

Israel Today – March 18-20, 2016
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Israel's Global Influence Exceptional – S. Ben-Ami
Israel now enjoys a degree of global influence unprecedented in its history. China, Israel's 3rd-largest trading partner, doesn't link economic ties w/ Israel to the success of peace talks. Israel is India's 2nd-largest supplier of military tech. Last month Israel's Amb. to Moscow told the Knesset that the bilateral ties were "flourishing in an unprecedented manner." S. Arabia maintains discreet security links w/ Israel; other Sunni Gulf monarchies and Egypt cooperate w/ Israel to contain terrorism and Iran's regional rise. Greek PM Tsipras, hostile to Israel while in opposition, has become a close ally. Hungary has annulled the EU's labeling guidelines targeting Israeli goods produced in the territories.

Saudi Journalist: Israel not #1 Enemy (*MEMRI*)

On 3/8/16, Saudi journalist M. Aal Al-Sheikh wrote in the Saudi daily *Al-Jazirah* that today, Iran is the No. 1 enemy of S. Arabia and the Gulf countries, supplanting Israel, that the Pals should expect no salvation from Iran, and that Gulf Shi'ites were pawns for Iran, which was using them to promote Persian nat'l aspirations.

BDS Setbacks in States (*WashTimes*)

The BDS campaign has suffered a series of setbacks in state legislatures, where bills to penalize companies that target Israel are garnering bipartisan support. Illinois and SC. Another 20 states are considering similar legislation. The British Sec'y of Justice Tues.: BDS "campaign indulges prejudice rather than fighting it." In Britain, "we have made clear that local authorities and public bodies cannot adopt BDS policies aimed at Israel; they cannot use public resources to discriminate against Jewish people, Jewish goods and a Jewish state."

Cost of Doing Bigotry (*Algemeiner*)

Gov't agencies, individuals and corps in Arab states that have stopped boycotting Israel did so because the legal and financial risks of refusing to deal w/ Israelis outweighed ideological benefits. When the Arab states decided they wanted their int'l corps to operate globally, they opted out of gov't-mandated boycotts of Israel.

S. Africa "Ready to Hear" Israel (*Times of Is.*)

Israel and S. Africa are taking steps to improve bilateral cooperation, FM D-G Gold said Sun. after he returned from a 3-day visit to the country. "There was a readiness to hear our arguments," Gold said. "We Jews understand implicitly the struggle for freedom which Nelson Mandela led here."

Peace w/ Arab World -> Peace w/ Pals (*JPost*)

Netanyahu: "More and more Arab countries are realizing

that Israel is not the enemy of the Arab world, but rather their partner in a joint struggle against Islamic extremists." The US has launched an effort to scuttle a French initiative, a Pal. official said.

Syrian Refugee Says Thank You - About Dandachi

It is astonishing that there have been so many instances of Jewish and Israeli orgs and individuals have gone out of their way to assist and help Syrians in need: medical teams offering lifesaving medical aid to wounded Syrians; aid to Syrian refugees; volunteers on the ground in the Balkans, ready to receive and assist the massive numbers of refugees fleeing the wars in the ME. I have spoken to Syrians in Is. hospitals and marveled at the world-class cancer treatment and limb-replacement operations given to them unstintingly and at great cost to the Israeli medical system. (*Tablet*)

The "Enemy" in Tel Aviv - Haisam Hassanein

Upon my arrival in Israel, I was shocked not to find a single Israeli who mentioned any desires to take the Sinai back from Egypt, or a grand strategy to occupy the area between the Nile and the Euphrates. When they discovered that I was Egyptian, Israelis were instantly enthusiastic and wanted to engage in conversation. I was often invited to Shabbat dinners, political gatherings, plays, and a variety of social events. (*Ha'aretz*)

Is. Economy Grows by 2.5% (*Israel Hayom*)

The Israeli economy grew by 2.5% in 2015. Other Org. for Economic Cooperation and Dev't states averaged 2%. Israel had a record surplus of \$13.8 billion in balance of payments.

New Int'l Airport Near Eilat in 2017 (*JPost*)

Flights at the new Ramon Int'l Airport in Timna, N. of Eilat, are expected to begin taking off in 2017. It will serve as the alternative to Ben-Gurion Int'l Airport during emergencies. It is named after Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon, who was killed in the Columbia space shuttle explosion in 2003, and his son who was killed in a fighter jet crash in 2009.

Obama Is Right - Aaron David Miller (*Politico*)

The very idea that the US seriously believes - alone or w/ its partners - that it can resolve the challenges of governance, sectarian conflict, religious divisions, hatreds, lack of respect for human rights, and the conspiratorial and irrational reasoning that afflict large parts of the Arab world is a leap of arrogance and ignorance so large that it threatens to consume what's left of American credibility. We can assist but cannot fix, repair or transform the ME or especially impose their will by

force on small tribes or persuade them to accept their plans for peace and accommodation.

Hamas' Financial Crisis (*Asharq Al-Awsat-UK*)

For ~2 months, the salaries of Hamas' Al-Qassam Brigades have been reduced and are being paid late; this on top of cutbacks on salaries to the gov't's civilian employees in Gaza. Iran offered to support in exchange for Hamas' support of Iran in its dispute w/ S. Arabia in Yemen and Syria; Hamas rejected the offer.

Iran Escaping UN Sanctions (*Reuters*)

Iran will escape new UN sanctions for recent launches of what Western officials described as ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. The resolution adopted last July as part of the Iran nuclear deal "calls upon" Iran to refrain for up to 8 years from activity, including launches, related to ballistic missiles designed w/ the capability of delivering nuclear weapons. Russia, which has Security Council veto power, says Iran has not violated the resolution. The Security Council said Iran's recent ballistic missile tests disrupted the "peaceful environment" and trust between world powers and Tehran. Russia and China oppose new sanctions on Iran.

Reuters: S. Power, the US Amb. to the UN, "is furious w/ Russian protection for Iran and is dragging the rest of the administration along w/ her in an attempt to do something that holds the Iranians accountable for their illegal missile launches." *Telegraph-UK*: Security officials in the Gulf say there's no guarantee that the deal w/ Iran will prevent it from continuing work on its nuclear weapons program. Not surprisingly, the Gulf states have now embarked on developing a multi-billion pound anti-missile shield of their own.

Main Concern in Syria: Iran, Not ISIS (*WSJ*)

Michael Oren, former Amb. to Wash., said: "If we have to choose between ISIS and Assad, we'll take ISIS. ISIS has flatbed trucks and machine guns vs. 130K rockets in Hizbullah's hands and the Iranian nuclear program. Dr. Bruce Bechtol, a former analyst for NE Asia at the Pentagon says N. Korea has sold Iran a variety of Scuds, and continues to ship long-range missile parts to Iran. It sends weapons to Hizbullah and to Hamas. Its engineers have been building underground facilities for Hizbullah.

IAEA's Insufficient Monitoring - Olli Heinonen

The Int'l Atomic Energy Agency's most recent report on Iran's nuclear activities provides insufficient details on important verification and monitoring issues: does not list inventories of nuclear materials and equipment or the status of key sites and facilities. Lack of detailed reporting will hamper efforts to reach a broader conclusion that all nuclear material and activities are accounted for and for peaceful use.

Genocide by Islamic State

The US will cooperate w/ efforts to investigate acts of genocide committed by ISIS. J. Kerry: Daesh [Islamic State] is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims.... Daesh is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities.

Israel Cancels Visit from Gaza (*Ma'an News*)

Israel cancelled a weekly visit allowing Pals from Gaza to travel to E. J-lem for Fri. prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. Many do not return. 1,000+ Pals in Gaza are permitted to cross into Israel daily for business or medical treatment.

Jerusalem's Sixth Annual Marathon (*JPost*)

An estimated 25K runners from Israel, as well as from 61 other countries, competed in the 6th annual int'l J-lem Marathon Friday. Runners traverse historical sites, including the Knesset, the Old City, Sultan's Pool, Mt. Zion, the German Colony, Ammunition Hill, Sacher Park, Mt. Scopus and the Mt. of Olives.

On Golan Heights, IDF Keeps Isr. Safe (*Times of Is.*)

The larger groups which control areas surrounding the Syrian border, have little incentive to attack Israel at this stage. Israel balance between keeping its cool in the face of accidental spillover, while maintaining its vigilance against deliberate attacks. There has been light gunfire at IDF jeeps and the occasional errant mortar or missile fire on the Golan Heights.

Do Pals Support 2 States for 2 Peoples? (*CAMERA*)

A recent poll of Pals shows Pal. support for a 2-state solution. A JMCC poll of Pals conducted in 9/15 found it was supported by 44%.

Dennis Ross (*JPost*)

Dennis Ross: "Every administration that distanced itself from Israel never produced what they expected; rather than gaining from the Arabs they produced more Arab demands."

Syria: A View from Israel - Asher Susser.

The overthrow of Saddam in Iraq in 2003 removed the Sunni gatekeeper of the Arab East, empowered the Shi'ite majority in Iraq and transformed the country into a link in Iranian regional hegemonic design. We face a logistical lifeline from Iran to Hizbullah.

Israel Cannot Withdraw - Col. Richard Kemp

Richard Kemp, former Commander of British Forces in Afghanistan: "Members of the int'l community are keen to tell Israel what it must do, but would not consider taking the same action w/ respect to themselves.

When you look at rocket fire from Gaza, for example, no country in the world would restrain itself when faced w/ that situation. Britain was faced w/ that situation back in 1943-44, we pummeled the hell out of the Nazis who were developing rockets."

Genocide of Christians in Arab Lands (*Wash Times*)

In the Yemeni port of Aden this month, Islamists attacked a Catholic home for the indigent elderly; they gunned down 16 old people and their care-givers, including 4 nuns. Christians are being wiped out by *jihadis* in the ME. That's genocide. The "cleansing" of Christian communities from the Muslim world follows the expulsion of even more ancient Jewish communities from the same lands.

Russia Is Not Leaving Syria (*Al-Monitor*)

One of Israel's top experts: "The Russian navy is remaining in Tartus. ½+ of the fighters are remaining in Latakia. The special units that defend these bases are also remaining. The Russian air force will assist Assad in his attacks on the rebels. The S-400 missile batteries are remaining." "The advisers to the Syrian army are remaining, as are the electronic systems, logistics, the RPVs [unmanned aircraft] and assault helicopters. This is not an exit, but a certain thinning [of forces]." Ya'alon: The nuclear deal has created the conditions for Iran to attain greater hegemony in the region. The US had not held Abbas accountable for his role in the breakdown of peace efforts.

PA Columnist Praises Attacks (*MEMRI*)

On 3/8/16, during VP Biden's visit to Israel, a West Pt. grad and combat veteran was killed; 14 Israelis & tourists were wounded in 3 terrorist attacks in Jaffa, J-lem and Petah Tikva. A columnist for the PA daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*: "All occurred inside the Green Line: in J-lem, Petah Tikva and Jaffa. This is very important. Shifting the battle zone into inside the Green Line means that the fire has reached Israel's fingers."

TIME Reprimanded (*Ynet*)

Israel named *TIME*, which published an article about a Pal. who was "killed by Israel," not mentioning that he murdered 3 Israelis and wounded 17 others in an attack on a bus in J-lem.

Incitement and Foreign Funding (*MEMRI*)

Some Pal. civil society orgs operating in the W. Bank that receive funding from Western countries, institutions, and foundations exalt terrorists, w/ public displays of support for attacks and their perpetrators. The Pal. Bar Assoc., which receives funding from the EU, awarded an honorary attorney's certificate to one who stabbed 2 people to death and wounded two others.

Special People in the IDF (*JPost*)

Special in Uniform is an initiative of the IDF that incorporates young people w/ disabilities into the military and helps them integrate long-term into society and the workforce. The focus is to foster independence and integration into the mainstream despite physical challenges. 230 participants head a long waiting list.

Aid Money to Build on Disputed Land (*Daily Mail*)

The EU is using taxpayers' money to build unauthorized settlements and roads for Pals on Israeli parts of the W. Bank. 1,000+ EU-funded Pal. homes have been erected in the Israeli Area C without permits in 40+ locations around the W. Bank. In recent months, Israel has demolished some of the unauthorized EU buildings.

Hamis Fails to Mend Relations w/ Egypt (*JPost*)

A delegation of Hamas members who traveled to Cairo in recent days failed to mend relations w/ al-Sisi gov't due to Hamas' "refusal to admit [its] mistake" regarding responsibility for Sinai terrorist incidents.

Six Hours in Gaza - Joel S. Migdal

In Gaza I saw hordes of children going to school, university students studying - all reasonably dressed. Cranes and construction workers were everywhere, w/ lots of buildings being worked on. Most buildings were in decent shape; some apt buildings were nice. Most cars were late-model varieties. In conversation after conversation, there was no obsessing about Israel. Indeed, there might even be a general acceptance of Israel in terms of realizing that Israel will long be part of their future.

Islamic State Loses Territory (*IHS Jane's-UK*)

In 2015, ISIS lost control of 14% of the territory it held at the end of 2014. In the last 3 months, the number is 22% of its territory. ISIS is increasingly isolated, and being perceived as in decline.

France for Israeli-Pal. Peace Talks (*WSJ*)

The French FM sought backing Monday at a meeting of EU FMs for a new push to revive peace talks between Israel and the PA. Some diplomats questioned the timing, given the US presidential campaign and when EU-Israeli relations have grown cold. *Ha'aretz*: France's Eutelsat ceased airing Hamas' *Al-Aqsa* TV following a phone conversation Fri. between Bibi and Prez Hollande. They include incitement to violence against Israelis. The station was already back on the air Sat. via Egypt's NileSat and Saudi Arabia's Arabsat.

Another Hamas Militant Killed in Tunnel Collapse

Pals Support Attacks (*JPost*)

56% of Pals support the continuation of the current wave of attacks on Israelis; 41% oppose it. 79% of Pals in Gaza back the stabbing attacks on Israelis.

Kerry on Peace and of Level of Violence (*Reuters*)

The US is looking for a way to break the deadlock between Israel and the Pals, but have no expectation peace talks will resume before the end of Obama's term. Kerry: "We're talking about any number of different ways to try to change the situation on the ground in an effort to try to generate some confidence.... At the moment it's a difficult one, because of the violence that has been taking place, and there are not many people in Israel or in the region itself right now that believe in the possibilities of peace because of those levels of violence."

Shooting, Stabbings, Car-Rammings

3 Is. soldiers were wounded in shooting and car-ramming attacks Mon. in the W. Bank. 2 assailants were shot dead. (2) Israeli soldiers were wounded after a Pal. rammed his car into a bus. He was killed by soldiers. (3) 2 Israeli soldiers were wounded in a shooting attack in the W. Bank by a gunman who fled the scene. (4) An Israeli was stabbed in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. The assailant was detained. (5) Border Police officers arrested a Pal. woman, 17, who was on the verge of committing a stabbing attack against security forces in the West Bank Tues. (6) Security forces discovered several knives in the belongings of 2 Pal. women at a checkpoint near J-lem Mon-. They confessed. (7) A Pal. teenager w/ a concealed knife was detained after he attempted to jump over a security turnstile at a W. Bank checkpoint. (8) An Israeli woman soldier was stabbed Thurs. at a bus stop in the W. Bank. Soldiers shot and killed the 2 Pal. assailants.

US For. Policy - Realist or Isolationist? - Josef Joffe

In Jeff Goldberg's words, Obama believes that the "the price of direct U.S. action would be higher than the price of inaction." Who has comparable weight to America? Reaching out to Russia, Iran, and China reflects a misreading of reality. They are rivals emboldened by America's retraction. Street cred in the global arena depends on a reputation for violence that will render force unnecessary. (HLA: Oh, and that's worked so well so far?) Tamara Cofman Wittes: US in-/action has global implications. The war on ISIS reminds us that threats to others, left unaddressed, land on America's doorstep. (HLA: And where is that doorstep?)

Science and Technology

Israeli Rocket Tech on Mars (*Times of Is.*)

When the newly-launched EU-Russian ExoMars spacecraft touches down on Mars in 2018, the propulsion system that will enable its gentle landing was developed by Rafael, the Israeli company that developed the Iron Dome missile defense system.

Fast, Accurate Early Warning App (*Times of Is.*)

The IDF's early warning app, iOref, is faster, smarter than other apps. Notifications arrive ~4 seconds faster than the other leading app, and more accurately pinpoint where an impact will take place. The developers aim to offer even more precise geo-targeting, so that warnings are sent only to those truly in danger - avoid sending half the country to bomb shelters, interrupting commerce, education, and the daily lives of Israelis.

Unsung Hero in Water Management (*HuffPost*)

Israel is the world's leader in water conservation. It can now function without rain. Desalinization plants, a sophisticated network over 250+ storage tanks and large reservoirs, many funded by the Jewish Nat'l Fund JNF

Israel to Double Heron UAV Squadron (*Def. News*)

The IAF will double its force of Heron TP UAVs by 2016's end. The Heron TP, known in Israel as Eitan, carries a 1-ton payload, fly for 60 hours, perform in all weather, and conduct sensor-to-shooter networked operations and a variety of special missions. Germany will lease 3-5 armed versions of the Heron TP - instead of the US Predator B.