

The Israeli-Syrian Conflict:

Prospects for a Resolution

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ABSTRACT

The conflict between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights began with the 1967 War, when Israel first occupied this land, which Syria believes is an illegal acquisition of its territory according to the UN Charter. The Golan Heights' strategic position as a buffer zone with valuable water resources makes this conflict particularly difficult to resolve. However, the author argues it is possible for Syria and Israel to realize a peace accord in conjunction with the United States and the international community.

THE CHALLENGE

In a 2003 interview with the *New York Times*, President Bashar Assad of Syria argued, "There can be no peace in the [Middle East] region without Syria."¹ Assad's contention is important to note given the historic intractability between Israel and its Arab neighbors and Syria's self-anointed role as a champion of pan-Arab nationalism. Hinnebusch argues that "without Syria's imprimatur no Arab-Israeli peace can be legitimate and hence durable."² However, Egypt and Jordan, which also border Israel, have achieved normalized relations with Israel and continue to recognize it despite Syria. Yet, there is little doubt that Syria's acceptance and formal diplomatic recognition of Israel is paramount to a greater and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In order for Syria and Israel to realize a peace accord, both countries, in conjunction with the United States and the international community, must overcome a number of diplomatic, security, and historical challenges.

The current impasse concerning the Golan Heights originated with Israel's invasion of Syria on June 9, 1967. After fighting for two days, Israel captured the Golan Heights and has occupied it ever since. For better or worse, Israel had not anticipated occupying the Golan Heights in the 1967 War. The Israeli invasion of Syria was arguably a tactical, unilateral, executive decision made by then Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.³ In the 15 years leading up to the war, Israel and Syria maintained tense yet relatively stable relations across their border in the Golan Heights. Dayan himself freely admitted that "more than 80 percent" of the clashes between Israel and Syria were due to an Israeli provocation of the Syrians.⁴ This is not to say that the Syrians were entirely innocent victims of unfair Israeli attacks—they frequently shelled Israeli farmers living on the low ground below the Heights. Up to this point (circa 1951) the line of demarcation between Syria and Israel was ambiguous at best. The June 4, 1967 boundary between both states was not, as Hof states, "recognizable to an attorney, a diplomat, or surveyor."⁵

The Israel-Syria conflict over the Golan Heights is one contentious issue in the larger on-going Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel justifies its annexation of the Golan Heights through its victory in the 1967 War. Syria argues that the United Nations (UN) forbids land acquisition through war, and therefore Israel's occupation is illegal. The second rationale underpinning this conflict lies in the strategic interests surrounding the Golan

Heights. Although there are concrete reasons for both countries to desire control over the Heights, the conflict is not as clear-cut as it may first appear. The overarching dilemma connecting both the theoretical rationale and strategic rationale is how to satisfy Syria's territorial claims while satisfying Israel's security concerns.⁶ Both countries' concerns must be adequately answered before peace between them and the entire region will be possible.

An added challenge in addressing Syrian territorial claims and Israeli security concerns is a difference in the perception of diplomatic negotiations between both countries. Syrian negotiation has been founded on networked and extended relationships. Simply signing a treaty does not entail the end of a negotiation or bargain. Dialogue is paramount and understood to be continuous. Israeli perceptions of negotiating are heavily influenced by Western culture and are best described as contractual and transactional. After an agreement is reached, both parties sign a treaty and are expected to adhere to it.⁷ Appreciating historical influences and regional politics are paramount to successfully negotiating a lasting Israeli-Syrian peace accord. Peace can be achieved, but only if cultural and historical influences are respected. Key international actors, notably the U.S. and the UN, must use their stature, power, and influence to serve as advocates and intermediaries for and between both countries.

NINETEENTH CENTURY NORMS VS. POST-1945 NORMS

The genesis of the modern state of Israel arguably began with the Hovevei Zionist movement in the late 19th century—punctuated by the publishing of Y.L. Pinsker's *Autoemancipation* in 1881.⁸ Theodore Herzl was another important figure in organizing the Zionist movement from 1897 to 1914. The Zionist movement provided the foundation for the modern state of Israel and is still important in understanding Israel's perceived insecurity.

Although Pinsker and Herzl's vision contributed to Israel's creation, equally important were the prevailing political science norms and realities learned and witnessed by future Israeli leaders. Allison's Model III schematic supports this notion. He argues that personal influences can explain and predict how certain leaders will act.⁹ With this in mind, it is

important to recall that Pinsker, Herzl, David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, and Menachem Begin were all born before international cooperation was formalized through organizations like the UN. These individuals all experienced the inescapably harsh and anti-Semitic realities of *realpolitik*.

Historically, Jews had been persecuted throughout Europe and Russia. Moreover, 19th and 20th century Israeli leaders witnessed the coercion and colonialism of the Victorian British Empire as well as the French Empire. At that time there were no prevailing norms against using power to invade and occupy another country. The Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France was proof of each empire's ability to invade a foreign land, conquer it, and divide the spoils among the victors.¹⁰ The League of Nations' abysmal failure and impotence underscored the belief that the idea of world governmental organizations was a notion best left to academic theorists.

Further underpinning this belief was the realist argument that countries are inherently suspicious of one another. Some argue that this is especially evident among Middle Eastern states. In short, they do not trust one another's intentions, because they are keenly aware of their own intentions.¹¹ Finally, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust reinforced the view among Jews that unless they formed their own state, they could eventually be exterminated. These realities influenced future Jewish leaders' ideology and strategic methodology in how to achieve their end goal of a comprehensive and geographically larger Jewish state—an *Eretz Israel*.¹²

The end of World War II ushered in an era of agreement on avoiding future global-scale wars. This feeling led to the development of new intergovernmental organizations including the founding of the UN in 1945. The UN Charter established new norms under which states would conduct themselves. Section 4 of Article 2 of the UN Charter prohibits the "use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."¹³ Therefore, land acquired through combat is illegal under the UN Charter. Sovereign states could no longer expand their borders through war.

Israel fought an arduous and long battle to achieve its statehood as many other great powers once did. Many Israelis understandably felt that they *ought* to have a right to territories won in combat. However, the prevailing international norms had changed by 1967. New norms influenced by the UN were antithetical to those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The international community no longer tolerated the acquisition of new territory through war or colonization. Moreover, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories used these new norms in the wake of the 1967 War to legitimize their claims against Israeli aggression and occupation. The Reagan administration's refusal to recognize the legality of Israel's annexation of the Golan in 1981 further strengthened this norm.¹⁴

Forty years following the 1967 War, some progress has been made to return occupied lands to their respective countries. Through the U.S. brokered Camp David Accords, Egypt eventually succeeded in regaining control of the Sinai Peninsula

in 1978. In late 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally withdrew Israeli settlers and troops from the Gaza Strip—allegedly for the prospect of peace, but arguably because of the disproportionately high costs of protecting the small number of Israeli settlers there. The Golan Heights, however, still remains a disputed territory. Syria has consistently maintained that the Golan Heights must be returned in order to achieve any notion of peace with Israel.

ISRAELI SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE GOLAN

McPeak argues that Israel originally captured the Golan Heights for the strategic advantage of providing a "geographic cushion" between it and Syria.¹⁵ This rationale was predicated on several factors pertaining to the military advantages offered by the Golan. First, Israelis living close to the pre-1967 border would be protected if the Syrian threat were removed from the overlooking Heights. In other words, Israelis living below the Heights would no longer live in an inferior position vis-à-vis their Syrian neighbors. A second strategic, military concern for Israel was that of a potential Soviet-Syrian advance. At the time of the 1967 War, Syria had been receiving some Soviet assistance. Although the U.S.S.R.'s assistance did not put the Israelis on high-alert, it was enough to make them keep a watchful eye on the Soviet-Syrian relationship.¹⁶ The further back Israel could push the Syrians into the desert, the more secure Israel would feel.

After the 1967 War, Israel began establishing farming settlements deep within the Golan Heights, reducing its usefulness as a buffer zone.¹⁷ In addition, technological advances in warfare have further undermined the Israeli argument. War planes and missiles can easily overcome the protection that the Golan's mountains once provided. Since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, not a shot has been fired between Israel and Syria in the Golan. Moreover, the Golan has since witnessed a massive economic transformation under Israeli occupation. Many Israelis argue that the Golan is now one of the most beautiful, secular, and peaceful places in Israel.¹⁸

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert recently reasserted Israel's commitment to maintaining control over the Heights "so long as he is prime minister."¹⁹ Although many Israelis have built homes and businesses in the Golan, many believe that releasing it to Syria in return for normalized relations may be worth the price. In 1999, Israelis even went so far as to vote out the Golan-focused party, the Third Way, from the Knesset.²⁰ Ehud Barak's administration did much to engage Syria and discuss the prospect of peace. It was widely understood that returning the Golan to Syria would be the condition *sine qua non* for normalized relations. Like Begin before him, Barak did the unlikely (albeit with significant pressure from the U.S.) and withdrew Israeli forces from Lebanon. This was a remarkably effective and strategic maneuver to undercut Hizbollah's basis for attacking Israel. Should Prime Minister Olmert attempt a similar maneuver in the Golan, Israel may be surprised with the positive results. This action may also help Israel to gain international respect and support.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS

Regional water supply is another complex issue concerning the dispute over control of the Golan Heights. There is a border dispute involving the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee). Israel wants to maintain complete control of the Kinneret, especially the strategically important 10-meter wide strip of land running along the Kinneret's northeastern bank. If ever this land were to officially become part of Syria's territory, it would mean that Israel would have to share the Kinneret's water supply with Syria. This small strip of land was originally demarcated as Palestinian territory (later Israeli) by British negotiators at the end of World War I to ensure that the region's limited water resources would remain entirely in British-Palestinian control.²¹ After the 1948 War of Independence, Israel signed the Armistice Demarcation Line Treaty with Syria in 1949—reaffirming Israeli sovereignty over this 10-meter wide strip of land. The strip's small size and topography made protecting it difficult and Syria assumed a de facto control of it; frequent cross-border attacks ensued. Both Israel and Syria accepted this tenuous arrangement until June 1967. Should Israel and Syria ever reach an accord to return the Golan for fully normalized, peaceful, diplomatic relations, this piece of land will undoubtedly be the subject of intense debate.

Sherman argues that because of the drainage flow of water from the Golan into the Kinneret, "Whoever controls these Heights, controls the fate of the Kinneret." Sherman contends that the Kinneret provides Israel with approximately 33 percent of its freshwater.²² Oren likewise argues that the 1967 War was specifically launched to gain control of the region's limited water supply.²³ Yet Allan argues that the Golan's water supply is not nearly as important as alleged. According to him the Golan's run-off constitutes just five percent of total freshwater contributions to the Kinneret. In fact, it is the West Bank with its large underground aquifer that is far more important for Israel's water and agricultural needs than the Golan.²⁴ Despite the ambiguity surrounding the actual supply of water furnished by the Kinneret and the Golan, the demand for water for the Western living standards in Israel has only increased. Even if the water supplied from the Golan is not as great as Allan argues, Israel would still benefit from maintaining control, which would allow its citizens to experience the comforts of Western life to which they have become accustomed.²⁵

Although Israel most likely did not view the Golan as an economically important area in 1967, it certainly has developed into one after the 1973 War. Recent reports highlight the beauty, serenity, and comforts offered in the Golan. Through government encouragement and incentives, many Israelis have developed businesses and homes there. Furthermore, the Golan has a unique geography found nowhere else in Israel. As a result, it can sustain both wineries and ski resorts, and has become a popular vacation destination.²⁶ Many Israelis have come to view the Golan as an inherent, inseparable part of their sovereign territory.

THE ROLE OF THE SYRIA-IRAN ALLIANCE

Perthes argues that the Syria-Iran alliance is purely a "marriage of convenience."²⁷ In short, the alliance is a *quid pro quo*, based on a common dislike for Israel. Because Syria has made scant diplomatic progress in regaining control of the Golan Heights since the 1967 War, many argue that only by supporting Iranian sponsored Hizbollah can it keep its Golan hopes alive.²⁸ Perthes and other experts do believe that President Assad would be open to negotiations if engaged by the U.S. Despite the current alliance, there are many differences between Syria and Iran that the U.S. and Israel could exploit: economic, political, and religious. Ultimately, Syria and Iran have conflicting interests.²⁹

Syria, unlike Iran, is a secular state that is predominantly Sunni Muslim. Syria also has a clear and tangible goal that it seeks to obtain from Israel: the return of the Golan Heights. In contrast, Iran's theocratic regime seeks intangible goals, including prestige, regional hegemony, and influence, which offer fewer possibilities for negotiation. Iran seeks to achieve these intangibles through its real and stated nuclear ambitions. This volatile combination should unite Syria with the U.S. and Israel (as well as the greater Middle East) to stop Iran.

At present, Iran wishes to assert its stature as a regional hegemon in the Middle East—much as it has done throughout its extensive history.³⁰ Ayatollah Khomeini's radical, theocratic legacy seeks influence over not only other Shi'ite communities, but also Sunni Muslims and Arabs of all religious backgrounds. Because Iranians are Persian, not Arab, they have historically considered themselves the superior race in the region.³¹ Syria, by contrast, is an ethnically diverse country with a majority Arab population.

Syria benefits from Iran through financing and investments. Syria desperately needs cash to help its struggling economy. Prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Syria had become so financially desperate that it allowed Saddam Hussein to illegally ship oil across its borders for a share of the profits. Although Iran and Syria rely on each other at present, it is unlikely that one will be able to tolerate the other's increased regional dominance. Iran's ruling regime is intolerant, violent, and religiously motivated. Even though Syria is a predominantly Muslim country, it is very much secular. Second, Iran is home to the region's largest Shi'ite Muslim population. By contrast, Syria's Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunni. Syria's alliance with Iran has concerned its Sunni neighbors so much so that Saudi Arabia cautioned Syria to temper the relationship.³² Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Muslim states fear that if Syria is not careful, Iraq's instability coupled with Iranian encouragement could unleash a wave of Shi'ite fundamentalism. In addition to Saudi Arabia, the secular regimes in Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan have no desire to see this happen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The death of Hafez Assad, the rise of his mercurial son Bashar, the Sharon administration's aggressive policies,

and Ehud Olmert's humiliating campaign in Lebanon in 2006 have derailed the prospect of negotiations for the time being. Israel cannot and will not bargain with Syria while it remains in a diminished position.³³ Renewed Syrian suzerainty in Lebanon, notably the assassinations of Rafik Hariri and Pierre Gemayel, has further exacerbated an already tense situation. Despite all of these obstacles, only by taking a leap of faith will Israel, the U.S., and Syria begin to entertain the notion of a lasting peace as witnessed in Egypt and Jordan. Syria, like Egypt and Jordan, must determine that peace is the primary goal and be willing to make diplomatic concessions to achieve it. Israel, as it did with Egypt, must make territorial concessions in exchange for full diplomatic recognition.

Regardless of whatever attempts Hizbollah, Hamas, or any other extremist group may use to thwart the peace process, all parties must remain committed and steadfast throughout. This is an area where the U.S. must play an active and concerted role. Because of its influence and foreign aid to the region, the U.S. must keep both Israel and Syria focused on achieving peace. It must simultaneously keep the international community involved to maintain intense pressure on both Syria and Israel to press forward.

Israel has occupied the Golan Heights for 40 years. The longer it continues to do so the more entrenched its citizens become there and the harder it will be to separate from Israel. Moreover, Syrians will become increasingly bitter and angry with what they (and the UN) perceive as an illegal occupation if there is no progress. Israel may have the ability to hold the Golan by force, but so long as it does, it will never enjoy peaceful relations with Syria. Additionally, it will continue to be viewed as an occupying power by the international community.

McPeak is correct with his assertion that each of Israel's occupied territories should be treated individually in order to attain some level of regional stability.³⁴ The only way this will happen is if the U.S., buttressed by a multilateral diplomatic regime, chooses to actively and sincerely devote itself to addressing Israel's security needs and Syria's territorial rights. Concerted and regular dialogue, coupled by adherence to incremental, tangible, and diplomatic milestones, are requisite to satisfy both countries' goals.

To ensure an effective peace process, the U.S. must engage partners from the international community. The Clinton administration called this foreign policy prescription "assertive multilateralism."³⁵ This policy employs varied options to prevent global destabilization such as diplomacy, intelligence, trade incentives, and intense international political pressure. After mustering significant international political support, the U.S. should enlist the help of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to appoint a commission to moderate talks between Israel, Syria, and the U.S.

Specifically, the U.S. must make it clear that all parties involved must be prepared to make serious concessions in order to achieve the end goal of normalized relations between Israel and Syria. Past examples of Israeli peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan also prove that normalized relations are possible and lasting. All three countries must make concessions. Because of

the depth and breadth of the Arab-Israeli conflict, no single country can be expected to resolve it unilaterally.

In enlisting partners, the U.S. should first focus on winning support from its trusted allies in the West—particularly the European Union (EU). The West alone may not constitute enough international pressure on Syria and Israel, but aiming to gain support from all Western nations is a logical first step. The U.S. and other Western countries share common democratic values, traditions, and histories; they have also worked successfully together in the past.³⁶ Before and throughout the 1991 Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker exemplified American patience and statesmanship to successfully gain Western (and Middle Eastern) support against Saddam Hussein. If the West was unified in its stance, then it would be able to more effectively persuade other nations (i.e., Russia, China, India, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) to pressure Israel and Syria as well.

Some experts contend that Israel will be loath to give up "cash for credit."³⁷ In other words, why should Israel give up a known for an unknown? This is a valid concern for Israel. This is an area where Syria, the U.S., and international community can play a large role. One way the U.S. and the EU could address the crisis between Israel and Syria would be to offer Syria economic incentives for ending its alliances with Iran and Hizbollah. This is a viable option in the assertive multilateral framework that would undercut Iran; its effectiveness, however, relies on harmonized efforts.³⁸ Syria would receive increased foreign aid from the U.S. and EU, but with this aid would come with clearly articulated consequences of unacceptable Syrian aggression toward Israel. In time, a peace similar to that of the Israeli-Egyptian accord (buttressed by American and European foreign assistance) could take root.

Similarly, the U.S. and the EU must also assert intense and sustained political pressure on Israel to reverse its domestic settlement policies. Though it would be a bold move, both may seek to penalize Israeli trade if Israel remains obstinate with its settlements. The U.S. may wish to consider gradually ending or scaling back the current Israel-U.S. Free Trade Agreement that it enacted in September 1985.³⁹ The EU might consider doing the same with the free trade agreement that the European Community signed with Israel in 1975.⁴⁰ Furthermore, both the U.S. and the EU should seek to harmonize trade liberalization efforts with Syria to offer it economic incentives to become more tractable and compliant. Because these measures will only be effective if partners work together, it is essential that the process be multilateral.

The U.S. should immediately engage UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to enlist diplomatic expertise to coordinate negotiations between Syria and Israel. Negotiators should be respected, high-profile leaders with a proven record in peace and conflict resolution. Two possible candidates are former South African president Nelson Mandela and former U.S. president Jimmy Carter. Mandela is an internationally

recognized man of peace and understanding who embodies diplomacy, understanding, and above all an appreciation for reconciliation.⁴¹ Carter's role in negotiating the 1978 Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel makes him an appropriate choice. Although Carter's most recent book *Palestine Peace, Not Apartheid* (2006) has already drawn much ire from several prominent Jewish scholars, he is one of the few who has achieved enduring diplomatic results between Israel and its neighbors.⁴² In short, a UN imprimatur is particularly important in this process because many countries throughout the world rely on the UN to set international norms and provide legitimacy and credibility where there are conflicting interests. Moreover, some states will only agree to support certain issues with a UN endorsement.⁴³

Prominent neo-conservative Robert Kagan suggests that the U.S. should renew its time-honored Western alliances.⁴⁴ Enacting a more balanced approach (i.e., less pro-Israeli) to the Israel-Syria conflict will help to demonstrate American sincerity to the West and world community in order to gain the requisite bona fide international support for a comprehensive Middle Eastern peace.

A medium-term goal that ought to unite Israel, Syria, the U.S., and the international community is opposition against a nuclear-armed Iran. Ultimately, the U.S. and the Middle East cannot allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons capabilities. Should Iran become a nuclear-armed power, it could effectively destabilize the Middle East and unleash a nuclear counter-proliferation wave in a region rife with conflict. A nuclear-armed Iran could also operate more independently of American action, threatening American oil shipments and trade. To nullify this threat, the U.S. must work with Israel and Arab nations to be united in opposition against Iran's nuclear development and regional hegemony. A balanced approach with Israel and Syria is a logical way of securing regional and global support in this endeavor.

Concessions by Syria and Israel are an integral part of any political bargaining process that both countries must be prepared to make. Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz admitted that Israel must be prepared to make concessions for peace with Syria.⁴⁵ Egypt and Israel attained peace with Israel's return of the Sinai to Egypt for the full diplomatic recognition of Israel by Egypt. Ironically, Ehud Olmert admitted that his opposition to former Prime Minister Begin's decision to withdraw from the Sinai was wrong; he emphatically stated, "[t]hank God we pulled out of the Sinai."⁴⁶ Despite the benefits Israel enjoys from the Golan, returning it to Syria could provide manifold benefits. It may take several generations before Israelis and Syrians come to fully accept one another and are able to cross their borders peacefully. The only way they will ever achieve this is if their respective governments fully recognize one another and accept each other's right to exist in peace.

Syria must also be prepared to end its alliance with Iran. Syria's Muslim neighbors, Israel, and the U.S. have come to view this alliance as a direct threat to their respective national interests. In addition to providing the necessary economic and diplomatic incentives to Syria, the U.S. and Israel must also demonstrate that they respect Syrian sovereignty (despite

different governing theories) and that they are willing to work with Syria. In exchange for this, Syria must end its support for Hizbollah and eliminate extended Iranian suzerainty in Lebanon. Some scholars believe that this will be difficult.⁴⁷ For counsel, President Assad must engage other Muslim leaders that have normalized relations with Israel – notably King Abdullah of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt. Both nations have full diplomatic relations with Israel and have also enjoyed relative stability in the region.

CONCLUSION

Any proposed plan of action requires varying degrees of risk. Kettl advocates, "reducing risk through redundancy." Layering safeguards and casting many different nets in which to ensnare threats are effective ways to ensure security. Conversely, Kettl also cautions of potential adverse effects due to too much redundancy that inevitably results in "inefficiency."⁴⁸ Both of Kettl's arguments can be applied to resolving the Israel-Syria conflict. Engaging both countries through diplomatic, multilateral efforts will effectively create a shared burden within the international community. However, such a process must be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure it remains relevant and progressing forward. All parties, but particularly the U.S., would be wise to adopt an assertive multilateral policy that is buttressed by a multifaceted approach if only to spread risk.

Engagement with Syria and Israel must be part of a larger pan-Middle Eastern peace initiative. Other flashpoints include Shebaa Farms, Israeli-Lebanese relations, continued engagement in the Gaza Strip, Israeli settlement policies, and of course the West Bank. Addressing each conflict individually will prove more manageable with tangible results for the diverse parties involved. The Iraq Study Group recently released its policy recommendations for the current war in Iraq. The group's report calls for the U.S. to engage Syria and Iran through diplomacy. It also calls for Israel to return the Golan Heights to Syria in return for normalized relations and a security guarantee from Israel by the U.S.⁴⁹ The group's bipartisan composition and diplomatic tone are encouraging for the peace process. Enacting the report's recommendations will require constant diplomatic monitoring and international participation to avoid pitfalls and stalling. Only by working together to address the needs of Israel and each of its neighbors (including the Palestinian territories), can a U.S.-led coalition resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The U.S. must realize that it cannot resolve this issue alone, although with international support it can. Normalized relations between Syria and Israel in exchange for returning the Golan to Syria is one step in this process.

If the international community invests time and resources in such an endeavor, then it will have greater reason to see this goal realized. The conflict between Arabs and Jews has become one of the most intractable political and religious situations known to humanity. What many people today do not realize is that Arabs and Jews actually did live in peace in the not so distant past. Returning the Golan to Syria and

normalizing relations with Israel is a concrete and attainable goal that can be achieved with international support. In an increasingly connected world, the international community cannot continue to ignore this situation. With renewed global support to resolve this conflict, Jews and Arabs can once again live with each other in peace.⁵⁰

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Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. Government.

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