

Pessimism is a luxury that Jews cannot afford.

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Israel's Political Condition in Advance of 2048

It seems that the region around Israel is undergoing another meaningful shift that has already started moving local forces around ahead of a new type of order in the long history of the Middle East and the Levant. If we assume that the conclusions that have been drawn from the Geographic Approach are reliable, it seems that Turkey has started returning to center stage, though no one knows how long it will hold that position. The process of Turkey's reassuming the role of the regional superpower will gain momentum in the 2020s, during which it will be supported by a global patron. As in 1967, when Turkey served as a buffer against the expansionism of the USSR, the US already considers it a strategic asset against a reemerging Russia,

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collapsing domains and fundamentalist forces in the Middle East. Expecting Turkey to play its role in disrupting Russia's return to Eastern Europe and managing collapsing regimes and fundamentalist forces in the Middle East, the US will shower it with gifts that will bolster its military and political status.

To help Turkey succeed, the Americans will be willing to turn a blind eye to various external and domestic follies that Turkey will promote.

History, however, has taught us that intentions and actions tend to differ. It cannot be ruled out that though many will be aware of the strengthening ties between the US and Turkey, the process will include secret moves and mutual attempts to outdo one another. The most important conclusion of the Geographic Approach is that the shape of the land dictates that parties that wish to protect themselves from tricks others might play on them have to be cunning too. Thus, the US may find other forces in the eastern Mediterranean that could circumvent Turkey in case it does not agree to play its assigned role. Should that happen, the US may bolster Greece in a way that will surprise and enrage the Turks

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Turkey, at the same time, will not sit idly by and just submissively play its part. It will constantly seek alternatives for US support and try to maneuver it so it does not find itself totally dependent on American favors. One of the best ways for it to do that is to establish a set of secret pacts with US enemies. It may attempt to establish economic and military ties with Russia, which will want to drive a wedge between the US and Turkey, and will be willing to pay dearly for that. Turkey will certainly occasionally forget who helped it recover and will want to prove to the US that it is not in its pocket. For example, it might conduct a foreign policy that will annoy the Americans and forge warm relations with Iran or other anti-American forces in the Middle East, Asia

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Minor, or elsewhere.¹⁰¹ These defiant ties will be forged to remind the world that Turkey is an independent power that has not gained its strength solely thanks to US efforts. Turkey will try to outflank US forces in the Levant as well, so that if at any time the US reneges on its commitment to the Turks, it would not be able to get away with it. To do that, Turkey will gradually warm up its relations with whoever

will be ruling in Lebanon and Syria on the one hand and with Gaza and Egypt on the other, which might strain Turkish-Israeli ties. That tension will start with troubling statements, but will intensify later with clear security and economic moves against Israeli interests.

Israel will have a hard time dealing with this reemerging regional superpower. It will have to understand the Turkish process, not try to oppose or engage it. Dealing with a reemerging regional superpower requires great sensitivity, caution, and clever moves. Israel will have

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to be aware of its geographic role in such tectonic regional shifts because they contain the seeds of a real threat to the existence of the Israeli political entity. Here, modesty is not just a virtue; it is a means of survival. It will be futile for Israel to raise

issues such as national dignity with a rising regional superpower. Since Israel's geography dictates geopolitical inferiority, the more humble and modest it will be in its political dealings with the Turks, the more options it will have to cooperate with it on interests that may be critical for its survival.

2020s

Cooperation with Turkey will prove extremely valuable particularly during two critical periods in the regional and global history of the first half of the 21st century. The first opportunity could present itself around the middle or near the end of the 2020s, while the other will emerge around the late 2040s. The two opportunities will be different in nature: the first will be military, while the other will be political.

If US-Russia tensions will eventually intensify in the 2020s, as I expect they will, the US will secretly ask Turkey to harass the Russians and sabotage their interests in Europe and the Middle East, which might force Russia to divide its attention between several issues just as it did when, recovering from the USSR disintegration

in the early 21st century, it supported Iran to draw the US attention there and ease American pressure on it. At the time, the Russians hoped that this tactic would circumvent American attempts to stop them from regaining their previous status in Eastern Europe, and they succeeded to some extent. Similarly, the US will expect this tactic to force Russia to divide its attention and efforts and erode its expansionist plans again. Nevertheless, just as the Russian efforts failed in the early 21st century, this tactic will not satisfy the US needs during the 2020s. At a certain point, the Americans will have to directly confront Russia's renewed expansionist intentions, and Turkey will have to assume an immediate role in that confrontation. Turkey will have to pay and return the US investment in it.

In the first stage, Russia will not be aware of the Turkish move because the messages of the Turks in the early 2010s will be very friendly. The two countries will form economic and political ties that will grow closer over the years, while Turkey will forge regional alliances. Those alliances will include Russia, whose sphere of influence will expand. Russia will be a very important state by then, and Turkey will not be able to ignore it as it makes its own ascent, which will enrage the Americans. Yet, when Turkey begins to realize that Russian domination of, or at least its very strong influence in, Eastern Europe might negatively impact on its own goals, it will agree to reassume the role that the US assigned it in the first place.

At that point, Russia will begin to realize that it is under growing pressure from several directions and will try to circumvent the American tactic. It will not have too many options. Cunningly, it will generate military tension in southern Turkey and hope that the Americans will become involved in it as well. At that time, Israel's northern borders will be one of the easiest places in which to spark unrest, and Russia will probably invest quite a lot in exacerbating it. Russia will have several options

Russia will cunningly attempt to generate military tension in southern Turkey

in going about this. The easiest way will be to arm numerous parties with parity-violating weapons – from advanced defense systems to frightening assault weapons, including tactical nukes or chemical warheads – that will evoke Israel’s deepest ancient fears.

The problem with this tactic is that Israel’s northern enemies do not only wish to attain parity with Israel. They might soon be tempted to believe that their new weapons will have provided them with an opportunity to defeat it and thus might try to heat up the region, attempting to find a reason to attack. Always anxious about its existence, Israel will react as it has always done – with extreme force.

We should remember that no responsible Israeli leader wants to inflict levels of destruction such as were witnessed in the Gaza operation of 2008-9. It uses enormous power precisely because the inherent asymmetry of military campaigns in the 21st century reveals one of its weaknesses. Israel will gradually become involved in battles that leave massive destruction in their wake. In the first decade of the 21st century, many began to understand and describe the by-product of that weakness.¹⁰² If the anxiety that follows the realization that the classic doctrine of war has collapsed should come in addition to the fear of physical extinction that the Jews developed over their millennia of exile, and if, added to both of these there is also the identity anxiety that intensified as archaeological findings shook the religious Jewish narrative, it should not be hard to guess how all this will be expressed on a future battlefield.

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, many armies worldwide have begun to realize that asymmetric wars placed them at a distinct disadvantage. Some argued that asymmetric wars involve not only regular armies fighting guerrilla forces, but also wars between two parties with different views of the important parameters of the campaign. In asymmetric wars, though the parties engage each other directly, each has a different goal. For example,

side A may want to defeat side B, while side B may only wish to break through a stalemate. When the asymmetry of war gains prominence or, in other words, when each party wishes to benefit from a war on a dimension different from the other party's dimension, the classic doctrine that defines victory is no longer valid. Thus, for lack of options, both parties are tempted to inflict huge damage on each other while seeking completely different outcomes.

Consider the following: since World War Two, the West has developed precise and effective weapons and doctrines that effectively attain victory. These doctrines aim at high-capacity destruction of large and powerful military formations in exposed terrain. The potential enemies of Israel and the West have not yet succeeded in providing direct techno-tactical solutions for these Western capabilities and, therefore, have opted for the asymmetrical doctrine that does not seek to directly attain the goals of the war, but circumvents them. They create wars of attrition that democracies cannot tolerate for any length of time, while eliminating the Western intelligence-gathering and firepower advantages.

After the 1967 war, Israel's enemies studied the method carefully and started using it in various forms – in direct, high-impact military struggles, or by utilizing terrorist groups of low military signature. Practically, this strategy is employed in an attempt to deny the Israeli option of winning wars and realizing the military might. It started in 1973, when the Egyptian Army tried to neutralize the IDF's ability to win battles. It prolonged the war, which prevented Israel from declaring victory, which left diplomacy as the only way to end it, which required Egyptian consent. By attaining the result of ending the war through diplomatic agreement rather than by a clear victory-defeat formula, Egypt, for all intents and purposes, initiated the negotiating process with Israel, which was its goal to begin with. It was a

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strategy that mainly comprises an attack on the durability of Israel's civilian and political system. That doctrine was clearly endorsed by Lebanon's Hizbullah in 2006. Firing rockets and missiles at soldiers and civilians was never meant to attain victory or classic operative goals such as territorial conquests, but was merely meant to impair the Israeli nation's willingness to keep fighting by destabilizing trust and coherence among the government, the civilians, and the army.

Impairing the desire to go on fighting requires several conditions that create the asymmetry of future wars. The first condition is that the fighting should last long enough to undermine the army's belief in its ability to attain a decisive victory. The second condition is making the civilian system realize that its army does not stand a chance of attaining a clear achievement that would justify the price of the war. In this respect, asymmetric wars create a situation where every additional day of confrontation that does not provide clear results supports the notion that the war is purposeless and thus should be ended as soon as possible. Asymmetric warfare has the effect of making one of the warring sides realize that its interests would be better served if it pulled out of the war quickly, even if the price is making bilateral agreements that include political concessions that accommodate the enemy, or even unilaterally withdrawing from the military challenge.

Attempting to score these achievements in recent years, countries and organizations such as Hizbullah or Hamas developed a complex and diversified doctrine that is mainly comprised of launching small, light, and autonomous squads that operate free of a central control system, which can saturate a battlefield with numerous, low-signature units. In the future, these units will further be equipped with plenty of high-quality weapons and thus, they will spread over vast territories and will have plenty of firepower while maintaining low visibility. In view of recent successes, it seems that regular armies will also assimilate asymmetric warfare methods. It is most

likely that, in a future campaign, regular armies too will operate as a dispersed and horizontal set of autonomous units that will cover territorial cells and use weapons and logistics that have been pre-deployed there. These units will follow standing orders to hold their positions for long durations and produce sporadic but very high-quality fire.

As we move further into the second decade of the 21st century, many minds are busy trying to find solutions for this type of asymmetric warfare, and I will not elaborate on it here. It is, however, clear at this stage that most of the solutions raised will drive future military campaigns to destructive levels that will be far greater than in previous wars. The level of devastation that Operation Cast Lead in Gaza (2008) and the Second Lebanon War (2006) left behind will be dwarfed by the level of destruction that asymmetric wars will generate. It seems that asymmetric wars make it practically impossible to directly impair the enemy's capabilities or power to attain political achievements, decisive results and victories will have to be gained in other ways, including strategic freedom of operation, undermining warfare paradigms, and imposing a different type of war. It is ironic that adopting the guerrilla model in asymmetric wars will probably make future wars more extreme and devastating, though fortunately they will result in fewer casualties.

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Should Israel be threatened by an asymmetric war that aims at defeating it politically, it will have to defend its existence as a political entity in the Middle East again. In response to that threat, it will probably quickly seize large areas in Syria and Lebanon, in an attempt to neutralize the enemy's asymmetric doctrine. That move will impose a different type of war on the enemy's autonomous cells on the ground and will force them to fight for

Israel will quickly seize large areas to ward off the asymmetric warfare

things they consider more important than driving a wedge between Israel's army and its civilians.

Israel will have to conquer vast territories between northern Lebanon and Damascus

The IDF may be left with the single option of conquering vast territories between northern Lebanon and Damascus, which is not an easy thing to say in early 2012. This will probably be the best way to destabilize the asymmetric warfare and tip the scales in Israel's favor. Indeed, this doctrine will expose Israel's rear to massive rocket attacks, but will also create enough pressure to make Lebanon and Syria request the end of hostilities, thus reversing the situation.

The Israeli rear will sustain huge rocket barrages

The main problem of this strategy is, as noted, that the Israeli rear will, for a while, sustain huge rocket barrages that can inflict serious devastation on the home front.

Initially, Turkey will play an important role in this Israeli expansion and will not consider it a direct threat against it. The US will convince it that the Israeli war in Lebanon and Syria is part of the campaign against Russia, and thus Turkey will support it politically and militarily, though not openly. Its most important contribution to

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this war will be toning down the Iraqi and Iranian reaction to the Israeli move. Israel will then reap the fruits of the humility and patience it will have displayed (hoping it does that) when Turkey was drawing closer in its relations with Iran and Iraq in the early 21st century. That rapprochement will provide Turkey with sufficient influence to relax Iranian reactions to the Israeli invasion of Syria and

Lebanon, which should buy time for the Israeli forces to establish their hold on the ground and subsequently launch negotiations on its withdrawal under diplomatic conditions that will serve it.

It has been argued that modern missile systems totally change the

tool of geographic analysis and cast doubt on their validity. In all modesty, I believe we have not yet reached the point where missile power can win a war, just as an air force alone cannot yet decide the fate of campaigns, as the Lebanon war of 2006 proved. Therefore, though missiles can damage large population centers and make the civilians question the necessity of buffer zones, they still cannot win wars, and certainly cannot conquer territories. Even very massive barrages still cannot attain much without commensurate massive armored and infantry movement.

Traditionally, Israel cannot tolerate the formation of a regional superpower north of Syria because if such a power were to try to expand, it would only be a matter of time before it conquers Israel and subdues its centers of population and government. Therefore, if Israel wants to keep its Third Commonwealth alive for a long time, it will have to protect its northeastern wing through political agreements or by stationing a deterrent military force along its border. If, for whatever reason, it should fail to create peace agreements or deterrence, its only option would be conquering Damascus and thus blocking the expansionist moves of that regional northern power.

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The Year 2048 – Israel’s Centennial

Should the option as described above eventually materialize, even if partly or somewhat differently, Israel will have to rely on Turkey’s military and diplomatic power in a way that few can envisage in 2012. That campaign will be an important turning point in Israel’s relations with Turkey as a regional power and with the US as a global one.

In the 2020s and 2030s, Israel will find itself maneuvering between greater powers that will be running a course that would be

the opposite of their directions in the 2010s. The US will sponsor Turkey, invest much in improving their relations, and support its return to a distinguished regional status in every way possible. Yet,

The relations between the US and Turkey will deteriorate in the 2020s

after tensions with Russia subside, Turkey will start conducting independent policies, as a regional power should. Slowly but surely, the relations between the US and Turkey will deteriorate until tension builds up between them. The US will want to keep Turkey under its wing, but the

latter will turn its back on the former and demonstrate increasing independence. The conflict between US and Turkish interests will eventually become evident to all.

Israel will be caught in the middle, owing both the Turks and the Americans. In the early 2020s, Israel will insist that it will not be able to afford to withdraw to its previous borders. Though it will be under great pressure, Israeli diplomacy will learn the tactics of asymmetric war and diplomacy by then and will explain to the world that only if the confrontation states sign binding peace accords with it, and only if the international community backs them up and vouches for them, would it be willing to withdraw. At that stage, both Syria and Lebanon will be defined as failing countries and will invite Turkey to guard their failing regimes and prevent their populations from attempting to flee their countries.

Israel will be able to slip through the crack between Turkey and the US

In this state of affairs, Israel's position might be perceived as directly threatening Turkish interests. Since, however, the relationship between Turkey and the US will already be tense, Turkey will want to keep Israel under its influence as well. Thus, once again, Israel will be able to slip through this

crack between Turkey and the US, hunker down and hope that some of its own diplomatic goals will be attained thanks to the competition of the superpowers.

As mentioned in Chapter 13, George Friedman estimated that in the mid-21st century, Turkey will join Japan to form a global power to balance out the exclusivity of the US, which will have reigned until then. Friedman estimated that there will be violence between the parties, but even if there is not, a tense state of affairs between Turkey and the US could contain diplomatic opportunities for which Israel had been waiting since it was established more than a century previously. Driven by these two conflicting interests – hostility to the US and the desire to keep Israel within the sphere of its influence – the Turks will be able to start a political process between Israel and the Arab states, which by then will be experiencing a state of progressive decay, that could ensure regional peace for many years, well into the 22nd century.

In truth, only a Muslim country with regional influence such as Turkey of the 2040s will have, will be capable of making Israel's confrontational neighbors, near and far, engage in comprehensive negotiations and end the current chapter in the history of the Levant.

The US and the Europeans will have tried that for 100 years, but were unable to help the rivals reconcile. A geographical analysis, however, shows that the only option of attaining that materializes when a country such as Turkey decides to force the rivals to sign binding agreements. It will be motivated by a dual interest. On the one hand, it might feel threatened by Israel, which, after the war of the 2020s, will have

Only a Muslim country such as Turkey could make Israel and its neighbors sign a peace accord

suddenly become a prominent country, dominating nearly the entire eastern Mediterranean. For Turkey, this will mean that its regional hegemony and mainly its southern wing are threatened and it will not be able to tolerate that situation for long. On the other hand, because it will engage in an ever-escalating competition with the Americans, it will wish to prove to the region that it can make Israel and its neighbors sign a peace accord, which the US have failed

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to do for decades. Subsequently, such a move will drive a wedge between Israel and the US and thus weaken the US hold in this region.

By the end of this process, Israel may shrink back to occupying only the three main regions that have always characterized its existence, but by then its neighbors will have acknowledged it and will maintain reciprocal relations with it. In this respect, Israel will be able to enact the strategy of asymmetric war against its enemies who tried it against Israel in the early 21st century.

In summary, it is safe to say that reality often exceeds imagination. I believe this is because human imagination is unable to contain a priori what logic dictates, because our power of imagination is lacking. Though the methodology we utilize as we try to understand the future contains a large portion of historic truth, we run into difficulties when we try to break down its conclusions into numerous details and apply them to human behavior and historic future events. Historic nuances will doubtless be very complex and perhaps even very different from the scenarios described above. In fact, they may be nothing like the situations this book predicts. Nevertheless, we could state with a large degree of credibility that the power relations will more or less derive from their geographic constraints, as described and analyzed here.