

Other Israeli leaders, including Moshe Dayan, Ezer Weizmann, Chaim Bar Lev and Mattityahu Peled - all generals - have made public statements which dispute the threat to Israel's existence claimed by Eban in both 1956 and 1967. The other noteworthy aspect is that in describing all this period, Eban never mentions the word *Palestinian* or the occupation of 1967. The Palestinian issue is referred to only obliquely, as an appendage to Arab hostility: «They (the Arab governments) asserted the right of Arab refugees to 'return' to Israel irrespective of Israel's will or security... In 1953-1956 a new technique was devised for expressing Arab hostility toward Israel. Terrorists (*Fedayeen*) were trained and organized for infiltrating into Israel...» from Egypt and in 1967 from Syria (pp. 500 - 509).

What is real in what Eban wrote in 1968 is the persistent Israeli fear that the energies of the Arab world will be pooled under a unified leadership and used to back up the Palestinian cause; and that Egypt and Syria are the Arab states most consistently identified as posing the greatest threat.

This perception of the enemy threat went unchallenged for three decades. Hebrew University professor and expert on security affairs, Dan Horowitz, writes: «From the time of the War of Independence up to the electoral upheaval of 1977, various governments in Israel attempted to accord relatively greater weight to the regional conflict between states and to play down the importance of the ideological national conflict between communities» (*Israeli Society and its Defense Establishment*, edited by Moshe Lissak, 1984, pp. 94 - 95). The first is considered basic security, giving reason to go to war, while the second is seen as current security, not requiring war. This distinction was shuffled in 1982 when Israel fought its longest war primarily against the PLO and the Palestinian and Lebanese masses, rather than against the Lebanese state, although this state was, of course, further undermined by the invasion, and Syria's army was also targeted. According to Horowitz, this marks a shift in the thinking of the Israeli political and military establishment, toward stressing inter-communal conflict, elevating it to the sphere of war. Among the implications of this shift, he names:

1. reduction of the probability of solution through inter-state territorial compromise in the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
2. increased chance for belligerent conflict «in the wake of widespread, extended terrorist activities;»
3. Israel would tend to initiate war when its military might is at a peak and «strategic environmental conditions are optimal for exploiting opportunities,» rather than when it was threatened. «Paradoxically, this means that the signing of a peace treaty with one Arab state or another does not reduce the probability of embarking on initiated wars; rather, to the contrary, the likelihood is increased.»

This shift was presaged by the rise of the Palestinian resistance after 1967, which forced the Israeli army to focus on «the war within.» Though it received less publicity at the time, the strength of the *fedayeen* in the Gaza Strip in 1970 was met by a virtual war, complete with the establishment of a concentration camp in the Sinai, holding families of «suspected terrorists» - the prototype for Ansar in South Lebanon and today's Ansar III in South Palestine. Ironically, Israel's development of a counterinsurgency strategy along the lines

used by the US in Vietnam, was the first sign of a grudging, implicit acknowledgement of the Palestinian dimension of the conflict. With time, this impacted on Israeli thinking about the 1967 occupation: «More than three-quarters of the Israelis who participated in the 1979 Task Force discussions privately questioned the ability of Israel to keep a million and a half Palestinians under occupation for much longer» (John Edwin Mroz, *Beyond Security - Private Perceptions among Arabs and Israelis*, 1980, p. 137. emphasis added)

Still, up into the eighties, most Israeli experts continued to view the threat to Israel as coming from the Arab states. In contrast to the flamboyant declarations of Begin and Sharon, serious analysts dismiss guerrilla warfare, «terrorism» and the pre-intifada civilian resistance in the occupied territories as real security threats. The typical assessment of experts was that «Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza also constitutes an ideological-political prod to Arab action... It is in this sense that the centrality of the Palestinian question to Israeli security must be understood» (Mark Heller, *A Palestinian State: The Implications for Israel*, p. 24).

After Camp David, Syria in particular was regarded as Israel's implacable foe, and there are indications that Israeli perceptions of the Arab regimes' intentions are resistant to change. In 1978-79, a retired Israeli military official stated that the Eastern Front (Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) «is a very real threat to Israel because its combined military strength makes it a more formidable opponent than Egypt... we can never discount the possibility that Egypt would renounce the Treaty and open a second front against us... most of all we understand that the ultimate intentions of our Arab neighbors are by and far the same as they have been... perhaps they are slightly more realistic now but that is hard to prove» (Mroz, op. cit., pp. 32-34).

Under the title «*Israeli Perceptions of Threat*,» Mroz lists the following:» An attack from the Eastern Front... Establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza... Arab population growth in Israel... An alteration of Israel's special relationship with the United States... Terrorism as a current security threat.» The first two are categorized as primary. Other security concerns mentioned include: Libya and Iraq acquiring nuclear capacity, Syrian intentions in Lebanon, increased dependence on foreign energy sources and the fact that Israeli water sources are vulnerable to attack.

There is ample evidence that most Israelis view a Palestinian state as a «mortal danger,» especially if headed by the PLO, as claimed in a pamphlet issued by the Israel Information Centre in 1978, and repeated by many an Israeli politician. This seems to contradict the perception that «terrorism» which by Israeli definition means Palestinian action against the occupation, is a secondary concern. One can only understand this apparent contradiction in the light that the Palestinian cause as such is considered dangerous in that it challenges the legitimacy and demographic integrity of the Zionist colonial project, regardless of the PLO's ability to mount a military threat to the Israeli state. This danger prompted the 1982 invasion of Lebanon; it explains the occupation forces' seemingly over-dimensional response to the intifada, and the revival of the age-old Zionist option of «transfer.» In 1984, Sharon advocated dealing with Palestinians under occupation as he had