Jerusalem, 22 April 2009

EU PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE – ISRAELI TRACK
Ofer Zalzberg

ISRAELI TRACK: THE TIME IS RIPE

This initiative was intended to provide an opportunity for Israeli Jews to collectively think in-depth about the nature of the state they wish to live in and how they will develop a fruitful and peaceful relationship with Israeli Arabs, the Palestinian people and their wider neighbouring countries. This involved bringing together Jewish-Israeli leaders from across all factions of Israeli society to answer the question: How do we envisage a state of Israel in which we, our children and our grandchildren would be happy and proud to live, amongst ourselves, together with the Palestinians and our neighbours? The initiative began in October 2007 and was completed in May 2008 to coincide with the 60th anniversary of the state of Israel. It included three workshops involving scenario planning for the future.

Before the workshops: Participant selection and interviews

In Israel, the Jewish Israeli society is governed by the anxiety of the traumatic past of the Jewish people, and the wish for a secure existence at all costs. The deep division within the Jewish Israeli society is about how to secure itself and achieve a sustainable peace with its neighbours. This fragmentation is reflected in the divergence in priorities, values and goals and a deep mistrust among the mainstreams of society. It is a result both of social cleavages (religious-secular, socioeconomic left-right, Ashkenaz-Sepharad, immigrants-natives) and of the pressures caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (as well as some related regional conflicts).

As a result the national conversation about the conflict has become a cacophony. To a large extent as time passes the discussion becomes increasingly polarized, filled with taboos and thus simplistic. This leaves Israeli Jews with no real capacity to agree on a common strategy. Israel's significant power in the Middle East means that as long as it continues to muddle through without a conscious strategy the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is likely to continue to defy resolution efforts.

With Israel facing a truly complex reality, and given its deep internal divisions about the strategy it should pursue, it appeared that mapping the key possibilities is a crucial stepping stone in moving towards an agreed strategy. In short, a collective Jewish-Israeli focus on the plausible rather than the desired is needed. Experience in other conflict regions in the world has shown that such mapping provides the leadership and the public with a new vocabulary which is needed for an effective national conversation. Having a concise and memorable name for two to four plausible, relevant, challenging and clear scenarios for the future of Israel's Jews is a requirement if Israeli Jews are to take a well-informed decision about their future – one that takes seriously into account the domestic, regional and international constraints, costs and benefits.

With this in mind, three specific objectives were presented to the participants in creating this set of scenarios. First, they should enable a complex conversation which is anchored in simple, tangible terms. If, for example, when a leader or TV broadcaster talks of the future of Israelis and Palestinians in "One Home" Jewish-Israelis have immediately a nuanced, detailed and clear image in their minds (say of a state-of-all-its-citizens) then a new form of communication is established. Second, certain insightful key terms found during the dialogue to be lacking in the national conversation should be used in describing the scenarios and thus enrich the popular conversation in significant ways. Finally, and not less importantly, after so many decades of violent conflict, a mapping of alternative scenarios should be used

to broaden the discursive space, alleviate some taboos and legitimize a conversation on certain futures that were so far unspoken.

If these are to be part of the public discourse then such scenarios -or more broadly such a new conversation- need to be owned by a group of leaders from all walks of life.

The main criteria the organizers focused on when selecting the participants was that together they represent the major currents of thought in the Jewish-Israeli society and that each of them is on his or her way up (i.e. that in five years time they will be in the first tier of their sector, community, organization or group). The group thus included several members of Knesset with diverse political views, former heads of the security services (GSS, IDF), leading businesspeople, key religious and spiritual leaders (ultra-orthodox, national-religious, [secular] Jewish renewal), prominent social activists, renowned journalists, senior academics and various celebrities and publicly known figures. A three-hour interview was carried with each participant by project staff members as a first step in the journey, encouraging participants to be reflective, curious, open-minded and creative. A booklet including insightful statements from these interviews was made available to all participants.

As this report was written, a year and a half after the project began, one can witness the significant progress of the participants towards more senior leadership position in their fields: one participant became a member of Knesset, two of the participants became members of city councils, all MKs and heads of municipalities were re-elected, and nearly all of the participants have increased their visibility in the Israeli public sphere though the mass media and other tools.

Workshop #1 (Nov '07) – Initial scenarios:
Internal Cohesion & Relations with Neighbours

The focus question selected for the entire project was the following: "How do we envisage a state of Israel in which we, our children and our grandchildren would be happy and proud to live, amongst ourselves, together with the Palestinians and our neighbours?"

After initially brainstorming and identifying a broad scope of over 20 future possibilities the first workshop played a significant role in focusing the participants on a set of 4 scenarios. The participants were asked to focus on the stories that are more important to share currently both with Israeli-Jews and with Arabs within Israel and out of it.

Probably the most interesting insight related to the justification for having these specific scenarios. Two central variables were identified as crucial to the evolution of Jewish Israelis: the degree of internal cohesion and the extent to which agreement is found with Israel's neighbours. Based on these two variables four distinct scenarios were created as indicated by the following matrix:

	Conflict with neighbours	Agreement with neighbours
Internal struggle	4	1
Internal coherence	3	2

#1 Internal struggle and constant conflict with neighbours
> Due to increasing fragmentation within Israel, the Arab countries intensify their attacks and Israel yields by relinquishing its character as a Jewish-Democratic state. Jews are a community in one of the Middle East's states. Agreement with neighbors is reached based on Israeli defeat.

#2 Internal coherence and agreement with neighbours
> Due to increasing fragmentation within Israel, Israeli politicians transform societal institutions to be community-based which enables answering the needs of each group and agreeing on long

term national aspirations. In light of such unity the Palestinians and the Arab countries realize Israel is here to stay and accept Israel's peace offer.

#3 Struggle with neighbours induces peace and consensus from within
US withdrawal from the Middle East catalyzes an Iranian attack on Israel which in turn unites Israelis with 'moderate' Arab countries and increases internal cohesion in Israel in face of the threat.

#4 Failed compromise with neighbours leads to internal fragmentation & nuclear war
Critical internal fragmentation causes an Israeli compromise vis-à-vis the Palestinians to fail in reaching public support. A new intifada breaks out, with missiles reaching Tel Aviv, and many of the attacks carried by Israel's Arab population. Secular Israelis flee, nationalist-religious Jews and evangelist Christians immigrate, and the conflict escalates first into an Israeli-Syrian attrition war and after an Israeli attack on Iran to a nuclear third world war.

Of particular interest are the causal linkages the participants have flagged between these two variables. To a large extent, the group's thinking was led by the assumption that internal cohesion is the key to resolving the problems of Israel's Jewish population and that this variable is determinative specifically of the nature of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours. More specifically, internal cohesion was defined as a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for reaching a peace agreement with Israel's neighbours.

Workshop #2 (Feb '08) – Explaining Internal (in)coherence:
Extent of Interventionism & Jewish character of the state

During the second workshop the group argued that the central variables identified as corner stones of the scenarios have to be changed. In particular, the axes of Interventionism (Marketism--Statism) and Jewish character of State (Halachic State--State-of-all-its-citizens) were pointed to as crucial if one wants to delve into the key reasons for the lack of internal incoherence among Israeli-Jews. Given the results of the first workshop the participants felt these are the stories that Israeli Jews need to hear now and that these have priority over scenarios relating to Israel's relations with its neighbours.

\ State's Jewish character Interventionism	Halachic State	Secular Jewish State	State of all its citizens
Marketism	1	3	
Statism	4	2	

Baesd on these axes, 4 scenarios were drafted:[1]
#1 A Free Halachic State
#2 An Interventionist Secular State
#3 A Free Secular State
#4 An Interventionist Halachic State

A noteworthy aspect of this set of scenarios initially was the difficulty the participants had in defining what lies between a Halachic State and a State of all its Citizens. A particularly helpful question for clarifying the meaning of each category was about the extent to which the Arab Citizens of Israel had equal rights to the Jewish ones. The focus on a Secular Jewish State was selected as it implies that Israel's is Jewish in the cultural and national sense but not in the religious one.

---

[1] A fifth scenario, of maintaining the current status quo with regard to occupation and the conflict, in which Israeli Jews focus inwardly on renewing Jewish identity, was discussed as well. However, the group agreed such a reality cannot be sustainable on the long term.

Another fascinating facet of the discussion was the conversation about the extent to which each of these scenarios can take place under various regional-political constellations: Can Halacha laws exist in a bi-national state? Is a laissez-faire policy of a secular Jewish state plausible when the regional conflict escalates or is such escalation a cause for Israel's Statism? Do some regional-political constellations (two-states based peace, conflict, confederation, etc) support a one Jewish group establishing a monopoly (not necessarily Ultra-Orthodox) over other Jewish groups and if so are there are any regional-political constellations which encourage domestic Jewish pluralism and tolerance? Similarly, which regional-political constellations encourage teaching solely Israeli-Jewish tradition, solely universal-humanistic traditions or enable having an adequate balance between the two?

Finally, a third valuable insight that emerged during this particularly inward-looking workshop, and which the group retained throughout the rest of the project, was based on their agreement on the terminological gap caused by the way the term "Jew" conflates all three aspects of Jewish identity – cultural/ethnic, national and religious. Instead, a more nuanced terminology was proposed: Jewishness (cultural Jewish identity), Zionism (national Jewish identity), Judaism (religious Jewish identity). It was noted that the Israeli identity is based on a fourth aspect: citizenship. The term Jewishness was seen as the most lacking in the current Israeli discourse. These basic distinctions proved as critical in advancing the group's conversation.

Learning Journeys (Jan '08 onwards) – Israel and its neighbours:

Immediately after the first workshop, and later between the second and the third workshops, several learning journeys were organized. The learning journeys aim at: (1) giving the participants as broad an understanding as possible of the whole system and their roles within it, and (2) enabling the participants to meet stakeholders and to map and assess their intentions and needs. For this double purpose sub-sets of participants went out to meet various stakeholders who were not present in the group and brought their impressions to the plenary in the workshop that followed. Of particular note are three of the learning journeys: Arab Israelis, non-Israeli Palestinians and regional actors. These learning journeys brought the participants to direct contact with Arab Israelis who authored the Future Vision of the Arab Palestinians in Israel document, non-Israeli Palestinian businessmen and journalists and experts on Middle Eastern politics and in particular political Islam.

Palestinian-Arab Citizens of Israelis – Three crucial aspects were highlighted in the report to the plenary. First, the Arab Israelis met defied the image of poor, old Arabs and were instead intellectually impressive, eloquent and professional. Second, they see Israel as a racist rather than a Jewish state, and this based on their perception that Israel accepts both non-Jewish Russians and non-Zionist Haredis (ultra-orthodox) which means there is no coherent Jewish state but instead an anti-Arab state. Finally, they propose a consensual democracy, which recognizes the existence of various groups (Jewish, Arab, Druze, Ultra-orthodx, Russian immigrants, etc), and addresses their needs. The inability of the Arab-Israelis to take responsibility for the 1948 War or to recognize the Jewish historic roots in the land of Israel were noted as well. Conversations in the group later in the journey flagged the theme of nativity, and in particular mutual recognition as natives of the land, as central to the transformation of Arab-Jewish relations within Israel.

Palestinians (non-Israeli) – Three basic messages were reported back to the plenary as a result of the learning journey to the Palestinians: (1) The Palestinians demand to be treated with decency as equal human beings – not as slaves, wood-cutters and water carriers. They argue International Law requires of Israel to treat the Palestinian population under its control very differently – as human beings with rights. I addition, they emphasize that the Jewish Tora, Talmud and Jewish morality all oblige Jews to treat non-Jews as human beings. "We are not children of a lesser God". Second, politically, they say that the Two State solution is probably no longer feasible. They argue that no government in Israel can dismantle most or even half of the settlements, nor is there a government interested in trying this. According to them Israel has three options: (1) continue to occupy us but then do so according to international law

and provide for our basic human needs as an occupied population, (2) separate from us but then do so fully and not as in Gaza we are jailed, or (3) integrate into our area – this is our preferred option. Indeed, on security their position cane summarized as following: the best recipe for Israeli security is to ensure we ourselves drink in your cafes.[2]

Regional actors (especially political Islam) – the most significant distinction introduced in the plenary report was between political Islamic movements like Hamas, which has a concrete agenda, and groups like Al Qaeda that are nihilist and aim solely at destroying the West. The risk of grouping such different movements, and thus drawing misguided strategies, was clarified. Indeed, some of the participants referred to this later in discussing the feasibility and desirability of regional integration. Also of importance was the emphasis on the risks existing in a Manichean view of the world, and in particular the way in which a discourse sharply focused on "us" vs "them" can easily turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Series of meetings of scenario subcommittee ("# 2.5"):
Refocusing on the conflict & Expanding the scenario set

The real breakthrough in the process, at least in terms of drawing the broad strokes of the final set of scenarios, was actually reached in meetings of the scenario subcommittee between the second and the third workshop. These were not small meetings. Indeed, the main meeting in which the new scenarios were generated convened more than half of the participants for a day-long workshop in Tel Aviv. Those unable to attend provided significant inputs through other participants or by email.

In light of the learning journeys and the escalation in and around the Gaza Strip, the meeting began with the realization that the group is missing something big and that the discussion has become too inward-looking and has underestimated the importance of external actors and events. As said by lead facilitator Adam Kahane from the very outset, the process of scenario-building is not linear but cyclical and revisiting past decisions in light of new information is encouraged. And so, after reviewing the work done so far in both workshops and the learning journeys between them, the participants were asked to propose what are the most important scenarios that have to be told now to Israeli-Jews and to their neighbours.

Building on the insights on the second workshop, the new scenarios were more focused on Israel's relations with its neighbours but retained a high level of awareness to the level of government interventionism and to the Jewish character of the state. In addition to the new scenarios the group has by now acquired a more nuanced capacity to compare and contrast scenarios and think of alternative futures as a set. This new set was brought to the participants at the third workshop as a basis to work on and react to.

Workshop #3: Finalizing the scenarios

The participants were mostly supportive of the new set and contributed specifically in terms of focusing the set and converging from six to four scenarios and in terms of add fleshing out the four scenarios and making them more tangible and lively.

---

[2] The learning journey was also significant in terms of the personal development of the participants. One Rabbi from a settlement in Samaria, member of the Yesha Council, concluded the presentation at the plenary with the statement: "no matter what we think on who has a right over this land, we have to finally acknowledge that the establishment of the State of Israel meant a terrible tragedy for the Palestinian people".

Moreover, work began on the scenarios as a set of stories which make sense when read one next to the other. The analogy of homes was selected as the silver thread running through the set. Below are summaries of the scenarios as finalized at the workshop:

#1 A Jewish Home - From the Jordan to the Mediterranean
Failure of negotiations and resulting radicalization & violence coupled with a significant demographic growth of the national religious and the ultra orthodox aggravate poverty and a mass emigration of secular population overseas. A new Israeli policy based on religious-national and national-social values causes the Arabs to despair from establishing a Palestinian state and accept a limited status of individual residents – not citizens- within Israel. Militant Palestinians are dealt with severe violence.

#2 Two Homes for Two Peoples – Good Neighbours
A joint understanding among Israelis and Palestinians about the need to divide the land if one wants to avoid a bi-national state. Implementation of the two state agreement is based on an international force ensuring Israeli security in the West Bank initially. A set of domestic mutual compromises between group in Israel is enabled and leads to closing social gaps by including Israeli-Arabs and ultra-orthodox Jews in governmental institutions and the Knesset adopting a constitution based on the declaration of independence.

#3 One Home for Two Peoples – Isra-Palestine
The US decision to abandon the Middle East leaves Israel with an unprecedented diplomatic, security and economic crisis. International pressure forces Israel to establish an Israeli-Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Sea. The government will be composed of neutral professionals for 40 years and the IDF will be replaced by an Israeli-Palestinian army based on the Lebanese multi-ethnic model. Both the Jewish and the Palestinian societies are torn amongst themselves and those opposing the new reality actively demonstrate their feelings at times violently. Massive emigration of Jews strengthens Jewish centres in the US and Germany and only true believers (either in religious or in egalitarian-democratic beliefs) or those economically unable to move remain in the state.

#4 A Shared Home – A Jewish Home as part of a Regional Confederation
In the context of a global economic recession the US reduces its Middle East involvement while Europe and Russia use their increased influence to run the PA as a protectorate under International (especially Arab) administration. A new international "coalition of hope" proposes a peace deal based on cooperation between religions, nations, states and businesses. Israel decides to adopt these ideas and promotes a peace initiative which includes the creation of a confederation under an international umbrella. Palestine and Jordan agree to become members of the confederation. Member states are responsible for education, culture, private law, religious services, etc. Economy, infrastructure and security are managed at the confederate level. Some Jewish settlements in Judea, Samaria and the Golan Heigts remain in their place through a lease agreement while the Old City of Jerusalem is declared confederate territory. The new confederation has the opportunity to become a member state in the European Union. The Near East Market, which includes Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, attracts massive foreign investments.

It is noteworthy that the assumption that anchored the scenarios at the first workshop, about the extent to which internal coherence is the key to assuring successful integration in the region, is at the basis only of the first scenario. This scenario was included in the set largely due to concerns of some of the participants about the criticism the set of stories will encounter if presented to the Israeli public without it and not so much due to their belief that this is the kind of story that has to be told.

Final meetings ("#4")
Understanding the scenarios as a set – Insights and implications

The major insight drawn by the group from this set of scenarios was the identification of the main tension that Israeli-Jews currently need to transcend if they are to make a well-informed choice. The tension identified is between Jewish Sovereignty and Identity in Israel. More precisely, it is the tension between different kinds of Jewish Sovereignty and different kinds of Jewish identity in Israel.

The choice of each scenario as a desired future implies benefits and costs that can be effectively and concisely encapsulated as interplay between these two factors. For example, a regional-confederal constellation secures firmly a stable situation of cultural autonomy for Jews but limits their sovereignty. Inversely, practicing Jewish sovereignty from the Jordan to the Mediterranean is arguably achievable only in the context of a religious orthodox militaristic hegemony of the Israeli-Jewish society.

Put differently, the character of the state, and in particular the manner in which it is Jewish (culturally / nationally / religiously), was thus flagged as an intermediating factor between the internal Jewish debate on identity and the external political constraints, mostly imposed by the conflictual reality Israel faces in the Middle East.

This can be seen in the following table:

	Jewish Sovereignty	Jewish Identity
A Jewish Home	Nation-state (territory)	Religious Orthodox Zionist militaristic hegemony
Two Homes for Two Peoples	Nation-state (people)	Secular Zionist statist hegemony
One Home for Two Peoples	None	Communal (Jewish in private & public sphere but not state)
A Shared Home	Limited sovereignty	An ethnic territorial group (Jewishness = cultural autonomy)

Summarizing the project's achievements, one can point to the following:

- A new concise and tangible vocabulary which enables an effective conversation on the future of Israel's Jews and their neighbours. This vocabulary is based on various forms of homes. Moreover, a few central insights, including in particular a more nuanced understanding of Jewish identities, were identified and inserted into the concluding booklet summarizing the project.
- A committed network of some 40 promising Israeli-Jewish leaders has established a more inclusive, well-informed, less polarized and strategic mode of work.[3] The members have agreed to meet every 2-3 months and the host role is a rotating one. Group emails are frequent. Several working groups composed of a sub-set of participants have emerged and work on communal and national projects. Particularly noteworthy are the working groups dealing with Jewish identity and sovereignty (in cooperation with the Israel Democracy Institute) and with exploring the confederation scenario with more rigour (in cooperation with some participants from the parallel Palestinian track – more details below).
- A booklet of all the final scenarios (in English and Hebrew) is available to all the members of the network and is used in their diverse activities. Due to the profile of the members, this mode of dissemination is effective and wide ranging. For example, the scenarios are used to broaden the conversation field both by rabbis teaching young Israeli Jews during their year of preparatory studies before the army service and by secular educators for democracy in Israel.

---

[3] Rabbi Azriel Ariel, chief rabbi of the settlement Ateret, formerly resident of Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip, captured much of the essence of this new way of thinking when he said to his secular colleague: "I prefer the realization of your dream which listens to me, to the realization of my dream which ignores you".

- A short film charting the journey the participants took in developing their thinking is available to the group members.
- Many articles and op-eds were published by the participants in various communal (e.g. Israeli-Ethiopian, Ultra-Orthodox, Settler, Sderot region) and national (Yediot-YNET, Haaretz, Maariv) media outlets referring either directly to the project or to its substantive results and demonstrating a broader scope of thought.

Where to now? Towards a Middle East Community?

The group realized that so far the national conversation was limited to two basic scenarios: military victory over the Arabs which enables securing control from the Jordan to the Mediterranean (A Jewish home) and a historical territorial compromise in exchange for securing Israel's future in the Middle East (Two Homes for Two Peoples). Given the current situation the feasibility of both scenarios has been strongly challenged. All the participants in the group have agreed that two additional possible future have to be included in the national conversation: an Israeli military and/or diplomatic defeat which imposes a transformation of Israel into a state in which no Jewish national realization is possible (One Home for Two Peoples) and a bold Israeli decision to compromise some of its sovereignty in exchange for securing not only its integration into the Middle East but also into the European Union (A Shared Home).

Given that only a small minority of the participants saw the One Home for Two Peoples scenario as desirable and the large majority saw it as the key scenario that Jewish Israelis have to take into account in order to better understand the magnitude of the risks and the significance of the opportunities, the Shared Home scenario seemed to a significant and diverse group of participants be the most promising avenue that has to be further explored.

Further discussions conducted by some of the participants and the organizers after the conclusion of the third workshop pointed out that the main achievements sought through the confederal solution, and in particular the capacity to transcend the need to reach a territorial compromise, can be reached in other ways. Four such options were flagged (see below) and discussions with some of the Palestinian participants of the parallel track expressed interest in exploring all of these further jointly with their Israeli counterparts. Significantly, all the following options for ending the conflict would allow a significant amount of Jewish settlers to reside in the state of Palestine and a significant amount of refugees to reside in the state of Israel. More basically, all open doors for Israel's integration into the Middle East.

- Two states with mutual residency agreements. Israel and Palestine, which agree to a mutual arrangement in which a fixed number of the citizens (say 100,000) of the other country can receive residency rights in their own state (while retaining citizenship in their country).
  - Such a mutual arrangement can also be an obligatory aspect of a Middle East Water and Energy Community (along the lines of the Coal and Steel Community) which manages jointly key natural resources. It was suggested that the community can include Israel, Palestine and Jordan initially and later perhaps also Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and/or Turkey.

- Confederation (territorial). Israel, Palestine and Jordan establish a confederation and agree to cede some of their sovereignty. In particular, security and foreign policy is formulated at the confederal level while cultural, educational and religious policy is formulated at the level of each member state. As above, other neighbouring countries are gradually invited to join.

- Non-territorial confederation. Israel, Palestine and Jordan establish a confederation and agree to cede some of their sovereignty. The three entities are non-territorial and exist mostly institutionally. The land of the confederation is shared by all three peoples. As above, security and foreign policy is formulated at the confederal level while cultural, educational and religious

policy is formulated at the level of each member state. Citizens of each state can live in any place in the confederation which they desire.

- Bi-national state. A Bi-national state is established following the Belgian model, with Jerusalem in the role of Brussels. Citizens of each nationality can live in any place of the state in which they desire.

The Israeli and Palestinian organizers and participants currently discussed the best way to move forward with this exploration and the optimal ways for sharing it with their peoples.