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**National Threat
Perceptions
in the Middle East**

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in the Middle East**

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Preface

The UNIDIR project on Confidence-Building and Arms Control in the Middle East is organized around the strategic tenets of co-operative security.¹ The strategic principle of co-operative security is to enhance peace and security through institutionalized consent rather than through physical coercion. It seeks collaborative rather than confrontational relationships among national military establishments. The emphasis is less on preparations to counter threats than on the prevention of threats in the first place. Thus, the significance of confidence-building is obvious. Militarily, the basis for co-operation is mutual acceptance and support for defence of home territory as the exclusive national military objective, and the subordination of power projection to the constraints of international consensus. There is a close relationship, therefore, between co-operative security and non-offensive defence. Finally, a fully developed co-operative security framework would include provisions for collective security as a residual guarantee in the event of aggression.

The project began with a series of background studies to account for the special characteristics, problems and conflicts of the area that motivate the institution of CSBMs and arms control. It has continued with a discussion of the principles that should govern international relations in the region, and a definition of the geographical concept of the Middle East for purposes of confidence building and arms control. Finally, it addresses a number of specific measures that might be taken to enhance international peace and security, essentially following the agenda of co-operative security.

Among the background studies are a series of papers on national threat perceptions. This Report comprises six of them, covering Israel and its neighbours. Later publications will deal with national threat perceptions in the Maghreb and in the Gulf area. Comprehensive analyses of threat perceptions are rare in the Middle East. Yet they are greatly needed in order to tailor specific measures to security needs.

An expert group of some 20 members, mostly from the Middle East, provides guidance and feedback in the elaboration of project plans and reports. So far, the

¹ Janne E. Nolan (ed.), *Co-operation and Security in the 21st Century*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994.

group has met three times: in Malta 16-17 April 1994; in Antalya, Turkey, 14-19 November 1994; and in Lund, Sweden, 8-11 June 1995. Many members of the group have also been commissioned to prepare papers for the project.

Furthermore, we are conducting smaller workshops on specific issues or draft publications. The first was held in Antalya, in conjunction with the expert group meeting there. Together with authors of national threat perceptions papers, we conducted a joint review of the first draft of these papers. The second was convened in Geneva 26-27 May 1995, to provide feedback on a draft report on the proposal for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. A third workshop will be held at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates. This workshop will examine papers on national threat perceptions in the Gulf Area, and discuss options for confidence-building and arms control there.

The project is run by Dr Jan Prawitz (Sweden), Ambassador (ret.) James F. Leonard (USA) and Director Sverre Lodgaard of UNIDIR. It is supported by the Ford Foundation, and by the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States (ACDA). I am grateful to them all for their generous support.

The technical editing of this Report was done by Ms Claudia Querner, Junior Professional Officer at UNIDIR. My cordial thanks to her and to all other project collaborators for their important contributions to a fascinating project.

UNIDIR takes no position on the views and conclusions expressed in these papers which are those of their authors. Nevertheless, UNIDIR considers that such papers merit publication and recommends them to the attention of its readers.

Sverre Lodgaard
Director, UNIDIR

Chapter 1

Threat Perceptions in the Middle East: A Summary*

James Leonard**

1.1 Introduction

Comparing the Middle East with other regions is generally *not* a useful operation; but the parallels and the contrasts between the Middle East since Madrid and Europe since the end of the Cold War do throw some light on how far the Middle East Peace process has advanced and how far it still has to go.

Perceptions of threat and insecurity in Europe for more than forty years were dominated by the Super-Powers rivalry and the Western fear of Soviet Communism. Today that threat has almost vanished. Military establishments are being sharply reduced and are nourished, in the main, by much weaker or more remote concerns: that a new menace might arise from the ashes of the Soviet Union; that disorder in the Balkans or outside of Europe might require large military operations, etc. However serious these remaining problems may appear, they are much less menacing than the old threat. Armed forces from "Vancouver to Vladivostok" are in a downward "glide path".

In the Middle East since Madrid much has changed but a great deal has not. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not what it was five or ten years ago but it has certainly not "vanished" either.

* Summary based on papers and discussions in the UNIDIR project on Confidence-Building and Arms Control in the Middle East.

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Israel is, of course, extremely though not uniquely vulnerable. Like the five declared nuclear states, it has adopted deterrence as its way of dealing with the problem, but Israeli officials assert that they are open to the more radical solution of complete elimination, the solution strongly urged by Egypt and others. How this nuclear issue might interact with the threat perceptions arising from conventional military forces is discussed below.

Israel's other neighbors, and the Palestinians, have threat perceptions that range from the rather low Egyptian level up to a level little changed from that obtaining before Madrid.

Jordan welcomed the Oslo agreement as making possible its movement to a full peace treaty with Israel. The treaty has, however, by no means put an end to Jordanian fears about its future. The problems between Israel and the PLO are far from solved, and until they are, Jordanians will live in a condition of great uncertainty. Even worse, almost every imaginable solution to these problems next door appears likely to exacerbate Jordan's own problems in one way or another. The difficulty of defining its relationship to the future Palestinian entity or state and the implications for Jordan's own political structure compete for priority with Jordan's immediate economic and social problems, all greatly worsened by the consequences of the Gulf War.

The other end of the spectrum of Arab attitudes is to be found in Syria. There little has changed as a result of Madrid or Oslo. The fear of "Zionist expansionism" remains acute, judging by official pronouncements and unofficial analyses. There appear to be only minimal hopes that negotiations can lead to the return of the Golan or a settlement satisfactory to the Palestinians. Unlike Egypt and Jordan, where the peace treaties reflect a deeper conviction that there will be no more wars, Syria and Israel continue to regard each other with profound concern, focused on South Lebanon but not confined to that unhappy area.

For Israel and the Palestinians, the "Hundred Year War" has entered a new phase, but its end is not yet in sight. From the Israeli viewpoint, the new phase is marked by the gradual acknowledgement that what once seemed unthinkable - Peace with Arabs - is now not only thinkable, it is a fact. It is not a warm peace and it certainly does not extend to all Arabs, but the changes are already seismic.

The most central of all relationships, that with the Palestinians, is however in an ominous condition. The steady stream of violent incidents underline the fears of many Israelis that no mutually acceptable way for the two can ever be found. They fear that the Palestinian objectives embodied in the concept of a Palestinian state are incompatible with any minimal degree of security for Israel, and there is little disposition to run new risks.

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interdependence with the Gulf, and the interdependence of the Gulf states and the Maghreb with Europe and the United States have increased perceptions of vulnerabilities. Each side of these relationships tends to see the other side as a threat or at least a problem.

These difficulties lead to a nervous, even pessimistic attitude. There is not convincing evidence, at least as yet, of a "peace dividend". Domestic unrest discourages development. A downward spiral instead of an upward spiral is widely feared, and the frightening situation in Algeria is on everyone's mind. Israel naturally watches this with apprehension, fearing most of all for the stability of Egypt.

1.4 Military Threats

We have mentioned the nuclear problem above, since it appears to be the main military danger perceived today by Egypt, the largest and strongest of all the Arab states. It is interesting and perhaps somewhat provocative to compare Egypt's military situation today with that of the United States. Each has "lost" what it perceived for forty years to be its principal threat: Israel and the Soviet Union. Each retains a military establishment far more powerful than any potential adversary, unless the old enemy somehow reasserts itself. Outsiders are bound to suspect a measure of inertia or momentum in the slow, grudging downsizing of those two military establishments.

The momentum of the pre-1990 regional arms race is far more apparent today in the Gulf, and it was given a major impetus by the Gulf War. The military forces of the Maghreb have never been particularly relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict; and today, they exist only in relation to each other or to domestic unrest. The military forces of Israel's direct neighbors are another matter. Even with peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan now in place, and negotiations fitfully in train with Syria, Israeli opinion retains its (understandable) habit of thinking in terms of capabilities more than intentions. A change in regime can, after all, alter intentions in a rapid and radical way. The mirror image of this threat perception can be seen on the Arab side.

These threat perceptions have a particular importance in connection with weapons of mass destruction. Israel did not develop its nuclear capability to deter a nuclear threat; in fact, Israeli leaders tended to dismiss the possibility of an "Islamic Bomb" as too remote to enter their calculations. Israeli deterrence was aimed at what it thought was a conventional threat to its very existence.

Therefore, the continued existence of large Arab conventional "capabilities" on its frontiers will continue for some time, until the Israeli perception of "intentions" has evolved, to seem to many Israelis to justify the retention of its nuclear deterrent.

Reductions in Arab capabilities, through arms control agreements or unilaterally, would obviously be helpful in fostering Israeli confidence in the peaceful intentions of its neighbors. This in turn could shift the balance in Israeli threat perceptions, so that fear of nuclear proliferation in the region would be given priority over fear of an overwhelming conventional attack.

Developments, especially since 1979, in Iraq and Iran, have been pushing Israeli threat perceptions in both directions. Israel now sees that an Arab country could indeed build a nuclear weapon, and it fears that Iran may follow suit. The importance of Israel's deterrent capability *and* the importance of eliminating from the region all weapons of mass destruction are in Israeli eyes both enhanced, yet they are sharply in tension with each other. It is difficult to foresee the positive resolution of this tension until all important states of the region have followed Egypt's example: relinquishing convincingly any ambition to acquire nuclear weapons *and* any intention to contribute to the destruction of Israel.

1.5 Conclusion

From this brief and partial review of threat perceptions - a review from which the Eastern Middle East, especially the Gulf, is almost completely absent - one conclusion stands out rather sharply. The consolidation of peace in the area requires concurrent progress along three parallel tracks. Two of these are self-evident: the political track (intentions) and the arms control track (capabilities), with confidence-building measures forming a web of connections between the two. Neither of these two lines of action is sufficient in itself. Peace agreements are essential, but taken in isolation they permit the persistence of fears that unduly large military establishments could again become grave threats. Arms control agreements are essential, but in isolation they could co-exist with rhetorical antagonism and could even be mere covers for a renewal of hostilities. Taken together, these two tracks reinforce and validate each other.

Even that, however, is not enough. There must be a third track along which the governments of the region demonstrate their ability to cope with their internal problems and satisfy the aspirations of their peoples. Without this third track, other states will not be confident that a particular country will remain true to its

Chapter 2

The Arab Threat: The Israeli Perspective

Shmuel Limone*

1. *The Setting:* The environment of conflict in which Israel finds itself has unique characteristics. Throughout most of its history as an independent nation, Israel has confronted and dealt with a heavily armed Arab world, professing various degrees of hostility toward it. The agreements with Egypt, the Palestinians and with Jordan, as well as the peace efforts now pursued between Israel and other Arab parties - have not yet convinced all Arab and Moslem countries to recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist in their midst.
2. *The Essence of the Threat:* This unique international phenomenon - the existence of a small nation within a large collective of mostly hostile states - has long determined the nature of the confrontation and the psychological state of mind in which Israelis live. The Jewish people's painful history of persecution, coupled with the memory of the collective Arab opposition to the creation of the state of Israel, has instilled in many Israelis a sense of apprehension toward their Arab surrounding. Indeed, to many Israelis what still shapes their sense of security, is an uneasy feeling that at stake is not only Israel's territorial integrity or political freedom, but its very legitimacy as a Jewish state.
3. *Mitigating Factors:* This paper deals with the parameters of threat that make up Israel's security concerns. Still, it should be emphasized that the present political process - which reflects a growing recognition among important Arab states of the futility of the use of force as a means to advance political goals - has blunted the immediacy and weight of these concerns. Although the current political process has so far produced tangible progress mainly in the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks, it has nevertheless signalled a breakthrough

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also in the attitudes of other Arab countries toward Israel. It also stabilized the conflict and served as a vital learning experience for all.

4. *Israel's Reaction:* In a broader historic context, Israel acknowledges the positive changes that have taken place in some key aspects of its "traditional" threats. Consequently, it has been willing to assume greater political and security risks in order to achieve peace with its neighbours. Recent political developments support this claim. Israel has entered into an open ended process of negotiations with the Palestinians, and has already transferred a significant number of powers and responsibilities - including in the sphere of security - to the Palestinian Authority. It has demonstrated its readiness to institute and abide by a new, less complex, security regime along its border with Jordan. It has also restated its understanding that peace with Syria cannot be achieved without an Israeli return of Golan territory to Syrian hands.

5. *Basic Asymmetries:* The strategic setting, or, more correctly, the general state of threat in which Israel exists and operates, reflects some basic asymmetries that exist between Arabs and Israel. Most of these factors can be presumed to remain permanent features of the overall Arab-Israeli balance of power:
- a. *First*, except for its coastline, Israel is completely surrounded by Arab states. Their large territories provide a militarily important strategic hinterland. Israel is small in size and has no strategic depth.
 - b. *Second*, Israel is dependent on outside sources of energy, and on sea and air lines for communication.
 - c. *Third*, the Arab world as a whole possesses vast oil reserves and hence, assured financial resources. Israel lacks in natural resources, including water.
 - d. *Fourth*, the density of its population and industrial centers makes Israel vulnerable to attacks. Israel is extremely sensitive to casualties among its general population and its citizen-soldiers, a point well understood and exploited by those who wish to harm it.
 - e. *Fifth*, Israel is incapable of sustaining a long, drawn-out war because of constraints such as the levels of inventory, time and space, and political

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considerations. The Israeli army relies mainly on reserve forces whose mobilization and deployment consume critical time. In the past this in-built asymmetry has increased the temptation to rely on surprise, or to resort to a war of attrition in order to maximize the Arab advantage.

f. *Sixth*, Israel is clearly outnumbered, and maintaining a military balance strains its economy and its available manpower pool. The Arab superiority in number also provides an advantage in potential capabilities. True, Modernization of Arab societies proceeds at a slow pace. Yet, a concerted effort, focused on selected areas, can add - and indeed, has added - an ominous dimension to some Arab military capabilities.

g. *Seventh*, many Arabs, and in a wider sense, Moslem countries, have been able to enlist religious considerations and arguments in their effort to isolate Israel. The rise and spread of Islamic fundamentalism, with its virulent anti-Israeli ideology, has exacerbated the religious dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has also created a new, indirect threat to Israel, in the form of radical Islamic subversion against those regimes and organizations seeking accommodation with Israel. In the long run, this phenomenon may pose the most severe threat to Israel and to the cause of peace in the Middle East in general.

h. *Eighth*, while many Arab and Moslem countries are ruled by autocratic regimes (monarchic, dictatorial or fundamentalist), Israel is an open democracy, easily observed from the outside. Major decisions in Israel are usually crystallized after a public, often critical debate, and then approved by a majority of a democratically elected legislature. In some Arab countries similar decisions may not reflect such widespread popular consent, and hence may be more amenable to sudden changes. That disparity increases Israel's sense of vulnerability.

6. *The Historical Record*: An analysis of Israel's approach to its Mideastern environment must, first and foremost, consider the essence of its experience with the Arab countries surrounding it. For years, Israel and the Arab states have been locked in a situation of ongoing conflict. The radical Arab states and movements have considered themselves as being in a state of war with Israel. To them, and in particular to those Arabs and to Iran that actively oppose any conciliation with Israel, a decision to initiate active hostilities

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nonetheless capable of posing a threat to the movement towards peace and accommodation, especially between Israelis and Palestinians.

10. *Economic and Political Threats:* Missing from this list of threats are two additional factors: economic and political threats. Both have not entirely disappeared. Officially, Arab economic boycott against Israel still remains in effect. Also, traditional anti-Israeli drafts are still routinely circulated in international organizations. However, both types of threats have lost much of their vigor and efficacy. The secondary economic boycott has been renounced by important Arab countries and there is a decrease in the hitherto routine resort to anti-Israeli rhetoric even in international fora.

11. *Future Prospects:* To sum up - the current efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement between Israel and its surrounding Arab states carry a potential for movement and change. Should they succeed, they stand to produce the possibility of a far reaching, positive transformation in the political-military climate in the Middle East and in the Israeli perception of external threats. Strategic peace dividends such as stability, predictability and shared interests may not be such far fetched ideas in this possibly new evolving reality.

12. *Future Risks:* Still, even such conditions will need a relatively long period to adjust and to ripen, and will not necessarily eliminate other, even existential, threats to Israel. Positive developments may even induce fundamentalists to further increase their attempts of undermining the process of conciliation between Arabs and Israelis. Radical Islamic elements will therefore continue to play a crucial, and from Israel's point of view, extremely dangerous role in the political environment affecting Israel's security in years to come. As already mentioned, this state of affairs holds true in regard to threats of terror against Israelis and Jews. However, it also holds true in regard to indirect threats against those Arab regimes which have opted to settle their differences with Israel through a diplomatic dialogue.

13. *Need for Vigilance:* In the long run, even in a positive negotiating climate, and under conditions of an expanding peace, risks to Israel's security will not disappear. In the absence of mutual arms control agreements, and as long as some Moslem regimes remain loath to Israel's very existence, such risks will continue to persist.

Chapter 3

From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics

Egyptian National Security Perceptions

Abdel Monem Said Aly*

3.1 Introduction

The major objective of this paper is to illustrate that Egyptian national security perceptions since the mid-1970s have been undergoing major transformations. These changes lie in the shift from geopolitical security concerns to geo-economic ones. Geopolitics here are understood as the traditional national security threats which emanate from the geography, as well as from the history of the nation state. The safeguard of the nation's survival and the protection of its territorial integrity are the main objectives of a nation's security policy. Power politics and the balance of powers are the means to achieve these objectives.¹ The concept of geo-economics, on the other hand, is much more complex. The subjects of external threats are, according to this concept, not the survival of the state and of its territorial integrity, but the state's economic well-being, its social cohesion and ability to withstand economic competition. The means to protect national security in geo-economic terms are the increase of productivity, economic reforms, the integration of regional and international markets and the protection of income sources.²

This paper is going to present the argument according to which Egyptian national security perceptions are undergoing a fundamental change: from the

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¹ B.A. Most and H. Starr, "Polarity, Preponderance and Power Parity in the Generation of International Conflict", *International Interactions*, January 1987, pp. 255-266; J.L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987; M. Midlarsky, "A Hierarchical Equilibrium Theory of Systemic War", *International Studies Quarterly*, January 1986, pp. 77-105; and J.S. Levy, "The Polarity of the System and International Stability", in A.S. Sabrosky (ed.), *Polarity and War*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985, pp. 41-66.

² R.O. Keohane and J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1977.

traditional geopolitical national security perspective to the more complicated geo-economic perspective. However, this argument does not imply that geopolitical concerns have disappeared from Egyptian national security calculations. On the contrary, Egyptian security policy will continue to be influenced by traditional geopolitical considerations.

3.2 Geopolitics: The Past

Geography, as well as history, have to a large extent determined Egypt's national security problems.

Egypt is situated at the South-Eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, at the crossroads between the three continents of the old world, and at the end point of the River Nile's long journey from the heart of Africa. Egyptian security has become sensitive to the moves and capabilities of external powers.³

One of the main features of the Egyptian history is the unbroken unity of its country. Egypt has known the phenomenon of statesood for about six millennia. Not the same can be said, however, of the independence of its politics. Ever since the Persian conquest in 525 BC, foreign domination has been a marked feature in Egyptian history. In more recent modern times, Egyptian nationhood developed in a context of conflict with external powers.⁴ Thus, both geographical and historical considerations have defined the "constants" of the Egyptian perception of national security.

First, unlike most Third World countries, Egyptian autonomy and statehood - more or less within the present boundaries - created a perception of the minimum security needs, in the face of the external threats faced by the country. These perceptions have further been enhanced by the nation-state building process which started in 1805, and by the creation of the first Egyptian "national army".⁵

³ Gamal Hamdan, *Egypt's Character*, Cairo: Dar Al-Hilal, 1968; and M.H. Haykal, *The Suez Files: The Thirty Years War*, Cairo: Al-Ahram, 1986, in Arabic.

⁴ Charles Issawi, *Egypt At Mid-Century, An Economic Survey*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954.

⁵ Christina P. Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt*, The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1954; Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961; Mohamed Heikal, "Egyptian Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, July 1978; and Abdel Monem Said Aly, *Nation State and Transitional Society*, paper represented at the Conference on "Dynamics of States and Societies in the Middle East", Cairo University, 17-19 June 1989.

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assets include the F-16, the F-15 EAGLE, the F-4 PHANTOM II, the E-2c HAWKEYE, the C-130 HERCULES, the Boeing 707, the AH-1 and the COBRA HELICOPTERS and AH-64 APACHES and 20 BLACKHAWKS. It is likely that Israel chose to consider adding the F/A-18 to its multi-role inventory, because of an expansion in tactical requirements. According to Israeli air force planners, Israel might be called in the future to deploy multi role aircraft against targets demanding deeper penetration and higher altitudes, for which the F/A-18 is uniquely suited. A clear preference was also expressed by the Israeli fighter pilots in favor of replacing their McDonnell-Douglas F-15 EAGLES with the new Lockheed F-22 Advanced Tactical Fighter (ATF). However, it seems that the Israeli government will not be able to afford the cost of the \$100 million F-22, unless the United States drastically boosts its military aid to Israel.⁹

At present, Israel is planning on deploying around five PATRIOT batteries before the mid- 1990s. The ARROW missile system would, by the year 2000, provide Israel with roughly three times the ABM range, and a higher altitude than that provided by the PATRIOT. The ARROW experiments conducted by US and Israeli technicians will contribute in the future to establishing the larger ABM technology base necessary for the building of regional and theatre ABM networks.

The US air-to-ground AGM-144 HAVENAP missile is basically identical to the Israeli POPEYE missile for which the US offered around \$33.6 millions to obtain 32 systems. Israel built its reputation developing and producing the UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), and has already concluded contracts with the USN, USMC, US army to provide them with several systems.

Israel is now developing and producing the POPEYE (stand-off precision guided air-to-ground) missiles, the PYTHON III (short range air-to-air) missiles, BARAK (anti-sea skimmers) and ADAMS point defence missile interceptors, as well as a wide range of advanced electronic warfare systems and reactive armour suits for armour (BLAZER). Israel is listed among the few countries capable of producing a first line quality tank; MERKAVA was developed to ensure Israel a tank available regardless of the state of world politics.¹⁰

The current growth of the Israeli naval power is aiming at deploying more capable upper class missile FACs, high performance submarines, and sea based long range ballistic and cruise missiles supported by a satellite surveillance

⁹ Tim Ripley, "Israel's Pilots look to the Future", *International Defence Review*, March 1992, p. 261; and Marvin Leibatone, "US-Middle East Defence Cooperation", *Military Technology*, October 1991, p. 66.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

American economic aid to Egypt over the same period. The following years showed that remittances seemed to continue the same average. In 1985/86, they amounted to \$3,063, \$3,012 for 1986/87, \$3,387 for 1987/88, \$3,522 for 1988/1989, \$3,743 for 1989/1990, \$3,775 for 1990/1991. The total for 1974-1993 reached \$72 billion.¹⁴

Remittances have not been the only source of income transferred to Egypt from its Arab-Gulf connection. In 1982, 613,000 Arab tourists visited Egypt, accounting for 43.41% of the total number of tourists. By 1992, the number of Arab tourists had almost doubled to reach 1.1 million or about 34% of the total. The Arab share in Egyptian tourism is significant not only because of the number of tourists, but also because they tend to stay longer and spend more than European and American tourists might. The increase in the Suez-Canal revenues over the past two decades was largely due to the growth in the Arab-Gulf economies. Arab journalism, broadcasting, and television were dependent on Egyptians working in Egypt. Egyptian private sector hospitals were preferred by the middle income groups in the Arab oil producing countries. Egypt continued to occupy the first position, as a country of the region, as far as Arab investments were concerned. In mid-1994, the Arab share of investments represented 20% (EL 25,145 million) of the total private investment and 49% (EL 10,373 million) of the total foreign investment. These investments mostly originate from the Gulf.¹⁵

The economic dimension of national security has become more evident since Egypt has had to face a growing economic crisis. The security and stability of the Gulf region have become vital to the Egyptian national interest. The Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war - two years later - have threatened this interest. Throughout the 1980s, Iran was considered the sole destabilizing state in the Gulf area, and hence a threat to Egyptian national security. Consequently, even under President Sadat, Egypt did not hesitate to stand behind Iraq in the conflict, both militarily and economically.

As a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the scope of Egyptian security interests in the Gulf became wider. The security interest became more than simply aiming at curbing Iran. During and after the Gulf crisis and war, Egypt played a leading role in the process that led to the defeat of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait. The Egyptian denunciation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

¹⁴ Calculated from annual reports of the Egyptian Central Bank and IMF reports on the Egyptian economy.

¹⁵ "Egyptian National Bank", *The Economic Bulletin*, No 4, 1993, p. 393.

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Sheikh Mohamad al- Dhahabi, the former Minister of Religious Endowment in 1977, and the assassination of President Sadat in 1981. In 1987 they attempted the assassination of former Interior Ministers Hassan Abu Basha and Nabawi Ismail and that of the Editor in Chief of Al-Musswar magazine, Makram Mohamed Ahmad. By 1988, they were attacking everything they considered immoral in music and arts, and even university parties and wedding parties in Egyptian villages (particularly in the provinces of Upper Egypt).

Since the summer of 1992, the level of terrorism has reached new heights. Early in the summer, the liberal political writer Farag Foda was assassinated. By the end of the summer, these terrorist groups were violently attacking Egyptian Christians in some villages of Upper Egypt. In the fall, they went further to target tourists in order to seriously damage the Egyptian economy. By the winter of 1993, they exploded bombs indiscriminately in heavily populated areas. This was followed by two failed assassination attempts against Safwat al- Shrief, Minister of Information, and Hassan al- Alfi, Minister of Interior. Early 1994, they attempted to assassinate Atif Sidqi, the Prime Minister.¹⁷

In the remaining months of 1994, Islamic radicalism was sharply reduced. It has, however, remained a threat to the socio-economic fabric of Egypt. Moreover, Islamic radicalism is considered today a national security threat to Egypt. As early as in 1979, Defence Minister Kamal Hassan Ali stated that "the political and military goal of Egypt [was] to preserve the independence of Egypt, its territorial integrity, and [to]protect constitutional legitimacy".¹⁸ In October 1994, Defence Minister Mohammed Tantawy said that "the phenomenon of extremism is a challenge to Egypt's security and stability". "We in the armed forces are following up this phenomenon, and as the last line of defence against internal threats and as a part of the part of the Egyptian texture, we cannot stay away from any threat to that texture. We hope that matters will not reach that end".¹⁹ The protection of the constitutional legitimacy - as a goal for the national defence policy -, and the safeguard of the armed forces - as a line of defence against Islamic radicalism - reflect the upgrading of internal domestic troubles to the level of threats to the national security.

¹⁷ *Ibn Khaldoun Center for Developmental Studies*, The File on Extremism and Terrorism, 1994.

¹⁸ Quoted in Gehad Auda, "Strategic Dependency and Arms Acquisition: The case of Egypt", paper presented at the conference on *Conventional Arms Transfer*, The Canadian Institute for Peace and Security, Ottawa, 21-22 October 1987.

¹⁹ An interview with Field Marchal Mohammed Tantawy, Egyptian Defense Minister, *AL-Akhar*, 5 October 1994.

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fulfill its role of protecting the Gulf security - did not materialize. Finally, since the end of the Cold War the crisis in the Horn of Africa has become irrelevant.

These fundamental international and regional transformations refer to a possible decline Egypt's regional and international status. As geo-economics are gaining the primacy over regional and world politics, Egypt's power capabilities become less obvious. All the economic indicators point towards the fact that Egypt is less able to compete on the regional and international markets. This reality was translated among Egyptian national security circles into a growing fear of the future. According to these circles, the Egyptian market will be dominated by foreign powers, moreover by Israel. It has even been claimed that Israel will achieve economically what it has failed to achieve militarily.

3.7 Conclusions: From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics

The above review of the Egyptian threat perceptions shows that, although geopolitical factors continue to have a bearing on Egyptian national security, geo-economic factors are increasingly coming to the forefront. Egypt is finally coming to face its weak internal power elements, which had been for too long overshadowed by the state's geopolitical position and concerns. Therefore, economic - as well as political - reforms are not only essential to Egyptian welfare and progress, but also fundamental to the Egyptian national security.

Chapter 4

Palestinian Threat Perceptions

Yezid Sayigh*

4.1 Introductory Remarks

The Arab-Israeli conflict has undergone a profound change since the signing of the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles in September 1993. Definitions of security threats and requirements have shifted perceptibly, as Israel and a growing number of Arab states have established direct contacts. The governments concerned have not yet reduced their provisions for military defence, but their needs will now be calculated in terms of guarding the peace with their neighbours, rather than in terms of preparing for war. Besides, the emerging security construct contains major political and economic components, as well as more traditional military ones.¹

The situation is different in the Palestinian-Israeli context, however. First and foremost, the two sides have only entered into an interim arrangement, in which the terms of the end-result have not yet been defined, let alone agreed. Moreover, there is an immense asymmetry of power and other capabilities, unlike in any other bilateral Arab-Israeli strategic relationship. More specifically, the Palestinians enjoy neither political sovereignty nor territorial integrity. Therefore, their vulnerability to pressure is extremely high, and their ability to determine their own security requirements correspondingly low. The overlap of historic and territorial claims and the intermeshing of economies and infrastructure not only makes separation or resolution highly problematic, but also complicates security calculations immeasurably. In other words, the definition of security and threats becomes multi-faceted and interactive to a degree unprecedented in any other bilateral Arab-Israeli relationship.

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¹ The notion of security as an integral concept is developed in Yezid Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper No 251, 1990.

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4.2 General Definition of Threats

Palestinian literature, that systematically defines security issues and discusses the nature of threats and responses, is sorely scarce. There exists nonetheless a small body of writings on the subject. According to these, the overall Palestinian security dilemma clearly stems from an *existential* threat.² The debate remains confined within a narrow circle of academics and practitioners. There have been, however, numerous, unstructured references by policy- and decision-makers and by various Palestinian parties to the core issues. This makes it possible to identify and analyze the key areas and sources of perceived threats.

The existential threat has been the issue most discussed and developed by Palestinians, and therefore requires least introduction here. Briefly, the perception emanates from the history of subjection to a British mandate contractually committed to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, of traumatic uprooting in 1948, and of subsequent dispersal, denial, and forcible subjugation by Israel and Arab host governments. The preservation of national identity and the physical continuity of the national community have been directly threatened. This has produced a powerful conviction that future existence can only be assured through the modalities of self-determination in a sovereign state.³

Specific issues, such as the extent of territory and setting of borders, gain special importance deriving from the overall aim of statehood. The return (or compensation) of the Palestinians, uprooted and exiled in 1948, or displaced in 1967, is just as fundamental to existential security. Asserting control over East-Jerusalem, as a national center and eventual capital, is equally central to the success of the national self-image and of the state-building "project". Measures

² Prominent examples are Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinian Security Needs and Concerns", draft paper presented to UNIDIR workshop, Malta, April 1994; Ahmad Khalidi, "A Palestinian Settlement: Towards a Palestinian National Security Doctrine", *Israeli-Palestinian Peace Research Project Working Paper Series*, Arab Studies Society, Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, and the Institute for International Affairs, Jerusalem and Rome, 1992; Ahmad Khalidi, "Middle East Security: Arab Threat Perceptions, Peace and Stability", in Ahmad Khalidi and Yair Evron, *Middle East Security: Two Views*, Cambridge MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Occasional Paper Series, 1990; and Yezid Sayigh, "La sécurité de l'Etat palestinien", *Politique Etrangère*, Paris, No 4, Winter 1992, pp. 825-35. A discussion of areas of concern is by Sari Nuseibeh, in Mark Heller and Sari Nuseibeh, *No Trumpets, No Drums: A Two-State Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1991.

³ For an early discussion of the Palestinian state, see the pathbreaking article by Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 56, No 4, July 1978.

is because the PNA is the "pragmatic" wing of the PLO under Arafat. As such, it has associated the attainment of statehood with a particular policy, namely the Declaration of Principles and its subsequent agreements. The PNA stands to lose the most, if the process fails. Equally, it is the most directly threatened by Israeli measures which either undermine its credibility or impede the final objective. All unilateral Israeli moves, such as settlement expansion or separation of East-Jerusalem, threaten the PNA and the entire Palestinian community.

By much the same token, the PNA remains vulnerable to the risk that the next stage of the autonomy process might not come at all. This is a threat held over it by Israel, that uses its control over the timetable, not only to present the PNA with performance tests, but also to threaten it with the *reversibility* of previous steps. The PNA is in a double bind, moreover, since the Palestinian opposition can also threaten the timetable. With acts of violence, the opposition can trigger Israeli counter-measures or reticence which, in turn, deprive the PNA of credibility and popular support. Ironically, activity by armed Jewish settlers is another double-edged threat, since it threatens both the Palestinians individually and collectively, and also reveals the PNA's inability to impose an end to this particular problem.

The potential for a spiral of violence and for a triangular punitive relationship involving Israel, the PNA, and the Palestinian opposition places the PNA between a rock and a hard place. Ultimately, the PNA has little *political* control over the terms of peace or security relations with Israel. At the same time, the PNA lacks most of the material resources with which real "peace dividends" could be offered to its public, in the form of housing, jobs, and public services. Indeed, economic control in all its aspects, or the lack of it, in itself presents a distinct threat to the PNA. Israel's closing off the Occupied Territories (banning daily labourers) or its separating East-Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank (strangling businesses and services) are only the most blatant examples of the economic threat. There is a structural economic threat as well, namely the Israeli ability to use devices such as standards to prevent the marketing of Palestinian goods. These threats may not always be used purely "defensively", that is to prevent terrorist attacks, but also for plainly coercive purposes. The final result is the weakening of the PNA's ability to maintain political stability and to confront security threats in areas under its control.

The above is not meant to suggest that the PNA is a passive actor, solely a victim of the policies of others. To the contrary, the PNA actively contributes to its own security dilemma through the governance and the administration of its own affairs. Certain threats are only the product of the PNA's particular world

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after the Oslo Accord, Israel remained in control of the entire territory of mandate Palestine, and retained the decisive say in all aspects of Palestinian life within those borders.

A number of the ways, in which Israel is perceived as a threat by the Palestinians, have already been described above. Non-military issues have been highlighted. Most important to reiterate here is Israel's *structural* dominance, through which Palestinian policy and behaviour can be contained, impeded, or directed in any functional sphere: be it security, economic, legal, infrastructural, or overtly political. Such control may be seen as a necessary defensive precaution on the Israeli side, and does not have to be threatening to the Palestinians. However, the "grey area" is important and allows considerable room for cynical exploitation or mismanagement. Even with the best will in the world, the requirements of security, as interpreted by the Israeli government, may be fundamentally destabilizing for the PNA. Border closures and labour bans, in response to terrorist attacks, are the most obvious examples. It becomes apparent in this context that, whatever impact the PNA might have on the process, through better or poorer management of its own affairs, resources, and opportunities, Israel retains the decisive influence in all cases.

Palestinian threat perceptions go further, however. At the most general level, there is the fear, already stated above, that Israel might seek deliberately to prevent any further transfer of territory and responsibility to the PNA. Total dependence on Israel's goodwill and judgment causes insecurity to the Palestinians. What would prevent a different Israeli government from reversing policy, or even from over-reacting, or exploiting any pretext to reassert physical control over Palestinian autonomous areas? How can the PNA react, if the Israeli authorities decide that only a pro-active, covert security policy by undercover agents in Palestinian autonomous areas will work to prevent terrorism - although such activity might by the same measure undermine the PNA, and irrevocably alienate its public? The Palestinians have little say in the matter, and their choice options are little more than the acceptance or the rejection of Israeli decisions on security matters.

At the wider level, the Palestinians also remain potential victims to developments in the Arab-Israeli arena, or in the Middle East as a whole. Specifically, Israel might regard certain developments as sufficient a cause to suspend the transfer of authority, or even to reverse it, because there might suddenly be a heightened risk of war with one or more states in the region. In such a context, strong opponents in Israel to the accords with the PLO might even be able to instigate "war" situations, if they wield sufficient government authority.

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the mainstream Fateh. Only those groups with an actual following in the Occupied Territories have any significance, and their strength is drawn from their local support rather than from Syria. Besides, the further Syria moves towards peace with Israel, the more it becomes a *status quo* power. Much the same might be said of Iraq or Libya, who in previous years backed Arafat's opponents, but now suffer from international isolation.

The Palestinian opposition, largely the Islamists, but also the secular PFLP and DFPLP, may pose a threat to the PNA and, arguably, to Palestinian social cohesion. In this case, the threat is primarily political, in the sense that the potency of the opposition lies in its ability to disrupt the autonomy process, and to antagonize PNA-Israeli relations. Failure to resolve internal differences may lead to civil strife on some scale or another, which would be a far more direct and damaging threat. Other sources of potential conflict relate to the presence of large numbers of former security prisoners (held by Israel for resisting its occupation) or PLO personnel, who have either been left in exile, or have been brought into the autonomous areas, but lack housing, income, and status. It is easy to conceive resentment leading to violence or to covert operations, on behalf of the opposition or outside parties. Latent regional or clan disputes may be aroused in such situations, increasing the risk of civil conflict.

4.5 Preliminary Outline of Confidence- and Security-Building

It is evident that while the danger of physical assault remains, the main threats to the Palestinians are not military in the immediate sense. This does not make them any less menacing, as in combination they pose an existential threat. The obvious implication is that the sort of confidence-building measures (CBMs) the Palestinians require, tend to have a high political significance. Two further, conflicting, practical implications follow. On the one hand, it should be easier for Israel, Jordan, or other parties to offer meaningful political CBMs, without affecting their own military security. On the other hand, the same parties might find it more difficult to offer political CBMs, without affecting their own core national interests and internal consensus.

However, there is considerable scope for the sort of CBMs most likely to help defuse tension within the Palestinian arena. The most obvious measure is the assistance to the conduct of general elections in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and further, the insurance that such elections will be designed to

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produce a politically credible and representative, and legislatively capable body. This would mean enabling all parties to compete, in order to endow the process with real legitimacy; and enabling both the parties and the PNA to conduct all related activities (such as campaigning) without impediment.

Ideally, the Israeli-Palestinian agreement on the nature and modalities of elections should also include one additional element, which has not been touched upon yet by neither side. This would be a clause permitting new elections in the future, or providing a mechanism to agree on new elections, as a fallback in case negotiations over the final status prove to be protracted. So far the elections are designed to be a one-off event. This could, however, lead to political deadlock, and to confusion on the Palestinian side, if a succession crisis occurred.

In any case, Israel should provide free access to population registers, in order to prepare electoral rolls. Indeed, Israel needs to provide access to population and land registers, as well as to other records (such as for water resources). This is part of a more fundamental confidence-building exercise, empowering the PNA to assume a real influence in the management of public goods and socio-economic policy. Movement regarding family reunification, or the return of persons displaced by the 1967 war is another major CBM.

The preceding examples are merely indications. The PNA itself could usefully employ CBMs, towards Israel or Jordan, as well as towards its internal opposition, achieving hereby a greater demonstrable effect. Clear policy statements regarding human and civil rights and the rule of law should be codified and, more importantly still, embodied in specific mechanisms and institutions (such as ombudsmen). Such mechanisms and institutions should serve to provide the public with independent channels for complaints and redress.⁷ Transparency in public appointments and contracts would also have a beneficial effect. Such an effect would also be attained thanks to a concerted effort to revitalize the education system, in order to absorb resentment and restore hope among the youthful and unemployed population.

At the end of the day, however, the PNA has limited resources. Even with good management and sound policies, the Palestinians remain the weakest party in the strategic equation. They can thus do little to pressure, or coerce their neighbours into altering negative policies. Besides, investments to improve

⁷ These and other ideas are contained in an internal memorandum prepared by the author while a member of the Palestinian delegation and submitted in late September. Parts were reproduced in an article in *al-Hayat*, 25 November 1994.

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security can have unwanted costs, such as the reduction in other forms of public expenditure and infrastructural investment which are urgently needed. Yet, insufficient allocation of resources to security may encourage hostile attention. A graphic example of the difficulty of striking the right balance is the building of a strong police force which may make good sense at one level. On the other hand, such a project is very costly financially and unsustainable.

This perspective is unlikely to change much, even after a permanent settlement has been reached. Israel is unlikely to permit the PNA or any successor entity to maintain a credible military force, be it even for purely defensive purposes. The Palestinians simply do not enjoy the human and financial resource base sufficient to maintain a large defence force anyway. Even if an independent Palestinian state was finally established, it is likely to be, to a high degree, demilitarized. It would further have little indigenous ability, either to defend itself against both military assault and non-military coercion, or to deter such action by its neighbours.⁸

The implication is that external parties will probably hold the key to the balance between the threats to Palestinian security and the Palestinian ability to deflect them.⁹ This is an uncomfortable, but unavoidable position to be in, for the duration of the interim period at least. The above applies, even if the terms of the peace settlement are relatively generous, since geography, comparative economic strength, and external alliances will limit the Palestinians in the foreseeable future. Indeed, they will face an arduous task simply to prevent Israel from annexing East-Jerusalem and sizeable parts of the West Bank in a final settlement.

What this suggests, first, is that the Palestinians might be well advised to seek a negotiated settlement in which political and security borders with Israel are clearly distinguished. A "hard" border with Israel would entail the substantial loss of territory, given the balance of power and realities on the ground, and would not really enhance Palestinian security, be it military or political. A functional

⁸ A useful and recent discussion of these and other security issues is Jeffrey Boutwell and Everett Mendelsohn (principal authors), *Israeli-Palestinian Security Issues in the Final Status*, Harvard, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995. An older discussion is in Ann Mosley Lesch (principal author), *Transition to Palestinian Self-Government: Practical Steps Toward Israeli-Palestinian Peace*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1992, Chapter Two.

⁹ This might include the deployment of international or multinational forces along Palestinian borders. For an early discussion, see Valerie Yorke, "Imagining a Palestinian state: an international security plan", *International Affairs*, Vol. 66, No 1, January 1990, pp. 115-36.

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approach to the coexistence of Palestinian and Israeli sovereignties, marked by "soft" borders is a possible alternative. In this option, considerable horizontal overlap and vertical differentiation would prevail. This might pose "tactical" security problems due to the intermingling of populations. It would, however, have the advantage of shielding the Palestinian entity from the conventional forms of military threat or non-military coercion.¹⁰

The second, strategic implication is the need for the Palestinians to ensure a significant part of their defence and of their ability to deter aggression or subversion, by promoting and joining regionally-based structures for security and co-operation. This might mean a trilateral "Benelux" arrangement with Israel and Jordan. Another possibility would be the creation of a wider Arab-Israeli "security community" based on neutrality and co-operative security.¹¹ At a minimum, the eventual Palestinian entity would need to find some reassurance in the construction of multilateral regional agencies in various fields - security, economic development and reconstruction, water, and environment (and, ideally, human rights and democracy) - and should actively seek the establishment of a Helsinki-type organization endorsing shared principles.¹² The ongoing multilateral peace talks might provide a suitable framework in the latter case.

The above may be the wisdom of weakness. However, the best assurance for the Palestinians in the long-run of protection against threats to their existence and well-being lies in the establishment of multilateral organizations, that constrain the strong as much as the weaker states. A deep structural crisis is overtaking the society, the economy, and politics in a growing number of Middle Eastern states. Therefore, a co-operative approach to security, based on formal treaties and institutions, may make the difference between collective stability and individual chaos.

¹⁰ These concepts are developed more fully in Yezid Sayigh, "Redefining the Basics: Sovereignty and Security in the Palestinian State", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No 4 (96), Summer 1995.

¹¹ The latter idea is developed in Ephraim Karsh and Yezid Sayigh, "A Cooperative Approach to Arab-Israeli Security", *Survival*, Vol. 36, No 1, Spring 1994.

¹² This idea is developed in Yezid Sayigh, "The Multilateral Middle East Peace Talks: Reorganizing for Regional Security and Cooperation", in Steven Spiegel (ed.), *Practical Peacemaking in the Middle East: Arms Control and Regional Security*, 1995. Another view of the Middle East is offered by Ahmad Khalidi, "Middle East security: A Palestinian Viewpoint", *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No 1, January 1995.

Chapter 5

Threat Perceptions from a Jordanian Point of View

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5.1 Preamble: A Hostile Environment

The political environment which fuels the Jordanian threat perceptions, among leaders and citizens alike, is dominated by three major elements. First, Israel and the concomitant Palestinian question; second, inter- and intra-Arab rivalry and disagreement, which also include radical and extremist movements; and finally, economic deprivation. Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been, in one form or another, a permanent source of danger to Jordan, notwithstanding the latest positive evolution of their relationship. Furthermore, the dismemberment of Palestine and the expulsion of more than half of its population across the borders into adjacent Arab countries, mainly into Jordan, have been the most threatening developments to the Hashemite Monarchy.

Zionism, in the first place, did not confine its territorial designs to Palestine, but extended them eastwards to include other vital areas. These areas also comprised Jordan, as it is geographically defined today. Until very recently, extremist elements and religious factions within the right-wing Likud party propagated the myth according to which "Jordan is Palestine". Yet, territorial aggrandizement has not been the only feature of the potential and actual Zionist threat according to Jordan. Jordan was inundated with large numbers of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, who were expelled from their homeland in 1948 and in 1967. As a result of these migration waves, the total number of Palestinians and their descendants who ended up taking residence in Jordan, exceeds two million. To them, tens of thousands of Palestinians who stayed in Jordan, as a last resort, must be added. They had either been deported by Israel, or denied the right to return to their homes on technical grounds after having left the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They had left their homes with valid permits from the Israeli military authorities, which should have allowed them to go back within a specific period of time.

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Above all and beyond the territorial and demographic threats for Jordan that emanated from the Arab-Israeli struggle over Palestine, Israel's overwhelming military power constituted a direct threat to Jordan. The two countries have fought two major wars, in addition to several other major battles.

The two-pronged threats perceived by Jordan of Israel, on the one hand, and of the Palestinian problem on the other, were further combined with Amman's almost constant mediocre relationship - at a strategic level - with key Arab actors. The confederal nature of the modern Arab political system, created in the wake of World War I, served as a backdrop to the Arab Cold War, which was marked by inter-Arab rivalry and competition, as well as by mistrust and by deep historical and personal antagonisms between the leading Arab regimes as well as between their leaders. Such a framework deepened disagreement and confrontation between them. The result has been a fragmented, ineffective and volatile Arab order. On several occasions, disagreement between two or more Arab states has escalated to open hostilities and perfidy. Due to historical and strategic considerations, Jordan has been very sensitive to Arab in-fighting, and susceptible to any changes in the fragile and ever-changing Arab balance of power.

In addition to this, the paucity of natural and material resources is a main source of discomfort and worry to the Jordanians. Chronic economic difficulties and dependency have been major causes of concern to both ordinary citizens and leaders in Jordan.

Finally, Jordan has not been immune to threats posed in various forms to internal security and national identity. Public security and political stability, though not jeopardized as such, are always being tested by dissenting local forces within the country, who operate outside the constitution. Such groups usually find encouragement and support from other regional actors - both Arab and non-Arab.

5.2 Sources of Threat

From the above-described hostile political environment, the major sources of threat from a Jordanian point of view can be discerned, and can be summed up as follows:

- 5.2.1 Israel;
- 5.2.2 The Palestinian Problem;
- 5.2.3 Intra-Arab Politics and Inter-Arab Divisions;
- 5.2.4 Economic Vulnerability;

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the individuals of Jordanian origin and the individuals of Palestinian roots. The preferences, as well as the perspectives, of the two groups vis-à-vis available options for Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza are not identical. But both sides feel that, irrespective of the outcome of the on-going process, their interests will be harmed in some fashion. Jordanians of Palestinian origin fear that the emergence of an autonomous or independent state on the West Bank and Gaza will undermine their status in their present abode. They feel they may have to choose between Jordan or Palestine as a homeland. This would not be an easy choice for many. On the other hand, individuals of Jordanian origin are afraid that the final product will not tackle their demographic concerns vis-à-vis the former group. An unified Jordan has to come to terms with what will inevitably be a less than satisfactory outcome.

Going beyond the communal level to a higher one, Jordan's politicians are apprehensive as to the future choices realistically available to the Palestinians. At the strategic level, Jordanian leaders are always wary that the Palestinians would either opt for a strategic understanding with Israel - albeit as a last resort and/or tacitly - or succumb to its dictate. Either choice is perilous to Jordan. By the same token, Israel may absorb the Palestinians militarily and diplomatically, dominate them economically and succeed in realising its long-sought objective of separating the Palestinian population from its territory. Jordan resents the idea of such a scenario. Palestinians in this case would be forced to seek the realisation of their political and national aspirations somewhere else. It is probable that they would do so - as many Jordanians fear - in Jordan. Shimon Peres' notion of a "Benelux" comprising of Jordan, the Palestinians, and Israel is a nightmare to individuals of Jordanian origin. Peres is envisaging an economic union between Israel and the Palestinians and a political one between the latter and Jordan. This exposes Jordanian demographic vulnerability to its limits.

On the other hand, the idea of a collapse of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations is just as threatening to Jordan. The prospects of such an eventuality are alarming too. The essential requirement for a stable Jordanian-Israeli agreement, for a durable peace in the region, and especially for the comprehensiveness of such a settlement will be seriously impaired if the Palestinian problem cannot be satisfactorily solved. The Jordanian leaders believe that a successful outcome of the autonomy talks would be less threatening to their country's interests than a negative result.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is the other partner in the Palestinian question. The relationship between Jordan and the PNA is very complex. The PNA's inherent weakness vis-à-vis Israel and its ambiguous attitude

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The PNA's economic and financial policies are another source of discomfort to the Jordanians. The Jordanian Dinar is the main currency in the West Bank and in Gaza. About one third of Jordan's printed currency is estimated to be in use in the Occupied Territories. At the same time, many private economic enterprises in Jordan have established contacts in the Palestinian territories. The economies of the two regions are intertwined. Therefore, Jordanians have always been very apprehensive to being subjected to the whims of an unstable and unreliable partner to the West. Furthermore, Jordan is likely to be affected by intra-Palestinian politics. Potential and apparent fighting between the Palestinian groups in the Occupied Territories could well spread or spill over into Jordan, thus disturbing the country's stability.

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Jordan has a fragile economy. Although the country's economy has expanded at a steady pace, it has always experienced painful periods of interruption over the past few decades. Jordan's rapid growth came to a sudden halt in the early 1980s, due to the fall of oil prices worldwide, and to the concomitant regional decrease. Since 1989, Jordan's economy has been making progress, but at a slow pace. Economic retreat reached its peak in 1989, when the official foreign exchange reserves were depleted. The country devalued its currency, rescheduled its foreign debt, and adopted an austerity programme which included an import ban on luxury products, much higher tariffs on permitted imports, fewer subsidies, and lower government spending.

The bleak economic situation was further aggravated by the second Gulf War. More than 300,000 persons poured into the country over a relatively short period of time. This caused extreme pressure on the social services and on an already faltering economy, not to mention the impact of the newcomers - the "returnees" as they are called - on the demographic balance of the country. Direct costs from the moment they arrived in Jordan, according to official estimates, will reach more than \$4.5 billion per year, and this over the period of the next five years. This is only little less than double the country's total budget for 1995. The return of these 300,000 or more people not only tested Jordan's weak economy, but also highlighted the country's central dilemma, which is the gap between resources and population.

Due to chronic economic difficulties, unemployment has risen to around 15 per cent. In the wake of the peace agreement with Israel, prices were hiked further, and an element of unpredictability could be discerned. The problem of poverty has even worsened. Jordan is not allowed to trade with Iraq, its main trading partner, since the United States and its close allies in the GCC have been linking the lifting of the embargo imposed on Iraq for the past four years, to Iraqi President Saddam Houssein's departure. At the same time, the GCC countries are imposing a semi-official embargo on trade with Jordan. Even Israel still enforces discriminatory restrictions on Jordan's goods entering the Occupied Territories (the West Bank including Jerusalem and Gaza) and Israel.

In a nutshell, the country is experiencing serious economic problems, and in particular those of poverty and unemployment. Opposition groups are betting on further deterioration of the situation, and on the possibility of an economic breakdown. Original high expectations about the peace dividend have been dampened by the reactions of potential donors and prospective investors from Western nations and their enterprises. This has exacerbated concerns among the Jordanian population. The gloomy prospects of the economic situation, coupled

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with painful political compromises in the peace agreements with Israel, constitute a serious challenge to Jordan's internal stability.

5.2.5 Extremism and Radicalism

Islamist groups in Jordan are not as violent or extreme as their kin in other countries in the region. Their relations with the regime are at present not under too much strain. The relative tolerance with which the authorities have dealt with the mainstream groups in the Islamic Movement - the Moslem Brotherhood - has, so far, paid off. The groups have displayed rationality and moderation. The mainstay of the Islamists have confined their opposition to means allowed under the provisions of the country's constitution. But Jordanian leaders are not entirely reassured as to the ultimate objective of the Islamic Movement. External meddling or manipulation is possible. Their affinity with the two Palestinian Islamic organizations, Hamas and al-Jihad, remains very strong. Together with other active political groups, they oppose normalisation with Israel. Potential economic pay offs of the peace process seem to be linked to having normal relations between Jordan, the Palestinians and Israel. This means that Jordanian authorities have to pursue the "normalisation" to its logical conclusion, despite the vehement, though peaceful, objection from various sectors of the population and from powerful political groups. There is genuine fear that the issue of "normalisation" with Israel may undermine the present modus operandi existing between the regime and the opposition groups.

Problems such as internal insurrection, subversion and political violence do not exist in Jordan. Yet, the country has experienced such problems in the past. The domestic and regional ingredients of political instability exist. So does the fear among Jordanians of such an eventuality. The fact that King Hussein continuously stresses the necessity of preserving national unity reflects the concern about such potential domestic unrest. The domestic scene remains susceptible to being manipulated by external powers. Various ethnic and regional groups have strong links and achieved a satisfactory level of understanding and co-existence in the past. Despite this cohesion, social and national integration is not complete. The results of a recent poll conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan underlined this fact.¹ The maintenance of harmony and social

¹ *Jordanian-Palestinian Relations*, a poll conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, February 1995.

Chapter 6

Overcoming Prejudice: A Syrian Perception of the Israeli Threat in the Arab-Israeli Region of Conflict

Abdulhay Sayed*

"Je ne conteste aucunement que le fâcheux blocus du golf d'Akaba était unilatéralement dommageable à votre pays et je ne méconnais pas que celui-ci eût lieu de se sentir menacé, étant donné la tension où était plongée la région palestinienne par suite du flot d'invectives prodiguées à l'encontre d'Israël en même temps que le sort lamentable des Arabes réfugiés en Jordanie ou relégués à Gaza. Mais je demeure convaincu qu'en passant outre aux avertissements donnés, en temps voulu, à votre gouvernement par celui de la République Française, en entamant les hostilités, en prenant, par la force des armes, possession de Jérusalem, et de maints territoires jordaniens, égyptiens, et syriens, en y pratiquant la répression et les expulsions, qui sont inévitablement les conséquences d'une occupation dont tout indique qu'elle tend à l'annexion, en affirmant devant le monde que le règlement du conflit ne peut être réalisé que sur la base des conquêtes acquises et non pas à condition que celles-ci soient évacuées, Israël dépasse les bornes de la modération nécessaire" Private letter from President De Gaulle to Ben Gourion after the 1967 war (Source: Henri Laurens, *Le grand jeu*, Paris, 1991, p. 214).

6.1 Introduction

The Israeli threat has marked Syrian politics since 1948, and largely influenced Syria's behavior in the regional and international context.

While both Iraq and Turkey share with Syria long borders and international watercourses, which could be a source of many threats, the numerous frictions that have occurred as a result of water issues or other border issues did not in any way develop into violent armed clashes such as those which have erupted on many occasions between Israel and Syria along their mutual border, or along the

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6.2 The Israeli Perception of Threat as Understood by Syrians

6.2.1 An Overview of the Israeli Perceptions of the Threats Emanating From Syria

According to Israeli sources, the idea that it was the Arabs, and only the Arabs, who initiated hostilities¹ in this region by refusing, without any justification, the "very existence"² of the peaceful and democratic "Israeli" state amongst them, is very much present in the Israeli consciousness. Arab hostility is indeed unequivocally evidenced by the huge Arab arms build-up,³ not only in conventional weapons, but also in non-conventional mass destruction weaponry⁴ and missile capabilities. In fact, it is extremely alarming, for Israelis, to observe that in the Arab countries ample financial resources are still being devoted to armament, despite apparent economic difficulties in most Arab societies.

¹ See for example, Yehoshafat Harrkabi, *Arab Strategies and Israel's Response*, 1977; Shmuel Limone, *The Arab Threat: The Israeli Perspective*, Chapter 2 of this book, p. 9; Alpher, "Israel's Security Concerns in the Peace Process", *International Affairs*, Vol. 70, No 2, 1994, p. 231; Mordechai Gur, "Destabilizing Elements of the Middle East Military Balance", in *Arms Control in the Middle East*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, Study No 15, 1990, p. 13; Daniel Pipes, "Is Damascus Ready for Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, 1990, p. 38; Ariel Levite, "Israel's Security Conception and its Attitude Toward Arms Control", in *Arms Control in the Middle East*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, Study No 15, 1990, p. 125; Gerald Steinberg, *A Realistic Approach to Arms Control: An Israeli Perspective*, UNIDIR, Conference of Research Institutes in the Middle East, 1994, p. 70; Aryeh Shalev, *Israel and Syria: Peace and Security on the Golan*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, Study No 24, 1994, p. 11; Ariel Levite, "Israel's Security Concerns: Characteristics and Implications", in Shai Feldman (ed.), *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, Jaffee Center For Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, pp. 184-194, p. 186; Shai Feldman, *Israel's National Security: Perceptions and Policy*, paper presented at the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts' Workshop on "A Future Security Architecture in the Middle East", held in Cyprus on 17-19 August 1995, p. 2.

² Shalheveth Freier, *A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East and its Ambiance*, UNIDIR, project on "Confidence Building in the Middle East", pp. 10, 12; Ze'ev Begin, "The Likud Vision for Israel at Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1991, pp. 21-36.

³ See for example Shmuel Limone, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 6; Ze'ev Begin, *The Likud Vision*, pp. 29, 33; Shai Feldman, "Security and Arms Control in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective", in Shelley Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp (eds), *Arms Control and Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, 1991, pp. 75-91; Mordechai Gur, *Destabilizing Elements*, pp. 9, 13.

⁴ Shai Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Many Israelis argue that the post-conflictual regional security of the "Middle East" should only address the situation of Israel as "a small nation within a large collective of mostly hostile states".⁵ To Israelis, the source of their security preoccupation not only is the violent hostility of the Arabs. According to them, the vulnerability of the Israeli society should also be taken into consideration in this respect. Indeed, Israelis continuously stress how disadvantageous in strategic depth⁶, inferior in population,⁷ feeble to sustain long wars,⁸ unsupported by anyone⁹ in the world, and dependent on the whole world for every source of energy or income Israel is. All these factors of vulnerability have had for the Israelis considerable direct repercussions on their security.

Israeli experts often conclude that Israel, and only Israel, feels insecure,¹⁰ and that to a large extent the violent and hostile Arab neighbors have always been the source of this insecurity. To many Israelis, Syria has always been, and still is, hostile to Israel. Israelis often direct their interlocutors to the merciless and unprovoked Syrian harassment and to the hostility against the Israeli northern demographic concentrations before 1967.¹¹ It is in response to the threat posed by the Syrian heavy artillery on the Golan before 1967 that Israel, according to the official Israeli declarations, took the Golan in order to guarantee the security of its northern borders. Israelis often point to the Hizbollah attacks on northern Israel as having also been inspired from, and sponsored to a large extent by, Syria. Many Israelis have indeed the firm conviction that the termination of the Hizbollah attacks on northern Israel depends largely on decisions taken by the Syrians.

6.2.2 Israeli Strategies

⁵ Shalhevet Freier, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
⁶ See for example Alpher, *op. cit.*, p. 231; Shmuel Limone, *op. cit.*, p. 2, 4; Yair Evron, *Israel*, p. 279; Shai Feldman, *op. cit.*, p. 77; Mordechai Gur, *op. cit.*, pp. 9, 13; Avi Kober, "Deterrence, Early Warning and Strategic Decision: The Israeli Security Conception in the Wake of the Gulf War", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 15, No 3, December 1994, pp. 228-250.
⁷ See for example Shmuel Limone, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Yair Evron, *op. cit.*, p. 279; Dore Gold, "Evaluating the Threat to Israel in an Era of Change", in Shai Feldman and Ariel Levite (eds), *Arms Control and the New Middle East Security Environment*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 100.
⁸ Shai Limone, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
⁹ *Ibid.*
¹⁰ M. Arens, *Toward a Strategically Stable Middle East...*, p. 135.
¹¹ See for example B. Netanyahu, *A Place among the Nations*, p. 133.

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To face the presumed unjustified hostility from the Arab world, and to overcome the existing asymmetry in number *vis-à-vis* the Arabs, Israel has pursued a strategy of stressing absolute qualitative superiority¹² *vis-à-vis* Arabs. More specifically, Israeli planners adopted a strategy of "cumulative deterrence"¹³ against the Arabs. This refers, according to Israel's founding father, Ben-Gurion, to the conviction that Israel's Arab neighbors would not accept Israel as a permanent factor in the region, until the Jewish state established a record of repeated successes on the battlefield, that would convince the Arab states that Israel could not be defeated militarily. This implied that Israel should, in one way or another, overcome the inherent asymmetry in the attributes of force between itself and the Arab states, and withstand the confrontation of any coalition between two or more Arab states. This Israeli structural inferiority created the imperative for Israel, according to its experts, to wage short wars, and to avoid waging war on Israeli soil. The strategy adopted to this end was based on the principle of delivering the battle to the enemy's territory as rapidly as possible. The principle was accompanied by an offensive military doctrine, that emphasized preemptive strikes.¹⁴ Israel also relied on achieving considerable qualitative superiority with the acquisition of high technology weapons of all sorts and configurations.

A central pillar of the Israeli "cumulative deterrence" has also been the posture of ambiguity with regard to its possession of nuclear weapons.¹⁵ This "strategic deterrence"¹⁶ has guaranteed Israel nationhood,¹⁷ in a region where its very existence has been denied.¹⁸ Indeed, the importance given by the Arabs to the presumed Israeli nuclear capability provides ample evidence for the effective contribution of this potential to Israel's cumulative deterrence. The extended deterrence by the Western allies, especially the United States, should not be

¹² Mordachai Gur, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹³ Shai Feldman, "Israel's Changing Environment: Implication for Arms Control", in *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 196.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Yair Evron, *Israel's Nuclear Dilemma*, New York, 1994, p. 43.

¹⁵ For an explanation of Israel's ambiguous posture see Yair Evron, *op. cit.*, New York, 1994, p. 270.

¹⁶ Gerald Steinberg, "Middle East Arms Control Regional Security", *Survival*, Vol. 36, No 1, Spring 1994, pp. 126-141.

¹⁷ See the reported declarations made by Shimon Peres in this direction in William Burrows, Robert Windrom, *Critical Mass, The Dangerous Race for Superweapons in a Fragmenting World*, New York, 1994, p. 282.

¹⁸ Shalheveth Freier, *op. cit.*, UNIDIR, project on "Confidence Building in the Middle East".

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ignored in this context. The special strategic relationship with the US¹⁹ has played a major role in the Israeli strategy of "cumulative deterrence".²⁰

6.3 The Syrian Perception of the Threats Emanating from Israel

6.3.1 An Overview of the Syrian Perception of the Threats Emanating From Israel

The Syrian perception viewed the conflict and Israel otherwise. Syrians often rely in their perception on what has really happened, not on what is widely being believed in the Western sources. Syrian analysts, as other Arab analysts, would first point out that international, and specifically Western public opinion is largely influenced by efficient propaganda, that has for its purpose the distortion of reality, to the Arab disadvantage.

Many Syrians, as their fellow Arabs in Palestine, perceive themselves as victims of an enormous injustice directed against them, of incomprehension regarding their concerns, and of total ignorance of their rights. They have been persistently subjugated, since the establishment of the state of Israel, to Israeli aggression aiming at maximising territory, and to Israeli military superiority aiming at regional domination.

6.3.1.1 Israeli Aggressions Against Arabs

According to the Syrians, Israeli "egocentrism" and "intransigence" initiated hostility in the region. With its establishment in 1948, Israel, from a Syrian perspective, purposely disregarded the Arab concerns, and their rights to self-determination, threatening, with all means of confrontation, the peace and security of simple societies, who had been exhausted by centuries of occupation.

¹⁹ For an evaluation of this special relationship with the US see William Burrows, Robert Windrom, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

²⁰ On deterrence theory in Israeli thinking see for example *Deterrence in the Middle East, Where Theory and Practice Converge*, Ahron Klieman and Ariel Levite (eds), Jaffee Center For Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1993; Avi Kober, "Deterrence, Early Warning and Strategic Decision: The Israeli Security Conception in the Wake of the Gulf War", *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 15, No 3, December 1994, pp. 228-250; Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980s*, New York, 1982.

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aggression on the part of the Israelis.²⁷ After launching an unprovoked all-out military assault on Egypt with the help of France and Britain,²⁸ Israeli aggression, from the Syrian perspective, culminated in the 1967 attack that permitted Israel to occupy territories, the area of which exceeded that of Israel itself.²⁹

²⁷ As pointed out above, the argument has often been made in Israeli sources that their attacks had deterrent value, and were indeed indispensable to Israel's security, as they took place only in reaction to hostilities from the Arabs. Nevertheless experience, from a Syrian perspective, shows that Israel's aggressivity has only been indispensable to its expansionist intentions. In the attack conducted by Sharon against a Syrian village in 1955, Israel justified its action by arguing that the raid was in retaliation for a previous day's incident, in which Syrian troops had fired (causing no casualties) at an Israeli patrol boat on lake Tiberias. This argument was disbelieved by objective research. According to Benny Morris, the raid was a well rehearsed military assault with border aims. For Morris, "the thinking behind the strike was to provoke Egypt into honoring its recent mutual defense pact with Syria by attacking Israel, thereby igniting the war Israel sought with Egypt". (See B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars...*, p. 364). Indeed Aryeh Shalev from the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, after a careful scrutiny of the incidents that occurred between Israel and Syria from the signing of the armistice agreement until 1967, concluded that "Israel was not always the innocent lamb and Syria not always the wolf. In the first years of the armistice regime, it was Israel that tried unilaterally to effect changes in the status quo in the Demilitarized Zones." (A. Shalev, *Israel and Syria, Peace and Security on the Golan*, Jaffee Center of Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 45.)

²⁸ In response to Israel's increasing efforts for armament, but especially to the Baghdad Pact, Nasser concluded the famous Czech arms deal in 1955. This was considered intolerable in Israel. This deal immediately raised the specter of an Israeli preemptive war, before Egypt absorbed the new weapons and became too strong. Nevertheless, Israel, according to Morris, could not launch an unprovoked all-out assault on the Egyptian army, for it would have been branded the aggressor, and have lost Western support. The policy of trapping Nasser into war by provoking him by a series of "justified" air strikes on Arab and especially Syrian villages revealed to be thus indispensable (see B. Morris, *Israel's Border Wars...*, p. 279; M. Tessler, *op. cit.*, p. 346; H. Laurens, *op. cit.*, p. 139).

²⁹ In the 1967 war, Israel justified its massive attack stating it had acted in self-defense in the face of the growing threat posed by Syrian heavy artillery on the Golan heights. President Nasser's bellicious actions, and his asking the UN troops stationed in Sinai, as a result of previous Israeli aggression to leave, and his order to close the strait of Tiran were also perceived as threatening by Israel. (See for example S. Freier, *op. cit.*, p. 11). Nevertheless, it has been remarked from objective reliable sources that the threat posed to Israel by Syrian heavy artillery on the Golan before 1967 does not appear to have had at the time the prominence, that it subsequently acquired in Israeli pronouncements. Donald Neef observed that none of the UNTSO chiefs of staff in their *mémoires* considered the Golan gun emplacements as especially menacing. Neef seldom mentions the heights at all. Indeed, UNTSO Chief of Staff, von Horn, was one of the few to make a direct reference to Syrian guns on the Golan, remarking "it is unlikely that these would ever have come into action had it not *been for Israeli provocation*" (emphasis added). (See C. von Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 117). For Neef, "the efficacy of Syrian artillery on the Golan Heights was not great enough to

aimed at confronting conventional Arab forces.³⁸ In such an environment of conflict in which Israel has always been the aggressor, the Israeli statements, in the course of four military confrontations, three nuclear alerts - in two of which the contiguous Syria was involved - according to which Israel would not hesitate to use tactical nuclear weapons for any reason whatsoever, are largely enough to further increase Syria's sense of insecurity.

In addition, all Arab cities, but especially those in Syria, lie worryingly within the target range of the Israeli nuclear weapons.³⁹ They are absolutely vulnerable compared to Israel. The Syrians simply do not have access to any of the similar defensive systems which Israel has acquired, or has presently achieved developing. Israel is thus capable at any time, and with any given justification, of incinerating, with a limited use of its nuclear capability, three quarters of the Syrian population. Many large Syrian demographic concentration, such as Damascus, Homs, Hama, Latakiah, or Aleppo, may well be declared uninhabited areas for a decade, as a result of any limited Israeli use of its reported nuclear capability. From a Syrian perspective, experience has shown that this is not an unlikely, but rather a very possible scenario, due to the combination in the Israeli case of an expansionist ideology with aggressive intentions, thus of irrationality with nuclear weapons. Indeed the worst can be expected.

6.3.2 Syrian Strategies

In response to the different sources of threat posed by Israel, Syria has oriented its action, following the second Egyptian disengagement agreement in 1975, towards the goal of attaining a "strategic parity" with Israel. Syrian awareness of the Arabs' inferiority *vis-à-vis* Israel, not only in terms of military capabilities, but also in all other sectors of life, due to the Western unequivocal support for the superiority of Israel, has encouraged its officials to preach such a strategy, with the help of the Egyptians.

³⁸ F. Barnaby, *The Invisible Bomb, The Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East*, London, 1991, p. 64; Y. Sayigh, *Middle Eastern Stability*, p. 191.

³⁹ S. Hersh, *The Samson Option, Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, New York, 1991, p. 319.

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any of its corresponding systems.⁵² For many Israelis, any Israeli qualitative superiority has, in the particular context of Israel facing the violent Arab and Islamic hostility, a stabilizing factor that should be preserved, even in times of peace, for the region to remain durably stable. Considerable limitations on many Arab conventional weapons should thus be seriously considered by the Arabs. The elimination of all Arab chemical and biological capabilities, in the context of the global conventions, should also be undertaken, as a further step on the Israeli Arms Control agenda. For the Israeli negotiator, priority should be assigned to controlling non-conventional systems of which experience has proven them to be destructive and destabilizing; that is, those systems that have caused massive casualties, suffering and destruction in regional wars, alluding specifically to non-conventional weapons in the hands of Arab countries. Limitation on Arab missile capabilities should also be discussed at a further stage in the process.

Any negotiations on the nuclear weapons presumably possessed by Israel, or on the establishment of Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the region should come at the end of the process.⁵³ Israel may accept, at this stage, to limit its capability in a regional framework that might be agreed upon. As has been outlined above, the Israeli nuclear capability was, according to Israeli experts, developed to deter threats to national survival. As long as threats continue to be posed to the very existence of Israel, the nuclear weapons will continue to be the guarantor for its statehood. For Israeli specialists, efforts to force Israel to give up its nuclear option without major reductions of the Arab conventional forces will be interpreted by Israeli policy makers as evidence that the "Arab states wish to retain the option of waging wars against Israel"⁵⁴ with nothing to worry about.

The opposite standpoint is held by Arabs, and especially Syrians, usually viewing the major components of the Israeli military strategy as particularly

⁵² Ariel Levite, "Prospects for Middle East Arms Control in the Aftermath of the Gulf War", in *Arms Control and the New Middle East Security Environment*, Shai Feldman and Ariel Levite (eds), Jaffee Center For Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 120.

⁵³ Gerald Steinberg, "Middle East Arms Control Regional Security", *Survival*, Vol. 36, No 1, Spring 1994, p. 128; Shai Feldman, "Israel's Changing Environment: Implications for Arms Control", in Shai Feldman (ed.) *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, Jaffee Center For Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University 1994, p. 202; Shai Feldman, "Security and Arms Control in the Middle East: An Israeli Perspective", in A. Shelley Stahl and Geoffrey Kemp (eds), *Arms Control and Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia*, New York, 1991, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Shalheveth Freier, *A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East and its Ambiance*, UNIDIR, project on "Confidence-Building in the Middle East", p. 4.

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threatening and destabilizing. For Syrian planners, the Israeli emphasis on offensive military operations, preemptive strikes, and the transfer of the battle to the enemy's territory are seen as evidence of an "aggressive policy with clear expansionist aims".⁵⁵ Arabs often affirm that Israel initiated the arms race in the region, and has driven it to dangerous proportions afterwards.⁵⁶ At a time when Arabs had to confront the aggressive Zionist enterprise aiming at establishing, at the expenses of the indigenous Arabs, a Jewish state on Palestine soil, Israel enjoyed qualitative superiority over all Arabs. All subsequent Arab rearmament, in the Arab-Israeli region, was always seen as an effort to catch up with the Israeli superiority in conventional weapons. Hence, the presumed acquisition by some Arab parties of chemical or biological weapons was perceived by Arab defence planers to offset the Israeli nuclear possession. Chemical weapons were the "poor and the-wanting-to-be-weak man's bomb". Also, any acquisition by an Arab party, in the Arab-Israeli region, of surface-to-surface missiles sought in reality to counterbalance the deep penetration of the Israeli Air Force aerial capability. Missiles are mobile and generally cheaper than aircrafts, and do not require vulnerable exposed infrastructures, such as air fields for the air force, and enjoy effective deep penetration in enemy territory. To this effect, Arab experts and defence planers have always operated a link between chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as weapons of mass destruction, and a link between air force capabilities and surface-to-surface missiles, as delivery systems.

As a result of such a perception, the Arab, and especially the Syrian, position⁵⁷ stresses in general terms the goal of arms control arrangements being that of ensuring that no state would gain a strategic or military advantage over the others, but that all parties should attain more security at the end of the process. Many Arab countries have emphasized the idea that the parties should shift the

⁵⁵ Ahmed Hashim, "Arms Control and the Arab's Strategic Environment", in *Confidence Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, Shai Feldman (ed.), Jaffee Center For Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, p. 173.

⁵⁶ International Atomic Energy Agency, Statement of the Iraqi Representative to the General Conference Mr. Al-Matook, GC(XXXV) OR.342, 11 October 1991, p. 6.

⁵⁷ For a Syrian view on the future regional arms control regime see Abdulhay Sayed, *The Future of Security in the Arab Israeli Region: A Critical Appraisal*, paper presented at the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts' conference on "A Future Security Architecture in the Middle East", held in Cyprus, 17-19 August 1995, unpublished; Abdulhay Sayed, *Syria Israel, and Regional Peace and Security Building*, Project on "Confidence-Building in the Middle East", UNIDIR, unpublished; Diab M. Zuhair, "Regional Arms Control in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Syrian Perspective" (in Arabic), in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Spring 1994, pp. 38-51.

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focus in military doctrines from deterrence to basic defence, and that all arms transfers to the region should be modelled accordingly.⁵⁸

As to the possession by Israel of nuclear weapons and Israel's constant effort to justify their continued existence in the region, even after the conclusion of peace agreements, Arab and Syrian analysts persistently assert that nuclear weapons are inherently destabilizing,⁵⁹ notwithstanding assertions to the contrary. The devastating destructiveness of the nuclear weapons exceeds by far any rationale for their justification in the particular context of Israel, especially since the latter has always enjoyed absolute superiority in conventional weapons against all its presumed Arab enemies.

The Arab and Syrian Arms Control agendas contain generally different priorities, that are more aware of the eminence of the different existing threats to the overall regional security. While Arabs and Syrian will endeavor to stress their national concerns when negotiating with Israel, they will also insist on the elimination of all the threats posed to the overall regional security.

It is according to this logic that many Arab states would encourage effective negotiation on regional security to deal first with the most destabilizing of weapon systems, and to end up with the least destabilizing, in relative terms. Negotiation on the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone should thus come at the top of the agenda not at its bottom, as Israeli experts advocate.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

It seems obvious that most of the technical problems between the Syrians and the Israelis in their negotiations for the future security arrangements to be applied to the Golan, and most of the differences between the propositions of the Syrians and the Israelis regarding the overall regional security lie in the opposing threat

⁵⁸ Abdel Halim Ahmed, "Middle East Regional Arms Control and Security", in *Confidence-Building and Verification: Prospects in the Middle East*, Shai Feldman (ed.), Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1994, pp. 177-183.

⁵⁹ See for example Abdulhay Sayed, *The Arab Security Dilemma: Normalization with Nuclear Weapons?*, paper presented at the University of California, Los Angeles, Center for International Relations' conference on "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East", held in Cyprus, 19-23 August 1995, unpublished; Yezid Sayigh, *Middle Eastern Stability and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Afraim Karsh, Martin Navis, and Philip Sabin, *Non Conventional Weapons Proliferation in the Middle East Tackling the Spread of Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Capabilities*, Oxford, 1993, p. 184.

perceptions on both sides. Questions such as which party is more threatened in the particular context of the Golan, or whose security should be primarily addressed in the overall future regional security have not found a satisfactory solution yet. This holds true for the bilateral talks between the parties concerned, as well as for the multilateral talks stimulating the debate, between the regional actors over the future of post-conflictual regional security.

Israel continues to assert its position according to which the technical security arrangements on the Golan should primarily address the Israeli concerns, and that no negotiation on the most destabilizing of all weapons, namely the nuclear weapon, and no adherence to the global NPT regime can be made possible before all the Arab parties adhere to major arms reductions in all their defensive systems.

In such a context, the Arabs in general, and the Syrians in particular, will have to continue to assert as boldly as possible their concerns *vis-à-vis* Israel, in all negotiating frameworks. They will also have to navigate against the Western acquiescence to the Israeli security concerns, and will have inevitably to resist growing pressures requiring more compromise at the expense of their own concerns. A considerable effort of rational persuasion on the negotiating table, and in all other fora of debate on regional security, should be exerted by all Arab parties, to overcome the prejudice associated with the Arab perceptions and concerns, in order to make the Israeli party appreciate, at least for the first time in its history, the real concerns of the Arabs from the threats emanating from Israel.

A further effort should also be devoted to convincing the Israelis that durable peace and security in the Arab-Israeli region of conflict can only be based on the fundamental idea that "states can non longer seek security at each other's expense",⁶⁰ and that the unrestrained pursuit of national security interests at the expense of others is "not conducive to international security and may even lead to disaster".⁶¹ It is thus imperative for the countries in the Arab-Israeli region to reconcile the contradictions between individual national security interests, and the overall interest of regional and international security and peace. The Israeli negotiator should be cognizant of the fact that durable security relations among all regional actors should be based on respect for the principles of equality,

⁶⁰ Johan Jørgen Holst, "Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Framework", *Survival*, Vol. 27, No 1, January 1983, p. 2.

⁶¹ United Nations, *Study on Concepts of Security*, Department of Disarmament Affairs, New York, 1986, p. 15.

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reciprocity, mutuality,⁶² and non-discrimination, and that these relations should reflect the desire of the people in the region to live in peace and equal security.

This would inevitably require the encouragement in Israeli society of conciliatory political forces capable of uprooting Israelis from their egocentric perceptions of security. A shift in the Israeli thinking, from egocentrism that has usually favored the national security at the expense of others, to a more genuine attention to the concerns of their neighbors, with whom Israel is expected to cohabitate, and to the requirements of the overall regional security, is indispensable. Indeed, only then can there be a durable peace and security not only for the Arabs, but also for the Israelis.

⁶² Diab M. Zuhair, "Regional Arms Control in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Syrian Perspective", in Arabic, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Spring 1994, p. 39.

Chapter 7

Security and Threat Perceptions in Saudi Arabia

*Saleh Al-Mani**

Saudi Arabia is a large country, its territory extends over 2,300,000 km (839,000 miles), and encompasses almost eighty per cent of the Arabian Peninsula. It almost equals in size the surface of Western Europe, and represents one-fourth of the area of the United States. The country is the birth place of Islam, and contains within its boundaries two of the holiest shrines of the Moslem world: Makkah and Madinah. It has a special and reciprocal bond and affiliation with the world Moslem community of one thousand million persons, who live across the globe.

Beside Makkah and Madinah, the Jerusalem mosque is the third holiest shrine in Islam, from which all Moslems believe that Mohammed (Peace be - upon Him) ascended to heaven, and Jesus would descend upon earth at the end of the world in Jerusalem to bring back justice and equality to mankind.

Next to those religious bonds, that attach the people of Saudi Arabia to the holy sites in Makkah, Madinah, and Jerusalem, and that characterize the country, the second fundamental feature of Saudi Arabia is oil. The country is the largest oil producing country in the world, and holds within its territory approximately forty percent of the world proven oil reserves. It also produces five percent of the world petrochemical products.

The economy almost totally depends on the extraction of this mineral resource, and has always adopted policies which would ensure continuous and secure access to oil markets.

Within the three parameters of geography, Islam and oil, the security policies of Saudi Arabia can be read. Within these three basic factors of territory, society and economy, we can delineate issues affecting the country's foreign and defence policies. In addition, Saudi Arabia finds those factors to be a source of strength and confidence, as it deals with the outside world. However, its security, like that of many other states, exhibits certain limitations. These require the adoption of

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particular strategies in view of addressing peculiar problems of the Saudi security paradigm.

The large territory of the country required its leaders, since the country's unification by the late King Abdul Aziz in 1926, to seek the delimitation of the borders of the young state towards its neighbouring countries. The existence of extensive oil deposits along some of these borders did not facilitate the delineation, and led as well at times to conflicts due to the neighbouring states' ambitions. In few instances, such conflicts did erupt in small open border clashes. This was the case with the British, during their occupation of the Southern Arabian Gulf. This was also the case of the dispute for the control of the Bruaimi Oasis (1949- 1955), during the small border clash with Southern Yemen, over the area of "Wadiyah" in 1975. And more recently, clashes have occurred between the tribes of Qatar and Saudi Arabia in 1992, over the shores of the Gulf of Khor Al-Adeed. It is remarkable that in all of those clashes, Saudi Arabia has succeeded in limiting the size of the conflict and in accepting third party mediation. Saudi Arabia has always sought to find a just and a diplomatic solution to the at times difficult and competing national claims over border regions.¹ Thus, the demarcation of borders by negotiations has been a whole mark of Saudi security policy. This is explained by the guiding principles of the country's policy, which are to reach consensus with its neighbours, to minimize the political ramifications of any dispute, and to enhance the security and stability of the region as a whole. In this regard, over the last seven decades, the Saudi state did succeed in the demarcation of its boundaries with Bahrain, Kuwait (1922, 1965), Jordan (1925, 1965), Iraq (1922, 1939, 1975) and with Iran, during the reign of the Shah (the 1968 Median Line Agreement of maritime boundaries and ownership of disputed islands, gas and oil fields in the Northern parts of the Arabian Gulf). The boundary disputes were settled with the United Arab Emirates in 1974, with Oman in 1986, and with Iraq in 1981. Some of these agreements may have implications for other borders, plus other boundaries still need to be demarcated,

¹ For a study of earlier documents concerning Saudi Arabian boundaries, see: Richard Schofield and Gerald Blake (eds), *Boundaries and State Territories in the Middle East and North Africa* (Arabian Boundaries: Primary Documents 1853-1953), Buckinghamshire: England, 1988. For more recent boundary claims and those pertaining to Al-Buraimi Oasis, see John Wilkinson, *Arabian Frontiers: The Story of Britain's Boundary Drawing in the Desert*, London: Tauris, 1991. And Abdulrazak Abu-Dawood, *Political of Saudi Arabia*, a Ph.D, Dissertation, The University of Kentucky, 1984. For those pertaining to Qatar, see: Abdul-Aziz Al-Mansour, *Al-Taour Al-Siyasi li-Qatar (The Political Development of Qatar)*, Kuwait: That Al-Salasil, 1984, (Arabic).

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for which provisional arrangements are partly in place. This has been the case with Yemen (since 1934), and with Qatar (1965 and 1992). The Eastern boundaries with Yemen are still without demarcation, and the two sides are currently engaged in intensive negotiation to find a mutually acceptable solution and settlement.²

Another aspect of large landmass is the primary need to protect it against incursions by external forces. Most countries endowed by this attribute have historically found it advantageous to build a large land army and an extensive air force.

The dilemma in Saudi Arabia is that in the past, the country did not have the financial resources to build a major army. Since the seventies, it has sought to build a small all volunteer force able to defend its boundaries and its territories. This policy has obviously failed to achieve its goal. Many factors have militated against the achievement of this objective. These have chiefly been the limited size of the population (12.35 million), but also the resistance of many middle class families to send their children to military schools, and their resistance to adopt a reservist or a draft system of recruitment; as well as the existence, in the last two decades, of a thriving business and of government employment in major cities for the new generation. Until recently, army recruitment was almost exclusively limited to those who had very little or no education. Only the Saudi Air Force, the Air Defense forces and the Engineers Corps have been able, through financial inducements and social status, to attract the best and most capable university graduates.

This limitation in size of the population has forced the government in times of crises to dig deep into the very young pool of the population. However, with the economic slow-down experienced during the past two years, more and more capable graduates find it advantageous to join the forces, and to enroll in military academies. This has allowed the government to increase the size of the forces from approximately sixty six thousands in 1990 to approximately 102,000 in 1994 (IISS estimates).

² For a text of the 1934 Taif Border Agreement between Saudi Arabia and Yemen and subsequent agreements, see Abdullah Al-Qabaa, *Al-Alaqat Al-Saudiyah Al-Yamanieh (Saudi Yemeni Relations)*, Riyadh: Al-Farazdaq, 1992, Appendices, (Arabic).

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7.1 Islam and Security

Saudi Arabia, as the birth place of Islam, finds support and natural alliances in the family of the Moslem states. Military co-operation in the past has taken place with Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, and Bangladesh.

A number of Islamic countries took part in the 1990-91 war against Iraq, and some of them like Pakistan, are reported to continue today their military co-operation with Saudi Arabia. Hence, Pakistan still has one division reportedly stationed in the country.³

Despite the changes in governments and cabinets in those countries, there is popular support to continued military co-operation with Saudi Arabia, for religious and fraternal reasons. The existence of thousands of expatriates has also helped to cement this relationship.

However, relations with Moslem states have by no means always been amicable. Relations with Iran have been marred by the 1980-88 Gulf war, by Iranian propaganda campaigns and marches during the pilgrimage season, and by Iran's incessant attempts to play the leadership role in the Moslem world. Thus, relations with Iran since the revolution have largely been competitive. Saudi Arabia views itself as the most imminent Islamic state, and this has put a huge burden on Saudi strategic planners. They have found themselves obliged at times to intervene diplomatically in attempts to settle disputes and civil wars among other Islamic states.

This has been the case, in the past, with the civil conflicts in Lebanon, in Afghanistan, and most recently in Yemen. Mediators are expected to provide aid and comfort to the civilian population, and financial incentives to the leaders of the different factions to reach a negotiated settlement. At times, this might also be perceived as partial. Saudi diplomatic intervention succeeded, along with the exhaustion of the parties of the conflict, in bringing an end to the Lebanese civil war (The Taif Agreement of 1989).⁴ In the case of Afghanistan, the civil war continues ablaze despite Saudi and other Islamic states' mediation efforts.

Religion also plays an important role in the historic attachment of Saudi Arabia to the suffering of the Palestinian people and the continued occupation of

³ F. Gregory Gause III, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994, p. 125.

⁴ For a text of the Agreement, see: Ittifaq Al-Taif: al-Salam Al-Manshoud, *The Taif Agreement: A Prospect for Peace*, Beirut: Dar Al-Liwaa, 1991, pp. 112-121 (Arabic).

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While alliance formations with Western powers have enhanced the security posture of the country through deterrence against regional aggressors, it has also helped to give the Saudi army, navy, and air force access to the latest equipments available on the international market. And while today Saudi Arabia has a small ground force, it has a very good air force, and an emerging small navy that proved its capabilities during Desert Storm.⁵ And while its air force might be on par with competing neighbours like Iraq or Iran, it is no match for the superior Israeli air force.

The alliance with the US has spared Saudi Arabia a military confrontation with Israel, but the country looks with anxiety at the hegemonic role played by Israel and its air force in the adjoining countries of Lebanon and Syria. It has sought throughout the last two decades to avert, and/or to limit any aggression by Israel on Lebanon. Further, it has worked with the American administrations and the UN to contain those military adventures (like in 1978, 1982 and in July 1993), so as they would not escalate into large regional wars. Saudi Arabia has also signed all the treaties and conventions limiting the use and proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. It has further supported Egypt's call for the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, in order to contain and reduce the nuclear arsenals in Israel.

As a member of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Saudi Arabia has created with the GCC states a security community. These states periodically consult each other, and have created a small rapid deployment force, the Gulf Shield, for possible use in any part of the Gulf region.

The military leaders of the GCC have agreed, at the 1993 Summit, to earmark certain naval and air force units for joint operations under a single military command. While all the GCC forces are very small in comparison with the big armies of their neighbours, those states have always co-ordinated their diplomatic policies *vis-à-vis* any act of expansion by forces from neighbouring countries. This was the case in 1990-91, and again in 1994 in Kuwait *vis-à-vis* Iraq. This was also the case when an attitude of solidarity was adopted with the United Arab Emirates which went against the occupation by Iran of the Tunubs Islands and of Abu-Musa.

The media campaigns periodically emanating from Tehran do not set well with neighbouring Arab Gulf states. Other ideological issues have also marred

⁵ See General Norman Schwarzkopf's autobiography, *It Doesn't Take A Hero*, written with Peter Petre, London: Bantam Books, 1992, pp. 421-422.

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Israeli hegemony. Due to the lack of balance of power, Israel was able to extend its power in the region. This brought instability to Lebanon, Tunisia and Iraq.

Likewise, during the Iran-Iraq war, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states provided logistics and humanitarian support to Iraq, in order to maintain a sort of balance of forces between the two warring states, and to prevent any clear-cut victory for Iran. With the diminished power of Iraq after 1991, the Saudis sought a semblance of stability in the Gulf region. They may have urged Turkey to play a balancing role, but due to economic and internal political tensions, the Turkish government shied away from filling the gap. Today and in the near future, the continued existence of Iraq, as an unitary state independent of Iranian influence, will continue to draw the concern and attention of Saudi planners.

Today, American forces and marine presence in the Gulf seem to be playing a counter-weight to the Iranian challenge. Other bilateral and multilateral security arrangements with Egypt and Syria play largely a symbolic and secondary role. The understanding between Saudi Arabia, the United States, the United Kingdom and France seems to be a permanent cornerstone in the Saudi security policy. Self-reliance in security matters is a cherished, remote goal at present time. And the Saudis would do well to manage their alliance framework with regional powers (The Damascus Declaration), and with Western powers, in a way that would maximize the gains, and minimize the costs. Some of the larger allies will continue to use such alliances to maximize their economic gains, and to secure contracts for their respective companies. Such a policy may not always be beneficial to the Saudi economy, as it renders this economy dependent and uncompetitive in a world governed by competition for economic survival. Other economic and political policies advocated by those allies, such as the privatization of certain sectors of the Saudi economy, or the limitation of trade and technical exchange with the small, but efficient East Asian firms may run counter to the benefits of small consumers in the country, and to the efficiency of the economy in general.

Ironically, while the stationing of foreign forces in the Gulf region might have served the short-term security interests of the regimes, over the medium to long term it might weaken the legitimacy of those same governments. The governments will lose even more legitimacy, if they fail to pursue independent policies regarding oil prices and/or economic policies, that may adversely affect the welfare of individual citizens. Those are precisely the policies the Shah developed in the

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1960's and 1970's, and which brought the degeneration of his legitimacy in the eyes of his people.⁹

7.4 Internal Threats

Saudi Arabia is a self-assured polity, that has existed in some form of political and social organization since time immemorial. Throughout its development, the country has faced many internal and external challenges. Internally, the country has developed social structures, that extend help easily to those in need. Extensive family, tribal, religious and political edifices exist to lessen the weight between the various social classes of differentiated incomes. It goes without saying that the country's leaders must adopt new policies to enhance mass participation, and extend even further the benefits of economic development to new strata of the population. This concerns especially the young generation, which comprises more than one-half of the population. From time to time, small marginal political groups from the right seem to offer new ideologies that run counter to government line. However, through a system of control and inducements, the government has always been able to coopt and/or coerce the potential leaders of these groups.

In addition, Saudi Arabia and its people have always prided themselves on being the guardians of the two holy mosques in Islam. The security and sanctity of those two holy mosques remain one of the basic objectives of Saudi national security. Any attempts by a foreign power, under whatever disguise, to gain access to control and/or administer the affairs of the two holiest mosques would be contrary to the country's basic sovereignty. While continuing to guarantee free access to all Moslems, the Saudi government must fend off any attempts by Iran or any particular group or other state. Under no pretext may any of these actors attempt to diminish Saudi sovereignty and administration of the two holy cities of Makkah and Medinah - the spiritual heart of the nation.

7.5 External Threats

⁹ It is precisely those policies that the Shah pursued in the 1960's and the 1970's and brought about the degeneration of his legitimacy in the eyes of his people, see Mark Gasiorowski, "Regime Legitimacy and National Security: The Case of Pahlavi Iran", in Edward Azar and Chung-In Moon (eds), *National Security in The Third World*, Aldershot, Hants, England: Edward Alger, and College Park, MD: University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict, 1988, pp. 227-250.

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would do well in expanding its membership on an associative basis to other states in the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabian Gulf. Such a move would not only limit future threats, but also increase the flow of goods and services between those states, and create interlocking interests and loyalties, that could militate against any future adventurism.

Another aspect of responding to external threats is the ability of decision makers to manage foreign alliances in a way that ensures the flow of needed hardware, without injuring the ability of the civilian economy to maintain a good and reasonable growth ratio (3 to 4% annual growth rates). There are certain political and economic costs in any alliance framework, but those costs must be at all times kept reasonable and manageable.

7.7 Summary and Conclusion

This paper has studied the underpinnings of the Saudi security system: area, Islam and oil. It has also noted the collapse of the old balance of power in the region, with all the manifest fluidity responsible for the unstable environment in the political and military milieu. The paper has also taken up the internal and external threats faced by the Kingdom. These include the ideological agitation, that seeks to undermine the unity of parts of the country and/or the sovereignty over the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.

The paper's conclusion is that the country has no alternative, except that of increasing the size of the army directly, and indirectly through a reserve system of service. The paper looked into ways of bringing women and foreign workers in service, in order to provide adequate security to the country. Finally, the paper mentioned the need to rebuild a web of regional relations, and to manage external alliance frameworks in a way that will minimize costs and maximize benefits.

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