

Barak's Complex Foreign Policy Agenda

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----- First Stop: Washington / Negotiating with the Palestinians: Why Wye? / Lebanon (With or Without Syria) / Russia: The Sick Dinosaur / Regional Cooperation / Relations between Amman and Jerusalem / Deterring Distant Threats: Iraq and Iran / The Elements of a Strategic Approach -----

Prime Minister Ehud Barak will not get a period of grace or a post-election honeymoon. Immediately upon taking office, he faces a number of pressing issues. Many of these are domestic - including religious-secular relations and economic concerns.

However, the most urgent items are in the realm of security and foreign relations. The agenda includes negotiations with the Palestinian Authority and Syria, related efforts to end the war in Lebanon, relations with the United States, problems with Russia, the threat from Iraq, the ongoing internal power struggle in Iran, efforts to thaw the "cold war" with Egypt, relating to the new ruler of Jordan, relations with Europe after the Kosovo conflict, and other important issue areas. While each issue poses its own complex and difficult problems, they are also closely interrelated, with policies and changes in one area impacting directly on another. In the Middle East, everything is related to everything, and this situation magnifies the complexity and the importance of a strategic approach to foreign and security policy.

Barak's ability to pursue successful foreign and security policies will depend on his ability to develop realistic objectives, pursue them consistently, and maintain domestic support for difficult decisions. Beyond a coherent approach to each of these specific issues, the results will depend on the government's ability to manage an integrated foreign and security policy, while also persuading the Israeli public to support the results. In the past, under both the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and former Prime Minister Netanyahu, the initial strategic approaches were quickly replaced by ad-hoc and tactical decision-making processes. Policy-making became largely reactive, responding to crises and pressures, both internal and external. These pressures contributed to Rabin's sudden decision to adopt the Oslo process in 1993, and the Netanyahu government was never able to implement a strategic approach. Furthermore, both Rabin and Netanyahu relied on a very small number of individuals to develop foreign and defense policy, and failed to build a domestic consensus.

To avoid being pressed into adopting a reactive policy, Barak will need a clear strategy and a coordinated team to implement it. Although crises and unanticipated developments are inevitable, particularly in the Middle East, by anticipating possible scenarios and preparing diplomatic and military options, the disruptive impact of such events can be minimized.

First Stop: Washington

Before tackling this complex agenda, Barak, like Rabin and Netanyahu, will visit Washington. The U.S. has been and remains Israel's primary source of strategic and diplomatic support, acting as an important force multiplier for Israel when relations are good. Israel relies on the U.S. for its major weapons platforms, as well as for assistance in developing new military technologies,

such as ballistic missile defense and short-range, tactical, laser-based anti-missile systems (Nautilus). In any future withdrawal agreements, whether in Lebanon, the Golan Heights, or Judea and Samaria, Israel will rely on American cooperation in relocating military facilities and offsetting security risks. Coordination with Washington is also important in preventing terrorism, and in responding to the continuing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly in Iraq and Iran. In these central issues, Israel and America share interests and perspectives. Despite the Clinton administration's foreign policy failures and mistakes, the U.S. remains the world's only superpower, and its relative strength is increasing, as demonstrated recently in Kosovo. For Israel, maintaining the special relationship with America is a top priority, and the U.S. needs close cooperation with Israel to prevent instability in the Middle East. Although the Netanyahu and Clinton teams did not get along very well (to understate the case), both the U.S. and Israel recognize the need to repair the damage. The Barak government must develop close ties with both the Executive Branch and Congress, and avoid allowing Israeli policy and interests to become entangled in American domestic politics. (In the 1996 Israeli election campaign, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk openly sided with Shimon Peres and opposed Netanyahu. In response, after the election, Netanyahu used the Republican-controlled Congress to offset criticism and pressure from the White House and State Department. This strategy failed when the Republicans did poorly in the 1998 elections and Newt Gingrich, Netanyahu's main ally, resigned.)

Beyond cooperation in specific issue areas, style and "body language" are of central importance. The "special relationship" with the U.S. has been a vital pillar of Israel's security for decades. This special relationship is based on a sense of shared democratic values as well as an understanding that both countries face the same threats from terrorism and from rogue states. Frequent consultation and visible signs of support are important in maintaining this relationship, and after erosion during the Netanyahu era, Barak will need to work with Clinton and his successor to reinforce the symbols as well as the substance of this relationship.

Substantively, the American-Israeli agenda includes all the issues that face Barak: the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Russia, Egypt, etc. Each requires detailed discussion in an effort to avoid sharp differences. Some disagreements are inevitable, as the U.S. and Israel are sovereign states whose interests and perspectives cannot always coincide precisely, but these can be managed diplomatically to insure that they do not lead to wider problems in the relationship. In some areas, the U.S. and Israel will have to agree to disagree.

Negotiations with the Palestinians are likely to provide one area of disagreement. President Clinton and his administration are committed to the implementation of the October 1998 Wye agreement. In addition to possible differences regarding Palestinian commitments to end incitement and hate speech (the Netanyahu government provided extensive evidence of Palestinian non-compliance), there are also broad gaps in approach. While the White House and the State Department's "Middle East peace team" apparently still support the step-by-step process created under the Oslo agreement (the 1993 Declaration of Principles), Barak is on record as opposing the surrender of tangible assets (land and security) without agreement on the end point. While Barak may be willing to take more risks than Netanyahu, and support for settlements will be reduced drastically, his approach differs sharply from that of Peres, Beilin, and Savir.

Even if Barak agrees to implement Wye, as a first step, the main emphasis will be on the permanent status negotiations, which were specified in the Oslo formula. This will be a complex process (as detailed below), and Israel and the Palestinians will be competing for American support. To avoid confrontation and instability, it is important for Barak to reach agreement on "red

lines" with the U.S. in these issue areas. The Clinton administration has invested a great deal in the relationship with Arafat, and can play an important role in convincing the Palestinians to end their incitement and strengthen policies that have prevented terrorism in the past months.

Iran is another area of importance for cooperation between Jerusalem and Washington. The combination of the internal struggle in Iran, and the continued Iranian development of missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as support for terrorism and anti-Israel extremism, requires development of a carefully nuanced policy. Both Israel and the U.S. seek policies that will encourage political changes in Iran to reduce the level of confrontation and military threat, while at the same time maintaining policy instruments, such as sanctions, to slow the pace of development of destabilizing military capabilities, and developing appropriate military responses (offensive and defensive). In this area of central strategic importance, coordination between the U.S. and Israel is vital. The recent arrest of Iranian Jewish leaders charged with spying for Israel has increased the salience of policy coordination.

Negotiating with the Palestinians: Why Wye?

Ehud Barak was never a big supporter of the Oslo process. Although he was very close to the late Yitzhak Rabin and served as IDF Chief of Staff when Rabin was prime minister, he disagreed strongly with his patron's policies with respect to these negotiations, recognizing the weaknesses long before things began to fall apart. After he left the military and joined the government, Barak continued to warn of the dangers of giving up strategic assets without a clear objective. In 1995, as a member of the cabinet, Barak was the only minister to abstain on the Cairo agreement (also known as Oslo 2), under which significant portions of Judea and Samaria were transferred to the Palestinian Authority.

Now as prime minister, Barak is faced with a number of deadlines and agreements. He is under pressure from within and without (including the U.S.) to implement the Wye Agreement without further delay. Supporters of this policy argue that the Palestinians have implemented their end of the deal by stopping terrorism (although the incitement continues, particularly in the form of the world-wide campaign to condemn Israel for violations of the Geneva Convention, and presentation of UN Resolution 181 from 1947 as the basis for negotiations), and it is now up to Israel to withdraw from the areas specified at Wye.

The problem is that implementation of Wye would continue the incremental process, while Barak has indicated that strategically, he prefers to go directly to the "permanent status negotiations" as specified in the Oslo agreement. If Israel and the Palestinians reach agreement regarding permanent status, and if Wye is consistent with this agreement, then it will be implemented. On the other hand, if this effort ends in disagreement, and Arafat declares a Palestinian state unilaterally, the process that began in Oslo will end, and there is no purpose (from the Israeli perspective) in giving up more land and security assets.

There are many obstacles to agreement on permanent status, and the prospects for success in one year to eighteen months are close to zero. Each of the issues on the agenda - Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and water - are extremely complex, and the gap between Israeli and Palestinian expectations remains wide. On the basis of his own evaluations of Israeli interests, and also in terms of the political balance of power within Israel, Barak seems unlikely to make far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians on any of these issues in this time period. Neither Rabin nor Netanyahu had the political resources to withdraw from a single settlement, and although Barak was elected by a wide majority, his party received 26 of the 120 seats in the Knesset (less than one-quarter), and his power base is quite narrow. In order to avoid intense domestic conflict on this sensitive issue, Barak will have to proceed cautiously.

At the same time, the leaders of the Palestinian Authority have not prepared their public for changes and concessions in traditional positions. Discussions regarding refugees still include demands that Israel accept some sort of moral and historical responsibility for their plight, which is a non-starter for any Israeli government. (By the same token, Israel would demand that the Palestinians accept responsibility and apologize for the wars and terrorist attacks over the past decades.) Similar gaps in expectations exist with respect to borders and demands for a Palestinian capital in eastern Jerusalem. None of these positions are realistic, and Palestinian inflexibility will lead to an impasse.

In this environment, the Barak government may consider a "third way" - long-term interim agreements instead of "permanent status" (a mythical concept that is not found in relations between states, which are governed by shifting power relationships, crises, conflicts, and changes in borders). The best chance for agreement in the short term might be based on substantial Israeli withdrawals in the five areas near the major Palestinian population concentrations, giving the PA control of about half of the land in Judea and Samaria, but excluding strategically crucial areas such as the Jordan Valley and east-west corridors. At the same time, areas vital to Israeli security would be annexed to Israel, by agreement. In areas where no agreement is possible, the status quo would prevail, negotiations would continue, and, assuming that terrorism is not resumed and in-citement ends, future pacts can be reached. This is probably as much as the Israeli domestic situation will allow, in terms of territorial withdrawal, at this time.

At the same time, the Barak government must also be prepared to respond to a resumption of terrorism. In the past, the Palestinian leadership has responded to disagreement with terror, as a means of putting pressure on Israel to make concessions. Many Palestinians view the intifada as a successful military campaign (although the Palestinians suffered far more than Israel), which forced Israel to begin discussions with the PLO. Similarly, Hizbollah's success in pressuring Israel to change its position in Lebanon is also seen as an example to be followed by the Palestinians.

In this context, Barak must emphasize that the PA's recent efforts to prevent terror cannot be a passing fad of the Netanyahu era, but must be permanent. If Arafat uses or permits terror again, the Israeli response will be swift and strong, endangering all of the achievements since 1993, including Palestinian autonomy. To prevent a resort to violence, Barak needs to strengthen Israeli deterrence, while also pursuing agreements.

Lebanon (With or Without Syria)

In the midst of the 1999 election campaign, following Hizbollah attacks in which Erez Gerstein, the commander of IDF operations in Lebanon, and a number of other Israelis were killed, Ehud Barak pledged to withdraw Israeli forces from Lebanon within one year after assuming office, based on an agreement with the Syrians. Barak was responding to the political pressure that had been building steadily in Israel, and included protest demonstrations and poll data indicating growing support for withdrawal from Lebanon.

This pledge was politically expedient in an election campaign but created a difficult dilemma, as was highlighted by Hizbollah's election-night rocket attack on northern Israel. If withdrawal from the Lebanese security zone is followed by a wave of rocket attacks on northern Israeli settlements, or if this area again becomes a major terrorist base, the policy will be judged a major failure and could force the government to resign. Thus, withdrawal needs to be accompanied by credible security arrangements.

To achieve these objectives, the Barak government has two broad options - a negotiated agreement with Syria, or unilateral withdrawal. Both paths have considerable risks and benefits.

If Barak is able to conclude a comprehensive and verifiable agreement with Hafez Assad, including Syrian acceptance of responsibility for the security of northern Israel, Israel can withdraw from the southern Lebanon security zone with minimal risk. Such a detailed agreement would include provisions for disarming Hizbollah, patrolling the area (perhaps jointly) to prevent the reentry of terrorist groups and militias, and insuring the safety of the members of the South Lebanese Army who fought and are still fighting with the IDF.

The outline of such an agreement was reached in talks during the Rabin government, but it was not implemented. Then, as now, Syrian cooperation is dependent on a comprehensive treaty including withdrawal, normalization, and security arrangements. In the past, the Syrians have insisted on Israeli withdrawal from all of the Golan Heights, including areas captured by Syria in the 1948 war, and access to the Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee). Even when the Rabin and Peres governments indicated that they might consider these demands, linked to security arrangements and establishment of normal relations, Assad backed away. Efforts by the Netanyahu government to revive the negotiations through a number of messengers failed to make significant progress, and Syria used the conflict in Lebanon to increase the pressure on Israel.

How, if Syria accepts Israeli demands with respect to normalization and security, the Barak government will have to decide if it is prepared to proceed with full withdrawal from the Golan. This will not be an easy decision, and would require a major effort to convince the Israeli public to accept the terms. This process is unlikely to be completed within the one-year deadline set by Barak for withdrawal from Lebanon, and will be difficult to achieve in parallel with difficult decisions on the Palestinian track.

Even if the negotiations with Syria make progress, during this period Hizbollah is likely to increase its attacks. If the extent of Israeli casualties grows, Barak may consider unilateral withdrawal, as advocated by some members of the Labor party including Yosi Beilin. This is strongly opposed by MKs such as Efraim Sneh of Labor and Yosi Sarid, the head of Meretz. More Israeli casualties will lead to more protests, and Barak will be reminded of his campaign pledge.

If the unilateral option is chosen, Israel will need to increase its deterrence capabilities with respect to Hizbollah and the Lebanese government in order to prevent increased terrorism. As IDF Chief of Staff in 1993, Barak commanded "Operation Accountability" which was launched in an effort to deter Hizbollah attacks, and before he left the military, he was involved in the planning of the "Grapes of Wrath" operation (conducted in 1996, when Barak was foreign minister). As prime minister, Barak can be expected to maintain military options in Lebanon, while seeking to minimize the diplomatic and political consequences of such a response to terror and rocket attacks. Implementation of this policy will not be easy nor cost-free, and will require careful military and diplomatic coordination.

Russia: The Sick Dinosaur

The Cold War is over and the Soviet Union has collapsed, but Russia still seeks to be a major player in the Middle East. As a bankrupt giant with nuclear weapons and without a functioning central government, Russia is a source of problems for Israel. Without a functioning economy or funds to pay engineers and scientists, the sale of military technology and expertise to Iran is seen as an economic imperative, allowing the military and nuclear industries to survive. The Russians have also provided weapons to Syria, and both technology and political support to Saddam Hussein.

Israeli-Russian relations are also hostage to external factors, including Russia's internal political turmoil, and Moscow's relations with Washington and the West. The conflict in Kosovo increased tensions with the U.S. and NATO, making it harder for the Americans to influence

Russian policy on technology exports to Iran and with respect to the maintenance of sanctions and arms limitations on Iraq.

Under Netanyahu, policy with respect to Russia was often inconsistent, reflecting the uncertainty about how to deal with this problem. The transfer of missile and nuclear technology and expertise to Iran was a major concern. Israel attempted to prod the Clinton administration into using its leverage (primarily economic) with Russia in an effort to block these technology exports. This led to the formation of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, and legislation designed to place sanctions on Russian firms involved in these programs. In response, Russia made some declarations pledging to tighten export controls, but these had no noticeable impact.

The role of Yevgeny Primakov, first as foreign minister, and later as prime minister before he was suddenly dismissed by Yeltsin a few weeks ago, heightened the tensions. During the Soviet period, Primakov led the Kremlin in supporting the Arabs, and in Russia he pursued a similar policy, attempting to destabilize the Middle East as a means of undermining the American role in the region. Primakov may be gone (perhaps temporarily, in the Kremlin's revolving door), but his impact and approach to the Middle East is well entrenched.

Under these conditions, development of a coherent and realistic strategy with respect to Russia is both important and difficult. The Netanyahu government attempted to initiate a high-level strategic dialogue with the Kremlin, while at the same time working with the U.S. on the issue of exports to Iran. Russian and Israeli officials held substantive discussions, but with no visible policy impact. Israel offered Russia technological cooperation and contracts to replace the benefits received from Iran, but also with no apparent impact.

In attempting to formulate a strategy for dealing with Russia, there are few and perhaps no good options for the Barak government. As noted, Barak's best bet is to coordinate closely with Washington, applying pressure in concert with the U.S., and offering carrots when appropriate. The strategic dialogue with Moscow should be sustained, in the hope that a combination of internal and external factors will increase the value of such a forum.

Most importantly, Barak and his foreign policy team may reach the conclusion that there is little that they or any outside power can do to influence basic trends in Russian foreign policy. The main factors are domestic, and at best, outsiders, including the Israeli government, can attempt to limit the damage of this turmoil.

Regional Cooperation

Amidst this overcrowded agenda, the Barak government must also find time and resources to promote cooperative relations in the region. Links with Jordan and Egypt are central to future stability, and other states, from North Africa to the Persian Gulf, must be actively involved in ending Israel's isolation. If agreements are reached with Israel's immediate neighbors, but hostility, terrorism, and military threats continue to be supported by Iraq, Iran, Libya, etc., instability and violence will continue.

To deal with this broader circle of Arab states, the 1991 Madrid conference established a multilateral framework, encompassing arms control and regional security (ACRS), the regional economic development working group (REDWG), environmental cooperation, water, and refugees. These talks included representatives from 14 states in the region, as well as the Palestinian Authority, and this process was seen as providing the basis for regional cooperation. (However, since Syria refused to participate, and Iraq, Iran, and Libya were not invited, there were also limits on how far the regional process could go, particularly in terms of security.)

Although some of these groups and the steering committee have continued to meet sporadically, there has been little or no progress since 1994. The working groups are governed by consensus,

so one state can effectively block agreements and cooperative projects. Egypt played a central role in this process, reflecting the Mubarak government's effort to use the multilateral negotiations to pursue its own agenda, and to limit the degree to which Israel was allowed to play a regional role. Foreign Minister Mousa led a crusade focused on Israeli nuclear policy, which was primarily designed to isolate Israel, both regionally and internationally. Although centered in the ACRS talks, which were halted as a result of the unbridgeable gap on this issue, the conflict also affected the other working groups.

As part of the overall effort to revive the process, the new government must develop a coherent policy with respect to the multilateral and other regional cooperation efforts. Barak, both as head of the Labor/One Israel party and heir to Rabin's legacy, is likely to favor the revival of the multilateral track, but only if it is more substantive than was the case in the earlier rounds. If the talks again become the basis for systematic efforts to isolate and exclude Israel from regional cooperation efforts, Barak will not be interested.

The status of the multilaterals is closely linked to regional relations, particularly with respect to Egypt. Although Cairo led the Arab world towards peace with Israel, since the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty was signed in 1979, relations have evolved from a "cold peace" to a "cold war." Even at the height of the Oslo process under the Rabin/Peres government, the Egyptian leadership led efforts to isolate Israel and slow normalization. Many Egyptian professional groups maintain a boycott of Israel, and the government-controlled press is particularly venomous. Egypt has also led many other Arab states in distancing themselves from the promise of mutual acceptance, and as a result, the hostility and rejectionism that characterizes large parts of the Arab world has not diminished.

The resumption of the multilateral talks, accompanied by a fundamental policy change in Egypt, would provide the Barak government with a major opportunity to resume regional cooperation. To test the waters, Peres and Beilin, who are likely to be key players in this area, could support efforts to reactivate four of the five multilateral frameworks. In addition, by resuming broad participation in the annual regional economic summits that began in Casablanca, the Arab states, including Egypt, would send a visible signal regarding the acceptance of Israel in the region. However, the new Israeli government is likely to leave the ACRS working group dormant, at least at this stage. The conflict over Israel's nuclear policy, which extended far beyond the regional framework, has demonstrated that Israel, under any leader, is not going to give up its "last resort" deterrent option as long as the conventional and non-conventional threats to national survival remain credible. At the same time, the evidence indicates that as long as Amr Mousa remains Foreign Minister of Egypt, a change in Cairo's policy on this issue is unlikely. Rather than resuming the confrontation in the ACRS talks, Barak should continue informal ("Track two" and "military to military") discussions, while pursuing regional security cooperation (without the arms control component) through other frameworks. The negative experience in ACRS, as well as the collapse of the UNSCOM verification regime in Iraq, and the failure to block Iranian efforts to develop long range missiles and weapons of mass destruction, have undermined the premises on which Middle East arms control efforts were founded in 1991. Thus, regional arms control is unlikely to be high on Barak's foreign policy and security agenda.

However, this does not mean a halt in discussions of regional security and confidence-and-security-building measures (CSBMs). The exercises and consultations involving Israel, Turkey, and Jordan provide a core for gradual expansion that could include other states. European security frameworks with interests in stability in the Mediterranean region, such as NATO and the

WEU, could provide a framework for joint search and rescue exercises, crisis management centers and simulations, and other CSBMs.

Relations between Amman and Jerusalem

For decades, Israel's relations with Jordan have been pivotal to the strategic balance and regional security, with many common interests and shared threat perceptions. The 1994 peace treaty formalized decades of cooperation and gave this collaboration greater visibility. In the last years of his life, the late King Hussein played a central role in helping to overcome crises, particularly with respect to Israeli-Palestinian relations, while also insuring that Jordan's vital national interests were protected.

Following the death of King Hussein and the accession of King Abdullah, Jordan's relations with its Arab neighbors began to change. The most important developments are taking place in Jordan's relationship with Syria. After years of isolation and direct hostility, including terrorism, Syrian policy with respect to Jordan seems to be changing. Syrian President Assad's sudden appearance at King Hussein's funeral in February signaled a break with the past. Assad's son and designated heir, Bashar, came to Amman to hold substantive meetings with King Abdullah. Abdullah made a return visit to Damascus, and the two countries agreed to cooperate in the construction of a large dam on the Yarmouk River. Another sign of an end to Jordan's regional isolation came with the visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Kharazi, the first such high-level visit since the Iranian revolution over twenty years ago.

For the Barak government, Jordan's changing regional role is both an opportunity and a potential source of difficulties. As the Arab country with the closest ties with Israel, open borders, a high level of traffic in both directions, and growing trade, Jordan's increased influence in the region provides a means of extending contacts and cooperation with other states. While Israel blocked past efforts (in the early 1960s) to build a dam across the Yarmouk River, which would have diminished Israel's water supply, under the current circumstances, a joint Jordanian-Syrian project is seen potentially as part of a regional water system that would include Israel. As long as Jordanian-Syrian cooperation is not at Israel's expense, this is a positive development.

Barak and his advisors will put a high priority on maintaining close contacts and cooperation with King Abdullah and Amman, particularly with respect to the negotiations with the Palestinians. In the past, under Rabin, Peres, and Beilin, Jordanian interests were often neglected on sensitive issues such as Jerusalem. Jordan plays a key regional role and cannot be taken for granted or ignored. In addition, Barak's government must monitor internal developments within Jordan. There are still many anti-Israel voices across the river, particularly in radical Islamic groups such as Hamas, and among militant Palestinians. If these groups attempt to use the transfer of power from Hussein to Abdullah in order to gain influence, particularly with the support of Syria and Iran, this could damage bilateral relations and the foundation of regional cooperation.

Deterring Distant Threats: Iraq and Iran

Strategically, the Barak government enters office in the shadow of growing threats from both Iraq and Iran. Eight years after the Gulf War and the cease-fire agreement, Iraq is again a formidable threat to Israel and to the region. Despite the unprecedented ability to make intrusive searches for missiles and WMD components and facilities, UNSCOM inspectors were unable to find and destroy many key components in Saddam's nuclear weapons program. Iraq also retains a substantial chemical and biological weapons capability, with missiles and other means of dispersal. The inspection system has now been dismantled, and the pressure for lifting economic sanctions is also increasing.

Iran also continues to pursue similar capabilities, assisted, as noted above, by Russian technology and expertise. The test launch of the Shihab 3 ballistic missile in July 1998 indicated that within a short time, Iran will have missiles able to reach Israel, Turkey, and American bases in the area. Longer range missiles, extending Iranian capabilities to cover Europe, and then full intercontinental ranges, are in development stages. Iran's effort to acquire nuclear weapons has accelerated and, despite signing the Chemical Weapons Convention, the evidence points to chemical and biological weapons in the Iranian arsenal.

To safeguard Israel's vital security interests, Barak needs to give priority to a combined diplomatic and military-strategic approach in dealing with these threats. As noted above, the U.S. remains a key factor, and coordination with the U.S. is . This coordination includes efforts, even at this late stage, to delay or prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, and to insure that Saddam Hussein is unable to cause trouble.

During the Netanyahu government, the U.S. and Israel negotiated a strengthened cooperative strategic framework, embodied in the Memorandum of Agreement signed in October 1998, in which the U.S. pledged to "enhance Israel's defensive and deterrent capabilities" against threats of ballistic missiles. As the regional strategic balance changes, this will require major changes in Israeli deterrent doctrine and capabilities, and this framework can provide the basis for coordination with the U.S. in this vital area.

The threats from Iraq and Iran are not only a problem for Israel or the U.S., but extend to Europe and other areas. NATO has recently begun to recognize the need for a coordinated and comprehensive policy in response to the threat of WMD and missile proliferation from pariah states such as Iran and Iraq. This may also provide a basis for increased strategic coordination and cooperation between Israel and NATO, as well as in other European security frameworks.

The Elements of a Strategic Approach

In order to manage a successful foreign and security policy, Barak and his government must develop and implement a consistent strategic approach that encompasses and accounts for the complexities and interrelationships between issues. This requires a professional and centrally coordinated team to provide and analyze information, to implement decisions, and to evaluate outcomes. It also means insuring domestic political support, and avoiding a situation in which the Israeli public is confronted with more than it can handle in terms of difficult and painful decisions.

Maintaining and improving coordination with the United States remains a high priority, and this also means convincing the American government to accept Israeli positions on some key issues. For this, Barak will need political resources, including the cooperation of American Jews and other pro-Israel groups.

However, the U.S. cannot continue to be isolated in its support for Israel. If Barak can create even a minimal level of support in European capitals, as well as in the foreign ministries of "middle powers" such as Canada, Australia, and Japan, this will give him more flexibility in negotiations with the Palestinians, Syria, and in Lebanon. A broad network of diplomatic cooperation is also necessary to advance vital Israeli interests with respect to Iraq, in responding to the implications of the power struggle in Iran, and in other areas.

As noted, extended regional cooperation is vital for increasing stability and reducing Israel's isolation and vulnerability. Jordan will continue to play a central role, and if the Egyptians can be persuaded that their "cold war" policies are counterproductive in terms of Cairo's own interests, this will also be a major accomplishment. Visible confidence-building measures with Egypt will

also help to strengthen Israeli domestic political support for risk-taking on the Palestinian and Syrian tracks.

Security and diplomacy are closely linked, and since Barak's background and experience are primarily in the former, he will need more assistance in the latter. By coordinating the resources of the Foreign Ministry, the National Security Council, intelligence organizations, the relevant parts of the Defense Ministry, and non-governmental experts and academics, the new government can avoid major errors and capitalize on available opportunities.