



Opinion and Analysis, Week ending 21 May 2014

1. Peres the peacemaker

Editorial, The Times (UK), 20 May 2014

Mr Peres is a wise man and Israel will be the poorer for his departure. The questions that remain unanswered are those that he astutely framed: above all, how, in a world of competing priorities, can Israel keep the US focused on long-term peacekeeping? How can the country keep alive the idea of a two-state solution?

<http://www.bicom.org.uk/comment-and-opinion/20275/>

2. Ambassador Dermer and United States-Israel relations

Zaki Shalom, INSS, 18 May 2014

In an address to the Foundation for the Defence of Democracies in Washington on May 1, 2014, Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to the US, spoke at length about a number of subjects on Israel's national agenda. Presumably his comments reflect not only his personal opinion, but also assessments and stances acceptable to senior Israeli leaders. The ambassador did not state that the relationship between the US and Israel is becoming symmetrical. Nevertheless, he stressed that Israel is no longer a country that only receives; it is a respected player with capabilities possessed only by world powers, and can contribute very valuable assets to the other party.

<http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=6993>

3. Israel isn't, and will never be, an apartheid state

Michael Oren, Los Angeles Times, 17 May 2014

Israel is not an apartheid state and will not become one.

Israel's enemies wield the word 'apartheid' to delegitimize the Jewish state #Israel.

Palestinian leaders aspire to create a state from which all Jews have been expelled. That is truly apartheid.

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-oren-israel-apartheid-20140518-story.html>

4. Arabs: We want democracy, like Israel

Khaled Abu Toameh, Gatestone Institute, 16 May 2014

"How many Arab leaders would be left if they went on trial of similar cases of bribery and corruption?" — Zuheir al-Karim, *Arabic CNN*.

"If Olmert were in Kuwait, his case would have been shelved and he would have received a senior position in government." — Yasalam, *Al-Aan*.

"Law is above all and this is real democracy. Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East." — Saad Sayad, *Arabic CNN*.

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7. The Palestinian Reconciliation Agreement: tactical relief or strategic opportunity?
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<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304081804579559630836775474>

9. Israel and the reality of anti-semitism
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The international survey of attitudes toward Jews by the Anti-Defamation League published today has removed any doubt about the virulence of anti-Semitism.

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/05/13/israel-and-the-reality-of-anti-semitism-adl-100-global-index/>

1. Peres the peacemaker

Shimon Peres, president of Israel and, at 90, the world's oldest serving statesman, has led his country through war and peace. He never managed to win a lasting settlement nor kindle the sense of enduring security that his people craved. He eased, but could not remove, the threat of violence from radical Palestinians. And he never quite managed to persuade his citizens and voters of the need to surrender entrenched positions.

Yet as Mr Peres approaches the end of his presidency, it is plain that this extraordinary career spanning 66 years does not represent a failed political life. Superficially it has been a progression from “hawk” to “dove”. In 1956, as a senior official in the defence ministry, he helped to plan the Suez war with Britain and France. In the 1970s he became an early supporter of settlements on the West Bank. In the 1980s he disguised himself with false whiskers to enter Jordan to negotiate with King Hussein. He is linked even more closely than Yitzhak Rabin to the Oslo accords and the acceptance of a Palestinian Authority.

Mr Peres is a wise man and Israel will be the poorer for his departure. The questions that remain unanswered are those that he astutely framed: above all, how, in a world of competing priorities, can Israel keep the US focused on long-term peacekeeping? How can the country keep alive the idea of a two-state solution?

The signs are not encouraging. Days before Mr Peres stepped down, new attempts to build confidence between Israelis and Palestinians were stymied by a reconciliation between Palestine’s chief factions, the secular Fatah and the Islamist Hamas. This move aligns Mahmoud Abbas, of the Palestinian Authority, with a group widely seen in the West as a terrorist organisation. Israel holds Hamas responsible for killing more than 1,000 Israelis, many of them civilian, and holds no truck with a unified Palestinian leadership.

2. Ambassador Dermer and United States-Israel relations

In an address to the Foundation for the Defence of Democracies in Washington on May 1, 2014, Ron Dermer, Israel’s ambassador to the US, spoke at length about a number of subjects on Israel’s national agenda, including the negotiations with Iran about its nuclear activity; the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; the Arab Spring; and US-Israel relations. Presumably his comments reflect not only his personal opinion, but also assessments and stances acceptable to senior Israeli leaders. This article considers primarily his positions on US-Israel relations, which by nature is an issue that involves much of the ambassador’s own input as well.

In his talk, Ambassador Dermer stated that Israel today is a leading power in science and technology, particularly in medicine, water, and agriculture. Given that science is a dominant component in the security and economic strength of nations, Israel’s status as a global power will likely grow stronger over the years. Ambassador Dermer elaborated specifically about Israel’s capability in cyber warfare, which not only poses a great threat to the security of many countries, but is also a huge developing market. The ambassador indicated that in this field Israel is a major superpower - a natural partner for the United States. Israel, Dermer emphatically concluded, will be the most important US ally in the twenty-first century.

Later in his comments, the ambassador assessed that US-Israel relations will grow stronger in the future, given the interests and values of the two countries. The US, noted Dermer, will find it difficult to disengage from the Middle East, even if it wishes to, because the major threats to it will emerge from the region. For this reason, so Dermer implied, it will need an ally with proven military power and interests and a value system comparable to those of the US. Only with Israel will the US be able to avoid having to choose between its interests and its basic values and the accepted norms of the American people. On this basis, Dermer contended, that while during the twentieth century Great Britain was the most important US ally, in the twenty-first century, it would be Israel.

Although the ambassador did not state this explicitly, his implicit conclusion is that both Israel and the USA must now understand the new level of their relationship. Until now, the

dominant perception has been that it is a relationship between a superpower and a small, relatively weak country, and therefore an asymmetric relationship. The implicit conclusion was naturally that Israel was frequently in need of the charity of the larger power. Israel was always on the receiving end and the US was on the giving end. This image, according to Dermer, must undergo a dramatic change. The ambassador did not state that the relationship between the two countries is becoming symmetrical. Nevertheless, he stressed that Israel is no longer a country that only receives; it is a respected player with capabilities possessed only by world powers, and can contribute very valuable assets to the other party.

The conclusion implicit in Dermer's comments is that in a relationship of this kind, Israel in no way should see itself as a country that must accept the demands of the US government. It can certainly feel free to refuse to accept the administration's requests if and when it believes that these requests could harm its essential interests.

Dermer also spoke about the disagreements between the United States and Israel on a variety of issues, including policy toward Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The ambassador rejected the argument that Israel's refusal to accept the outline proposed by the US government and an Israeli decision to act unilaterally in a way that is contrary to the position of the administration would necessarily lead to a deterioration in bilateral relations. Historical experience, he claims, proves that even when Israel has rejected the administration's positions and acted in contrary fashion, ultimately, the relationship between the two countries has not suffered harm, but has generally grown stronger. While the ambassador did not elaborate, the ostensible sense is that the US appreciates and respects an ally that knows how to defend its essential interests, even in the face of threats by the US government. Therefore, even if there is tension in the short term because of Israel's "stubbornness," in the long run, it contributes to strengthening the relations between the two countries.

In this context, the ambassador mentioned the following main examples: (a) In 1948, Israel declared independence, which was contrary to the wishes of the US government. (b) In 1967, Israel went to war in spite of an explicit warning from the president that if Israel acted alone, it would be alone. (c) In 1981, Israel attacked the Iraqi nuclear reactor with the clear knowledge that the Reagan administration opposed such an attack. (d) During Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, Israel refused to comply with demands by the Bush administration to stop the operation before its objectives had been achieved.

This way of thinking can perhaps explain the Prime Minister's steadfastness in the face of various demands by Secretary of State Kerry during his recent mission in the region, including a freeze on construction and the release of prisoners who are Israeli citizens as part of the fourth round of prisoner releases. It may also explain the fact that Israel's defence minister was not deterred from criticism of the US government's proposed security plan. This mindset cannot but lead to the conclusion that the negative US attitude to an independent Israeli military strike against Iran, in and of itself, would not deter the government of Prime Minister Netanyahu from unilateral military action if and when it realized that this was its only remaining option for preventing Iran from going nuclear.

However, the picture presented by Ambassador Dermer of Israel's strength and the Israel-US relationship likely does not match the US administration's view. If Israel actually acts on the basis of this approach, it will most likely experience growing and ongoing conflicts with the United States, whether the US administration is Democratic or Republican. Furthermore, the ambassador's confident and decisive tone could give the US administration the feeling that Israel is "trigger happy" when considering whether to accept or reject US government requests, and that it will not hesitate to refuse these requests even if they do not involve harm to Israel's essential interests.

3. Israel isn't, and will never be, an apartheid state

The war against Israel has passed through three phases.

The first was the attempt to annihilate Israel by conventional means. It began with Israel's birth in 1948, when Arab armies nearly captured Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and ended in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israeli forces came within artillery range of Cairo and Damascus.

The next stage, starting in the early 1970s, sought to cripple Israel through terror. Suicide bombers nearly paralyzed the country, but by 2005 they too were defeated.

That is when Israel's enemies launched the third, and potentially most devastating, campaign: to isolate, delegitimize and sanction Israel into extinction. And a key weapon in this stage is the hugely destructive word "apartheid."

Translated from Afrikaans, apartheid means "apart-hood." It stemmed from the deeply held racist beliefs of South African whites who, in the half-century after World War II, imposed strict legal barriers between themselves and all black people. The segregation was total: separate restaurants, separate toilets and drinking fountains, separate houses, hospitals and schools. Blacks were denied the right to vote. The system resembled the American South under Jim Crow and outlived it by several decades. Thereafter, "apartheid" remained synonymous with undiluted racism, second only in hatefulness to Nazism.

Today, the word "apartheid" is wielded by Israel's enemies to delegitimize the Jewish state. Adversaries point to the separation between Israeli settlers and Palestinian residents of the West Bank, separate Israeli and Palestinian roads, and separate schools, hospitals and legal systems. Although Israelis can elect their leaders, opponents of Israel say, Palestinians cannot. They claim that Israel has erected an "apartheid wall" between Jewish and Arab areas.

Yet none of this even remotely resembles apartheid. The vast majority of settlers and Palestinians choose to live apart because of cultural and historical differences, not segregation, though thousands of them do work side by side. The separate roads were created in response to terrorist attacks — not to segregate Palestinians but to save Jewish lives. And Israeli roads are used by Israeli Jews and Arabs alike. The separation of schools is, again, a cultural choice similar to that made by secular and Orthodox Jews and Muslim and Christian Palestinians. Many Palestinians, however, study in Israeli institutions such as Ariel University, located in a settlement. Thousands of Palestinians, many from Hamas-controlled Gaza, are treated at Israeli hospitals.

Israelis can indeed vote for their leaders, and so too can the Palestinians, but the Palestinian Authority has refused to hold elections for years. Palestinians are indeed tried under Israeli (originally British) military codes for security infractions, but other cases are referred to Palestinian courts. And even on security-related issues, Palestinians can appeal to Israel's Supreme Court.

Israel has erected a security barrier — only a small section is actually walled — between it and most of the West Bank. But the barrier, a vital counter-terrorism tool, is not permanent and has been moved several times to accommodate Palestinian interests. It is no more an apartheid wall than the fence between the US and Mexico.

The West Bank represents a complex historical, humanitarian and security situation that six Israeli prime ministers from both the left and right have tried to resolve. Unfortunately, Palestinian leaders turned down Israeli offers of statehood in 2000 and 2008, and have now abandoned peace talks in favour of reunification with Hamas. They aspire to create a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza from which all Jews have been expelled. That is truly apartheid.

Outside of the West Bank, in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel, Jews and Arabs mix freely and increasingly live in the same neighbourhoods. Arabs serve in Israel's parliament, in its army and on its Supreme Court. And though discrimination in Israel, as in America, remains a scourge, there is no imposed segregation. Go to any Israeli mall, any restaurant or hospital, and you will see Arabs and Jews interacting.

This reality has not prevented Israel's enemies from branding it with the apartheid label. They do so not to achieve a better peace arrangement with Israel but to isolate it internationally and to eliminate it through sanctions. We Jews remember how each attempt to obliterate us, whether in the Inquisition or during the Holocaust, was preceded by a campaign to delegitimize us. People who practice apartheid are easily considered illegitimate.

Israel is not an apartheid state and will not become one, even if the Palestinians continue to reject peace. However unwittingly, those who associate apartheid with Israel are aiding the third and perhaps ultimate stage in the effort to destroy the nation. They are also committing a grave injustice to the millions of American and South African blacks who were the victims of true apartheid.

4. Arabs: We want democracy, like Israel

The Tel Aviv District Court's decision to send former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to six years in prison for corruption has prompted calls in the Arab world for endorsing Israel's standards of accountability, transparency and justice.

Reacting to the sentencing of Olmert, many Arabs expressed hope that the day would come when their countries would learn from Israel that no one is above the law, even if he or she is a president or prime minister.

Sufian Abu Zayda, a leading Fatah official and former Palestinian Authority minister, praised the court verdict; he said it shows that in Israel, no one is above the law.

"This verdict provides further evidence that the judicial system in Israel is fully independent in the wake of the separation between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, as well as total freedom of the media," said Abu Zayda, who is considered an expert on Israeli affairs.

The praise for Israel's democratic system does not mean that Abu Zayda and other Arabs have become pro-Israel and are willing to recognize Israel's right to exist.

But while they continue to hate Israel and seek its destruction, many Arabs do not hesitate to express their admiration for the independence of Israel's judicial system.

Comments posted by Arabs and Muslims on the Internet this week revealed how eager they are for their countries to endorse Israeli democracy. Similar reactions were also published when an Israeli court sentenced former Israeli President Moshe Katzav to seven years in prison for sex-related offenses.

Following are some of the comments posted on Arab media and social websites in response to the Olmert verdict:

- Ali Al-Kadi: "We salute Judge David Rosen [who sentenced Olmert to prison]. We wish the Arabs had 22 judges like David Rosen!" *[Al-Quds Al-Arabi]*
- Mohammed Akash: "O Muslims, look at the fairness of this judge and where you are. You must learn from our enemy, Israel. Long live the fair Israeli judicial system." *[Al-Quds Al-Arabi]*
- Manji Dalali: "This is one of the secrets behind Israel's victory over the Arabs. We must learn from our Jewish Zionist enemy the principles of fair justice." *[Al-Quds Al-Arabi]*
- Ibrahim - Libya: "We Muslims are in great need of a decent judicial system to punish our thieves and corrupt leaders. May God help us." *[Al-Quds Al-Arabi]*
- Hassan Jamal: "I wish Arab countries do the same for their corrupt leaders. I wish the Arab people will do the same for their countries and get rid of corrupt officials, including presidents and kings." *[Al-Quds]*
- Mohammed: "Of course Islam is the best religion. But the regimes that claim to endorse Islam are practicing repression and corruption. Meanwhile, Israel is among the democratic countries and is better than all the Arab and Islamic countries when it comes to respecting its people and combating theft of resources." *[Al-Wasat News]*
- Adel: "This is the secret to Israel's success; it has become a symbol of justice because it has made justice one of its major bases of power. We, on the other hand, are doing the opposite. We continue to cover up cases of corruption and do not do anything about them." *[Echorouk Online]*
- Abu Zeid: "I live in Israel and am familiar with its laws. In this state, no one is above the law." *[Al-Arabiya]*
- Sami Dirani: "Israel is the enemy of the Arabs...but it practices democracy - something the Arabs do not know. That is why Israel is stronger and more advanced than the Arabs, who are busy slaughtering each other. Some [Arabs] are dying of starvation, while others are swimming in pools of dollars." *[Al-Hayat]*
- Hani: "The *hadith* [prophet's sayings] states that we should seek education, even if it is in China. And I say to Muslims, 'Learn justice even if it's from Israel.' I wish the day would come when our leaders would be brought to trial and have our money taken back from them." *[Assawsana]*
- Yasalam: "If Olmert were in Kuwait, his case would have been shelved and he would have received a senior position in government." *[Al-Aan]*
- Rahhal: "The Zionists have more justice than our thugs and so-called Muslims." *[Al-Aan]*
- Kahir al-Muhandiseen: "This is how states are built. This is the secret to Israel's strength and steadfastness." *[Al-Aan]*
- Muhasabah: "In Israel, they hold their officials accountable and send them to prison, while we Arabs glorify the corrupt." *[Al-Aan]*
- Zuheir al-Karim: "How many Arab leaders would be left if they went on trial for similar cases of bribery and corruption?" *[Arabic CNN]*
- Abdo Shehatah: "The Jews continue to prove, every day, that they have real democracy in this world." *[Arabic CNN]*
- Saad Sayad: "Law is above all and this is democracy. Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East." *[Arabic CNN]*

5. No ignoring a billion anti-Semites

There are 1.09 billion anti-Semites in the world today. That's right: more than a billion — about 135 for every Jew. These are bigots who believe Jews are greedy, unethical manipulators who control the world and cause everything bad: 9/11. Financial crises. Communism. Dyspepsia. Name it.

It's a stunning, hard-to-believe figure. But it comes from one of the most credible, comprehensive studies on the subject ever. And in an honest, sane, fair world, it would be a clarion call for immediate, steadfast action.

The study, released last week by the Anti-Defamation League, included 53,100 respondents. Interviews were conducted in 96 languages in more than 100 countries. How did the researchers decide who is an anti-Semite?

They bent over backward to be conservative. Very conservative.

For example, harbouring merely a few anti-Semitic beliefs didn't make you an anti-Semite. So the real number of these bigots might actually be higher. Also, no one was considered an anti-Semite merely because of a hateful attitude toward Israel. We are talking only about clear-cut, old-fashioned Jew-haters.

Now, if you're in the tri-state area and haven't encountered this epidemic, it's not surprising. The good news in this study, and others recently, is that the United States isn't the problem. Americans (along with Australians, British and a few others) typically score among the most tolerant in the world. Indeed, many Americans have very positive attitudes toward Jews.

So who exactly are the billion anti-Semites? For starters, 70% of them have never met a Jew.

Disproportionately, they hail from (no surprise) the Middle East and North Africa, where nearly three out of four endorse a whole slew of anti-Jewish beliefs. Some 92% of Iraqis, for example, qualified as anti-Semites, as did 69% of Turks.

Still, 880 million anti-Semites do not live in the Middle East or North Africa. The disease is global: Among Poles: at least 45% qualify as anti-Semites. Greeks: 69%. Malaysians: 61%. Russians: 30%. Spaniards: 29%. Germans: 27%. (They say the Germans will never forgive the Jews for the Holocaust.)

Most anti-Semites say people hate Jews "because of the ways they behave." But what exactly have Jews done to Malaysians and Greeks?

Given the flood of anti-Jewish propaganda in the Muslim world, and the shamefully inadequate denunciation of it by mainstream Muslim leaders, it is hardly shocking that Muslims were found to be more anti-Semitic than other religious groups. About half of all Muslims were anti-Semites, according to the survey. If you teach your children that Jews are the sons of pigs and apes, after a while it sinks in.

Still, region matters more than religion. Muslims in the West are quite a bit less likely to meet the criteria than those in the Middle East and North Africa. At the same time, many Christians in the Middle East and North Africa are also hostile to Jews.

More bad news: Among those worldwide who have heard of the Holocaust (54%), about one in three believes it is either a myth or has been greatly exaggerated.

In the Middle East and North Africa, that figure is nearly two in three. And the problem is getting worse. Young people are less likely to know about the Holocaust and less likely to accept what historians say about it.

So what are we to do? For starters, we might stop treating anti-Semitism like yesterday's news.

University courses on racism and sexism almost never talk about anti-Semitism. When they do, they treat it as ancient history. Moreover, Jew-hatred cannot be understood as simply another instance of everyday prejudice. Nor should it be dismissed because it's on the wane in America.

It has lasted 2,000 years. It has roots in the founding stories of Christianity and Islam. It has a genocidal potential.

Also, we might see progress among the half-billion Muslim anti-Semites if the so-called anti-racist community would stop excusing their bigotry and sweeping it under the rug. Meanwhile, a lot of countries have some explaining to do. We should not let them weasel out of their responsibility to address the hatred in their midst.

Finally, how about some honesty at the United Nations? The next time that august body votes to condemn Israel, perhaps the ambassadors ought to note where this is really coming from.

To wit: "The great state of Greece, where anti-Semites account for 69% of the population, votes to condemn." It might not shame them, but at least it would put their votes in perspective.

6. Nobody seems to get enough of Israel

With more start-up businesses than anywhere in the world except for the US (4000+ at any given time), Israel has become a regional technological powerhouse of interest to multi-nationals worldwide.

According to Steve Schoenfeld, Chief Investment Officer for BlueStar Indexes: "It's a small country with a very large global footprint, and it bats well above its average in all of the metrics that define a successful economy."

Even when much of the developed world was retrenching in 2008-2009, Israel was able to eke out modest growth. Since then, the nation's economy has been growing at nearly twice the pace of the US economy. Its jobless rate is among the lowest in the developed world and it is a second home to virtually every big high-tech company in the world, including Apple, Google, Intel and Microsoft.

"Israel's economy is doing well enough that the country can now be considered high-income," according to Standard and Poor's in its latest evaluation of Israel's fiscal state.

S&P said that with a per capita annual income of over \$38,000, "we now view Israel as a high-income economy, with trend growth at the higher end of its peer income group." Just five years ago, per capita income was about \$28,000. This is due, S&P said, to Israel's

“prosperous and diverse economy,” with a good mix of manufacturing and high-tech, and also to the benefits the economy will realize as the country's natural gas production comes online.

Recent foreign involvement in the country includes Google's purchase of WAZE for \$1b; the US' Palo Alto Networks acquisition of Israel's (cyber security) Cyvera for \$200m; Florida's Opko Health's acquisition of Israel's Inspiro Medical, its 4th Israeli acquisition in recent years, for \$10m; Russia's Yandex's acquisition of Israel's KitLocate for \$20m, to cite just a few examples.

On the trade side of the equation, the United States continues to be Israel's largest trading partner, assisted by a free trade agreement which, when it was initialled in 1985, was the very first one that America signed with any foreign partner. Prime sectors include life sciences, biotech, aerospace, defense, agrotech, ICT, semiconductors and green tech. Israel is home, for example, to the world's largest producer of generic pharmaceuticals (TEVA), as well as the world's premier producer of desalination equipment (IDE Technologies).

But one significant contributing factor to that activity that is often overlooked in the US-Israel space are the many states and a number of regional economic development groups who have dedicated offices in Israel to encourage additional business activity between the two countries.

For example, ten US states presently operate offices in Israel including Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois (*), Indiana, New Mexico (*), New York, Ohio (*), Oklahoma (*), and Pennsylvania (*). [n.b. The items indicated with an (*) are regional offices covering the entire Middle East as well.] In addition, Utah is about to open an Israel office and Missouri's legislature has authorized funding for the state to reopen an office in Israel shortly as well.

Additional US groups active include Virginia (with a consultative operation functioning on a project-by-project basis), the Michigan-Israel Business Bridge, Fairfax County [Virginia] and Dayton [Ohio], all of whom operate here as well.

There is even an organization of state offices, the American State Offices Association (full disclosure: I chair that group) which runs joint programs for the states active. Next week, for example, in cooperation with the US Commercial Service and the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), ASOA will have a joint booth at the MIXiii Biomed/High Tech Exhibition and Conference in Tel Aviv.

And all of this, of course, is only in the US-Israel space. European and Asian entities are represented in Israel to promote their country's business interests as well.

In a word, Israel has become such an attractive business opportunity that there seems to be no end to the level of interest and the desire to tap into the economy. EDI, of course, stands ready to assist any overseas group interested in tapping into these opportunities.

7. The Palestinian Reconciliation Agreement: tactical relief or strategic opportunity?

The reconciliation agreement reached recently by Fatah and Hamas is, in essence, similar to previous agreements between the two organizations (Mecca in 2007, Cairo in 2011, and the 2012 Doha declaration) and includes an agreement to establish a joint national government of technocrats, headed by President Abbas, and hold parliamentary and presidential

elections in the Palestinian Authority. The understandings that were formulated postponed the discussion of security, especially the future of the military wing of Hamas and its capabilities. This issue will be handled by a security committee to be convened only after the establishment of a unity government, which means a continuation of the status quo, i.e., separate management of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The agreement neither mentions any binding dates for completing the discussions on the unity government nor stipulates a date for elections once the government is formed.

An analysis of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement must consider both what is not included and what is covered. Yet despite its brevity – the agreement refers to two issues only – and despite the importance of what is not included, which may prove to be the stumbling blocks when it comes to implementation of the agreement, it is important to assess the significance of the agreement's validity specifically at this point in time.

The agreement is a result of the internal weakness of both organizations, with each suffering a steady erosion of legitimacy and public support. In this sense, the domestic policy of both Palestinian groups is what dictated the move. Hamas finds itself at an all-time low because of its conflict with the current Egyptian regime after the downfall of its patron, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The ongoing economic crisis in the Gaza Strip due to the closure of the tunnels and the tight Egyptian blockade has aggravated Hamas's loss of public support. Abbas too has lost the support of the Palestinian public given the lack of faith in his political direction. His legitimacy is lowest among his constituency, especially the younger generation of Fatah, which has tired of him and the leadership in general. At the same time, Abbas is driven by the sense that he might be defamed as having split the Palestinian camp.

If the agreement is in fact the result of internal issues and is meant to expand Abbas's base of legitimacy, it is important to clarify the type of legitimacy involved and its foreign policy implications. Is the legitimacy of a kind that would expand Abbas's room for political manoeuvring vis-à-vis Israel? Would it give him the flexibility to make significant compromises? Presenting Abbas's effort as an inevitable last resort to expand his internal legitimacy base means support – even if inadvertent – for incitement and the ethos of struggle and resistance. The discourse of hatred in the Palestinian public reduces Abbas's political room for manoeuvring and represents a millstone around his neck, no matter how pragmatic he may be.

It appears that both Palestinian parties understand the potential for the agreement's collapse due to the huge gaps between them and the deep conceptual divide between Hamas's pan-Islamic religious ideology and Fatah's nationalistic ideology. The agreement does not change Hamas's essence as a terrorist organization and does nothing to make the Palestinian Authority or the PLO or Abbas into authorized representatives of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The current interim stage, which grants Abbas renewed legitimacy, is the most difficult one for Hamas. Perhaps for this reason, Fatah and Abbas are dragging their feet and postponing the establishment of a government in an attempt to hold Hamas in this interim state for as long as possible.

The government of technocrats is a mechanism meant to make a show of both sides living under the same roof without either one having to give up its fundamental ideology. However, the proposed mechanism is liable to emerge as problematic and dangerous, given the inherent potential for Lebanonization. Hamas, like Hizbollah in Lebanon, would be able to be part of the governmental mechanism and a partner in the government while preserving its military capabilities (Hamas leaders in Gaza have already made that point) and military freedom of action in order to serve what it considers to be essential strategic interests. Any international acceptance of this hybrid union that relies on hopes of Hamas becoming more moderate in the future means the start of an intolerable situation for Israel. Any attempt to

single out the Palestinian case from all others in the region is a kind of wishful thinking that ignores the depths of the religious ideology in Hamas's worldview.

If and when the reality of the reconciliation agreement comes into being, Israel is liable to find itself facing an even more complex problem vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip. How exactly will Israel act towards Abbas who, by virtue of the agreement, becomes responsible for whatever happens in Gaza, including rocket fire at Israel? Will Israel have to moderate its response because the international community will say that too harsh a response is liable to damage the Palestinian Authority and the fragile unity? How will Israel be able to conduct political negotiations with Abbas and at the same time tackle terrorism and terrorist infrastructures in the Gaza Strip and possibly in the West Bank as well? Moreover, how exactly does one explain the oxymoron of the inclusion of a terrorist organization opposed to the Oslo Accords in the PA, established by virtue of those very accords?

It seems that Abbas intends to present his government of technocrats as one that accepts the three conditions presented by the Quartet – renunciation of terrorism and violence, recognition of previous agreements, and recognition of the State of Israel – alongside the agreement to conduct political talks with Israel but without challenging Hamas. Thus Abbas expects to expand his toolbox and present himself as the representative of all the Palestinian people, giving him the extra gravitas and validity that he needs when he appeals to the international community both for support in his challenge to Israel and for broad recognition of a Palestinian state.

Although the reconciliation will likely not last, because Hamas will not cede its control of the Gaza Strip and will not disarm its military wing, and therefore Abbas's vision of "one authority – one weapon" will not come to pass, Israel must be unequivocal in its demand that Hamas accept the conditions stipulated by the Quartet. Any whitewash or blind eye is tantamount to sowing the seeds of destruction, weakening the international community's definition of Hamas as a terrorist organization. Israel might then have to confront a reality in which it is accused of undermining the Palestinian reconciliation whenever it is forced to act against the Gaza Strip because of rocket terrorism.

A different approach: necessary conditions to make the reconciliation an opportunity

Should a Palestinian unity government of technocrats be established, one option open to Israel is a transition from a discourse of opposition to the reconciliation, to an attempt to restart the political process but with an essential difference in the format of the process. This would entail moving away from a discussion of the permanent status agreement core issues, where the gaps cannot be bridged any time soon, to a gradual construction of a two-state reality by helping the Palestinians build a responsible, stable, and functioning political entity. In doing so, Israel would be able to demand responsibility on the part of the PA, and especially Abbas, for the Gaza Strip and propose turning the Gaza Strip into the first stage of a gradual process of constructing a Palestinian state.

If an Abbas-led government operates with statehood logic and proves the ability and willingness to build the capacity for a functional entity, Israel would be able to present the demand that in the first stage, the government focus on rebuilding and developing the Gaza Strip, with the PA in charge of the Gaza Strip crossings. If the Palestinian government demonstrates the desire and the ability, and at the same time operates resolutely to dismantle terrorist and non-state military infrastructures in the Gaza Strip, the second stage would then begin and involve assistance by the international community, Israel, and the Arab world in the processes of construction, including the construction of a naval port (with required security arrangements). After proven progress, development efforts in the third stage would focus on Area C of the West Bank in terms of construction and economic infrastructures and even the development of new urban centres for rehabilitation of refugee populations from West Bank refugee camps, where conditions are especially harsh.

While this scenario seems highly elusive, it is important that the Israeli government not oppose the principle of reconciliation, and at the same time, advance a different approach to move the political process forward, on condition that Hamas accept the Quartet's three conditions and that the PA government have the monopoly over the use of force in the territory under its control.

8. Making Iran come clean about its nukes

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization announced late last month that it intends to compile a "comprehensive document" listing all of the country's nuclear work. Yet the announcement said nothing about the crucial question: whether Iran has worked on nuclear weapons. Despite great expectations by its negotiating partners - meeting again this week in Vienna - that Tehran would clear up suspicions about its past and possibly current nuclear-weapons development, Iran has so far clarified little.

Alarm bells should be going off in the West. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - called P5+1 - have been trying to negotiate a deal to end sanctions against Iran in return for drastic reductions in its nuclear program. A prerequisite for any final agreement is for Iran to address nuclear-weapons questions raised by inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

If Iran is able to successfully evade questions about a weapons program now, when biting sanctions on oil exports and financial transactions are in place, why would it address them later when these sanctions are lifted? What use will an agreement be if Iran can hide a capacity to secretly build nuclear bombs?

So far, the P5+1 discussions have focused almost exclusively on Tehran's uranium-enrichment and plutonium-production capabilities. This is a mistake. Yes, Iran's ability to produce fissile material is of crucial importance, but the world wouldn't be so concerned if Tehran had never conducted activities aimed at building a nuclear weapon. Japan engages in enrichment but nobody believes that its programs are suspicious.

To be credible, a final agreement must ensure that any effort by Tehran to construct a bomb would be sufficiently time-consuming and detectable that the international community could act decisively to prevent Iran from succeeding. It is critical to know whether the Islamic Republic had a nuclear-weapons program in the past, how far the work on warheads advanced and whether it continues. Without clear answers to these questions, outsiders will be unable to determine how fast the Iranian regime could construct either a crude nuclear-test device or a deliverable weapon if it chose to renege on an agreement.

After nearly a decade of talks, however, Iran has resisted answering the International Atomic Energy Agency's primary questions about a weapons program. Now a deadline looms: Iran's interim agreement signed in late 2013 with the P5+1 expires in July. So Tehran may be betting that if it stalls long enough, its negotiating partners will significantly soften their demand for information about militarized nuclear activities in order to keep the negotiating process on track. The announcement in April by Iran's Atomic Energy Organization about a "comprehensive document" may well be part of the stalling strategy.

To ensure that the Iranian regime doesn't benefit from running down the clock, the US and its European allies should make clear that no agreement is possible unless Tehran addresses the IAEA's concerns. If Iran remains unwilling, the message should be crisp: no

further sanctions relief. If non-cooperation continues, the P5+1 would be wise to start planning more crippling sanctions well before the official January 2015 deadline for a final agreement.

Much more than diplomacy is at stake. Iran has claimed all along that it has never had nuclear-weapons aspirations. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei often declares that the bomb violates Islamic strictures. But his denials are not credible. Assessments by the US, its main European allies and the IAEA have found that Iran had a sizable nuclear-weapons program into 2003. The Europeans and the IAEA have publicly complained - the US less so - that Iran's weapons development may have continued after 2003, albeit in a less structured manner.

Iran regularly denies the IAEA access to military sites, such as Parchin, a facility where high-explosive experiments linked to nuclear triggers may well have occurred. Iran continues to refuse IAEA requests to interview key individuals, such as Mohsen Fakrizadeh, the suspected military head of the Iranian nuclear-weapons program in the early 2000s and perhaps today, and Sayyed Abbas Shahmoradi-Zavareh, the former head of the Physics Research Center alleged by the IAEA be the central location in the 1990s of Iran's militarized nuclear research.

Unless Iran takes seriously its obligations to the IAEA to address concerns about past military-nuclear efforts, Tehran will have established a powerful precedent of no-go zones for inspectors. Tehran could declare a suspect site a military base and thus off-limits. What better place to conduct clandestine, prohibited activities, such as uranium enrichment and weaponization?

Tehran would have also defeated a central tenet of IAEA inspections: the need to determine both the accuracy and completeness of a state's nuclear declaration. Other countries contemplating the clandestine development of nuclear weapons will certainly watch Tehran closely.

Washington and the Europeans have arrived at a critical juncture. If the West fails to demand that Iran verifiably fess up to the military dimensions of its nuclear program, the odds are good that Ayatollah Khamenei would be able to build the bomb without fear of discovery.

9. Israel and the reality of anti-semitism

In an era when acceptance of Jews in virtually every facet of society in the United States is universal, discussions about anti-Semitism are often understandably shelved in favour of those about prejudice about other, less successful minority groups. But when one looks around the globe, it's clear that anti-Semitism is alive and thriving. Any doubts about that were removed by what may have been the most ambitious effort ever to quantify levels of prejudice. The international survey of attitudes toward Jews by the Anti-Defamation League published today has removed any doubt about the virulence of anti-Semitism.

The ADL Global 100 Index of Anti-Semitism is based on polls of adults in 101 countries plus the Palestinian territories. It contains few surprises, but confirms what has already been widely understood to be true about the persistence of bias against Jews. That 26% of all respondents across the globe agreed with at least six out of a list of 11 anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jews is hardly remarkable. Nor is the fact that this hate is largely concentrated, but not exclusive to the Middle East and North Africa, where 74% hold such

views, and is most prevalent among Muslims (49% worldwide and 75% in the Middle East and Africa), who are, ironically, held in even lower esteem by those polled than the Jews.

The survey did not directly establish whether the persistence and widespread nature of anti-Semitic attitudes could be directly linked to hostility to Israel. Indeed, some of the results may point in another direction since the people of Holland have one of the lowest indexes of anti-Semitic attitudes (5 percent) in the world while also harboring great hostility to Israel. Similarly, Iran has become Israel's most virulent and potentially dangerous foe in the Middle East while actually having the lowest level of anti-Semitic views in the region, albeit a still alarmingly high rate of 56 percent.

Yet despite these anomalies (which can perhaps be explained by other factors), it is hardly possible to look at the map that charts these numbers without coming to the conclusion that the willingness to single out the one Jewish state on the planet for discriminatory treatment and to think it—alone of all nation states—deserves to be eliminated without understanding the strong link between levels of anti-Semitism and the war on Israel and the vital need to preserve that bulwark of Jewish existence against those who seek its destruction.

Among the fascinating details to be gleaned from this is the fact that 70 percent of those who hold anti-Semitic views have never met a Jew, most wildly overestimate the number of Jews in the world (instead of the fraction of a percent they invariably guess it to be vastly greater), and that more young people doubt the Holocaust while harbouring fewer anti-Semitic views.

While the survey centred on several basic canards about Jews, such as Jewish power (including control over the media, finance, the U.S. government or starting wars) and those who hold such vile views generally do so without personal knowledge of Jews, Jewish history, or the Holocaust. Nor is it possible to draw a direct correlation between bad economies and hate since while a depressed Greece has the highest anti-Semitic rating in Europe at 69 percent, the generally prosperous people of South Korea (almost all of whom have never had any contact with Jews) have an ominous rating of 53 percent.

But while a deep dive into the numbers provides a fascinating look at the way the world thinks with often perplexing results, there is no doubt about one hard and fast conclusion: the grip of anti-Semitism on the inhabitants of Planet Earth 70 years after the Holocaust remains powerful and perhaps impervious to reason.

Why single out one of the world's tiniest populations for such hatred? To that question, the survey offers no answer, as ADL head Abe Foxman admitted to the *Wall Street Journal*. Like traditional staples of anti-Semitism such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the justification for these noxious attitudes come from a variety of often contradictory frames of reference about Jewish activity, most of which are rooted in myth rather than reality.

Anti-Semitism has survived the death of European theocracies, Nazism, and Communism and metastasized into a belief system embraced by Muslims and Arabs, and remains a deadly force. Though some might claim that the existence of Israel and allegations about its behaviour has become the single greatest motivating factor for anti-Semitism (judging by the survey, the Palestinians are the most anti-Semitic people on Earth), that assertion must be placed up against the fact that the attitudes that indicate hostility to Jews long predate the birth of the Jewish state or its coming into possession of the West Bank in 1967. Seen in that perspective, it's clear that Israel is just the latest, albeit a vicious, excuse for Jew hatred. If not all those who hate Israel also embrace the full roster of anti-Semitic stereotypes, their willingness to embrace the war against the Jewish state demonstrates the way Jews remain the planet's boogeyman and the objects of unthinking bias and potential violence.

Many Jews will look at these numbers and, no doubt, wonder how they can change the minds of the haters or adopt behaviours that will undercut the stereotypes. But whatever else it tells us, the survey is a reminder that anti-Semitism is about the minds of the anti-Semites and their desire to seek out a small group for hostility, not what the Jews do. Those who will seek to blame Israel or Jewish power for these numbers are deceiving both themselves and others. Anti-Semitism is an ancient belief system that can adapt itself to any set of circumstances or locale.

While the ADL and others will continue their work of seeking to educate the world against hate, until that seemingly futile task succeeds, Jews would do well to redouble their support for the Jewish state and to stand ready to defend it. There was no ADL survey in 1933 to tell us what we already knew about anti-Semitism as there is today. But all these years after the Holocaust and the subsequent rebirth of anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Zionism, the necessity of the existence of Israel - a place where Jews can defend themselves against the haters and shelter those in need - is no less an imperative for being the obvious verdict of history.
