

# Keeping Israel weak

written by David M. Weinberg | 22.04.2025

Beware the Western diplomatic discourse developing in New York, Paris, and elsewhere that views Israel as a global problem because it has grown too strong, too “hegemonic” in its ambitions, too “aggressive” in its military actions, too “dominant” in resetting the regional strategic situation. Too successful in defending itself.

Instead, Israel ought to “reckoned with” by the West, i.e., restrained, constrained, hemmed-in, humbled. All this to redress the “current asymmetry of power” in the Middle East (again, meaning too much Israeli power, as opposed to say, Iranian and Turkish power) – a situation that “sooner or later will lead to more confrontation, violence and terror.”

In other words, Israel must not be allowed to win so much. This would be bad for American and Western interests.

President Emmanuel Macron of France said so most succinctly this week by averring that Israel “has the right to defend itself, but within proportion” (whatever limited proportions he is comfortable with, one assumes.)

His officials then went swiftly on to reassert the necessity of strengthening the Palestinian Authority, rebuilding Gaza, and driving toward Palestinian statehood, while urging Israeli military withdrawals from Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza.

And the EU announced \$1.8 billion in new funding over the next three years for the PA.

The fact that Macron and the political Left in the West has learned nothing from the attacks on Israel of October 7, 2023 (and Mahmoud Abbas’s support for them) is disappointing but not surprising.

What is more discouraging and indeed infuriating is the attempt to delegitimize Israel’s re-asserted defense doctrine of preventively and preemptively downgrading enemy capabilities and threats. This includes IDF operations against Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, various jihadist and Iranian forces in Syria, and terrorist enclaves in Judea and Samaria, including a long-term Israeli military

presence over the previous borders. Striking at Iran, too.

But no, that is not acceptable to Macron and other oh-so-concerned Western minders of regional security. Israel cannot be so powerful and controlling, so “provocative.” It must be brought to heel, under a “responsible” Western thumb.

## **‘Too much Israeli power’**

The dangerous discourse that warns of too much Israeli power was given most prominent expression this week in a New York Times op-ed article by two Mideast experts from the Oslo era who served in Democratic administrations: Aaron David Miller and Steven Simon.

These American experts are well known in Israel and are not among Israel’s fiercest critics. And yet they now choose to disparage Israel as a problematic “hegemon” in the Mideast that must be “reckoned with,” that must be pressured by Washington to back down and back off. Israel, they insinuate, must put aside its narrow interests in order to achieve an American “balance of interests.”

To restore a healthy “symmetry of power” in the Middle East (whatever the heck that means), pressure must “particularly” be placed on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “and his far-right coalition.” Netanyahu (and Ben-Gvir, Smotrich, etc.) must be forced to “strike deals” such as re-embracing the PA and withdrawing on all battlefronts, in order to “convert Israeli military dominance” into supposedly “more stable arrangements and agreements.”

Miller and Simon grant that Israel’s response to the Hamas terror attacks of 2023 “has fundamentally altered the Middle East balance of power in a way not seen since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War,” and at first, they almost appreciate what a fine achievement this is.

“The Israelis have broken the Hamas-Hezbollah ring of opposition and revealed the vulnerability and weakness of their patron in Tehran while also degrading Iran’s air defenses and missile production.”

But then they immediately proceed to explain that such Israeli “hegemony” (a pejorative term!) is awkward and clashes with American interests. To do so, they blame Israel for everything bad happening in the Middle East from Lebanese,

Syrian, and Iraqi internal rivalries to America's difficulties in cutting grand agreements with Saudi Arabia and Iran.

FOR EXAMPLE, they accuse Israel of "favoring a weak and divided Syria... permeated by foreign forces with conflicting agendas" over a "stable, united, and effective" Syrian government that will align with American interests in countering ISIS and disposing of chemical weapons.

Aside from this being an absolute canard, Miller and Simon have not a word to say about ending Iranian and other threats from Syria against Israel or about stopping Iranian weapons smuggling to Hezbollah through Syria.

Nor do they have anything to say about the threats to destroy Israel coming from the radical Islamist and openly antisemitic leader Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, whose ambitions include gobbling up Syria and launching strikes on Israel from there. Did somebody say "hegemonic"?

You get the sense that these two experts prioritize the return of Syria to its towering military bases - on the Hermon Mountain heights on the previous border with Israel - than they care about long-term security and peace for Israel. You get the sense that they prefer a region led by "East-West bridges" like Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt than a region stabilized by overwhelming Israeli military power and led by Israel and its Abraham Accord partner countries.

The common sentiment expressed by these old-guard European and American denizens is a hankering for a return to the good old days of "sensible strategies as mapped out by former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to foster security, effective governance and reconstruction."

The scent coming from these old-guard European and American denizens is antipathy toward Israel. They simply cannot stomach a strong Israel.

Instead of embracing Israel - the only democracy in the Middle East, the only country that constantly has compromised for peace in the Middle East, and the only true American ally in the Middle East - as a positive, proactive regional power reshaping the Middle East for the better, they slander it as a troublemaker, or worse.

HERE IS THE place to explain why Israel no longer considers "effective

government and reconstruction” (involving for example the lavishing of additional billions of dollars and euros on the PA) or feeble diplomatic agreements (such as soft deals with Syria and Iran or a deal with Saudi Arabia on civilian nuclear power – which Miller and Simon endorse) to be sufficient security policy.

Forty or so years of Oslo-style arrangements, in which the West cajoled and pressured Israel into territorial withdrawals and a policy of restraint against emerging enemy threats, has proven to be an utter failure. “Containment” policy, which prioritized diplomacy over decisive military triumphs, has failed. It all blew up in Israel’s face, with terror and invasion from the West Bank and Gaza and Syria and Lebanon, and the march of Iran’s nuclear bomb program to near completion.

This was accompanied by decades of willful Western blindness to the jihadist nature of Israel’s enemies, to the threat of the jihadis to other countries in the region, and to infiltration of jihadist influences in – and jihadi-minded migrant populations to – the West itself.

Consequently, over the past 18 months, Israel has necessarily moved to a better balance between diplomacy and the use of force to prevent and scuttle enemy threats. Israel must and will continue to employ fierce, overwhelming, and surprising strikes against enemy assets and strongholds. It needs to keep its enemies off base with beeper blasts and bunker-busting airstrikes, even on hospitals and schools where the enemy burrows its arms arsenals and terrorist headquarters.

Israel wants to be feared – and yes, militarily “dominant” – not loved. And Israel also knows that its neighbors will seek true partnership with Israel only when it is strong.

Thus, Israel can no longer accept policies that emphasize “quiet for quiet” or “restraint” because this allows the enemy to develop its attack capabilities under the cover of diplomatic breathing time; what Miller and Simon wrongly call “stability.”

In this new era, Israel intends to project its strength to definitively neutralize adversaries, and in so doing to lead the region – to gather a coalition of truly peace-seeking nations. Yes, to truly “stabilize” the region, but not through reliance on hackneyed diplomatic templates and failed formulas that ooze

weakness.

It is sad and so destructive that politicians like Macron and analysts like Miller and Simon think that the way to peace in the Middle East is, once again, ho-hum, to pressure Israel into restraint, to “show good faith” in diplomacy, to bend to Arab demands and agree to withdrawals that supposedly will “satisfy” the enemy bloodlust.

It is ugly that they stoop to demonizing Israel as the threat, rather than the greatest asset for the West, in resetting the strategic table and helping win the war against the Russia-China-Iran axis.

Published in The Jerusalem Post 18.04.2025