THE STATUS QUO WITH SYRIA IS BEST FOR ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

Ever sinceSyria's loss of the Golan Heights toIsraelin the June 1967 War, this strategic area has been a bone of contention between the two states. Immediately after the war,Israeloffered to withdraw from theGolan Heightsin exchange for a peace treaty but was rebuffed. Subsequently,Israelbegan to establish a civilian presence, and in December 1981 decided to extend Israeli law to the area–a de facto annexation.

Since 1992, when Yitzhak Rabin became prime minister, almost all Israeli governments have negotiated directly or indirectly with Syriain an attempt to reach peace between the two states within the framework of the "Land for Peace" formula. The formula's assertion was that peace between the two states–perceived as an important step in stabilizing the Arab-Israeli arena–required ceding the Golan Heights to Syria.[1] Israeli leaders have displayed a willingness to withdraw from all or parts of the Golan Heights in exchange for a peace treaty accompanied by security arrangements,U.S. political and/or military involvement, as well as American incentives. So far these efforts have not succeeded due to reluctance on both sides to sign a deal. Generally, Israeli diplomatic efforts since the 1990s have oscillated between the Syrian and the Palestinian tracks.

The current difficulties to make "progress" on the Israeli-Palestinian track, a reflection of deep structural problems,[2] could renew some interest on part ofIsrael and/or the international community in pursuing the Israeli-Syrian track. YetSyria is currently in turmoil and nobody knows what will happen there, which puts peace negotiations on the back burner. If the situation inSyria calms down, and there is no Islamist regime inDamascus, calls for a return to negotiations are likely.

Yet the accepted "Land for Peace" paradigm withSyriaentails great military risks and may invite aggression, while the potentialpoliticaldividends of a peace treaty are limited. Moreover, the status quo, based on a defensible border, is both sustainable and preferable to any alternative. Even without taking into consideration current political volatility in the region, retaining theGolan Heightsis more important than a peace treaty. Therefore,Israelshould adopt a new paradigm for relations withSyria–a "Peace for Peace" formula even if peace is unlikely to emerge any time soon.

THE SECURITY PRICE OF WITHDRAWAL FROM THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

TheGolan Heightsis a rocky plateau, mostly ranging from about 1,300 to 3,300 feet (400 to 1,000 meters)–an area totaling 695 square miles (1,800 square kilometers). The Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee mark its western border, theYarmukRiverdemarcates its southern end, and the watershed line and theRokadRiverborder it to the east. The 9,232 foot (2,814 meter) high Mount Hermon (partially in Israeli territory) marks the northern end of theGolan Heights. The Golan Heights dominate the Jordan River valley, the Israeli Galilee to its west, and is only some 37 miles (60 kilometers) fromDamascus, to its east.

Militarily, withdrawal from theGolan Heightsis extremely problematic. Its control givesIsraelseveral important advantages and has enabledIsraelto maintain stability along this border. Indeed, despite the absence of a peace treaty, and despite the regional tensions that eventually led to violent clashes betweenIsraeland Arab actors, the border betweenIsraelandSyriahas remained quiet since 1974. Even the military confrontation between Israeli and Syrian units in 1982 inLebanondid not extend to the Golan.

The current border along the watershed line–the eastern hills of the plateau–is the best line of defense against a conventional military attack from the east.[3] Such an attack would need to overcome the topographical superiority of the defensive force, as the terrain requires the attacking side to channel its forces in between the hills, allowing a small defense force to repel an attack and buy time for sending reinforcements. In 1973, the Golan's terrain enabled 177 tanks to stop approximately 1,500 Syrian tanks giving Israel critical time to call up its reserve formations.[4] A ground attack could hardly be successful and could not be sustained for long without taking the hills thatIsrael presently controls.

No other line in the plateau can confer such defensive advantages as the current border and as the land west of the current line goes downward toward the Golan's cliffs and theJordan River. A withdrawal from the Golan would place Israeli troops at its bottom, about 660 feet (200 meters) below sea level, with a very steep gradient toward the plateau at about 1,300 feet (400 meters) above sea level. Recapturing the territory in a crisis would thus be a very complicated military operation.

Control over the Golan enhances the safety of the strategicHaifaBayarea on the Mediterranean coast by extending the distance from Syrian positions to about 55 miles (90 kilometers). TheHaifaBayarea is an important concentration of industry. It also hosts one of the two main Israeli ports. The bay area is part of the vital triangle (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv-Haifa) that holds most of the country's infrastructure and population.

An Israeli military presence in the Golan also prevents the creation of an indefensible pocket in the narrow strip (about 4.3 miles or 7 kilometers wide and 16.3 miles or 26 kilometers long) in the Upper Galilee, the northernmost part of Israel, an area sandwiched between Hizballah-controlled southern Lebanonand the Golan. Tens of thousands of Israeli citizens in this pocket could be easily disconnected from Israeland taken hostage in the case of a coordinated attack by Syriaif in control of the Golan and by the Iranian-inspired Hizballah.[5]

Israel's presence on one of the peaks of Mount Hermon (6,506 feet or 1,983 meters) also provides it with useful intelligence gathering capabilities, enabling the use of electronic surveillance deep into Syrian territory and providing early-warning capacity in case of an impending attack. Similarly, the topographical superiority of the current defense line provides better capabilities for acquiring targets. The use of precise

guided munitions (PGMs), in particular, requires good intelligence since sight lines are extremely important for electronic warfare.

Alternatives to the intelligence stations, such as Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) and/or Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs), are not adequate. In contrast to an installation on a mountain, they cannot carry heavy equipment such as big antennas, and they can be shot down by anti-air missiles. Moreover, the amount of time they are in the air and able to provide intelligence is limited. Weather conditions may also influence the survivability of airborne systems. Surveillance satellites provide know-how primarily about static targets but are not useful for providing tactical intelligence. Even communication satellites have disadvantages when compared to ground-based stations.[6]

The proximity of the Golan toDamascus(about 37 miles or 60 kilometers) has a tremendous deterrence value because it puts the capital, the nerve center of the Syrian regime, within easy reach of Israeli military might. Moving the Israel-Syria border westward deniesIsraelof this option and reduces deterrence, which, in turn, invites aggression.

However, since the 1990s, many in the Israeli elite believed that modern technology diminished the strategic value of land, leading to a willingness for territorial concessions. Shimon Peres, for example, argued at times that holding on to territories was less necessary given modern technology and the ability of missiles to fly over physical barriers.[7] According to this thinking, strategic depth and defensible borders became a strategic anachronism.[8] The notion of defensible borders, which in the past emphasized topographical features, acquired a new meaning ascribing political elements greater importance. It was argued that only the borders agreed upon were secure. Arab acquiescence was, therefore, more important than the military potential of a particular line drawn on a map. In the opinion of then Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Amnon Shahak, a Syrian embassy in Israel was more important than an early warning station,[9] while Maj. Gen. Zeev Livneh stated that "peace is the best security."[10]

Simplistic slogans about the decreasing value of territory and topographical assets in light of recent technological advances ignore the fact that military technology has continuously fluctuated, occasionally favoring defensive postures or offensive initiatives. Each weapons system eventually has a counter weapon. For example, the firepower of machine guns was neutralized by tanks, which in turn were threatened by anti-tank missiles, which then triggered the recent emergence of sophisticated tank defense systems. The technological race is complex, and contemporary technological advantages are always temporary since new technology is constantly developing.[11] Moreover, the technological offense-defense balance is not the primary factor in determining military outcomes–topographical constants can be a highly valuable asset. Militaries around the world still confer great importance to the topographical characteristics of the battlefield. The design of Israel's northeast border should not be shaped by ephemeral current technologies that seem to grant advantages to Israel defensive capabilities. It is important to remember that the history of warfare shows that technological superiority and better weapons are not enough to win a war.[12]

Various security arrangements to compensate for withdrawal from the Golan are quite problematic.[13] For example, the demilitarization of the Sinai (125 miles or 200 kilometers wide), which has had a stabilizing effect on Egyptian-Israeli relations, cannot be emulated in the 16-mile-wide (25 kilometers) Golan. The Sinai demilitarization prevents a surprise attack from either of the two states, because the

distance created by this buffer zone translates into warning time. In contrast, the small width of the Golan plateau is not enough to provide advanced warning of an imminent attack. The main fear is that a Syrian surprise attack–facing no opposition due to the demilitarization of the Golan Heights–could, in just a few hours, enable the positioning of several armored divisions at the western ridge of the Golan Heights–the area that controls the northern part ofIsrael.

The assumption thatIsraelwould be able to preempt such a move is flawed.Syriacould erode demilitarization arrangements by salami tactics (minor violations of demilitarization that cumulatively and significantly change the status quo). Moreover,Israelmight not always be aware of violations, as there is no way to erect foolproof verification mechanisms. In addition,Israelmay not have an early strategic warning regarding Syrian plans to take over the Golan and might not be able to successfully reconquer theGolan Heights. The staging areas of the IDF west of the Jordan River would be effectively within firing range of artillery and missiles, which would slow an Israeli response to recapture theGolan Heights. Last,Israelmay not have the freedom of action to use military force, as international circumstances may have a curtailing effect.

Extending demilitarization eastward intoSyriais not a realistic option due to the proximity ofDamascus. After all, a strong military presence in the capital is the mainstay of the regime. Unfortunately, the control of theGolan Heightsis a zero-sum game.

Defensible borders are particularly needed due to the deterioration of Israel's broad geostrategic position since the mid-1990s. Two of Iran's allies, the rising power in the Middle East, Syriaand Hizballah, are on Israel's northern border. Moreover, Turkey, another non-Arab rising Middle Eastpower, has turned anti-Israeli.[14]

Furthermore, the uncertainties surrounding the stability of Israel's neighboring regimes dictate great caution and little faith in security arrangements that are driven by transient political considerations. The Alawi regime in Syriais also facing growing domestic opposition, a large part of which is the Muslim Brotherhood.[15] The prospects for the empowerment of liberal elements inSyria are very low. A "democratic peace" withSyria is highly unlikely in the near future. Moreover, the Arab liberal circles have so far hardly shown a conciliatory disposition towardIsrael. In fact,Israel was very fortunate not to conclude a deal withSyria by ceding the Golan Heights, as the future of the regime is not clear and its intentions towardIsrael or those of its successor are uncertain.

THE MEAGERNESS OF THE SYRIAN QUID PRO QUO

The most important reasonIsraelshould reject the "Land for Peace" formula is thatSyriahas very little to offer. The Syrians cannot offer more than the "cold peace" delivered byEgypt, meaning a formal promise to refrain from using force againstIsrael, coupled with a high level of hostility in the state-controlled media and official organs and almost no "people-to-people" interactions. Moreover, such a "peace" does nothing to reform the education system, which ensures that past stereotypes of Jews andIsraelare transferred to the next generation. This makes transition from "cold peace" to war easier. The eradication of defensible borders will also make such a transition to war less costly forSyria.

The peace withEgypt, the strongest and most important Arab state, likely warranted territorial largesse in order to achieve a breakthrough in Arab-Israeli relations; yet the price for a peace treaty withSyriaseveral decades later, whenIsraelis a much more entrenched and accepted reality in the region, should not be as high.Egyptviolated the Arab taboo concerningIsraeland "deserved" suitable compensation.Syria's change of course towardIsraelmany years afterEgyptis less valuable.

Peace withSyriawill not trigger recognition ofIsraelon part of the rest of the Arab world, which has gradually entered into varying types of peaceful interactions withJerusalem. Arab states no longer fear a Syrian veto on relations withIsrael. The PLO entered into agreements withIsraelin 1993 without any coordination withDamascus; as didJordanin 1994. In fact, the Saudi peace initiative, which was adopted by the Beirut Arab Summit (the Arab League Peace Initiative) in March 2002, indicates the willingness of the current Arab elites to come to terms withIsrael. This is not necessarily a one-way historic process, butSyria's influence on future developments in the Arab world is limited. Moreover, its political stability is at stake nowadays, further reducing its regional clout.

Just as peace withSyriawill hardly changeIsrael's regional standing, it will not improveIsrael's international status as sometimes advocated. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which entails far more complex issues than just an inter-state territorial dispute, could positively affectIsrael's international position, but not peace withSyria.

Factors at play several decades ago, which favoredIsrael's acquiescence to a peace deal withEgyptbased on the "land for peace" formula, have lost their relevance. In the late 1970s,Israelwas interested in buttressingEgypt's change in orientation from pro-Soviet to pro-American. Yet in the twenty-first century, theSoviet Unionno longer exists. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that theUnited Stateswill go to great lengths to compensateIsraelfor the loss of theGolan Heights, something it was prepared to do in the framework of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

Today, a peace treaty with Syriawould have only a marginal impact on the regional balance. The belief that Israeli territorial concessions will dissuade Syriafrom continuing its relationship with Tehranis baseless. Since the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Syriahas seen Iranas its strategic partner, countering Israel's might and making this one of the most stable relationships in the Middle East. In reality, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad has clearly stated several times that Syria's foreign policy will not be held hostage to an Israeli-Syrian agreement.[16]

It is doubtful whetherSyriais ready to change its foreign policy orientation in exchange for receiving the Golan.Damascushas refrained from realignment on many occasions. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger tried unsuccessfully to moveSyriatoward a pro-American orientation after the 1973 October War. Under more auspicious international circumstances, immediately after the end ofCold War,U.S.Secretary of State James Baker tried again but failed. Even whenWashingtonwas clearly the hegemonic power,Syriapreferred not to be in the American camp.Syriaalso resisted the pressure to change course from the two George W. Bush administrations.

This regime shares the anti-Americanism of similar dictatorships, such as those in Havanaand Pyongyang, where there is a genuine dislike of the United Statesand opening up to the West is a mortal danger to these despotic regimes. Anti-Americanism is widespread in both Syria's and Iran's ruling elite,

who see themselves as leading agents in creating a new world order in which the United States has a much more limited role.[17] In the Middle East, fomenting feelings against America and Israel also helps secure greater legitimacy for these regimes.[18]

Moreover, why would Bashar al-Asad, or any successor, jump on the American wagon at a time when the United Stateshas displayed weakness. America's foreign policy toward the Middle East, particularly since the events of the 2011 Arab Spring, projects hesitance and lack of clarity. U.S. President Barack Obama advocated engagement toward Iran, set firm dates for withdrawals from Iraqand Afghanistan, and deserted Husni Mubarak and Mu'amar Qadhafi–steps that have been almost universally construed in the Middle Eastas signs of weakness. Moreover, the Obama administration made many gestures toward Syria [19] withoutDamascus modifying its alliance withIran or its support for terror organizations inLebanon,Iraq, and among the Palestinians. A decliningUnited States is not a desirable ally by the power politics prism ofSyria's rulers.

Moreover, the expectation that Damascuswill stop interfering in Lebanese affairs following a peace deal with Israelis far-fetched. Lebanonis still of great importance to Syria, and it is unlikely that any Syrian leader will relinquish the option to intervene in Lebanese politics. Yet this influence has its limits. Hizballah is the strongest organization in Lebanonand seems to be under greater influence of Iranthan Syria.[20] The inability ofDamascus to deliver Hizballah casts doubt on the feasibility of a long-standing Israeli condition for a peace–a peaceful border withLebanon.

An issue so far ignored in the discussions of Israeli-Syrian relations isDamascus' nuclear aspirations.Syriaattempted to build a nuclear reactor for plutonium production with the help ofNorth Koreaand Iran, which was destroyed by an Israeli air strike in September 2007. The fact that a state of war exists between the two states made it easier forIsraelto preempt and to endSyria's nuclear endeavor. Paradoxically, a peace treaty could facilitate the spread of nuclear technology intoSyria. Foreign suppliers would become less hesitant to provide sensitive equipment and technology to a state formally at peace with its neighbors. Moreover, it would be more difficult forIsraelto attack a nuclear installation of a state with which it were formally at peace.

In addition,Israelgenerally has little to gain from limited economic or cultural interactions withSyria, which could result from a peace treaty. Any Syrian regime is unlikely to welcome open borders and free movement of people and goods withIsrael.Syriahas not opened up to globalization and has remained poor, an unappealing market for most Israeli products. Taking into consideration a realistic assessment of the advantages of an Israel-Syria peace treaty, the inevitable conclusion is that its benefits are not very enticing, particularly if it entails a withdrawal from theGolan Heights.

THE VIABILIY OF THE STATUS QUO

Maintaining the status quo seems to be a more promising option than a peace treaty based on "peace for land." The status quo has provided for a quiet border since 1974. Since 2006,Syriahas released many statements about "resistance" to the Israeli occupation of the Golan, but no action resulted. The status quo proved tenable since the early 1970s, longer than the periodSyriaruled theGolan Heights.

The status quo on the Golan is primarily a result of Israel's military superiority and its deterrence. As long as the power differential between Israel and Syria continues, there is little chance for a Syrian challenge to the status quo. In world politics, the designation of borders has always partly been a function of power relations–the weaker side generally accommodates the stronger side. A survey of almost 100 territorial disputes shows a tendency for resolution by force of arms–power politics. In most cases, the stronger and victorious power simply dictates who rules over the disputed territory. Negotiated settlements, such as the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, are rare events.[21]

Many assume that the Syrians would never accept less than the entire Golan Heights as a condition for a peace treaty. Yet Syria has been seen to behave pragmatically and bow to superior power. When confronted with international determination to force Syria out of Lebanon in 2005, Syria backed down. Similarly, apprehensions about U.S. power in the 1990s and about American intentions after September 11, 2001, led the Syrian regime to exercise caution and limited cooperation with America.[22]

Moreover, in the Syrian-Turkish territorial dispute over the Alexandretta region, Syrian behavior has confirmed the capacity for pragmatism. In official maps of Syria to this very day, the Alexandretta region, annexed by Turkey in 1939, is demarcated as part of Syria.[23] Despite the fact that Syria has regarded this annexation as an unlawful Turkish occupation of Syrian land, it realized Turkish military superiority and thus never threatened to go to war in order to regain the lost territory.[24] Moreover, this territorial dispute did not prevent Damascus from having diplomatic relations with Ankara. Following this power politics example, the territorial dispute between Israel and Syria should not serve as a pretext for not having diplomatic relations with a much stronger Israel.

Indeed, Syria is militarily weak and its offensive ground capabilities are particularly limited. Yet Syria has developed a large missile arsenal, and most of Israel has been within range for over a decade. It is also very advanced in the area of chemical weapons. Much of this arsenal includes inaccurate missiles, which are primarily a terror weapon against civilian populations. Only improvements in the accuracy of these missiles could turn them into an effective threat to Israeli strategic installations. Although Syria has acquired more advanced capabilities to defend itself from an Israeli air attack, its missiles are still not immune to Israeli strikes. The September 2007 air strike deep inside Syria, against the partly constructed nuclear reactor, showed a modicum of Israel's air force capabilities.

Yet an Israeli-Syrian military large-scale encounter cannot be ruled out if the United States and/or Israel are seen to be weak, or in the case that Syria wants desperately to disrupt the status quo. While Syrian ground forces are unlikely to create a serious military threat when Israel controls the Golan, Syria could launch missile salvos against Israeli population centers. The success of these missile attacks would depend on Israel's capability to suppress the fire by attacking the launching sites and to develop an effective active and passive defensive missile shield. It is likely Israel could neutralize much of the potential missile damage by offensive and defensive measures if it were to allocate resources wisely.[25]

Syria could also challenge the status quo by occupying a small area in the Golan Heights (a *mehtaf* in Israeli strategic parlance) and then repelling Israeli counterattacks to take it back. Syria could also initiate a static war of attrition, though Israeli determination and strong riposte to provocations–including willingness to escalate–would likely bring a quick end to such warlike actions. Israeli control of the Golan is

particularly valuable in this type of challenge. The control of the Golan justifies the potential price of an Israeli-Syrian War in the future. Yet such a price could be lowered significantly by wise military preparations and clearpolitical resolve not to relinquish theGolan Heights even at the prospect of war.

Syriamay be able to heighten the price it extracts fromIsraelby enlisting Hizballah and Hamas for a coordinated military effort againstIsrael.Irancould be expected to lend it support, although it might hesitate to be directly involved in military operations. This is a scenario thatIsraelobviously has to prepare for. As noted, an enhanced defensive posture, a willingness to escalate and/or launch preemptive strikes, should be part of the response.

In the spring of 2011,Syriaallowed unarmed civilians (Palestinians) to march toward the border on the Golan in an attempt to cross it. The purpose of this unusual activity was to divert attention from the suppression of the opposition to the regime and to espouse its commitment to the Palestinian cause. While initially caught by surprise,Israelwas successful in repelling these marches.

Another reason the status quo has been maintained is the lack of international interest in the territorial dispute betweenIsraelandSyria, especially compared to Israel-Palestinian issues. Many other interstate territorial disputes generate limited international interests and the status quo persists. For example, Russia's rule of the South Kuril Islands (since 1945), India's control of Kashmir (since 1947), Morocco's annexation of the Western Sahara (since 1975), and Armenia's conquest of Nagorno Karabakh (since 1994) have been challenged for many years by their neighbors with little success. Today,Syriahas little diplomatic leverage to enlist the international community to forceIsraelto withdraw from the Golan.

Syria's influence has also waned in the region. Syria, once the champion of the rather defunct Pan-Arab ideology, carries little weight currently in the Arab world. Moreover, many Arab states share deep concerns about Syria's strategic relationship with Iranand Teheran's rising power in the Middle East, strengthening the heterodox non-Sunni arc extending from Iranto Lebanon. They view Israelas a strategic ally facing a potential nuclear Iran, which reinforces Israel's reluctant acceptance by the Arab elites. The telegrams sent by American diplomats from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other pro-Western Arab states, as reported by the WikiLeaks organization, clearly show that these countries are much more concerned about a nuclear Iran than the Palestinian issue.[26] The "occupation of the Golan" has even lesspolitical resonance, andSyria is unlikely to harness any support for military action to recover the Heights.

Last, the Alawi regime might have an interest in preserving the status quo despite its calls to return the Golan Heightsto Syrian sovereignty. The continuous conflict with Israelgrants legitimacy to the Alawi minority rule by providing them with patriotic Arab credentials. The struggle against the Jewish state provides pretexts for the regime's failures in the economic arena and its infringements on human rights. As long as the state of formal war continues with Israel, the regime has a convenient excuse for stifling dissent.[27] The conflict withIsrael is also useful in legitimizing the preferential economic treatment given to the military, which is the mainstay of the regime.

Yet Syriais not interested in a large scale confrontation with Israel, because a military debacle could threaten the regime's stability. It has also refrained from a low-intensity conflict because it fears escalation, which has been the typical Israeli response in such situations. Therefore, the mix between a publicly belligerent posture against Israel, bleeding Israelby proxies, and inaction along the Golan may well be optimum for Syria's rulers.[28] The years of quiet along the Israel-Syrian border possibly reflect a tacit agreement for the status quo.

It is difficult to gauge how a new regime, if the Alawi regime crumbles, will act toward Israel. Current Syrian capabilities are not likely to change within a short time. While Syrian capacity to challenge the status quo remains limited, its political desire to do so may increase. Neither an Islamic Sunni revolutionary regime nor a proto-democratic Syrian state is likely to pursue peaceful relations with Israelor display territorial flexibility on the Golan. While a new leadership will probably focus on domestic challenges, revolutionary regimes generally tend to display warlike behavior in the immediate years after taking power.[29] Even if the weak democratic elements in Syria succeed in generating a democratization process, against all odds, it is potentially dangerous for its neighbors. While a democratization process is laudable, empirical evidence shows that states in transition to democracy are more war-prone than others. [30] Therefore, defensible borders remain important.

CONCLUSION

The expectations of the international community for an Israeli-Syrian deal are almost universally based on the "Land for Peace" formula, which does not serve Israel's interests. Indeed, most Israelis favor staying in the Golan even if this prevents a peace treaty with Syria. Public opinion polls of recent years show 60-70 percent of Israelis oppose any concession on the Golan Heights.[31] A withdrawal from the Golan will therefore be hard to sell to the Israeli public.

Giving up the Golan plateau would depriveIsraelof its best defense against a potential Syrian aggression; it signals Israeli weakness and underminesIsrael's deterrence. Designing borders in accordance with current, but changing, military technology and with transient political circumstances is strategically foolish. Moreover, the expected returns toIsraelfrom a peace treaty withSyriaare meager.Syriais unlikely to align itself with pro-Western Arab states and to abandon its alliance withIranin return for Israeli territorial concessions. Its ability to "deliver" Hizballah inLebanonis also questionable. Moreover, a peace treaty is not going to affect the diplomatic fortunes ofIsraelin the region and in the world.

A strongIsraelcan maintain the status quo that servesIsrael's best interests. While the possibility of disrupting the status quo by military means exists,Syriafears escalation andIsrael's power. ForIsrael, retaining the Golan is more important than reaching a peace treaty withSyriain the foreseeable future.

Therefore, Israeli policies towardSyriashould be guided by power politics, similar to how most territorial disputes are conducted.Israelshould insist on a new paradigm, "peace for peace," which rests on defensible borders. The demand for secure borders seems reasonable and is rooted in international resolutions such as UNSC Resolution 242. The political unrest and volatility in the region, including questions about the foreign policies ofIsrael's neighbors, similarly prescribe against taking any significant security risks.

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[4] See Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement. October 1973* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), pp. 55-115.

[5] Point brought to the attention of the author by Mark Langfan.

[6] This has been emphasized to by Haim Rosenberg, former Director of Long Range Planning atRafael,Israel's Weapon Development Authority.

[7] Shimon Peres and Arye Naor, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), pp. 77-78.

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[10] *Bamachane* (Hebrew), May 25, 1994.

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[16] See Ian Black, "Syria's Strongman Ready to Woo Obama with Both Fists Unclenched," *The Guardian*, February 17, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/17/syria-president-bashar-al-assad.

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[23] Syrian Ministry of Tourism, http://www.syriatourism.org/index.php?module=subjects&func=listpages&subid=114.

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[26] See Uzi Rabi, "The WikiLeaks Documents and the Middle East," *Tel Aviv Notes*, December 9, 2010.

[27] John Myhill, "The Alawites and Israel," *BESA Perspectives Papers*, No. 137 (May 2011), http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/docs/perspectives137.pdf; see also Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991), p. 42.

[28] See Rubin, *The Truth About Syria*, pp. 10, 110-12; Ron Tira, *Forming an Israeli Policy Toward Syria* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2000), p. 80.

[29] Stephen M. Walt, "Revolution and War," *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (April 1992), pp. 321-68.

[30] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 5-38.

[31] Yehuda Ben-Meir and Olena Bagno-Modavsky, *Vox Populi: Trends in Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2004-2009*, Memorandum 106 (Tel Aviv: INSS, November 2010), p. 12.