuclear program. His October 1 address to the United Nations plenum, where he accused Iranian regime President Hassan Rouhani of being "a wolf in sheep's clothing, who is trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the international community," was met with accusations of war-mongering. Columnist Roger Cohen accused Netanyahu of "crying wolf" while a New York Times editorial blasted Netanyahu for "Blind distrust of the Iranian regime," seeming eager for a fight... and sabotaging diplomacy, especially before Iran is tested."

While optimistic western elites bristle at Netanyahu's rejection of Rouhani's "smile and conquer diplomacy," the Middle East's silent Sunni majority backs Netanyahu's "distrust, dismantle, and verify" approach towards neighboring Iranian regime's nuclear program and race for regional supremacy.

Led by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states and supported by the region's many minorities including Kurds, Christians, Druse, Sufis, Baluchees and others, several hundred million Sunnis across the Middle East are quietly banking on Netanyahu's making good on his declaration before the UN General Assembly that, "Israel will not allow Iran to get nuclear weapons," and "If Israel is forced to stand alone, Israel will stand alone."

While official Arab Sunni and non-Arab Sunni criticism of America's softer approach to Iran and its Syrian state proxy remains muted, as is expected in non-democratic "fear societies" as former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky has coined them, voices have begun to pierce the silence.

Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi journalist who is close to the Saudi royal family, told the New York Times recently that, "There is a lot of suspicion and even paranoia about

some secret deal between Iran and America.

My concern is that the Americans will accept Iran as it is – so that the Iranians can continue their old policies of expansionism and aggression.”

The Times also reported that Mustafa Alani, a Dubai-based security analyst, said the Saudis think US President Barack Obama is “not a reliable ally, that he’s bending to the Syrians and Iranians.” Mishaal al-Gergawi, a United Arab Emirates-based analyst, said, “There is a lot of cynicism, and it feeds into the notion that Obama is very naïve – he was naïve with the Muslim Brotherhood, naïve with Bashar al-Assad, and he is now naïve with Iran.”

Sunni concerns over Iranian regime-sponsored Shi’ite power extends beyond Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

A very senior Jordanian lawmaker told this author in 2009 during a visit to the Jordanian senate in Amman that the Iranian regime “could only be stopped by military force and that only Israel was capable of doing that.”

In fact, it was Jordan’s King Abdullah II who first coined the phrase “Shi’ite crescent,” that began with what he called the “Islamic republic of Iraq” referring to Iranian penetration and control of Iran’s Shi’ite-majority neighbor that the king warned would extend to Syria and Lebanon.

Saudi Arabia’s top cleric, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Al Sheikh, condemned Iran’s Hezbollah proxy’s role in Syria, urging politicians and Muslim scholars to take “effective steps to deter its aggression” on Syria. Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi noted that “Iran wants “continued massacres to kill Sunnis.”

While US and some Western leaders have expressed cautious optimism over Rouhani’s expressed readiness to reach an agreement over Iran’s nuclear program, Sunni regimes are mindful and respectful of Israel’s past readiness to use force to stop Tehran, and its proxies and allies.

Israel’s destruction of Syria’s nuclear program in 2007, according to foreign reports, its war against Iran-backed Hezbollah in 2006, and Hamas in 2009 and 2012, and the Jewish state’s five preemptive assaults against the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah strategic balance-breaking weapons stockpiling and transfers in 2013 alone has made Israel a center of power, deterrence and even salvation for the Sunni world.

However, while the Sunni world is taking Israel’s side for the moment, it is likely a tactical convenience. If and when the Iranian regime is replaced by a new government more amenable to the West, the Sunni establishment would likely not hesitate to turn against the Jewish state in their traditional attempt to coalesce other Sunni powers in attempting to reassert regional control.

But for now, with the US seen by its Arab allies as turning inward in handing pro-Syria and Iran-friendly Russia the keys to superpower influence in the Middle East, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israel are perceived as the only hope for saving the Middle East’s Sunnis from Iran’s nuclear ascension. With Sunni powers unwilling to act, Israel and its so-called “distrustful” prime minister are not only the protectors of the Jewish state; They have also become the defenders of a primarily Sunni Middle East.

Sunni states and other peoples of the Middle East have remained unimpressed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s shift in tactics as faithfully carried out by President Rouhani. Many

have also been captivated by Israel's will to stop them. The free world would do well to heed their warnings.

(6) The kindred values of the Chinese and the Jews

There was big news in the world of philanthropy last week, but it was buried in the hullabaloo about the government shutdown. It seems that Li Ka-Shing, the richest man in Asia, has donated an additional \$130 million dollars toward higher education. Although newsworthy, this was not surprising. Over the years, he has donated over \$750 million to Shantou University alone.

What might make this surprising to some is that his latest donation was to Israel's leading engineering university, the Technion, to build the new Technion Guangdong Institute of Technology in southern China. However to those who know Mr. Li, even this is not entirely surprising. That's because Mr. Li has quite a long history of successful investing in Israel. He is well known as a friend to both Jews and to Israel itself, as China itself has been for much, though admittedly not all, of its history.

In general, the history of the Jews in China is both long and friendly. When Marco Polo "discovered" China, he found that the Jews were already very well established there and quite prosperous. Even earlier, in the ancient Chinese capital of Kaifeng, Jews had built a synagogue and a kosher butchering facility. In the 20th century, China proved to be a hospitable sanctuary for Jewish people escaping the Russian Revolution and the Holocaust.

China even boasts its own Oskar Schindler in Dr. Ho Feng-Shan, China's consul-general in Vienna, who saved the lives of thousands of Jews. In consideration of the centuries of peaceful contact between the two peoples, China can arguably be called the most hospitable country to the Jewish people. (Arguably, we reiterate.)

Last semester, I had the pleasure of hosting a visiting professor from Beijing's University of International Business and Economics to exchange ideas about the teaching of international finance. In the course of casual conversation, I learned that all over Chinese academia these days, there is a veritable explosion of interest in the Jewish people, Judaism and Israel. Mr. Li's gift merely epitomizes this interest.

To say that China respects Israel would be a tremendous understatement. In fact, China greatly admires both the nation and State of Israel in many important areas with the notable exception of cuisine, in which case the admiration goes demonstrably the other way. If you doubt this, just think about the number of Jewish delis you've ever seen in any of the Chinatowns of the world. Now consider the number of Chinese restaurants in any Jewish neighborhood. I rest my case

China greatly admires the strength of the Jewish Diaspora, its educational and intellectual achievements and its entrepreneurial successes. China greatly admires the innovation of Israel's technology and biotech industries, as Li Ka-Shing very obviously does, the resilience of a state surrounded by enemies, and the fearsome IDF. There's no question that Mr. Li's largesse reflects this great respect.

In recent years, I've spoken often on the topic of this article. Although it is probable that all cultures have something or other in common, the sheer number of them between the Chinese and Jewish cultures is remarkable.

Most obvious is our two cultures' reverence for knowledge and wisdom. In both cultures, education goes far, far beyond prosaic job training. It goes to the very heart of our cultural values. This similarity of cultural values is mirrored by the similarity of wisdom provided by our greatest teachers. Try this quick little quiz.

From which of the two cultures' greatest teachers did we receive the following words of wisdom?

1. "Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves."
2. "The risk of a wrong decision is preferable to the terror of indecision."
3. "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we do."
4. "Teach your tongue to say 'I do not know' and you will progress."
5. "If one avoids haughtiness to the utmost extent...this is the standard of saintliness."
6. "The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones."

The answers appear at the conclusion of this article. But the point is that the expressed wisdom of these remarkable philosophers is virtually interchangeable. Even the goyim and the gweilo (similar to goyim) can appreciate these pearls.

Respect for tradition is another kindred value. Tradition as Tevye sang in "Fiddler on the Roof" is endemic in everything the Chinese and Jewish people do. Respect for tradition is essentially another manifestation of both cultures' received wisdom. It provides us with legends and stories which may or may not have ever happened but which can be applied to almost any occasion like a gift certificate. Which is pretty smart, especially if you've forgotten to buy a gift.

What Mr. Li has accomplished is to strengthen a strength. China, no slouch at engineering, will benefit from the expertises of the Technion. In turn, the Technion will benefit from those of the Guangdong Institute of Technology. But perhaps more importantly, Mr. Li has laid the groundwork for increased cooperation between not just the two universities but the two countries.

China and Israel have political differences of course. But Mr. Li's private initiative will help to smooth over these differences. We should hope that our great capitalists will also use some of the fruit of their free market endeavors for similarly bold and innovative purposes.

(ANSWERS: 1) Confucius, 2) Maimonides, 3) Confucius, 4) Maimonides, 5) Maimonides, 6) Confucius)

(7) Jihad Tourism

For 20 years I studied and interviewed Islamist *mujahedeen* (jihad fighters) imprisoned in Israeli jails, examining their inner worlds and discovering the obsessive thoughts leading them to carry out terrorist attacks. They were addicted to fantasizing about an alternative reality, describing their compulsions in metaphors similar to those used by obsessive gamblers and drug addicts. They likened them to "worms" (*duda* in Arabic) burrowing into their brains and driving them to seek not another game of cards or a fix, but dead Israelis, Americans, Europeans, or anyone else they considered infidels. They did not try to resist their compulsions or consider that their actions might be wrong, because they felt completely controlled and manipulated by the concept of *jihad*, which dictated their behaviour in every sphere of life.

The findings of my research indicated that the jihadists' obsessions created what are known as "overvalued ideas," that is, false or exaggerated beliefs sustained beyond reason or logic. One often repeated, was the vision of what awaited the *shaheed* (a martyr for the sake of Allah) in the Islamic paradise after death. The sensations of the release of tension and relaxation come only after the terrorist act, when the perpetrator looks at the people he murdered. Even suicide bombers whose explosive belts failed to detonate or who were arrested before they could carry out their missions described a transcendent sensation, a smile as they approached their targets.

They spoke of their inability to control their impulsive behaviour, harmful to themselves and others.

They described the *mujahed's* [the jihad fighter's] search for meaning in his life, how he turns his back on civilization and everything it represents. Many of them felt rejected by their immediate surroundings, either because of feelings of inferiority, marginality or guilt for things they had done (or not done) that brought dishonour to their families, or simply because they could not integrate into society as productive, contributing citizens. Those who had been exposed to Western society had strong feelings of inferiority, jealousy and rejection, especially because of differences in life styles, sex roles, confidence and other personal attributes. Some of them noted unbridgeable gaps between culture and science. One dispatcher of suicide bombers spoke of the great differences in capabilities, culture and economic condition between Christian and Muslim Arabs. For the *mujahedeen*, people are either good or bad, and that conceptual polarity directs their course.

Terrorists are also frustrated and alienated by those who rejected them, leading them to announce that as *mujahedeen* they "reject the rejecters." A similar sensation has been noted in criminological studies as a criminal behavioural dynamic, and because the criminal is rejected by a normative society and cannot integrate into it, he declares war on it. Generally speaking, there is no psychopathology among Muslim terrorists. That is, none of them can be diagnosed as having a recognizable mental illness, even those who attempted to carry out suicide bombing attacks. What remains to be examined is whether or not there is a collective pathology, and if it is a question of a society, many of whose members find it difficult to suppress violence and control their urges and anger.

Jihad, a holy war against the infidel, is the personal duty of every Muslim, and if he does not wage it, he will die as a religious hypocrite, someone who only outwardly practices Islam but does not truly believe, and be damned for all eternity. The terrorists I interviewed told me that waging jihad is, for the *mujahed*, the way to partake of Allah's mercy for themselves and the members of their families, and to go directly to paradise without the Islamic "tortures of the grave" and without undergoing a painful examination by angels before they are allowed to enter.

Exhilaration and ecstasy accompany jihad fighters in their search for arenas of excitement around the globe. They look for places where they can rape and kill with impunity and fight the infidel in the name of Allah, reaching the pinnacle of masculinity and honour reserved for the *shaheed*. Superficially, they may seem to be fighting for an ideal, but in reality, even in suicide bombing attacks, there is an element of desire for reward, both in this world and the next. The overwhelming desire of many Muslim adolescent boys, even those educated in the West or who are converts to Islam, especially those living in countries where there is no real governance, is excitement. To that end they stream into confrontation zones: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Chechnya, Libya, Iraq, Africa (the recent terrorist attack in Kenya), and Syria to experience the mission, the excitement and promise of being a *shaheed* as the ultimate in self-realization.

Frustration, alienation and a sense of inferiority accompany the increase in the pace of modern life, and the gap between East and West continually grows. The deprivation, restrictions and solutions imposed by Islamism lead people to seek a group to which they can belong and which will help them channel their negative feelings for the other, the different, the "infidel," feelings which are common to all. In addition,

the need for adventure and excitement has helped create a kind of "jihad tourism" especially but not exclusively relevant for young Muslim men, including those born in the West. Today in Syria there are jihadist fighters from 60 countries, among them converts to Islam, who star in videos and help the jihadists recruit supporters and spread propaganda. Jihad tourism is a subculture of fun and excitement, a festival of violence, similar to the Western criminal and gang subcultures. The jihadist lifestyle allows them to shake off the confines of the disintegrating patriarchal family. As opposed to ordinary criminals, whose social status is lowered when they are classified as felons, the Islamic terrorists feel they are performing good deeds for the sake of Allah, raising their status. They act on violent impulses, are unrestrained in their aggression and try to impress those around them by taking risks, hoping for admiration and praise. They butcher people of all ages, use both sarin gas and hatchets, behead, rape and mutilate their "enemies" with no regard for the fact that until recently the enemy was a neighbour, or at least shared their language and culture.

In their "extreme jihad journeys" they become accustomed to violence and atrocities, or as one of the men I interviewed said, "we find the smell of blood natural; even as young children we saw sheep being slaughtered in our yards." In addition, they receive religious justification from various *fatwas*, religious edicts issued by sheikhs such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's religious authority. The jihad tourists live like wandering adventurers, generally finding it difficult to integrate into the mainstream of modern life. Instead they choose a path of murder and violence while embracing simplicity and even primitiveness. Having different aspirations, they do not have to compete with the West, seeking instead to destroy it while hoping to recreate the past in preference to joining the future. Before he was killed by the Americans, the terrorists I interviewed often praised Osama bin Laden and the simple life he lived in the caves of Tora Bora – an illusion, because bin Laden lived a life of relative comfort in Pakistan.

The waves of jihad tourism and terrorism targeting mainly Christians and Jews in the West have spun out of control and are not susceptible to the restraints of family, culture, religion or society. Violent jihad tourists are now overwhelming entire countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt and Syria. The atrocities currently being committed in Syria would not embarrass any legendary serial killer, and there are thousands of such jihad tourists there, Sunni and Shi'ite, and even Western converts to Islam, who torture and kill innocent civilians.

It is the high season for jihad tourism, and while the mujahedeen continue their activities in Iraq, the trendy watering hole is currently Syria, where Bashar al-Assad's friends and foes alike indiscriminately slaughter innocents of all ages and sexes. They surf on waves of blood, and the operatives of the Al-Nusra Front, a group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, slaughter both members of the Assad regime and of secular rebel organizations who fighting the same regime.

The goal of Western educational systems is to provide the tools necessary for functioning in society. In the Islamic countries, however, children are taught from infancy that the family and clan are the foundations of their lives and dictate their behavior. Islamic society binds its members in chains, and the individual has no choice but to submit to group pressure. Drowning in blood and violence, his only justification is seeking the death of a shaheed.

Recent conflicts show that the West provides plenty of jihad tourists despite our education and opportunities. For some, especially converts to Islam, waging jihad in foreign lands can be exciting and revolutionary and a chance to prove the depth of their new devotion.

With all of this in mind, I would like to propose calling murder for the sake of Allah "shahadamania," which might make it easier for the West to understand and fight the syndrome. It refers to the obsession for *istishhad* [martyrdom for the sake of Allah] and includes feelings of transcendence and euphoria after

killing the infidel, the capitulation to instinct, the inability to function in daily life, and jihad as a good and even altruistic deed in this world to qualify for a hedonistic afterlife.

(8) A Jewish Majority in the Land of Israel: The Resilient Jewish State

Growth trends and population forecasts have played a significant role in the political landscape of the Middle East, especially over the thorny question of Israel and the disputed territories. The notion that the Jewish majority of Israel is in danger of being swamped by Arab fertility has repeatedly been used as a political and psychological weapon to extract territorial concessions from the Israeli government. In September 2010, U.S. president Barack Obama referred to the so-called "hard realities of demography" that threaten the survival of the Jewish state.

Such a conclusion is wrong. Analysis of long-term demographic developments leads to quite the opposite conclusion: In the long run, a strong Jewish majority, not only in the state of Israel - as this author projected almost twenty-five years ago and the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics recently reaffirmed - but also in the Land of Israel is quite possible.

Middle East Population Annual Growth

It is useful to analyze the processes among world populations in general and in the Middle East and the Arab world in particular. Such scrutiny helps to determine whether demographic trends within the Jewish and Arab population groups living in the Land of Israel differ or resemble the general tendencies observable within the global population over the last sixty plus years, the same general time frame as that of the state of Israel.

Beginning in 1966, the annual population growth in the Middle East rose consistently until it peaked at 3.24 percent in 1980 when it began to ebb - at a faster pace than in the developed world. In the subsequent thirty-two years, the Middle East population increase has gone down by more than a half, to 1.45 percent in 2012.

During that same period, the annual growth rate of the Jewish population in Israel was much higher than in developed countries, largely due to the ongoing repatriation of Jews from various countries to Israel. For the same reason, the annual increase of the Israeli Jewish population was, for the most part, higher than the population in less-developed countries. During the times of mass immigration to Israel, the Jewish growth rate was also significantly higher than the aggregated growth rate of Middle Eastern countries.

Since 2003, the annual increase of Jewish Israelis has grown steadily from 1.48 percent to 1.81 percent while the aggregated annual increase of the Middle Eastern countries has decreased to 1.45 percent.

Population Changes among Israelis

After reaching its all-time peak of 2.89 percent in 1951, the natural increase rate of Israeli Jews began to decline, dropping to 1.07 percent by 1995. This sharp decrease was due to the influx of close to 600,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union in 1990-95, which paradoxically lowered the natural increase rate for the Jewish population as it took approximately five years for the new citizens to settle in properly and start families. Thus, despite a lowered natural increase rate, the Jewish population grew in total by 24 percent. By 1995, the total fertility rate of these new Israeli citizens increased, reaching 1.72 children per woman (compared to 2.66 for native-born Israelis), presumably due to their successful absorption into the larger society as well as a continued influx of others from the former Soviet Union along with Ethiopian immigrants during the 1980s and 1990s. Beginning in

1996, the natural increase rate of Israeli Jews has trended upward, rising to 1.5 percent in 2010, increasing by 25.2 percent in one decade. The same natural increase rate of Israeli Jews was also maintained in 2011 and 2012.

At the same time, the trend for Israeli Arabs has moved in the opposite direction. Having reached a peak of 4.41 percent in 1964 - a figure significantly higher than that of the rest of the Arab world (see Figure 2) - the natural increase rate of the Israeli Arabs declined by 37.2 percent from 1964 to 1987. Furthermore, while the natural increase rate for Israeli Jews rose by 41.6 percent from 1995 to 2012, the Arab natural increase rate declined during the same time by 30.6 percent, with the rate in 2012 at its lowest level since 1955.

The main reason for such decline is the rapid decrease in Arab birth rates from 36.4 births per 1,000 in 1998 to 24.7 births in 2012. While the Arab mortality rate also dropped from 3.37 deaths per 1,000 in 1995 to 2.69 in 2010, it has risen to 2.78 deaths per 1,000 in 2012.

Population Age Structure

These demographic developments have an impact on the proportion of Israeli Jews versus Israeli Arabs. As a result of declining fertility, significant changes in the age structure of the Israeli Arab population have taken place during the past fifteen years. Figure 3 compares Jewish Israelis to Arab Israelis by age group structure and can help make better sense of both historical and future trends.

For example, in 2000, the number of Israeli Arabs born was 39,579 (including 34,667 Muslims). By 2012, the number of Israeli Arab newborns was 40,080 (35,730 Muslim). The number of children born within the Jewish population rose from 90,900 in 2000 to 125,492 in 2012 and in the expanded Jewish population, which includes Jews, any population not classified by religion, and non-Arab Christians, from 94,327 to 130,460 in 2012. Thus the share of babies born to Jews increased from 67.9 percent in 2000 to 73.6 percent and of expanded Jewish population from 70.4 percent to 76.5 percent in 2012.

Taking a broader view, the number of Jewish children in the 0-4 age cohort rose by 26.7 percent while that of Arab children in this group rose by a mere 1.9 percent. Thus, the share of Jewish toddlers within the general population increased from 68.2 to 72.8 percent and of the expanded Jewish population from 70.7 to 75.6 percent in 2012.

The shape of the age structure presented in Figure 3 clearly shows that the younger the age, the more the number of Jews increases while the number of Arabs either decreases or remains stable.

While in 2012 there were 81,600 21-year-old Jews (86,300 expanded Jewish population), their number steadily and continuously grew for the younger ages: 125,492 Jewish babies (130,460 for expanded Jewish population) born in 2012. By contrast, there were 31,100 21-year-old Arabs and 40,080 newly born Arabs in 2012 - a smaller relative increase than their Jewish counterparts.

There were 98,100 Jews (or 2.38 per every Arab) at the age of "9" when the Arab population reached its peak for all ages - 41,300 people. When checking this proportion of each age group down to age "0", this ratio continuously increases, up to 3.13 Jews for every Arab at the "age 0" group.

The share of Jews among the "0" age group reached 73.6 percent compared to the lowest share of 67.4 percent at the age of "11." The expanded Jewish population among age group "0" reached 76.5 percent (compared to the 70.4 percent at the age of "11"), or 3.25 children for every Arab child. Such developments started influencing the Israeli education system

because the share of Hebrew education pupils among all pupils in the first grade began increasing in the 2008-09 school year. Taking into account the numbers of babies born in 2012, there will be at least 76.5 percent Hebrew-education first-grade pupils in the 2018-19 school year. The addition of the children of new immigrants (olim) will enhance this proportion still further.

Another way to look at the population dynamics of the two groups is to examine the other end of the aging spectrum. Israel's Jewish population share of the 65+ age group was 88.5 percent (91.8 percent for expanded Jewish population) in 2012 versus 8.2 percent for the Arabs. Taking into consideration that the 45-75 age group of 2012 will belong to the 65+ age group of 2032, the share of the Jews in this age group would diminish to 81.7 percent (86.5 percent for expanded Jewish population), while the share of Arabs would increase to 13.5 percent, 64.8 percent larger than it was in 2012. The share of the Israeli Muslims at the 65+ age group will increase even more drastically, by 75.5 percent, from 6 percent in 2012 to 10.5 percent in 2032. In other words, during the last ten years, the share of Israeli Jews versus Israeli Arabs within the overall young Israeli population has increased, indicating that the Jewish population has started to become younger while the Israeli Arab population is getting older. With existing life expectancies factored in, the natural aging of Israeli Arab "baby boomers" will significantly increase their mortality level over the next two decades, causing an accelerating decline in the overall Arab natural increase rate.

Continuation of current trends will result in a convergence in 2025 of the natural increase rate for Jews and Arabs in Israel. For the first time in the modern history of the Land of Israel, the Arab natural increase rate may not be higher but rather equal to the natural increase rate of the Jews. Given the possibility of continued Jewish immigration, one can expect an intensification of the steadily rising Jewish share of the total population of the Land of Israel.

This trend becomes even more pronounced when studying the population of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, which until recently had been under Israeli administration and is now either part of the Palestinian Authority - dominated by the Palestine Liberation Organization - or a quasi-independent Hamas enclave.

Under the Israeli administration (1967-93), the natural increase rate of the Arabs of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza Strip rose markedly from 2.52 percent in 1965 to peak at 4.21 percent in 1989. However, over the next two decades, it declined noticeably to 2.88 percent in 2012. It appears that the decline in the Palestinian natural increase rate in Judea and Samaria is accelerating even faster than among Israeli Arabs.

Combined with a massive emigration of Arab youth from these territories, especially from Judea and Samaria, the size of the younger age group will be reduced and coincidentally, the elderly age cohort of the population will increase, resulting in an increased mortality rate in the near future. Following these trends, the natural increase rate of Arabs in Judea and Samaria will be decreasing even faster.

Migration Balance and Population Annual Growth

Any proper analysis of demographic developments in the Land of Israel must take into account the critical role of the migration balance. *Aliya* - Jewish repatriation - has been a significant factor in narrowing the difference between Jewish and Arab natural increase rates. For example, while in 1990, the natural increase rate for Jews was equal to only 1.29 percent, their annual growth, due to immigration, was 6.18 percent, more than twice as high as the Arab natural increase for that year.

From 2008 to 2011, Jewish immigration to Israel rose 30 percent. An analysis of immigration patterns reveals some surprising data about the countries of origin of these émigrés and points to future developments with important consequences.

In 2010, Israel ranked 15 out of 169 on the Human Development Index (HDI) - a comparative measure used to rank countries by life expectancy, education levels, and standard of living. While about a million and a quarter Jews live in twenty countries with an HDI lower than Israel, another eight countries with significant Jewish populations (about 6,500,000) have a higher HDI than Israel.

In 2000-10, 284,907 new immigrants moved to Israel alongside 44,639 returning expatriates. Not surprisingly, about 87 percent of the newcomers came from countries with an HDI lower than Israel's - 59.4 percent of all repatriates came from the former Soviet Union, 10.2 percent from Ethiopia, and 4.1 percent from Argentina. Only 13.5 percent came from countries with a higher HDI such as the United States or France. Yet in the first ten months of 2011, the largest growth of repatriation to Israel (compared to the previous decade) came from countries with a higher HDI: Their share of the total immigrant population more than doubled. Twenty-nine percent of these immigrants came from eight developed countries, 14.6 percent from the United States and 10.3 percent from France.

It may very well be that a combination of factors contributed to this change. The recent world economic crisis may be one. According to Reuters: "Employees of universities and researchers are among the biggest sufferers of economic slowdown in the United States ... As a result, universities are cutting their budgets and staff, and many researchers are going home."

The other likely contributor is a rising wave of anti-Semitism, especially in Western Europe. According to Benjamin Jacobs, Holland's chief rabbi, "the future for Dutch Jewry is moving to Israel." Relentless harassment in the south Swedish city of Malmö has driven most of its Jewish population out of the city, or even the country. Recent years also have seen increasing numbers of Jews moving to Israel from [France](#) and [the United Kingdom](#). There have been reports of Muslims assaulting Jews in [Norway](#) and [Denmark](#) and stone-tossing Arabs driving Jewish dancers from a stage in [Germany](#). A recent poll found that 38 percent of Muslim youth in [Austria](#) agree that "Hitler had done a lot of good for the people."

A spring 2008 survey by the Pew Research Center's *Pew Global Attitudes Project* finds 46% of the Spanish rating Jews unfavourably. More than a third of Russians (34%) and Poles (36%) echo this view. Somewhat fewer, but still significant numbers of the Germans (25%) and French (20%) interviewed also express negative opinions of Jews. These percentages are all higher than obtained in comparable Pew surveys taken in recent years. In a number of countries, the increase has been especially notable between 2006 and 2008.

This situation has brought increasing numbers of Jews to Israel. According to data from 2012 published by the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, the majority of olim continued to come from Europe (10,088, 49.4 percent of all immigrants), and the numbers rose by 30 percent in 2008-12.

The immigration from France with 1,923 individuals (9.4 percent of all immigrants) in 2012 remained steadily in third place from Europe after Russia (3,566, 17.5 percent of all immigrants) and Ukraine (2,100, 10.3 percent). Former USSR countries accounted for 35.9 percent of all immigrants to Israel in 2012. From 2008 through 2012, repatriation from Russia rose by 32.4 percent and from Ukraine even more by 58.9 percent.

A significant number of immigrants came from the United Kingdom (641, 3.1 percent). Repatriation from Scandinavian countries rose by 65.8 percent and from Italy by 161.9 percent; the increase from Holland was 22.2 percent and from Belgium, 24.6 percent. However, the most impressive growth of immigration during these four years came from Spain, by 232.1 percent.

If these conditions persist, Israel may experience a substantial aliya wave into the near future, including an influx of skilled professionals, a welcome addition to Israel's fast developing economy. The recent discoveries of huge gas deposits create an enormous momentum for the Israeli economy that is bound to change the geopolitical situation in the Middle East.

Many Israeli expatriates may also seriously consider returning to the Jewish state. During the years 2000-10, the number of returning Israelis was 21.3 percent higher than the previous decade. These developments would lead to a further increase in the annual growth of the Jewish population.

Of equal importance are emigration trends of the Arab population that began long before the 1967 Six-Day War. Demographer Justin McCarthy has estimated that about 200,000 Arabs emigrated from Judea and Samaria between 1949 and 1967. "After 1948, Palestinian high fertility and the limited economic potential of the land led to out-migration. The West Bank, in particular, had sizable out-migration from 1948 to 1967... emigration was now large-scale and directed mainly to the Arab world." Migration rates from Gaza were much lower because until the 1960s, the Egyptian government, which controlled the territory, restricted emigration.

According to Mustafa Khawaja, director of the Jerusalem Statistical Department of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS): "The net balance of arrivals and departures for the West Bank in the period 1967 to the present has been consistently negative, with an average of about 10,000 leaving annually ... The main reason for migration by Palestinians relates to the economic factors resulting from the political instability and the infighting between the Palestinian parties." This view is supported by journalist Khaled Abu Toameh who wrote in August 2002:

Approximately 80,000 Palestinians have left the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the year (a rise of 50 percent compared to last year), a senior Palestinian Authority official said Monday. The official ... told *The Jerusalem Post* another 50,000 Palestinians are now trying to leave through the Jordan River bridges and the Rafah border crossing [between Gaza and Egypt].

Two years later, Egyptian journalist Bissan Edwan stated that "according to Jordan[ian] statistics, at least 150,000 Palestinians left the West Bank during the *intifada* years from 2000 to 2002 and did not return," concluding that the economic situation in the Palestinian Authority territories could lead to new waves of emigration. She also dismissed the myth of a demographic time-bomb by noting that net Jewish migration offset the higher Palestinian natural increase and that better access to birth control lowered Palestinian fertility rates. The impact of out-migration was further reinforced by a 2006 poll published by An-Najah University in Nablus, which found that "one in three Palestinians wanted to emigrate. The

1,350 people surveyed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip cited dire economic conditions as the first reason, followed by lawlessness, political deadlock, and fears of civil war."

Arab emigration from Judea and Samaria increased even more in 2007-09. During the first seven months of 2008, the Jordanian-Palestinian border-crossing point located near the Karame bridge registered a negative migration balance of 63,386 people while in the first eight months of 2009, there was reported a negative migration balance of 44,000 people.

World Bank figures also indicated a decrease in the size of the Palestinian population, by 0.45 percent in 2009 and by 0.37 percent in 2010. Thus, in 2009-10, the negative migration balance was higher than the natural increase of the Arab population in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip.

Population Projections for the Land of Israel

It is a well-documented fact that Palestinian population figures as well as Palestinian-supplied growth projections are seriously flawed, rife with double-counting, presumed (and unsubstantiated) mass immigration, inflated birth numbers, and deaths not counted. Considering those issues alongside the emigration trends should lead policymakers in Israel and abroad to a more nuanced view of demographic projections and decisions based upon them.

Consider the PCBS' 2001 annual *Statistical Abstract of Palestine*. According to its projection, the Arab population in the Palestinian-administered territories would amount to 4,077,981 people in 2005, then increase to 5,027,580 in 2010, to 5,354,988 in 2012, and finally to 6,632,439 in 2020. In fact, at the end of 2005, the actual PCBS population estimate was lower by 315,976 persons than the PCBS projection published just four years earlier.

In December 2006, the PCBS proclaimed that the "Palestinian population and the Jewish population [east of the Jordan river] will be equal in 2010 ... the Palestinian population will increase to 5.7 million in mid-2010." The reality was different: At the end of 2010, the PCBS issued a press release claiming that there were actually 4,108,631 Arabs in Palestinian-administered territories, 918,949 less than it had projected in 2001. Similarly, a PCBS press release on December 31, 2012, estimated the Arab population at 4.4 million, a number smaller by 955,000 than it had previously predicted.

The recent PCBS projection made at the end of 2012 stated that "the number of Palestinians in historical Palestine will total 7.2 million compared to 6.9 million Jews by the end of 2020." According to the recent Israel Central Bureau of Statistics projection, there will be about 1.9 million Israeli Arabs in 2020. Reducing this figure from the PCBS projection for all Arab population in historical Palestine in 2020 gives 5.3 million Arabs in Palestinian-administered territories. This estimate is 1,362,439 less than projected by PCBS in 2001.

But projections from Palestinian sources are not the only forecasts that need to be adjusted. In October 2007, this author prepared a demographic projection of the Israeli population based on observable trends since the founding of the Jewish state. The resulting numbers, 12,805,000 persons in 2050, fell somewhere between two U.N. population projections - 11,942,000 using the high forecast variant and 13,064,000 using the constant fertility rate variant. The author's projection was based on certain assumptions: That just as in each of the last 120 years, the annual growth of the Jewish population would consist of natural increase as well as immigration. Some of the predictions, however, proved to be far more conservative than what actually transpired. For example, in 2003-10, average annual growth was 14.7 percent higher than originally estimated. The 2007 report had also predicted that the natural increase rate of the Arab citizens of Israel would continue diminishing in the future. In fact, the natural increase rate of Israeli Arabs was 2.2 percent in 2012, 21.1

percent lower than assumed in 2007. In sum, based on the new data, the share of the Jewish population in Israel is expected to decrease to its lowest point of 79.2 percent in 2015, but starting in 2024 may begin to rise up to 81.8 percent of the total population in 2050 and to 83.2 percent by 2059.

Further, it is reasonable to conclude that an existing trend of growing natural increase in the Jewish non-ultra-Orthodox population will continue. This will likely be augmented by a positive migration balance since the majority of Jews living in the Diaspora are not ultra-Orthodox (Haredim).

There were apparently no Haredim among the immigrants from the former Soviet Union and just 4.5 percent of these declared themselves as religious. There were only 7.2 percent of Haredim and 14.8 percent of religious people among immigrants from Europe and the United States. Just 3.1 percent of immigrants from Asia and Africa declared themselves as Haredi and 26.4 percent declared themselves as religious. All in all, the Haredi share of 2012 immigrants could be estimated at 3.6 percent and of religious people at 10.4 percent.

This would be accompanied by an accelerating decline in the natural increase among the Haredi population. According to the ICBS, the total fertility rate (TFR) of the Haredim has declined by 14.3 percent in just six years from 7.62 children per woman in 2003 to 6.53 children per woman in 2009, back to the level that existed twenty-five years before in the middle of the 1980s. At the same time, the TFR of secular women rose by 8.9 percent from 1.90 children per woman in 2003 to 2.07 in 2009.

Likewise, from the beginning of the twenty-first century the TFR of Israeli Muslims decreased considerably, from 4.7 in 2000 to 3.5 children per woman in 2011. The TFR of all Arabs decreased still further to 3.3 children per woman, very close to the 3.09 for Jews born in Israel. In November 2011, a new comprehensive ICBS projection was published in which the government office admitted that in the past it had overestimated Israeli Arab fertility and underestimated Jewish fertility.

An updated version of the author's 2007 projections for the population of the State of Israel (extended from 2050 to 2059) appears in Figure 6. The numbers are presented side by side with the ICBS's second and third scenario projections.

According to the author's forecast prepared in 2007, the Arab population in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza Strip would reach 2,496,000 in 2050. Extending the forecast for nine more years, this population could reach 2,761,500 people. Combined with the estimated population of the State of Israel, the total population of the Land of Israel would comprise some 19,487,000 people in 2059.

Based on these estimates, the expanded Jewish population share would be 83.19 percent of the population of the State of Israel and 71.4 percent of the total population of the Land of Israel in 2059.

Conclusions

Population growth for the Land of Israel at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century will be influenced by the Arab and Jewish natural increase rates reaching a convergence point based on similar live birth and mortality rates. It will also likely be influenced by continued Jewish immigration, including a new, possibly strong wave in the near future following the prolonged world economic crisis and manifestations of rising anti-Semitism around the globe. Repatriation will also be encouraged if the Israeli economy continues to be strong in the near future, an increased likelihood based in part on the huge gas and shale oil fields recently discovered in Israel. The share of Jews in the total

population of the Land of Israel may also increase as a result of continued Arab emigration that may include Israeli Arabs as well. According to the results of the first-ever survey on political-social attitudes of Arab youth in Israel, conducted by the Baladna Association for Arab Youth and the Mada al-Carmel Arab Centre for Applied Social Research, both in Haifa, 25 percent of the Arab youth in Israel want to emigrate.

Every country has a natural and objective carrying capacity limit for the population living on its territory and, in this respect, Israel is no different than any other. With that in mind, demographic projections can and should be used as a tool for planning by the state as well as by municipalities to avoid mistakes that can damage vital infrastructure and public services, such as health, education, and welfare systems. Ignoring the impressive demographic changes of the last twenty years in Israel has produced heavy burdens on Israel's health system due to a lack of hospital beds and a scarcity of medical personnel. Overpopulated classrooms and a lack of qualified teachers is another such consequence. Similarly, lower than necessary construction starts in the residential sector is causing pain for young couples.

Developing proper demographic policies can be important tools for planning national security needs to assure internal order and the security of the state's borders. Jerusalem must bear in mind that without developing such a professional, comprehensive, and long-term demographic policy, it will be very difficult to reach the vital goals of assuring a stable and secure future for generations to come.

NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SAZF