



Jerusalem 3:58
Toronto 4:30

ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

education system built to negate the Jewish people's right to self-determination in its indigenous and ancestral homeland.

This is an important point because while it is certainly not the easiest way to end the conflict, an Israeli victory over

Palestinian rejectionism is the only way. Anything less simply convinces the Palestinians that their ultimate future will be free of an entity that keeps on conceding ground and leverage without demanding anything in return.

So, while "shrinking the conflict" sounds nice in intellectual and foreign-policy circles, it is doomed to failure, because history has already proven the fallacy of the idea, and a repackaged product with glossy verbiage still has the same contents.

It is possible to spend another 30 years trying slightly different variations of the same failed policy, which brings a lot of attention and opportunities for its authors, but does not save a single drop of blood; or Israel can face the fact that every other such option has been exhausted.

This conflict only ends when the Palestinians give up, not a moment before. (JNS Nov 14)

The writer is an IDF Military Commander (Res) and CEO of Mivtachi Israel, an organization of former senior IDF Officers.

Commentary...

Why 'Shrinking the Conflict' is Doomed to Failure

By Alex Nachumson

The shiny new slogan in Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy is "shrinking the conflict." It represents a policy that falls between maintaining the status quo—"managing the conflict"—and trying to arrive at a mutually agreed-upon solution, known as "solving the conflict."

Unfortunately, it's nothing more than repackaging a tired, old concept.

Those arguing for its implementation, most notably its author, Micha Goodman, use terminology reminiscent of Oslo, disengagement and various other, less notable but equally failed, strategies of the last few decades.

Proponents of "shrinking the conflict" argue for greater Palestinian autonomy (as in the Oslo Accords); greater Palestinian separation from Israel and the Israel Defense Forces (as in the withdrawal from Gaza); and the removal of friction points, as in the elimination of the vast majority of checkpoints. However, they ignore the elephant in the room: that the heart of the conflict remains ongoing Palestinian rejection of Jewish sovereignty.

Managing, solving and shrinking the conflict have all been tried, time and again over the last three decades, and the conflict hasn't gone anywhere, frequently descending into bloodshed, as it did in May this year.

Does anyone believe that the Palestinian thugs on the Temple Mount, lobbing projectiles at Jewish worshipers at the Western Wall, Hamas terrorists launching thousands of missiles into Israel or those who laud and glorify mass-murdering terrorists will suddenly have their heads turned by bypass roads in the West Bank?

Call them Israeli concessions, confidence-building measures or a reduction of friction between the two populations, they will be seen in the same light by Palestinian decision-makers and opinion-shapers: as capitulation.

Oslo only increased the number and ferocity of terrorist attacks; disengagement brought about the Second Lebanon War and increased the number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad rockets on Israeli population centers; and the freeze on building in Israeli communities beyond the Green Line pushed Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas further away from the negotiating table.

If the Palestinians wanted more control, or greater sovereignty, all they had to do was accept one of the many overly generous offers by Israeli leaders, such as Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert.

This is not about who currently controls what; it's about who ends up controlling territory in the future.

Only last month, the P.A.'s highest religious authority, Grand Mufti Muhammad Hussein, assured P.A. TV viewers that the destruction of Israel, the "liberation" of Jerusalem and its "return to Islam" is only a matter of time.

According to Palestinian Media Watch, shortly after the P.A. mufti promised Israel's demise, official P.A. TV broadcast a filler between programs, which spoke of the fact that "history has never let the colonialist remain, and the occupiers have always left in the end. One day they [the Jews], too, will return to where they came from."

These are excerpts from the so-called moderate P.A., which continues to educate its people with the belief that eventually, the State of Israel will cease to exist. "Shrinking the conflict" will merely intensify this, as all such Israeli proposals have done historically.

The only way this conflict ends is with the reversal of vicious, violent Palestinian rejectionism, which has to be dealt with as the foundational pillar that ensures the endurance of the conflict.

Only when this rejectionism is defeated will an end be put to the conflict. Then, and only then, will the Palestinians be able to build up their polity and spend their energy and resources on social welfare, education, health and construction, rather than on the funding of terrorists, the supporting of bloodthirsty hate-preachers and on an

Israeli Security and Policy Need to Serve Settlement

By Nadav Shragai

Oh, the shame: "The party that built the state" is now a radical left-wing outfit that is turning its back on its glorious legacy. Instead of Zionist activism, the Labor Party is leading a confused, lenient ideological line that seeks to dry up settlement. The new map of national priorities that the Labor secretary-general is drawing up denies not only the Zionist legacy but also the historic paths of many of its founders.

During the first Rabin government, dozens of Jewish communities had already been established in Judea and Samaria—and not only in settlement blocs. Even Ofra and Kedumim and Kiryat Arba, which Labor wanted to drop from the map of national priorities, were already there. Yigal Allon, a notable Labor figure, promoted the founding of Kiryat Arba. He explained that this settlement, and settlement as a whole, had been set up to "transfer vital points in different parts of the Land from foreign ownership to the ownership of the Jewish people ... to deepen the hold on the internal parts of the land."

These are simple, direct words. Founding father and first prime minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion was unwilling to give up Hebron under any circumstances. Even Yaakov Hazan of the Mapam—once a partner of the Mapai movement and now part of Meretz—made it clear that from a historical perspective, Hebron was closer to him than Ramla.

The map the Labor Party of today is putting together denies that the settlements, whether in the blocs or deep in the territories, cannot be measured by their political and security worth alone. "A small Hebrew community between large Arab villages ... all its homes in one place, its fields in another, the Arab fields beyond that, and the ownership of the land is complicated," is how Moshe Smilansky described the first days of Petach Tikvah. His words could have been written right now about Ofra or Beit El.

Like Allon, Ben-Gurion and Yisrael Galili or Avraham Herzfeld, Smilansky was not concerned merely with settlements' contribution to the state's military security or its chances of survival. Ben-Gurion insisted on holding on to far-flung settlements in the hills of Jerusalem and the Negev and the western Galilee. Even the existence of Yehiam and Gush Etzion went against all narrow security and political considerations, but Zionism did not forgo them. It measured their worth by broader criteria, that included Zionist and national values, the spirit of the people and the question of borders.

Today, all these are known as "the national security view."

Negba, Gush Etzion, Kfar Drom, Yad Mordechai and Mishmar HaEmek, like those who followed them in Binyamin and Samaria, weren't founded merely to provide security, but mainly to implement Jewish existence and shape the country's borders.

In Judea and Samaria, too, the stretches of settlements bolster security and the Israel Defense Forces ongoing security activity. They give our presence in our historic homeland a permanent dimension, not one of passing randomness that invites terrorist attacks. If it weren't for the settlements in Judea and Samaria, the IDF would be forced to send out bigger forces to prevent the foundation of a "Hamastan" across from the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

But first and foremost, before any of these are weighed, this settlement—like its predecessors—arose from a much simpler source that we should remember and repeat. It was founded because the Land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people, and security and policy must serve settlement. Not the opposite. (Israel Hayom Nov 17)

Why is Iran Returning to the Negotiating Table?

By Yaakov Amidror

After several months of uncertainty and delay, Iran has announced its return in November to talks in Vienna regarding a return to the 2015 nuclear deal. The question is, why? This is an unconditional return, contrary to the position previously expressed by Iran, which demanded an easing of sanctions as a precondition to resuming negotiations. The Iranian concession is an apparent American success.

The reason Iran is returning to the talks is simple: the present leadership in Tehran has a clear interest in returning to the 2015 agreement because it is a good agreement for Iran, which seeks to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranians understood that the nuclear deal was good for them and that it is now even more so in light of the rapid progress in their enrichment program.

The real question, then, is why did Iran delay?

The delay may have been a negotiating tactic on the Iranians' part, designed to elicit concessions from the Americans. Moreover, the Iranians knew it was safe to delay the resumption of talks because they understood that no U.S. military option existed, neither in the current administration nor the previous one. The absence of a military option was the main weakness the Iranians sensed when the previous U.S. administration withdrew from the nuclear deal in 2018.

It was a significant mistake to withdraw from the deal without charting a viable military option and demonstrating the determination to use it if necessary. The Iranians realized that no matter what they did, with the exception of U.S. or other intelligence services detecting the actual assembly of a bomb, the United States was unwilling to use military force to stop the nuclear project.

The Iranian perception that there is no military option on the table will also be their basic assumption in future negotiations. The Iranians know that the United States has no alternative but to return to the agreement, so they will not rush to fold—and may first try to remove sanctions and gain other economic benefits.

The Iranians also observed that after launching drone attacks against an American base in al-Tanf in eastern Syria last month, the United States failed to respond in any serious manner. Even though there were no casualties, this event demonstrated Iran's determination and reading of American behavior. This lack of an American response signaled that the United States wants to return to negotiations at almost any cost. But, unfortunately, it also might lead Iran to conclude that it can continue its aggressive behavior in the Middle East as long as there are prospects for further talks.

Further, the perceived American weakness will motivate the Iranians to run out the clock in negotiations. The talks themselves give the Iranians more freedom of action as they restrict the ability of the United States to respond to provocations, including even elementary acts of force protection, and thus harm U.S. deterrence.

The United States emphasizes that the return to the nuclear agreement is only a first step, after which it intends to enter into talks aimed at a better and longer deal. However, the chances of reaching such an agreement are nil, because the United States has no leverage over Iran.

Iran could drag the talks out again and things could end back at square one. Moreover, Iran now openly threatens that the talks will fail unless the United States offers guarantees that would bind future administrations' behavior. Any such attempt to enshrine the agreement as a formal treaty, however, would require ratification by the Senate; the necessary two-thirds majority is nowhere in sight.

Israel cannot and should not interfere with the talks. Still, Israel must obtain from the United States a commitment to complete the negotiations in a short time and not let the Iranian procrastinate for

months.

Israel must learn what the U.S. response will be if it turns out that there is no chance of reaching an agreement, and what the timetable might be for attempting to reach a longer and stronger deal.

Either way, Israel must prepare for the possibility it will have to defend itself—because a nuclear Iran is not an option Israel can accept. As has been declared by a few American presidents, Israel should be able to defend itself, by itself.

An effort to prevent Iran from going nuclear will not be simple, and will perhaps even be dangerous—but it is necessary. (Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security / JNS Nov 15)

Biden's Neutrality on Infrastructure of the War against Israel

By Jonathan S. Tobin

The arrival in Israel of the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, was another example of the efforts that are being made by both governments to act as if relations between the two allies couldn't be better. Thomas-Greenfield pleased her hosts by speaking about a common agenda at the world body in which both sought to "combat anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias," as well as a common "approach to shared regional threats." Bennett replied by calling her "a representative of a voice of reason and decency in an institution that I think we can both objectively say is pretty biased in terms of its treatment of Israel."

That's the sort of rhetoric expected from allies. But back at the United Nations, the Biden administration was undermining the notion that all is well between the two countries. The Americans abstained last week on a U.N. resolution on "assistance to Palestinian refugees" that essentially called for the descendants of Arabs who fled what was then British Mandate Palestine to be compensated, as well as for an unlimited "right of return"—something that is incompatible with the survival of Israel as a Jewish state. It was one of a series of resolutions that are linked to support for the UNRWA, the agency of the world body that is solely devoted to backing the Palestinian refugees.

Does an American refusal to oppose a document that essentially calls for Israel's elimination matter as much as a warm embrace of leaders? The vote at the United Nations didn't generate much of a protest from Jerusalem. Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid clearly feel that they have bigger problems than the mischief being made in New York by UNRWA. And with the government also dealing with a visit by Robert Malley, the administration's special envoy for Iran, they have some reason for thinking so. While Lapid met with Malley—a longtime antagonist of the Jewish state—to tell him that Israel thinks Biden's goal of reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is both futile and dangerous, Bennett refused even to sit down with him.

Compared to the existential threat posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions and the American desire for a rapprochement with Tehran, talk about a "right of return" that will never happen in the ideological fantasy world of the United Nations doesn't seem too important. And other than some protests about the U.S. abstention from critics of Biden's policies like the Zionist Organization of America, most of the world seemed to concur with that judgment by largely ignoring it.

But that is a mistake, both on the part of Israel and by many of those Jewish groups who are tasked with advocating for Israel. As with past failures to take U.N. incitement against Israel at the U.N. Human Rights Council where anti-Semitic initiatives are just business as usual, the problem with ignoring UNRWA is that it's not just a matter of empty talk from extremists who want to destroy the Jewish state. Letting the "apartheid Israel" lies promoted at U.N. forums since the infamous 2001 Durban "anti-racism" conference go unanswered has led to those canards being accepted throughout the world in academic circles and political forums, proving that ignoring UNRWA comes with a cost.

The best word to describe the role that UNRWA plays in fueling the war on Israel is one that means a lot to the Biden administration these days: infrastructure.

Founded in 1949 in the wake of Israel's War of Independence, UNRWA was different from the other U.N. refugee agency—the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees—that was created a year later to deal with every other such population on the planet. The UNHCR had as its purpose the goal of helping to resettle refugees. UNRWA seeks to perpetuate the Palestinian refugee problem by not trying to

help them establish new lives and homes. Instead, it keeps them in place in refugee camps—now built-up urban neighborhoods—so as to maintain their status as political cudgels with which to beat Israel.

In this way, UNRWA, which is generally represented in the mainstream media as a charitable organization, provides the essential infrastructure of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The refugees—a multi-generational population of which the overwhelming majority are not truly refugees but their descendants—are a permanent obstacle to any hope of a peace settlement.

Their numbers have ballooned from the original 750,000 or more Arabs who fled their homes, largely in the hope of returning to them after Israel's eradication, to estimates of up to 5 million today. No Palestinian Arab leader—not the supposed “moderates” of Fatah, who despotically govern the West Bank under the corrupt rule of Mahmoud Abbas or the Islamists of Hamas who lord it over Gaza—dare defy their hopes of one day coming back to places in Israel that their great-grandparents left in 1948. Indeed, Palestinian political culture revolves around their demands, which are incompatible with any notion of peace that doesn't mean Israel's destruction.

Funding for UNRWA, therefore, is not so much help for stateless people as it is ensuring that they remain without permanent homes so that the war on Israel can go on. UNRWA facilities and schools are incubators not just for Palestinian irredentism but also of hate for Jews and Israelis, not to mention material assistance for terrorists like those of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

As with its moves on Jerusalem, and its push for normalization between Israel and the Arab world that resulted in the Abraham Accords, the Trump administration broke with U.S. diplomatic tradition and sought to eradicate UNRWA by pulling funding. But, as with everything else Trump did, Biden's foreign-policy team is determined to reverse that effort.

The foreign-policy establishment, whose members fill most of the posts in both the Obama and Biden administrations, applaud this as a return to a belief in diplomacy, support for multilateralism and an embrace of the possibility of peace. It is actually nothing of the kind. On the contrary, by treating UNRWA as untouchable, Biden is ensuring that the war on Israel will continue.

That's exactly what those on the far-left want since the intersectional ideas embraced by many in the activist base of the Democratic Party demand that Israel be treated as a colonialist expression of white privilege and imperialism that must be destroyed.

And that is the opposite of what the Biden administration tells us it wants for the Middle East. Yet by choosing not to oppose UNRWA's efforts to delegitimize Israel, officials are, just like their Jerusalem consulate plans, sending a signal to Palestinians that they don't need to accept the reality of Israel—a reversal of the stand that was the hallmark of the policies of Biden's predecessor.

Seen from this perspective, an obscure vote on a U.N. resolution in which the United States declares its neutrality is actually a lot more important than statements publicly exchanged between Israeli and American officials. As long as that is true, any claims about the pro-Israel sentiments of Biden and his appointees remain meaningless. (JNS Nov 15)

A Turkish Hostage Crisis in the Making? By Ruthie Blum

The arrest in Turkey last week of an innocent Israeli couple on holiday illustrates the utter uselessness of diplomacy when dealing with evil regimes. And that of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, an openly anti-Semitic Islamist autocrat, is as bad as they come.

There are a few lessons to be learned from this ongoing incident, which Israel's government and citizens would do well to internalize. Hopefully, President Isaac Herzog is rethinking his chummy July 12 phone conversation with the Turkish tyrant, with whom he “emphasized that Israeli-Turkish relations are of great importance for security and stability in the Middle East [and] agreed on the continuation of a dialogue in order to improve relations between our countries.”

Sadly, not one of the morals of the story is new. On the contrary, Erdoğan's stranglehold on his country and destruction of relations with the Jewish state have been on a steady incline for decades.

But Israelis have a short memory and a long history of flocking to nearby Turkey at every opportunity. This has to do with its proximity and relatively low cost, both of which make it a favored destination for

tourists from the Holy Land in search of good deals on all-inclusive packages for families and individuals alike.

Natalie and Mordy Oknin, the Israeli couple facing charges of espionage in Turkey after taking pictures of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's residence on Nov. 12, 2021. Source: Facebook.

The current case of Natalie and Mordy Oknin, whose jaunt to Istanbul for a little rest, relaxation and respite from COVID-19 landed them in a Turkish prison, should serve as a cautionary tale. The Oknins, Egged bus drivers from Modi'in, were detained on Thursday night after they were seen taking pictures of the Turkish president's palace. The Oknins were nowhere near the compound, however. They were snapping cell-phone photos from the observation deck of the Küçük Çamlıca TV Radio Tower, which provides a panoramic view of the city.

Seeing the Israelis engaged in the mundane tourist activity, a waiter at the site's restaurant alerted police. Officers then arrived and hauled off the Oknins, accusing them of “political and military espionage.”

Since that fateful evening, the two have been in jail, awaiting indictment. So far, they haven't been allowed contact with their family. It was only on Tuesday that each was visited by an Israeli consular official. And this was only after days of back-channel requests from Jerusalem.

Thankfully, the Oknins' Israeli attorney, Nir Yaslovitz, was granted a meeting on Monday with Mordy, who is in solitary confinement and begging to know how long he will be forced to languish there.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid have assured the public that everything is being done to secure the couple's release.

Israel's leaders are making a point of treading delicately. Their hope is to have the Oknins home as quickly and quietly as possible without provoking Ankara into holding them indefinitely, perhaps for years. It is this reasoning that apparently led to the decision not to make waves by, say, imposing a ban on or even warning against travel to Turkey.

There is also speculation that the lack of serious coverage on the couple in the Turkish press indicates that there was no political impetus for their arrest.

Another question being raised is whether Erdoğan, who thus far has been mum on the matter, was involved in the decision to nab some Israelis in an effort to exert some sort of leverage, or if the whole thing was undertaken independently by Turkish law enforcement.

Talk about grasping at straws.

Bennett and Lapid surely know that the Oknins would already be on a plane back to Israel if Erdoğan were to give the go-ahead. He rules Turkey's roost, and all attempts to gloss over that fact are counterproductive.

Let's not forget that following the failed coup in 2016, he conducted a massive purge of suspected dissidents, incarcerating thousands of politicians, judges, police, professors and members of the media. Anyone who thinks that he can't simply give an order to free the Oknins and have it obeyed is living in an alternate universe.

His deafening silence, then, bodes ill. It means that he's mulling his next move—considering how to capitalize on the hostages in his captivity, the way that he took advantage of the 2010 Mavi Marmara affair.

Due to maneuvering by then-U.S. President Barack Obama, Erdoğan not only received an apology from then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but oodles of cash to boot. One shudders to contemplate what demands he has up his sleeve this time.

Bennett has been stressing for Turkish ears that the man and woman in custody are not Mossad agents. It's almost silly for him to have to give such a guarantee when it's clear to all concerned, including Erdoğan himself.

In a chilling twist, shortly before their abduction—and that's exactly what it was—the Oknins taped a video message in which they laud Turkey as a great destination for Israelis. They made the film at the request of another traveler who heard them speaking Hebrew and asked them to reassure his friend back home that Turkey was safe.

“You have nothing to be afraid of,” they say, smiling. “Turkey is fun. It's safe. You can speak Hebrew freely here ... they love us. Come on over.” (JNS Nov 16)

Military Diplomacy as a National Security Asset: Israel's Widening Array of Joint Exercises By Eran Lerman

The Blue Flag 2021 air force exercise and the gathering in Israel of air force commanders from several countries, including the United Arab Emirates, represents an impressive milestone.

This international cooperation has now been extended to include joint naval operations with United States Central Command (CENTCOM). The Israeli Navy and the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet held a joint exercise for the first time in September in the Red Sea, marking the transition of cooperation to CENTCOM.

Moreover, this was followed by a joint special forces exercise with the U.S. Marine Corps near Eilat and the extraordinary step of a joint naval exercise with the Israeli Navy's Red Sea flotilla, Emirati and Bahraini ships, and the U.S. Fifth Fleet.

In September, CENTCOM officially took control of the military's relationship with Israel, taking over from European Command (EUCOM).

In addition to improving military capabilities, Israel's military diplomacy also has strategic value in consolidating the country's role as a member of good standing in what might be termed the Like-Minded Defense Community. This community enhances Israel's stature among its regional partners, undermines efforts to isolate it and sends a message to hostile forces.

The fifth biannual Blue Flag multinational air force exercise, held from Oct. 17-28 at the Uvda Air Force Base in the Negev, was the largest and most significant since the exercise series began in 2013. The exercise is modeled after the U.S. Air Force's largest combat training exercise, Red Flag, held at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

Officially, eight air forces took part in Blue Flag: the Israeli Air Force, the U.S. Air Force, Britain's Royal Air Force (for the first time), and the Indian, German, French, Italian and Greek air forces. In addition, judging by a leaked photo from the exercise, it appears that the Jordanian Air Force participated as well—and probably not for the first time. Overall, 37 guest planes and some 1,500 troops arrived in Israel for the exercise.

The drills focused on new threats, such as cooperation against a virtual enemy state, "Dragonland," the air-defense profile of which resembled Syria. The exercise also included defense against intruding enemy aircraft and strikes against the enemy's rear areas, defended by surface-to-air missile batteries.

Further, the participants carried out close air support for ground forces and the escorting of transport aircraft for in-depth raiding forces.

The exercise utilized the capabilities of the fifth-generation F-35 fighter aircraft, which can communicate with and support friendly forces.

There were three unique characteristics of the drill that represent the transformation of Israel's international standing:

1. At the beginning of the exercise, aircraft from participating nations performed a fly-over salute over Jerusalem—including a side-by-side flight by IAF commander Maj. Gen. Amikam Norkin and his German counterpart, Lt. Gen. Ingo Gerhartz. The latter flew a Eurofighter repainted in the colors of both nations' flags. After the fly-over, the countries exchanged medals in two separate ceremonies. Both the fly-over and the symbolic ceremonies won broad attention in the Israeli media, much more so than during previous Blue Flag exercises.
2. During the exercise, there were visits at Uvda Air Force Base by senior representatives from the air forces of several countries, including Japan and Australia, which, together with the United States and India, form an alliance that could redefine the balance of power in Asia. Particularly noted in news coverage was UAE air force commander Maj.-Gen. Ibrahim Nasser Muhammad Al Alawi, whose presence signaled the depth of cooperation in the era of the Abraham Accords. In addition, all senior guests were invited to a dinner hosted by President Isaac Herzog.
3. Nevatim Air Force Base hosted a U.S.-sponsored gathering of air force commanders of forces that deploy F-35s. This, too, reflected the unique standing of the IAF and the IDF as a valuable force that can contribute to the capacities of NATO members.

The exercise, and the coverage it received, demonstrate that the IDF's cooperation with other military forces has become institutionalized. In recent years, a profound transformation has taken place regarding the overt presence of Israel as a legitimate and vital part of the defense of like-minded nations.

Once Israel was transferred to CENTCOM's area of responsibility, there emerged a pattern of participation in operational activities, not just exercises. For example, Israeli fighter jets have escorted U.S.

bombers on their way to deployment in the region.

The appointment of a permanent IDF liaison officer at CENTCOM headquarters in Florida is a pattern that is likely to be enhanced. Unlike cooperation with EUCOM within NATO operations in the Mediterranean, which were foiled in recent years by a Turkish veto, work with CENTCOM is not necessarily subject to the consent of all other regional players.

Meanwhile, as guests of the Hellenic air force, Israeli fighters now participate annually in the "INIOCHOS" exercises in Greece, alongside the air forces of the United States, France, Italy, Spain, Cyprus and the UAE.

The Israeli Navy joined the "Nemesis" exercise in November 2021 in Cyprus, alongside the United States, several European allies and Egypt(!). In addition, the IDF special forces regularly train in the Troodos mountains range in Cyprus, simulating scenarios of warfare deep in Lebanese territory.

Furthermore, the Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, held joint exercises with Greece and Cyprus. In April 2021, the foreign ministers of Cyprus, Greece, the UAE and Israel met in Paphos, Cyprus, adding a diplomatic layer to the patterns of military cooperation.

In Asia, while treading carefully not to raise the ire of China, Israel is increasingly cooperating with the U.S.-led Quad that includes the UAE and India. Over the last decade, Israel also witnessed breakthroughs in defense cooperation with Australia and Japan.

Moreover, for two generations, it has built what amounts to a security partnership with Singapore, and the attempts to treat it as a secret are becoming absurd. For example, Defense Minister Benny Gantz held what was supposed to be a secret trip to the country in October, but the news leaked.

In Europe, cooperation with the German air force is not limited to the Blue Flag exercises. Working relations are extensive and continuous, demonstrated by the growing personal relationships between German and Israeli officers. In addition, Israeli units have been taking part in some NATO exercises.

The demonstrative jump by Israeli paratroopers in Slovenia this year was carried out in commemoration of the brave men and women, such as the legendary Hannah Senesh, who the Nazis executed in 1944.

Moreover, Israel has a significant role in the extensive intelligence cooperation in terrorism and nuclear proliferation, with no one agency able to contend with all the challenges alone. Israel also consults with the Five Eyes alliance between Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States.

How does military diplomacy serve Israel's strategic interests?

Technological superiority and defensive capabilities add to the now-familiar triad of deterrence, early warning and decisive outcome (harta'ah, hatra'ah, hachra'ah in Hebrew).

True, the scenarios in the exercise were not designed to simulate any action against Iran, though the exercise did occur in conjunction with a rising level of tension and a statement by the IDF chief that preparations for a military response to the Iranian nuclear project are now underway. Israel certainly does not expect any participants to be of active help should such circumstances arise. Yet more generally, the recognition granted by other air forces to the strength and sophistication of Israel's air force should give Tehran and other regional foes such as Turkey pause.

The regional forces opposing Israel seek its political, economic and military isolation. This military cooperation between Israel and its regional and Western allies, along with trade and other areas of exchange, demonstrate that at the end of the day, these factors are far more critical than meaningless votes at the United Nations.

Equally important is the message to Israel's newly established friends in the region, and to Egypt and Jordan, who find themselves in the same trenches against revolutionary Islamists. This exercise and others, including those taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean, establish a significant alignment of forces.

Finally, the growing military and intelligence cooperation contribute directly to the overlap with Israel's advanced technological solutions. This, in turn, generates interest in acquiring Israeli technology.

This provides income and employment—but above all, contributes significantly to Israel's national security. Only a solid and reliable economic grounding—which requires larger markets than the IDF can provide—enables the defense industries to thrive and make their top-end products available. (JISS/JNS Nov 17)