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19

NATO Defense College
Collège de Défense de l'OTAN

# Planning Ahead for a Peacekeeping Mission on the Golan Heights: a Role for NATO?

Celine Touboul

Rome, September 2011

NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE
COLLÈGE DE DÉFENSE DE L'OTAN

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**Celine Touboul**

**Edited by Pierre Razoux**
*Rome, September 2011*

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# PRELIMINARY NOTE

This research has been written while violent protests are challenging the future of President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

The uncertainty surrounding the fate of the Assad regime does not affect the validity of the arguments expressed in this research, or its conclusion. Hence, whoever the leader of Syria will be, the same questions will be raised in regard to the conditions required for a peace treaty with Israel. The future leader of Syria will face the same requirements as the present leadership from the Israeli side and, by the same token, can be expected to maintain the same demands vis-à-vis Israel. Consequently, the international peacekeeping mission that will be created following the signing of the peace treaty should, by and large, have the same role and comply with the same parameters as if Assad were to remain in power.

While current events may delay the prospects of an Israeli-Syrian peace settlement, the key parameters of a peace agreement are thus expected to be the same tomorrow as they are today.

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| DMZ | Demilitarized Zones |
| IDF | Israel Defense Forces |
| IM | International Mission (to be established in the framework of the future Israeli-Syrian peace treaty) |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| KFOR | Kosovo Force |
| MD | Mediterranean Dialogue |
| MFO | Multinational Force and Observers |
| MOD | Ministry of Defense |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| PLO | Palestine Liberation Organization |
| PM | Prime Minister |
| ROE | Rules of Engagement |
| SFOR | Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| TIPH | Temporary International Presence in Hebron |
| UNDOF | United Nations Disengagement Observer Force |
| UNEF I | United Nations Emergency Force |
| UNIFIL | United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon |
| UNTSO | United Nations Truce Supervision Organization |

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims at examining whether NATO could be the provider of an international force to supervise the implementation of an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty. It proceeds by outlining the main characteristics of the peacekeeping mission needed for that task, based on the likely provisions of the future Israeli-Syrian peace treaty.

Based on previous Israeli-Syrian negotiations, the research assumptions are that any future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement will be based on two main demands: Syria's demand for Israel's full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Israel's demand for well-defined security arrangements. As in the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, these security arrangements will include, without being limited to, the creation of demilitarized and limited force zones supervised by an international mission (IM).

The IM will have two main components with distinctive tasks. First, civilian observer units will be mandated to monitor and verify the implementation of the security arrangements. Based on a comparison with the MFO and UNDOF, fifty civilian observers will be needed at the IM's inception. Second, a tripwire military force will be created to deter the parties from violating the peace agreement. The size of the force will be a function of the level of trust between the parties and is therefore estimated at 2000 military personnel, based on a comparison with the MFO's inception strength. The deterrence capacity of this force will be mainly a function of the credibility and political authority of the nations composing it, rather than of the tasks, size or military features of the force itself.

The IM will be created in a post-peace agreement context in order to sustain long-lasting stability. Therefore, the IM will be a long-term mission, with no exit strategy other than the mutual consent of the

parties to end the mission.

A very important attribute of the IM will be its composition. While Syria may incline in favor of a multilateral mission, both Israel and Syria have clearly expressed their position in favor of a strong involvement of the US, as a guarantor of the peace treaty. The US' involvement will be required in the political leadership of the IM, and as the main nation composing the military force. Its contribution to the force will be critical to grant it the credibility and political authority needed to create its deterrence effect.

In conclusion, the conditions under which the IM will operate represent no major difficulty or risk for NATO. Moreover, such a mission would serve NATO's interests by giving the Alliance the opportunity to contribute significantly and positively to long-lasting stability in the Middle East. However, the mission's purpose does not consist in a stabilization or rescue mission to end bloodshed and conflict, but in a long-term post-peace agreement mission with an open-ended mandate. Mainly for this reason, NATO does not seem to be the right candidate for such a mission, which is not fully consistent with the Alliance's natural purpose.

Since Israel's deep mistrust of the UN precludes the possibility of a UN mission, a preferable option would be an ad hoc independent organization created especially for this task and shaped according to the parties' needs and concerns. Such an ad hoc organization could consist in an extension of the MFO, under which an additional, separate force would be created. It would benefit from the strong involvement of the US and the long experience gained by the MFO. Alternatively, a new ad hoc organization could be created, with a similar triangular structure to the MFO but not affiliated to it, or with a different organizational structure, according to which the US would manage the IM jointly with one or more additional States.

# INTRODUCTION

Unlike the Israeli-Palestinian Permanent Status agreement, the parameters of a future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement have not been the subject of much public discussion or comment. This is not because the chances of a peace treaty between Israel and Syria are bleaker than those of an agreement between Israel and the PLO, nor is it because the Israeli-Syrian question is less relevant or critical than the Israeli-Palestinian one.

The key feature with a view to a settlement between Israel and Syria is that, in contrast to the violent character of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both parties have made efforts to keep their mutual border quiet for several decades despite strong and persistent mutual hostility. They have also done their best to manage preliminary attempts at negotiations far from the media and from public debate.

The pillars of a future Israeli-Syrian agreement are nevertheless more or less generally known. The same components have been discussed in prior Israeli-Syrian negotiations and described in the memoirs of former Israeli negotiators and American mediators. As will be described in Chapter I, the agreement will most probably entail Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and special security arrangements in the evacuated area. As was the case in the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, these security arrangements will include the delineation of demilitarized and limited arms zones supervised by a mutually agreed international force whose composition and functions will have to be agreed upon by Israel, Syria and the international mission (IM).

*Objective and scope of the research*

The objective of this research is to determine whether there is a role for NATO in guaranteeing the implementation of the security

arrangements of a future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement. The main questions that will be addressed are: what will be the characteristics and functions of the international mission (IM), to what extent NATO will be able and willing to undertake the requested tasks, and under what conditions.

Based on prior negotiations, this research paper will first briefly outline the main components of the future peace agreement on the basis of which the mandate of an international mission and its functions will be defined. This first chapter will only focus on relevant components of the future agreement, but will not go into detail regarding the terms of the future agreement as this is not the purpose of this paper.

Second, the paper will describe the main characteristics required of the international mission to supervise the security arrangements of the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement. Basic conditions for success, functions, rules of engagement, size and other characteristics of the IM will be described.

The third chapter will examine both political and operational considerations that will have to be taken into account in the Israeli and Syrian positions regarding the role and attributes of the international mission.

The fourth and last chapter of this paper will focus on NATO's constraints and the factors it must take into consideration. Two questions will be examined: whether NATO will be able to respond to the parties' needs, and whether NATO should agree to engage in the proposed mission.

As developments in the Middle East often change course unexpectedly, this paper will not try to assess Israel's and Syria's readiness to reach a peace agreement, or the probability that they will accept expected reciprocal demands. The assumption made in this regard is that, once Israel and Syria are serious about reaching a peace agreement, they will be ready to pay the price for it.

In the context of the current protests in Syria against Assad's regime, the implications that could emerge from the collapse or weakening of Assad's regime will be addressed when needed. However, the main assumption in that respect is that a peace agreement will be possible only if Israel is confident that the regime in power in Syria is reliable and stable enough. Consequently, current events do not necessarily affect the validity of the arguments expressed in this research in regard to the role and parameters of an international mission supervising a future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

*Methodology and sources*

From the Israeli perspective, this research is mainly based on interviews with Israeli security officials (IDF, MOD) and security experts,[1] as well as on former Israeli and US officials' accounts of previous negotiations (Itamar Rabinovich,[2] Danny Yatom,[3] Martin Indyk,[4] Dennis Ross[5]). Based on lessons learnt from previous rounds of negotiations with Syria, one of the research assumptions is that senior Israeli military and security experts, whether working in the IDF, the MOD, the PM's office or the NSC, will be the main figures defining Israeli demands concerning Israeli-Syrian security arrangements, including the attributes of the future IM. This is not to say that legal advisers and senior diplomats will not be deeply involved in the negotiation process and drafting of the agreement, but they will also tend to rely on the IDF's expertise to outline the security arrangements.

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[1] These interviews were conducted on condition that the names of the interviewees will not be disclosed.

[2] Itamar Rabinovich was Israeli Ambassador to the United States from 1992 to 1996 and Israel's Chief Negotiator with Syria under the late Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin.

[3] Danny Yatom was Military Secretary to late PM Yitzhak Rabin and to former PM Shimon Peres. He was head of the Mossad between 1996 and 1998, and Chief of Staff and security advisor to former PM Ehud Barak.

[4] Martin Indyk was Senior Director of Near East and South Asian Affairs at the National Security Council (NSC) between 1993 and 1995. He served as United States Ambassador to Israel in 1995-1997 and 2000-2001. In between, he was Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs.

[5] Dennis Ross was special US Middle East coordinator between 1993 and 2001.

From the Syrian perspective, the research is mainly based on Syrian positions as described in former officials' accounts of previous negotiations, or on views directly expressed by President Bashar el-Assad in recent interviews. For two main reasons, there is not a perfectly symmetric balance between sources on Israeli positions and those on Syrian positions. The first reason is the difficulty for Israeli researchers to access Syrian officials or scholars. The second and more substantial reason is that Syrian demands have tended to focus mainly on territorial issues, while security demands have mainly been raised by Israel.[6] On the security parameters, Syrian representatives have mainly stressed the need for reciprocity and symmetry in the security arrangements, as well as the fact that a peace agreement with Israel should not result in Israeli predominance over Syria.

From NATO's perspective, the research is mainly based on speeches of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and interviews with NATO's international staff conducted in various divisions of NATO headquarters in March 2011.[7]

*Brief historical background*

The history of Israeli-Syrian relations since 1948 is marked by three major wars and four attempts to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty.

- Israeli-Syrian wars

  The three wars were fought in 1948 (following Israel's independence), in 1967 (the "six-day war") and in 1973 (the "Yom Kippur war").

[6] President Bashar Al-Assad stated that: "For us the primary basis is the return of the whole land. For the Israelis they are talking about security arrangements […]". Assad, 2010d. See also Assad, 2010b. Likewise, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated: "From us they need the Golan Heights and we need security and early warning and peace relationship and in fact the very kind of stopping of the process of radical terror which has its headquarters in daylight in Damascus, all these from Hamas in Gaza, they are operating freely." Barak, 2010.

[7] These interviews too were conducted on condition that the names of the interviewees will not be disclosed.

Following the 1948 war, an armistice agreement was signed between Israel and Syria on July 20, 1949. The armistice agreement delineated an armistice demarcation line "beyond which the armed forces of the respective Parties shall not move".[8] Part of the 1949 armistice demarcation line is located west of the 1923 Mandate International boundary[9] (see maps in annex I and II). As stipulated under the terms of Article V (5a) of the Armistice Agreement, demilitarized zones (DMZ) were created in areas "where the Armistice Demarcation Line does not correspond to the international boundary between Syria and Palestine". The Armistice Lines (with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) were supervised by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

As stipulated in Article V of the Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement, the Armistice Demarcation Line and the Demilitarized Zones were "not to be interpreted as having any relation whatsoever to ultimate territorial arrangements affecting the two Parties to this Agreement".

During the six-day war in 1967, Israel captured the Golan Heights. At the end of the war, a new cease-fire line was drawn, called the "purple line", and placed under the supervision of UNTSO (see map of UNTSO's deployment in Annex V). This line was crossed by Syria in the 1973 "Yom Kippur" war. The disengagement negotiations that followed the war ended by the signing of the Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement on 31 May 1974, establishing an area of separation on either side of which were

[8] Article IV (2) of Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement, 20 July 1949.

[9] Five months after the League of Nations granted Great Britain a mandate on Palestine and granted France a mandate over Syria and Lebanon, on 23 December 23 1920 France and Great Britain signed the Franco-British Boundary Agreement. This agreement defined in broad terms the border between the British and French mandate, and appointed a commission (the Newcombe-Paulet commission) to demarcate the border and mark it on the ground. The Newcombe-Paulet demarcation report delineating the international mandatory line was approved and signed by the British and French governments on 7 March 1923.

delineated two equal limited force and limited arms zones (see map in Annex VI).

The Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement also called for the establishment of a United Nations observer force to supervise its implementation: the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), deployed on 31 May 1974. It is assisted by the military observers of UNTSO's Observer Group Golan, who are now attached to UNDOF. UNDOF's main functions are to supervise the ceasefire and the implementation of the disengagement agreement.[10]

- Previous rounds of Israeli-Syrian negotiations

Four main rounds of formal negotiations and one informal round have taken place between Israel and Syria since 1994, involving five different Israeli Prime Ministers: the late Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert.

*1994-1995: negotiations between PM Yitzhak Rabin and President Hafez al-Assad, under US auspices* - Following the Madrid Middle East Conference in 1991, negotiations took place at the ambassadorial level[11] between May 1994 and October 1994. The main focus of these talks was security arrangements. They led to a first meeting between the Israeli and Syrian chiefs-of-staff[12] in December 1994 and to four months' negotiations, starting in February 1995 and resulting in the Aims and Principles of

---

[10] See the UNDOF website (http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/undof/index.shtml) and UN Security Council Resolution 350. According to the Protocol to the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces, the mandate of UNDOF is to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Syria; supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces; and supervise the areas of separation and limitation, as provided in the May 1974 Agreement on Disengagement.

[11] The Israeli Ambassador was Itamar Rabinovich, and the Syrian Ambassador was Walid Mouallem.

[12] Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak was Israeli Chief of Staff, succeeded in 1995 by Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin Shahak. The Syrian Chief of Staff was General Hikmat Shihabi.

the Security Arrangements "non-paper".[13] This first round of negotiations ended in July 1995.[14]

*1995-1996: "Wye River" negotiations between PM Shimon Peres and President Hafez al-Assad, under US auspices* - Between December 1995 and the end of February 1996, Israeli-Syrian negotiations resumed under U.S. auspices.[15] Two rounds of negotiations took place at the Aspen Institute's Wye River Conference Center, focusing on issues related to the nature of Israeli-Syrian relations after the conclusion of a peace agreement (so-called "normalization" issues).[16]

*1999-2000: "Shepherdstown" negotiations between PM Ehud Barak and President Hafez al-Assad, under US auspices* - In December 1999, Israeli-Syrian negotiations resumed, when Ehud Barak was the new Israeli PM. Direct negotiations under US auspices started on January 3, 2000, in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and lasted 8 days.[17] Israeli-Syrian negotiations ended with the meeting between President Clinton and President Assad in Geneva on March 26, 2000.

*2008: indirect talks between PM Ehud Olmert and President Bashar al-Assad, under Turkish auspices* - On May 21, 2008, an official announcement was made about the opening of indirect talks between Israel and Syria under Turkish auspices. These talks ended on December 27, 2008, when operation Cast Lead was launched in Gaza.

In addition to these four formal rounds of negotiations, American

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[13] The Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements "non-paper" is attached in Annex VII.
[14] Ross, 2004, pp. 145-163.
[15] Shimon Peres was then Israeli PM. He appointed Uri Savir, then Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, as head of the Israeli delegation. His Syrian counterpart was Syrian Ambassador Walid Mouallem.
[16] Ross, 2004, pp. 240-245; Savir, 1998, pp. 265-291.
[17] Maj. Gen. Uri Sagie, former head of IDF Military Intelligence, was the head of the Israeli delegation. His Syrian counterpart was Syrian chief legal negotiator Riad Daoudi, who was accompanied by General Ibrahim Omar.

businessman Ronald Lauder opened in 1998 an indirect secret channel between PM Netanyahu and President Hafez al-Assad, which resulted in a 10-point paper.[18]

The issues discussed in Israeli-Syrian negotiations will be briefly described in Chapter I, in order to outline the main components of a future peace agreement on the basis of which the mandate of the future IM will be defined.

[18] Ross, 2004, pp. 511-515; Indyk, 2009, p. 247 and p. 250.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Working assumptions: relevant components of the future peace agreement

The main characteristics of the IM described in this research are based on a number of assumptions with regard to the parameters of a future Israeli-Syrian agreement.

The Israeli-Syrian negotiations are essentially composed of four pillars:[19] territorial issues, water issues, security arrangements and what were called normalization issues or "peace" issues (i.e. nature of the bilateral relations between the sides, and border regime arrangements[20]).

The functions of the future IM and its areas of operation will be defined mainly on the basis of the security arrangements, and to some extent based on the location of the future border and on agreements related to water issues.

The assumptions expressed in this chapter concerning the parameters of a future agreement are mainly based on the positions expressed by Israeli and Syrian negotiators during the 1995 negotiations on security arrangements, and during the 2000 negotiations in Shepherdstown.

### A. Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights[21]

One of the assumptions of this study is that, as part of a peace agreement with Syria, Israel will agree to full Israeli withdrawal from

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[19] Ross, 2004, p. 552.
[20] Ross, 2004, p. 241; Savir, 1998, pp. 265-291.
[21] For a geographical and demographic description of the Golan Heights, see Annex III. For views of the Golan Heights, see pictures in Annex IV.

the Golan Heights, provided that all its conditions are met,[22] especially in terms of security requirements. These security requirements will aim largely at reducing the risks entailed in regained Syrian control of the Golan Heights and will therefore be an absolute condition of Israel's withdrawal (see section C below).

The line of the future border could be drawn on the basis of different principles, i.e. on the basis of borderlines that existed prior to Israeli occupation, on the basis of security considerations, or other considerations, including legal ones.

Prior to Israel's takeover of the Golan Heights during the six-day war, the only borderline demarcated on the ground was the 1923 international mandatory line that resulted from the Franco-British Boundary Agreement[23], finalized by the Newcombe-Paulet Agreement on March 7, 1923. It drew a border between Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. The Syrians rejected the legitimacy of this line and have always requested a return to the situation prior to the six-day war[24]. Officially, Israel has

---

[22] Late Israeli PM Y. Rabin reportedly conditioned Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights on the certainty that Israeli's needs would be met. This conditional readiness of Israel to withdraw is known as Rabin's "deposit", made secretly to the US (Yatom, 2009, p. 145). The language reportedly used by Rabin is as follows: "He [Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin] would be prepared to commit to the United States that Israel would withdraw fully from the Golan Heights provided Israel's needs were met and provided Syria's agreement was not contingent on any other agreement – such as an agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis. He went on to explain his needs: (1) There must be normalization of relations, with full diplomatic relations and an exchange of ambassadors after the first phase of withdrawal. Withdrawal should be spread out over five years; (2) Full normalization required trade and tourism; (3) there must be satisfactory security arrangements, with the United States manning the early-warning sites in the Golan; (4) Israel's water needs must be safeguarded." Ross, 2004, p. 111.
After Assad specified that "full withdrawal" meant a withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 lines, the proposed language became that Israel would commit "to full withdrawal to the June 4 lines, provided all Israel's needs were met". According to Ross, this wording was reportedly agreed between Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin (Ross, 2004, p.147). Reportedly, Rabin's deposit was also endorsed by PM E. Barak (Ross, 2004, p. 542), as well as by PM B. Netanyahu in Ronald Lauder's 10-point paper (Yatom, 2009, p. 195; Ross, 2004, p. 512; Indyk, 2009, p. 250). Unlike Ehud Barak, Benjamin Netanyahu denies having agreed to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights (Yatom, 2009, p. 198).

[23] "Franco-British Convention on Certain Points Connected with the Mandates for Syria and the Lebanon, Palestine and Mesopotamia".

[24] "Assad said that when he agreed to participate in the peace process with Israel he did so based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which refers to the land occupied in 1967, not the international border." Indyk, 2009, p. 124. See also Assad, 2010b and Assad, 2011.

never expressed any formal position on the matter.

For the purposes of this research, whether the future border will be based on the 1923 international line or a return to the situation prior to 4 June 1967[25], the implications will be the same.[26]

## B. Water

Both Syria and Israel suffer from a scarcity of water resources. In both countries, available fresh water resources tend to diminish while water demands increase. In Israel, as of 2006, the Sea of Galilee supplies approximately 30% of the country's drinking water.[27] The Sea of Galilee's catchment area is around 2730 sq km and includes the Upper Jordan River, the Golan, and eastern Galilee.[28] Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Syrian resettlement in the evacuated area will have a direct implication for Israel's water resources, which will be diminished to a certain extent.

One of the main concerns for Israel regarding withdrawal from the Golan Heights is to preserve water resources, as well as to protect the quality of water in the Sea of Galilee's catchment area.

Hence, in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations that took place in January 2000 in Shepherdstown, Israel reportedly requested to maintain its sovereignty over the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee. It also

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[25] There is not a June 4, 1967 line that was ever drawn on a Syrian, Israeli or any international official map. See Hof, 1999; Rabinovich, 1998 and Savir, 1998, p.265-291. As Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Sharaa reportedly said: "[it is] impossible to find this line on any historical map and therefore, he suggested, they should try together to delineate it" (Indyk, 2009, p. 255).

[26] As Fred Hof (1999) explains: "The sine qua non of any Syrian-Israeli treaty of peace will be the security arrangements arrived at by the parties. If they reach agreement on security matters, to include limited forces zones, third-party monitoring, demilitarization and so on, there would be no practical difference - from a security point of view - between an Israeli withdrawal to the international boundary of 1923 and an Israeli withdrawal to a mutually agreed interpretation of the line of June 4, 1967. The difference between the two, in terms of land area, would be minuscule: perhaps 20 square kilometers."

[27] Mekorot (Israel's National Water Company): http://www.mekorot.co.il/Eng/Mekorot/Pages/IsraelsWaterSupplySystem.aspx

[28] Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water sector: http://www.emwis-il.org/EN/Water_context/context_08.htm

requested that guarantees be made regarding the protection of the quality of water and unhampered flow of water resources.[29]

These principles were apparently accepted by the Syrian delegation. The proposed Syrian formula was that "sovereignty on the lake is Israel's; sovereignty on the land is ours", meaning that Syria would regain the sovereignty over the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee which it held until June 4, 1967. [30]

As far as the demands of the Syrian delegation are concerned, it reportedly requested to have access to the Sea of Galilee.[31] This Syrian demand resulted from their understanding of the situation that existed prior to the six-day war.

## C. Main security arrangements

### 1) "Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements"

During the first semester of 1995, Israel and Syria agreed in a "non-paper" on the aims and principles on which the security arrangements of the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement should be based. [32]

Although the "aims and principles" agreed upon in 1995 are not binding on Israel or Syria, they are likely to be still regarded as the basis for future Israeli-Syrian negotiations on security arrangements, by both Israel and Syria.

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[29] "[Syrian chief legal negotiator] Daoudi accepted a water management board to ensure the quality and the quantity of the water flowing into the Sea of Galilee […]" Ross, 2004, p. 561.

[30] Syrian FM Farouk al-Sharaa said that "sovereignty on the lake is Israel's; sovereignty on the land is ours" (Indyk, 2009, p. 259). On Sharaa's position, see also Ross, 2004, p. 554: "On the question of whose sovereignty applied where, he was straightforward and unequivocal: The Israelis have sovereignty over the lake; the Syrians would have sovereignty over the land, at least all the land to the east of the 10 meters off the shoreline."

[31] Martin Indyk (2009, p. 259) explains that "[Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Sharaa] wanted the five fishing villages in that area to have access to the lake for water and fishing."

[32] On the negotiations of the security arrangements that led to the Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements "non-paper", see: Ross, 2004, pp. 153-161; Rabinovich, 1998, p. 168; and Yatom, 2009, pp. 170-171. A copy of the "non-paper" is attached in Annex VII.

The "non-paper" reflects some of the main concerns and positions of Israel and Syria on security-related issues. Israel outlined its main concerns as being related to the need to prevent a surprise attack, to prevent frictions between the two sides, and to reduce the risks of a war (the three main aims of the security arrangements as outlined in the "non-paper").[33] The main Syrian concern outlined in the "non-paper" is the requirement that the security arrangements will have to be defined according to principles of symmetry and equality. On the principle of equality, a compromise formula is proposed in the "non-paper", in order to accommodate the Israeli position that geographical equality is neither acceptable nor practical.

Various Israeli and Syrian security-related positions and concerns will be detailed below.

2) Core Israeli demands

a) The main threats to be addressed

- *Conventional threats – the threat of a surprise attack from Syria*[34]

  The Golan Heights dominate the north of Israel. Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights would mean for Israel that it would relinquish its control over the high ground.[35] The main Israeli concern in the event of such a withdrawal is Israel's resulting vulnerability to a surprise attack by Syria. Accordingly, the need to prevent a surprise attack is the first main aim mentioned in the 1995 "non-paper".

  An important aim of the security arrangements will be to reduce this threat towards Israel.[36]

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[33] Yatom, 2009, p. 154 ; Rabinovich, 1998, p. 170.
[34] Yatom, 2009, p. 154.
[35] See pictures in Annex IV.
[36] Yatom, 2009, p. 154 (my translation from the Hebrew): "Barak explained that the importance of the security arrangements is the reduction of motivation in launching a plain or partial offensive, even if it is not a surprise attack."

- *Terrorist threats*

  The threat of terrorism has risen considerably in the last decade. Such threats could materialize through the infiltration of terrorists into Israel or through the launching of rockets from Syria. Whether these threats will emerge with the support of the Syrian authorities or unbeknown to them, Israel is likely to require verification measures and the presence of an international force to prevent and deter the development of hostile terrorist activities at the Israeli-Syrian border.

- *Support to organizations and States that are hostile to Israel*

  In the last ten years, the main point of contention between Israel and Syria has been Syrian support to terrorist groups (namely Hezbollah and Hamas), used as proxies by Syria against Israel. In addition, Syria's military cooperation and close ties with States hostile to Israel, mainly Iran, are a great source of concern as Iran has repeatedly called for the destruction of the State of Israel and is actively supporting both Hamas and Hezbollah.

  One of Israel's main reasons for achieving a peace agreement with Syria, and one of its main requirements, will be for Syria to sever these ties, especially by ending all military support to these groups. This should include prohibiting and preventing arms smuggling from Syria to Lebanon and to Hamas, preventing the development and preparation of terrorist activities on Syrian territories, and prohibiting any military or financial support to terrorist groups.

b) Arrangements required

In order to reduce the threats outlined above, Israel will require specific security arrangements whose purpose would essentially be to reduce the risk of tensions and war, to build confidence between Israel and Syria and to guarantee that Israel will not emerge from the peace agreement weaker and more vulnerable.

- *Demilitarized and limited force zones*

  As explained above, as a result of Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights, Israel would be shifting from a position of control from high ground over Damascus to a situation in which Syria would be able to threaten the north of Israel from the Golan Heights (as was the case prior to and during the six-day war).

  To counterbalance this threat, Israel will require the demilitarization of the Golan Heights and the creation of limited force zones.[37]

  As explained by former head of Mossad General Danny Yatom[38], Major General Ehud Barak, who was Israeli Chief of Staff at the time of the negotiations of the security "non-paper", believed that "a demilitarized zone will position the forces at a significant distance one to another, will prevent any possibility of friction and will reduce potential frictions".[39]

- *Deployment of international forces and creation of a monitoring and verification mechanism*

  The main purpose of creating an international monitoring force on the Golan Heights would be to monitor the non-violation of the various security arrangements, by verifying and supervising the demilitarization and limitation of forces in the agreed areas. Additional functions will be described in Chapter II, below.

  From an Israeli point of view, monitoring should be performed by observers and inspectors carrying out inspection of specific sites, as well as by "passive" monitoring with video surveillance devices. The primary goal of the international monitoring system would be to verify, monitor and observe the parties' compliance

[37] "Barak explained that if Israel were to withdraw from the Golan Heights, and the Syrians were to control from the cliff, we would weaken significantly our ability to protect the heart of the country, and therefore we need security arrangements that will compensate for this strategic loss." Yatom, 2009, p.155 (my translation from the Hebrew).

[38] Gen. Yatom was, at the time of the 1995 Israeli-Syrian negotiations, PM Rabin's military secretary.

[39] Yatom, 2009, p.154 (my translation).

with the security arrangements agreed upon between them. Israeli requirements were accepted in principle by the Syrians, although they reacted strongly against the use of video surveillance, which in 1995 was thought similar to the international monitoring measures imposed in Iraq.[40]

In addition, Israel insisted on a strong US component in any international monitoring mission, since it would give the IM a stronger deterrent effect.[41] Syria also saw the US as the needed guarantor of the future agreement, but expressed some reservations regarding an excessively dominant US role, given the difficult relationship between Syria and the US. Still, Syria did not exclude the possibility of greater flexibility on the matter.[42]

Israeli and Syrian considerations with regard to the parameters of an international monitoring mission, including its composition and function, will be further detailed in Chapter III.

- *Early warning station*

  As stated above, Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights would increase its vulnerability to a surprise attack from Syria. From an Israeli perspective, this greater exposure proportionally reinforces

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[40] Ross, 2009, p. 560: "[General Omar] accepted General Yanai's proposal for extensive active and passive monitoring of Syrian and Israeli ground forces, weapons depots, and logistic support units. (Barak had repeatedly emphasized that extensive inspections, together with passive monitoring using cameras at different bases, provided greater warning indicators for preventing surprise attack than being able to get the Syrians to redeploy their forces somewhat farther from the Israeli border.)". See also Yatom, 2009, p. 155.

[41] "An additional component in the security arrangements relates to the verification, monitoring and observers. We require a team of observers composed of representatives of Syria, Israel and the US and that would undertake monitoring and supervision. In addition, we request an American observer force, deployed between both armies, and a video-surveillance monitoring system operated from afar." Yatom, 2009, p. 155 (my translation). See also Rabinovich, 1998, p. 170.
In personal interviews conducted in 2011, former IDF senior officers who participated in formal negotiations between Israel and Syria confirmed the view that strong US involvement was critical to deter the parties against a violation of the agreement, in a similar way that it does in Sinai between Israel and Egypt.

[42] Yatom, 2009, p. 160 (my translation).

the Israeli need to maintain its ability to gather intelligence in order to be able to foresee any potential attack.

Israel therefore required, in previous negotiations on Israeli-Syrian security arrangements, that at least one early warning station be maintained on the Golan Heights, even if not necessarily manned by Israel.

According to Major General Danny Yatom, "Barak explained that 'the security arrangements aim at guaranteeing that even if there is a crisis, it will not result in an offensive action. The early warning stations will aim at preventing a surprise attack or a military confrontation of any kind.'" [43]

Some Israeli experts do not share this view that the Golan early warning station is an absolute necessity from an Israeli security perspective.

- *Severance of ties with organizations and States hostile to Israel and renouncement of all terrorist activities*

  As explained above, Syria's support to the Hamas and the Hezbollah, as well as its strong ties with Iran, are the main sources of tensions and concerns in Israel. The severance of these ties has therefore became one of the main Israeli requirements vis-à-vis Syria.

  Any future peace agreement between Israel and Syria will in all probability explicitly prohibit security cooperation or alliance with hostile entities, as is the case in Article 4 of the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty.

[43] Ibid, p. 154 (my translation).

## 3) Core Syrian demands

### a) Concerns to be addressed

- *A peace agreement should not serve to enhance Israeli predominance*

  While Israel's concern is not to emerge weaker from a peace agreement with Syria, one of Syria's concerns is that its peace agreement with Israel must not "serve to enhance [Israel's] advantage over the Arabs, Syria in particular, but rather to diminish it".[44]

  This rationale is directly linked to Syria's repeated request that the security arrangements should be defined equally and symmetrically on both sides[45], and to its categorical refusal of any Israeli interference in the size and order of battle of Syrian armed forces.[46]

  Syria's absolute rejection of any Israeli request related to Syrian order of battle is based on two considerations: Syria considers this an unbearable infringement of its sovereignty, and the size of the Syrian army is also related to the country's security needs vis-à-vis its other neighbors.[47]

- *Maintaining Syria's ability to control its territories, and more particularly the Damascus area*

  Syria reportedly insisted that the security arrangements should be limited to the Golan Heights[48] and that, accordingly, it would refuse

[44] Rabinovich, 1998, p. 168.
[45] "The Syrians wanted to emphasize mutuality and equality in the security arrangements – meaning limitations on forces would be applied to both sides equally." Ross, 2004, p. 153.
[46] Rabinovich, 1998, p. 172.
[47] Walid al. Muallem reportedly said that "the reduction of Syria's order of battle will not be part of the agreement. This can only be an independent Syrian decision" (Yatom, 2009, p. 169 - my translation). Former Syrian Chief of Staff Hikmat al-Shihabi is also quoted as saying that "[Syrian order of battle] is an internal Syrian issue that we are not ready to discuss with you openly or secretly. The size of the Syrian army is not only related to our relationship with Israel. Syria shares additional borders that it has to protect" (ibid, p. 169 - my translation).
[48] Rabinovich, 1998, p. 169.

the extension of the limited deployment zone to Damascus.[49]

The Aims and Principles "non-paper" refers in an indirect manner to this Syrian requirement by stipulating that "security arrangements should be confined to relevant areas on both sides of the boundary between the two countries" (paragraph 4).[50]

This position is also linked to the need of the Syrian regime to maintain its ability to protect the regime against potential domestic security threats. From an Israeli point of view, this Syrian concern is often considered as a legitimate one that does not necessarily contradict Israeli security interests. Hence, given the Israeli request that Syria should prevent the development of hostile terrorist activities against Israel, Israeli security experts and former IDF officials tend to believe that Syria should be allowed to maintain a strong police presence on the Golan Heights and on the southern part of the Syrian-Lebanese border so as to prevent the development of criminal or terrorist activities.[51]

b) Arrangements required

- *Reciprocity, symmetry and equality of the security arrangements*

For all aspects of future Israeli-Syrian security arrangements, the Syrian delegation insisted during prior negotiations that these arrangements will be based on principles of "equality and equal footing, mutuality, reciprocity, protection of sovereignty, symmetry".[52]

As outlined above, this principle applied to all Israeli requests, but more particularly to the size of the demilitarized area and limited force zones. Israel agreed to the principle of symmetry and

[49] Ross, 2004, p. 554.
[50] See the Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements "non-paper", attached in Annex VII.
[51] Interviews with former IDF senior officers and security experts (2011).
[52] Rabinovich, 1998, p. 169. See also Yatom, pp. 159 and 161.

reciprocity but not to the principle of equality. Israel's position is that the geographical asymmetry between the size of Israel and Syria does not enable equality in the size of the demilitarized areas and the relative density of forces.[53] Reportedly, the Syrian delegation accepted a 10:4 ratio.[54] This potential flexibility on the Syrian side was subtly reflected in the rather complex language of the Aims and Principles "non-paper" (paragraph 2):

> *"If during negotiations on security arrangements, it appears that the implementation of equality in principle insofar as geography is concerned with regard to a particular arrangement is impossible or too difficult, the experts of the two sides will discuss the difficulty of this particular arrangement either by modifying it (which includes supplementing or subtracting from) or by mutually agreeing to a satisfactory solution".* [55]

Hence, as Danny Yatom explained: "[…] when the Syrians adopted the paper [non paper on security arrangements], they actually admitted that the issue of geographical equality remains subjected to disagreement, and that a mechanism to solve our divergences is in place. In consequence, geographical equability was one of the principles, as the Syrian requested, but it was an ambiguous one since the Syrians agreed with the Israeli approach, according to which there is a problem requiring a problem-solving mechanism" .[56]

- *Respect of Syrian sovereignty*

  Whereas Syria would reportedly accept the creation of equal and

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[53] "The Israelis, for their part, wanted the security arrangements to take account of the geographic asymmetry of the two sides […]. Given the difference in size, Israel could accept that all security arrangements would apply to both sides, but not equally." Ross, 2004, p. 153. See also Yatom, 2009, p. 155.

[54] "[…] the Syrian General indicated that his government was prepared to make minor modifications in the June 4 line and accept a 10:4 ratio in Israel's favor in dividing up the demilitarized zones along both sides of the new border." Indyk, 2009, p. 260.

[55] See the Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements "non-paper", attached in Annex VII.

[56] Yatom, 2009, p.171 (my translation).

symmetrical demilitarized and limited force zones, it rejected any measures that would imply infringing its sovereignty.[57]

This position is expressed in the Aims and Principles "non-paper", in paragraph 3: "The two sides acknowledge that security arrangements should be through mutual agreement and, as such, should be consistent with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each side."

On the basis of this consideration, Syria rejected the Israeli request to maintain an Israeli early warning station, especially if it were to be manned by Israeli officers.[58] There could be more flexibility in regard to the possibility that such stations would be manned by a third party.[59]

As mentioned above, by the same token, Syria also strongly objected to any interference in the size and order of battle of its armed forces.

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[57] "On the issue of sovereignty of each side, Muallem said: "I respect your sovereignty and independence, and I do not want that the security arrangement will harm the sovereignty of any side." Yatom, 2009, p. 159 (my translation).

[58] "Muallem underlined that when the Syrians talk about an Israeli withdrawal, they mean that no Israeli soldier, citizen or Israeli early warning station will remain on the Golan Heights." Yatom, 2009, p. 159 (my translation). See also Yatom, 2009, pp. 166 and p. 169.

[59] "An early warning station on the Golan Heights manned by Israelis was out of the question; a station manned by a third party, say the United States, was not ruled out." Rabinovich, 1998, p. 169.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Main characteristics of the future International Mission (IM)

This chapter will first briefly describe the basic parameters required to enable a successful international mission, based mainly on lessons learnt from other peacekeeping missions operating in the area.

Second, based on the various concerns and demands of both Israel and Syria described in the previous chapter, the functions, rules of engagement, timeframe and size of the proposed IM will be outlined.

### A. General requirements for a successful IM

The success or failure of international monitoring missions depends on three main factors:

- a clear and simple mandate agreed upon by the parties concerned;
- the willingness of the parties to respect the signed agreement and maintain stability;
- trust between the parties concerned and the IM.

#### 1) A clear and simple mandate agreed upon by the parties concerned

How the success or failure of international monitoring missions is judged depends, first, on whether the mission has successfully fulfilled the mandate requested. This is not necessarily a simple question, as the parties may have a different interpretation of the mandate and therefore different expectations vis-à-vis the third party. For example, the mandate of UNIFIL is read differently by Israel and Lebanon, especially as it relates to the role of UNIFIL in preventing the rearming

and military redeployment of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.[60]

Divergent interpretation of a mandate often occurs, since a mandate is often the result of a compromise between conflicting interests and needs. As in the case of UNIFIL in Lebanon or TIPH in Hebron, these compromises have often deprived the third party of the means to operate efficiently, to provide greater stability and prevent frictions between the two sides.[61]

The clarity and effectiveness of a mandate therefore depend not only on its being formulated without ambiguity, but also on the consistency of the functions attributed to the mission with the objective sought.

2) The willingness of the parties to respect the signed agreement and maintain stability

Obviously, the capacity of an international third party to generate stability does not merely depend on the clarity of its mandate. It mainly depends on the parties' interest in maintaining stability and reducing sources of friction. Both factors are interconnected, as strong motivation of the parties concerned will often lead them to promote a clear and unambiguous mandate to the third party.

In the case of UNIFIL, the Lebanese side was apparently the more reluctant to enable a more robust and intrusive mission, as its main concern was to prevent internal frictions between the Lebanese forces and the Hezbollah.[62]

On the contrary, the MFO is a perfect illustration that the willingness

[60] Israel believes that UNIFIL should make use of its right to use force, as authorized by Art. 12 of UN-SCR 1701 (UNIFIL Press Statement, 2006; Katz, 2009; Benhorin, 2006). Conversely, Lebanon stressed Art. 11, which requires coordination between UNIFIL and the Lebanese army (Andoni, 2010; MEMRI, 2009; Gaddar, 2010). This different reading of the resolution has been a source of frustration on both the Israeli and the Lebanese side.

[61] The TIPH also provides an example of a mandate whose provisions deprive the mission of any concrete functions (see art. 3 of the Agreement on the Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron). Due to its lack of capacity, the TIPH lacks credibility and authority on both the Israeli and Palestinian side.

[62] See footnote 42.

of the parties to respect the signed agreement and maintain stability is a determining factor in the success of the mission. Although it has a strong military component, the MFO is not a "robust" mission in the sense that it has not been given enforcement functions. But both Egypt and Israel have during the last 30 years shown their willingness to preserve stability.[63] The fact that the two share a joint interest in continued stability has enabled them to be flexible with regard to the agreement and the role of the MFO. For example, they established in 1989 an informal procedure called "Agreed Activity" process that permits either side to request the other side the presence or additional number of forces, personnel or equipment that would otherwise be prohibited by the Treaty. Since the activity is implemented with the agreement of the other side it not regarded by the MFO as a violation of the Treaty.[64]

3) Trust between the parties concerned and the IM

For an international mission to succeed, the parties concerned have to respect its authority, not hamper the fulfillment of its functions, and give its representatives enough freedom of movement and action so that it can fulfill its mandate properly.

As outlined above, this requires first and foremost that the parties concerned have a genuine interest in guaranteeing stability, but also that they trust the third party's ability to fulfill its mandate.

Hence, whereas UNIFIL is regarded with mistrust by both Israel and Lebanon and is regularly under attack (both verbally or physically)[65],

[63] "The MFO is internationally recognized as a uniquely successful non-UN peacekeeping organization, and it has been studied by numerous experts to determine whether such success can be replicated elsewhere. These studies have concluded that while competent management has played a part in MFO effectiveness, the overall force behind the continuing peace in the Sinai has been political commitment by the Party nations to fully comply with the treaty terms." Spoehr, 2000.

[64] Author's interview with a senior IDF officer.

[65] UNIFIL suffered 92 fatalities by malicious act, which is higher than other UN Peacekeeping missions (in comparison: UNTSO suffered 26 and UNPROFOR 74 fatalities). See UN records of fatalities caused by malicious act in:http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/fatalities/documents/StatsByMissionIncidentType_4.

the MFO is an organization that is respected by Israel and Egypt and has generally been supported by its host.[66]

## B. Functions of the proposed IM

Based on the security arrangements outlined in Chapter I, this section will describe the functions required of the IM in order to supervise the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

1) Monitoring, observing and verifying the implementation of the security arrangements

The main task of the IM will be to monitor, observe and verify the implementation of the security arrangements.

Beyond the strictly operational aspects of such a mission, monitoring measures will aim at compensating for the lack of trust between the parties by verifying their compliance with the agreement and reducing the risk of confrontation.

The proposed monitoring functions should consist of the following tasks:

a) Challenge inspections, periodic inspections and random tours

First, monitoring functions should include verifying the demilitarization and limitation of forces and capabilities in agreed territorial zones, as MFO observers do in Sinai.[67] These zones will be mainly on the Golan Heights and beyond, on the Syrian side. Hence, while the principle of reciprocity and symmetry outlined above will have to be taken into account, it is unlikely that the size of the zones on each side will be the same.[68] Most of the monitors and observers will be posted on the Syrian side.

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pdf. See also reported incidents in the UN Secretary-General's Report on the implementation of UNSCR 1701, 2008, pp. 5-6.

[66] See MFO Director General annual report of 2007, p.16 and subsequent annual reports.

[67] MFO Director General annual report, 2010, p. 12.

[68] See Chapter I (C) (3).

As in the case of the MFO, verification tasks should preferably be carried out by civilian observers, as they are considered more skilled and tactful than the military for intrusive tasks of this type.[69]

There should be periodic inspections in coordination with the Syrian authorities, as well as challenge inspections and random patrols carried out without informing the host authorities in advance. In both cases, the monitoring unit may request the Syrian army to escort them to guarantee their security. The escort should under no circumstances condition the ability of the observers to perform their tasks.

Ongoing video-surveillance inspections of remote sites located outside the demilitarized or limited force zones could also be considered as a means to supervise specific sensitive military sites.[70]

b) Border control - monitoring Syrian efforts to prevent arms smuggling

Arms smuggling is a major source of tensions between Israel and Syria. For this reason, Israel may seek to obtain that the monitoring functions should include monitoring of Syrian efforts to prevent arms smuggling.

The aspiration to allocate this task to the IM stems from the fact that the MFO in Sinai is not mandated to monitor Egyptian efforts to prevent the shipment of arms to Gaza through Egypt, which has been a cause of frustration in Israel.

But requiring such a task of the IM is highly problematic. As explained above, the recipe for success of international peacekeeping is to keep the mandate as clear and simple as possible. Assigning such a task to the IM would imply that the IM would

[69] Author's interview with a former representative of the MFO.
[70] Ross, 2009, p. 560; Yatom, 2009, p.155.

deploy all along the Syrian-Lebanese border. The length of this border is about 375 km and it has never been precisely demarcated. Monitoring movement along its full length could therefore prove to be a particularly difficult task that would significantly complicate the scale of the IM and the nature of its role. The difficulty of the task is likely to cause considerable frustration on both the Syrian and Israeli side, and harm the credibility of the IM as well as the parties' trust in its capabilities.

The negative implications of assigning the monitoring of smuggling prevention to the IM are therefore considered to outweigh the expected benefits.

To address the issue of smuggling prevention, the future peace agreement should require that Syria act firmly against arms smuggling along its borders and prevent the use of its territories by hostile players. Even if Syria deploys serious efforts to fulfill this task, controlling borders of this size will prove to be difficult. Therefore, Syria should be assisted in its efforts by granting its forces the technological means to fulfill their responsibilities, even if this implies exceptional arrangements in the demilitarized area. Such exceptional arrangements were agreed upon between Israel and Egypt so as to enable the deployment of Egyptian border police along the border with Gaza, waiving the provisions of the Israel-Egypt peace agreement.

2) Deterring against a violation of the agreement

Besides the observer and monitor units, the IM should also be composed of a "tripwire" military separation force whose deployment on the Golan Heights would have two purposes: deterring the parties from violating the agreement, and protecting the mission.

The deterrence capacity of the separation force should be its main attribute. This capacity will mainly result from the international credibility and political authority of the nations composing the force

and, to a lesser degree, from the size of the force, its military attributes, or its tasks.

In the MFO, the separation force is the largest component of the organization.[71] Its strength results primarily from the clear understanding of both Israel and Egypt that launching an attack against the other side means disregarding the US troops deployed on the ground and entering into a direct conflict with the United States. For similar reasons, US involvement will also be a requirement in the Israeli-Syrian context, from both an Israeli and a Syrian point of view.

From an Israeli point of view, the tripwire force will be a crucial component of the IM. Since Israel does not consider that the UN is robust enough or has enough political weight to deter a violation of the security arrangements, it will likely reject the possibility that UNDOF or another UN mission will be appointed as the IM.

Both Israeli and Syrian considerations regarding the composition of this separation force will be further described in Chapter III.

3) Liaising between the parties to resolve emerging conflicts and prevent situations resulting from errors or misinterpretations

Direct channels of communication, including military and civilian liaison mechanisms, should be created between Israel and Syria after the signing of a peace agreement. These mechanisms will be essential both at the tactical level and at the strategic level.

In addition to the bilateral Israeli-Syrian mechanism, a liaison mechanism between the parties and the IM should also be established at three levels:

- a daily liaison mechanism at the level of the local commanders, to manage the daily operational aspects of the IM. A hotline should be established at both this and higher levels;

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[71] See www.mfo.org.

- liaison between senior officers, to oversee the various aspects of the security arrangements and tackle possible problems observed by the IM or one of the parties. Such liaison should occur both periodically and at the request of one of the parties or the IM;
- political liaison and coordination between the head of the IM and Israeli and Syrian representatives. This liaison is a critical tool if repeated incidents occur and the lower operational liaison levels fail to solve a particular issue. It is an important channel to reinforce the ties between the IM and the parties, and gain the support of the political levels on the need to solve specific issues or adapt to a changing situation on the ground.

All three levels of coordination have proved to be crucial in both the Israeli-Egyptian context and the Israeli-Lebanese context. In the case of Israel and Egypt, the MFO has often enabled specific concerns of the parties to be raised at a political level at times of crisis, during which direct bilateral political ties were hampered. If a repeated incident has occurred in violation of the agreement, or a military operation has been perceived as threatening by the other side, both the political and the senior military liaison mechanisms have played a critical role in raising awareness and preventing misinterpretation of the operation on either side.[72] In the case of UNIFIL, the tripartite committee has played an important role as the sole channel of communication between the IDF and the Lebanese forces.

4) Possible secondary role: managing a special access regime if established

Part of the future Israeli-Syrian agreement may include special border regime procedures that would aim at facilitating Syrian or Israeli access to areas under the other side's sovereignty. Such ideas have been raised by various experts as a possible way of making some

[72] Author's interview with a former senior officer of the MFO.

territorial concessions more easily acceptable.[73]

If facilitated access procedures are to be put in place in such a framework, the IM could play a role in supervising their management or in manning the entry and exit points that would be established.

## C. Rules of Engagement (ROE)

The conditions under which the IM will be allowed to use force should include:

1) Self-defense

The most basic ROE is the right of self-protection. It is considered as an inherent right of a peacekeeping mission. Accordingly, all armed military staff or civilian personnel will have the right to use force against anyone threatening their life. By the same token, the military component of the IM should be allowed to protect the mission personnel, its installations and equipments.

2) Resisting forceful attempts to prevent the IM from fulfilling their mandate

All components of the IM should have guaranteed freedom of movement and be able to move unhindered in the agreed areas. If it encounters forceful attempts to prevent it from fulfilling its mandate, the IM should be able to resist by using force, if needed.[74]

This ROE would contribute to the credibility of the mission, although its use could be a source of friction and direct confrontation between the IM and its hosts. On the one hand, the IM, even if allowed to use force in such cases, may be reluctant to do so as it could make the continuation of its role in the host country very difficult and jeopardize its relations with its host. On the other hand, if the IM fails to exert

[73] Hof, 2009; Greenfield-Gilat, 2009.

[74] The use of force to defend the mandate of the mission tends to be considered as deriving from the right of self-defense. See "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines", United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Missions, 2008, p. 34.

its authority, its credibility is likely to be gravely compromised. This dilemma is one that UNIFIL has often faced. But since it chose not to use force when it was confronted with violent opposition to its presence and investigation measures, UNIFIL has lost a great deal of credibility.[75]

As described in Chapter III, Israel will require strong US involvement in the IM in order to raise the credibility of the mission and reduce the risk of its authority being challenged during fulfillment of its functions.

3) Ensuring that its area of operations is not used for hostile activities

As part of its role in overseeing the demilitarization and limitation of forces in agreed areas, the IM will have to ensure that its areas of operation are not used for hostile activities.

In order to enable it to fulfill this task, the rules of engagement of the IM should include possible use of force against hostile elements that refuse to comply with the Treaty and with the IM's efforts to monitor its implementation. This ROE would be the corollary of the IM's right to resist forceful attempts to prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

However, under no circumstances should this ROE discharge the parties from their responsibilities. Hence, the IM should first alert the national forces of its hosts and intervene only if the national forces fail to do so.

## D. Ability to deploy a long-term mission

1) Facilitating prolonged stability in an unstable environment

The objective of the mission is to maintain prolonged stability in a rather unstable area. The IM must therefore be able to sustain a

[75] UN Secretary-General's report on the implementation of UNSCR 1701, 2008, pp. 5-6.

continuous presence in the long term, like the MFO. Hence, unlike UN peacekeeping missions that require a periodic extension approved by the Security Council, the MFO mandate remains in force unless Israel and Egypt jointly decide otherwise.

Although the Israeli-Egyptian border has been relatively quiet since the signing of the Camp David peace agreement in 1978, with no major violation of this agreement, the regional environment has been rather unstable. In this context, the continued presence of the MFO has been a guarantee of stability, especially when Israeli-Egyptian political relations were very tense as a result of high regional tensions and political stalemate.[76] The "Egyptian revolution" of January 2011 has only reinforced the sense of uncertainty regarding the guarantee for future stability.

The ability to commit to a long-term engagement in the Israeli-Syrian context is equally necessary. Many challenges to Israeli-Syrian stability can be expected, especially if a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon and between Israel and the PLO does not promptly follow the signing of the Israeli-Syrian peace agreement. Hence, even if both Israel and Syria prove very willing to maintain stability, the regional context may be a source of friction.

2) IM's withdrawal only by mutual consent

It is essential that the withdrawal of the IM will be possible only at the request of both Israel and Syria.

The withdrawal of the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) at the request of Egypt on the eve of the six-day war has left painful memories in Israel and has undoubtedly contributed to Israel's negative perception of UN peacekeeping forces.[77] While the deploymentand

[76] "The foundation for the peace that we safeguard remains strong. But the shadows cast by nearby conflicts are growing longer, and serve as a constant reminder of the need to remain vigilant." MFO Director General, Annual Report, 2007, p. 3.

[77] See UNEF I background in http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unef1backgr1.html and http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unef1backgr2.html

withdrawal of UNEF relied on the sole consent of Egypt[78], the deployment of the MFO is based on the "Protocol Establishing the Multinational Force and Observers" of August 3, 1981, in which it is stipulated that "the two parties may consider the possibility of replacing the arrangements hereby established with alternative arrangements by mutual agreement".[79] Although the protocol that established the MFO does not otherwise stipulate the conditions of termination of its mandate or withdrawal, the terms of agreement signed between specific contingents and the MFO require the mutual consent of both Israel and Egypt.[80]

## E. Size of the IM

### 1) Guiding principles

An estimate of the number of troops and observers needed in the IM will be proposed below, based on a comparison with the MFO and UNDOF.

The comparison with the MFO is pertinent for three reasons:

First, the future IM will be created in the same context as the MFO was, namely after a finalized peace agreement signed between two strong and stable entities who have shown in the last 30 years their interest in maintaining stability at their mutual border.

Second, the nature, functions and various components of the MFO mission are fairly similar to those of the IM.

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[78] "A key principle governing the stationing and functioning of UNEF, and later of all other peacekeeping forces, was the consent of the host Government. Since it was not an enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter, UNEF could enter and operate in Egypt only with the consent of the Egyptian Government. This principle was clearly stated by the General Assembly in adopting resolution 1001 (ES-I) of 7 November 1956 concerning the establishment of UNEF." In http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unef1backgr2.html

[79] Article 1 of the Protocol Establishing the Multinational Force and Observers, August 3, 1981.

[80] Exchange of notes between the Government of Canada and the Multinational Force and Observers constituting and agreement on the participations of Canada in the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers, June 28, 1985; letter of the Director General of the MFO, Arthur H. Hughes, to Peter Bennett, Ambassador of New Zealand to Italy, 27 January 1999.

Third, both the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights have similar geographic characteristics: they are sparsely populated and essentially rural areas. The main difference is in the size of the area concerned. The area of the Sinai Peninsula is about 61,000 square kilometers. MFO's three infantry battalions are deployed and operate only in Zone C, a strip of land occupying approximately one sixth of the Peninsula on the eastern side, along the 266-km Israeli-Egyptian border (see map in annex VIII). The size of the occupied Golan Heights is much smaller and less isolated from population centersi[81]: it is about 1,150 square kilometers, and the length of the "border" line between Israel and Syria is 76 km.[82]

Still, the size of the force will depend not so much on the land area involved as on the level of trust between the two sides. Accordingly, an estimate of the size of the force needs to be based on a comparison with the strength of the MFO in its first years of operations rather than at the present time. This means that the IM's initial strength will be relatively high and may evolve over time to meet changing requirements and take account of the trust built between both sides.

In assessing the size of the force needed for the IM, the distinction will be made below between the tripwire military force and the civilian observers.

2) The IM's tripwire force

In its first full year of operation (1983), the authorized strength of the MFO was 2,692 military personnel, including 1,200 US military personnel.[83] By comparison, the current strength of the MFO is 1,656 military personnel, of whom 693 are provided by the US (as of

[81] Annex I of the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement divided the Sinai Peninsula into three zones in which different security arrangements are applied (Article II of the Protocol Concerning Israeli Withdrawal and Security Arrangements).
[82] The length of the "border" line is published in the CIA World Fact book, without specifying to which line it refers.
[83] MFO Director General, Annual Report, 2004.

November 2010).[84]

On the one hand, the size of the Golan Heights and the length of the border are smaller than the area of operations of the MFO. On the other hand, the degree of distrust between Israel and Syria is particularly high. This level of distrust implies that the tripwire force that will be formed at the inception of the IM will have to be big enough to create a more credible deterrent effect.

Taking into account all these considerations, the military strength of the IM (including infantry battalions, supporting staff, logistic and patrol units) should be a minimum of three battalions, which should total around 2,000 military personnel. As in the case of the MFO, at least 40% of the IM military personnel should be US military personnel, in order to grant the force a credible deterrence capacity and meet the parties' concerns (see Chapter III, below).

In comparison, UNDOF is composed of 1,047 troops.[85] However, the main difference between UNDOF and the proposed IM will not be in the number of troops but in their political nature. Indeed, as outlined above in section B, the deterrence capacity and authority of the separation force will not stem primarily from its size but from the credibility, strength and political authority of the nations composing the force and the organizational framework.

3) The civilian observers

In addition to the military contingent, an observer unit should operate within the IM to undertake the verification tasks. The IM will be asked to undertake inspections in the demilitarized and limited force zones as well as in remote, sensitive military sites.

In the case of the MFO, the Civilian Observer Unit (COU) is currently

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[84] MFO Director General, Annual Report, 2010.
[85] UNDOF is composed of 1,047 troops, 76 UNTSO military observers of the Observer Group Golan, 41 international staff and 104 local civilian staff.

composed of 16 US civilian observers. They are in charge of verifying "the presence of military personnel and accountable items such as tanks and artillery".[86] There were about 50 at the inception of the MFO, which should also be the case in the first few years of operations of the IM. In comparison, there are currently 76 UNTSO military observers of the Observer Group Golan attached to UNDOF.

Given all these considerations, the estimated number of civilian observers needed in the IM should be around 50, and decrease over time according to the level of trust built up between the parties.

[86] MFO Director General, Annual Report, 2010.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Israeli and Syrian considerations regarding the characteristics of the IM

This chapter will mainly focus on Israeli and Syrian considerations concerning the IM organizational umbrella and its composition.

These considerations stem essentially from concerns related to the IM's operational capacity, as well as from the political attributes of the IM as a reliable and neutral third party.

### A. Israeli considerations

1) Organizational umbrella and composition of the IM

a) Lessons from other peacekeeping missions: UN, MFO

Israel's position regarding the mission's composition and its basis of authority results mainly from the Israeli experience and perception of how other peacekeeping missions have performed.

- *Israeli distrust towards UN missions*

  The Israeli position on UN missions stems mainly from its negative experience of UNEF's withdrawal from Egypt on the eve of the six-day war[87] and from its discontent with UNIFIL's performance.

  From the Israeli point of view, the failure of UNEF I to remain posted in Egypt and resist Egyptian demands is one of the factors that contributed to the start of the war.[88]

  In the case of UNIFIL, Israel perceives the Force's attitude as inefficient, insufficiently robust and contrary to its rules of

[87] See above, Chapter II (D) (2).
[88] Author's interview with a former IDF senior officer, 2011.

engagement.[89] In addition, unlike the situation with the MFO, Israel has no influence regarding the nationality of the contingents in the mission or of the person in overall charge. This has been a source of concern for Israel, as some of the contingents are from countries which have no diplomatic relations with Israel and which it thus considers too "sympathetic" towards the Lebanese side.[90] The general Israeli perception of UN missions is one of ineffectiveness, the UN being seen as having a political bias against Israel. Consequently, in prior negotiations, one of the Israeli requirements regarding the organizational umbrella of the IM in charge of supervising the implementation of the Israeli-Syrian agreement was that it would not be a UN peacekeeping mission.[91]

- *Implications vis-à-vis UNDOF*

  Many have argued that, after the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, UNDOF could be appointed as the international mission supervising the implementation of the agreed security arrangements for the future Israeli-Syrian peace treaty.[92]

  However, given the Israeli mistrust of UN missions, UNDOF is unlikely to be seen by Israel as an appropriate candidate for this task.

  Moreover, although UNDOF is seen as successful in reducing tactical and daily tensions at the border, it is not a tripwire force and it is not perceived as robust enough or as having enough political authority to deter the parties from violating the future peace agreement. Therefore, Israel will argue that UNDOF can be "pushed away" too easily.[93]

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[89] Lando and Katz, 2011. See also note 42.
[90] Tovah Lazaroff, Herb Keinon and Yaakov Katz, 2010.
[91] Rabinovich, 1998, p. 170.
[92] Spoehr, 2000.
[93] Interview with a former Israeli chief negotiator and with an IDF Israeli officer.

- *The MFO – the most favored model*

  The most singular characteristics of the MFO's organizational structure and mode of operation are the following:

  - it is an ad hoc independent organization, established by virtue of the agreement;
  - the organization's Director General is a senior American diplomat who reports directly to the US, Israel, and Egypt;[94]
  - the tripwire separation forces are composed of three infantry battalions. Of these, one is an American battalion[95], and the other two are from nations agreeable to the parties;[96]
  - the MFO is funded to an equal extent by the governments of Egypt, Israel, and the United States;[97]
  - MFO's reports of incidents are confidential and are not made public. Only the Director General's Annual Report, which relates to the management and funding of the mission, is published.

  The structure and mode of operation of the MFO ensure the major involvement of the US as the guarantor of the Treaty's implementation.

  In addition, the equal sharing by Israel and Egypt of the financial responsibility for the organization increases their involvement and sense of ownership.

  The fact that the MFO is an ad hoc, independent organization

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[94] "Exchanges of letters constituting an agreement concerning the United States of America's role in the establishment and maintenance of the Multinational Force and Observers". Washington, 3 August 1981. Paragraph 1 of the letter of the US Secretary General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.: " The post of the Director-General will be held by U.S. nationals suggested by the United States."

[95] Ibid, paragraph 3 (A): "The United States will contribute an infantry battalion and a logistics support unit from its armed forces and will provide a group of civilian observers to the MFO."

[96] Article 3 of the Annex of the Protocol Establishing the Multinational Force and Observers, August 3, 1981.

[97] "Exchanges of letters constituting an agreement concerning the United States of America's role in the establishment and maintenance of the Multinational Force and Observers". Op.cit., paragraph 3 (B).

also means that, unlike for UN peacekeeping missions, the Director General is not obliged to send a report to any countries or organizations other than the US, Israel and Egypt. This prevents the politicization of incidents that may emerge between the parties, or of the organization itself, and enables discreet diplomacy to reduce tensions that may emerge.

The MFO is often considered as one of the most successful peacekeeping missions.[98] Reportedly, the late Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin favored the model of the MFO as the one on which the future IM in the Golan Heights should be based.[99]

There are several reasons for this preference. The first and most important is the predominant US engagement, both at the political level (Director General) and at the military level. From an Israeli point of view, the US role reinforces the deterrence capacity of the organization, as a serious violation of the agreement would imply the creation of tensions with the US. Also, presumably, it would not be easy for Egypt to ask the US battalion to leave Egypt as it did for UNEF I. Second, beside the deterrence factor, the fact that the civilian observers are US nationals also reinforces the reliability of the monitoring mechanism. Third, the fact that the MFO does not require a UN mandate that has to be periodically extended is a reassuring parameter regarding the capacity of the IM to commit in the long term. Fourth, the fact that the MFO is independent and separate from the UN, with no public reporting obligation, is regarded as reinforcing the political neutrality of the organization.

If the MFO model is used for the future IM, two options could be considered. The MFO's existing political and logistical structure could be used, providing for two totally separate forces with separate

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[98] Spoehr, 2000.
[99] Author's interview with former Israeli negotiators, 2011. See also Spoehr, 2000.

budget management systems – one in the Sinai and the other on the Golan Heights. Alternatively, an independent organization similar to the MFO could be established, but with a different organizational structure. Pros and cons of these models will be outlined below, in the final recommendations of this paper.

b) The Israeli perception of NATO

Israel generally perceives NATO as a powerful and reliable military organization with a potentially strong deterrence capacity.[100] This perception is Israel's primary source of motivation for reinforcing Israel-NATO bilateral ties.

The fact that NATO is seen as a robust and reliable organization in which the US plays a predominant role implies that NATO could match Israeli expectations vis-à-vis the attributes needed in the IM.

On the other hand, Israel is aware of the complexity of NATO's decision-making process and the fact that it requires the approval of the 28 Member States. Since Israeli-Turkish bilateral relations have deteriorated, a specific source of concern in this regard is the membership of Turkey and the fact that it could push NATO in a direction that does not serve – or even harms – Israel's security interests.[101] Therefore, even though NATO could be regarded as a suitable and reliable organization to create the future IM, the good relations between Turkey and Syria may be considered as potentially harmful to the neutrality of the mission if Turkish troops are engaged in the IM.

2) Impact of the IM on bilateral relations with NATO and Member States

One of the Israeli concerns relates to the impact of the IM on its bilateral relations with NATO and with the States composing the IM.

[101] Author's interview with senior IDF officers, February 2011.
[101] Author's interview with senior IDF officers, February 2011.

On the one hand, the role of the IM as a guarantor of a peace agreement can increase its involvement in an area of conflict and therefore reinforce its ties with the parties concerned. Conversely, its involvement as a monitor of the parties' behavior vis-à-vis a peace agreement can be a source of tension between the IM and the parties concerned, because its presence hampers their freedom of action.

While Israel is very keen to deepen its relations and partnership with NATO, the engagement of the Alliance in the peacekeeping mission will most probably not be the appropriate platform to serve this purpose – to the contrary. In general, relations between Israel and NATO will most probably develop at the same pace as the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), as a privileged relationship with Israel could be detrimental to NATO's relations with the other MD partners.

If NATO engages in a peacekeeping mission in the Israeli-Syrian context, these considerations will have even greater weight as the Alliance will be careful to maintain a neutral role between the parties concerned.[102]

Regarding the impact of the IM on Israel's relations with the participating nations, previous experiences show that engagement in peacekeeping missions does not necessarily improve or worsen bilateral relations. Although Israel sees an international presence as a potential source of tensions if Israeli operations clash with the international forces, this risk is relatively low in an Israeli-Syrian (as opposed to an Israeli-Palestinian) context. Indeed, as in the Israeli-Egyptian arrangements, the IM is likely to be deployed mostly on the Syrian side and the risk of friction between the IDF and the IM will be low. Therefore, a predominant US engagement in the IM is not regarded by Israel as a source of concern – on the contrary, US engagement as the guarantor of the peace treaty is considered an essential factor in enhancing US commitment to Israel's security.

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[103] Author's interview with a political officer of the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, NATO, March 2011.

## B. Syrian considerations

1) Organizational umbrella and composition of the mission

a) The US as a "guarantor" of the peace treaty

On several occasions, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has expressed his view on the role of the US in Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

He has underlined the role of the US as the "guarantor" of the peace process, during and after the signing of the peace treaty:

> *"The role of the US is very important because it is the greatest power; it has a special relation with Israel and it has weight to be the guarantor of the peace process when you sign the treaty. But actually when you sign the treaty, it is the very beginning of the peace where you want to make the peace; because this is only a treaty, and not the real peace. Peace is when you have normal relations, when you bury the hatchet and when people can deal with each other. This needs lots of steps and a lot of support. At that time, the arbiter should perhaps have a more important role than during the negotiations."*[103]

Hence, Assad clearly differentiated between the role of the guarantor of a peace treaty, who supervises and guarantees the implementation of the treaty, and the role of a mediator during the negotiations:

> *"The US has the most powerful impact on Israel, its presence is important for the peace process, particularly during the last stages, but the US is important as a guarantee to implement the peace process. What about managing the negotiations and solving the big number of problems that will occur and removing the difficult obstacles ... here comes the role of Turkey. It knows the*

[104] Assad, 2011.

> *region and we have confidence in the Turkish officials. Another point which asserts the Turkish role is our experiment with the US during 19 years. Since 1991, the US proved capable of giving guarantees but it was unable to play the role of mediator for the difficulty of being unbiased from one side and its ignorance of the culture of the region."*[104]

Accordingly, Syria shares the Israeli position that the US should be considerably involved in guaranteeing and supervising the implementation of the peace agreement, as it has the capacity to deter against the violation of the agreement.

b) Syrian concern for equality and symmetry

In prior negotiations, Syria has repeatedly insisted on the principle of reciprocity and equality. As explained in Chapter I (C), this is one of the principles clearly stipulated in the Aims and Principles "non-paper" of 1995.

Based on this principle, Syria will prefer an IM with a balanced composition, not prominently in favor of Israel.[105] This position, together with Syria's willingness to see the US involved as a guarantor of the peace treaty, implies that Syria could prefer a multilateral force with strong US involvement.

Within this setting, Syria reportedly preferred a UN mission to allay its concern about an overwhelming predominance of the US in a context of tense US-Syria relations. However, former Syrian Ambassador Walid Muallem did not exclude the possibility of future flexibility in this position, as he probably understood the unlikelihood of Israel accepting a UN mission.[106]

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[105] Assad, 2010e.

[105] Indyk, 2009, p. 106.

[106] "Muallem rejected Barak's proposal to deploy American monitors and explained that Syria preferred UN monitors. 'You know the antipathic relations of the US congress towards Syria,' said Muallem in reference to the Congress's accusation that Syria is assisting terrorism and harm

In addition, a UN mission would not be in line with Bashar al-Assad's statement in favor of the US' involvement as a guarantor of the future peace treaty.

As further outlined in the final recommendations, a compromise position between Israel's opposition to a UN mission and Syrian concerns could take several forms: an ad hoc multilateral organization in which the US would share the political management with one or several additional States, or a MFO model whose composition would address Syrian concerns.

c) Syria's aspiration to grant a role to Turkey

After decades of tension, Syria and Turkey were reconciled in 1998 when they signed the Adana Agreement, which put an end to years of friction over the Kurdish issue. As part of this agreement, Syria acknowledged that the PKK is a terrorist organization and agreed to expel its leaders from Syria. This reconciliation was finally complete when Syria, at the end of 2004, recognized Turkish sovereignty over the Hatay province (Alexandretta) and signed a free trade agreement with Turkey.

Nowadays, Syria and Turkey share extensive strategic, political and economic interests, as they decided in 2009 to connect their gas networks, to increase their sharing of joint water sources, and to remove visa requirements between the two countries.[107]

As part of its good neighborly relations policy, Turkey has shown great interest in playing a more active role in wider regional issues, including in the mediation of Israeli-Syrian negotiations. However, since Israeli-Turkish relations have deteriorated, Israel is unlikely to accept Turkey playing such a role again, as Turkey's rapprochement

ing human rights. Muallem, who could not ignore Rabin's preference for US monitors, said: 'I am not excluding this possibility, but I cannot agree to this now, as we need first to normalize the relationship between Syria and the US. In any case, ' he added, 'I am confident that on the issue of international monitors, we will reach an agreement.' " Yatom, 2009, p. 160 (my translation).

[107] On Syrian-Turkish rapprochement, see ICG, 2009.

with Syria and increasing identification with organizations or nations hostile to Israel (e.g. Hamas, Iran) have harmed its neutrality from the Israeli perspective.

Conversely, from a Syrian perspective, the shift in Turkish foreign policy makes Turkey a more attractive mediator and indicates it will be more attentive to Syrian concerns and positions. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad is also eager to please Turkey by insisting on its qualities as a mediator[108], even if he admits that the political context makes Turkey's involvement highly improbable.

Hence, Assad is well aware that without good relations between Israel and Turkey, Turkey will not be able to prove a suitable mediator.[109] He also knows that Turkey's role would only be complementary to the US, as it is not powerful enough to replace the US as a guarantor of the peace treaty.[110]

In the light of the current events in Syria, one should take into account that the relations between Syria and Turkey could change dramatically in the short and mid term, and mean an about-turn in Assad's position vis-à-vis Turkey's possible role. It is, for example, significant that the criticism expressed by Turkey in May 2011 regarding the Assad regime's crackdown on anti-government protesters has led to a deterioration in Syrian-Turkish relations and to a Syrian counter-attack against Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[111] At the time of writing, it is too soon to tell whether Syrian-Turkish relations have taken an

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[109] "There is no other country who could replace Turkey in mediation between Syria and Israel. I have said in the past too that it is Israel who doesn't want this role (to be played by Turkey). Israel, particularly the Netanyahu government, has been trying to distance Turkey from mediation in the last few months. […] I'm also telling every visitor about the importance of Turkey's role. […] If we had found a mediator who is more successful than Turkey, then we would approach it without hesitation. If we had found a competent party for getting our territories back and for maintaining peace, we would have told this to Mr. [Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan. However, we haven't, so far, found a better mediator. […] Very clearly, the main role in the indirect talks belongs to Turkey. Other countries' roles are not alternative but are supportive." Assad, 2010c.

[109] Assad, 2010e.

[110] Assad, 2011.

[111] Bar'el, 2011.

irreversible turn for the worse. However, if the current turmoil in Syria does not end the Assad regime, Syria's trust in Turkey will probably need time to be restored to its former level.

d) The Syrian perception of NATO

Presumably, while no clear statement of Syrian official position on NATO has been found, Syria's attitude to NATO is likely to be influenced by two main factors: its perception of NATO's Member States and its views on the missions in which NATO has been involved in the Middle East, namely Afghanistan and more recently Libya.

With regard to NATO's Member States, Syria's perception of NATO is probably influenced by its perception of the West, and more particularly of the US, given its predominant role in the Alliance. As explained above, the position of Syria vis-à-vis the US is nuanced. Its antagonism with the US is a source of distrust regarding the role that the US could play in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations. Nevertheless, Syria still believes that the US should be the guarantor of a future peace treaty. These mixed feelings may result in a similar attitude regarding a potential role for NATO in supervising an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

An additional consideration may be the role of Turkey in NATO. Within the context of the Syrian-Turkish rapprochement, Turkey's membership of NATO can be an asset for Syria as a result of its ability to influence NATO's policy and operations in the Middle East and counterbalance the Western positions in the Alliance. In this respect, Turkey's membership can reduce Syria's potential distrust of NATO and makes the Alliance's involvement more attractive.

Turkey is fully aware of its role and of the expectations that it has raised in the Arab world. Its position vis-à-vis NATO's role in Libya was a clear expression of its inclination to represent the interests of the Middle East against those of the West. At first it firmly opposed any involvement of NATO, until the Arab League gave its formal support.

Turkey's position showed a complete about-turn when it realized that, by supporting NATO's involvement, its influence in the Libya operation would increase and counterbalance the French position.[112]

In conclusion, Syria's perception of NATO is presumably the combined result of its perception of the US, other Western nations active in NATO (such as France) and Turkey. For these reasons, from a Syrian point of view NATO could be a compromise choice for the future IM, as a multilateral organization whose management is more balanced than that of the MFO, and is still more acceptable to Israel than the UN. However, for other reasons outlined in Chapter IV, NATO is not necessarily the best choice to fulfill the tasks required of the IM.

2) Impact of the mission on bilateral relations with NATO and Member States

Syria is not a partner in the Mediterranean Dialogue and it has no relationship with NATO. The Alliance's engagement in an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement could serve as the platform for the creation of ties between Syria and NATO. Such ties could supposedly benefit the stability of the region and of the peace treaty by reinforcing Syria's relations with the West.

In terms of Syria's relations with NATO Member States, NATO engagement could on the whole reinforce these ties as long as its involvement is not a source of direct confrontation on the ground. As outlined in the previous section, Israel will be concerned that Turkish engagement in the IM might soften the position of the IM vis-à-vis Syria as a result of Turkey's willingness to please Syria and its tendency to avoid direct confrontation with the Syrian authorities.

[113] Head, 2011.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# NATO constraints and considerations

This chapter will discuss whether NATO could and should engage in a peacekeeping mission to supervise a future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

First, NATO's ability to create a peacekeeping mission that would respond to the parties' needs will be examined.

Second, possible political and operational considerations affecting NATO's position in favor of or against the Alliance's future engagement will be analyzed.

## A. Can NATO respond to the parties' needs?

1) Operational capacity

As outlined in Chapter II, the IM will mainly consist of two components: observers and a military tripwire force.

NATO has gained extensive experience in peacekeeping and stabilization missions in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Afghanistan. Even though the nature and setting of a mission in the Israeli-Syrian context will be significantly different than in the cases of KFOR, SFOR or ISAF, NATO has developed important know-how as well as logistic and human capacities that should enable the Alliance to cope with the operational aspects of such a mission.

Moreover, the Israeli-Syrian IM will result from a peace agreement between two nations that have maintained stability along their shared border despite deep mutual hostility. It is therefore highly likely that this IM will present fewer difficulties and challenges than KFOR, SFOR or ISAF, and that it will prove a rather easy task for NATO in

comparison with its missions in central Europe or Afghanistan.

In addition to these considerations, one of the most important tasks of the IM will be to deploy tripwire separation forces capable of deterring the parties from violating the peace agreement. As outlined in the previous chapter, one of the most significant qualities of NATO is its deterrence capacity, at least from an Israeli perspective. From this perspective, NATO is thus a valid candidate to fulfill the necessary tasks.

2) Long-term commitment as a condition for lasting stability

As stressed in Chapter II (D), one of the most important attributes of the IM will be its ability to deploy in the long term and guarantee prolonged stability.

Based on interviews with NATO's international staff, NATO will probably be reluctant to make a formal long-term commitment and will look for a UN mandate that will be renewable periodically.[113] Equally, from the Member States' point of view, an open-ended commitment of their forces is likely to be perceived as too hazardous from both a political and a practical standpoint.

In addition to the call for a UN renewable mandate, NATO will most likely plan for an exit strategy in the event of its deciding for whatever reason to disengage.[114] In such a case, it is likely to seek an agreement with the parties concerned regarding the transfer of its mandate to another organization.[115] The conditions of the exit strategy will in any case have to be agreed upon in advance with both Israel and Syria, in order to reassure them and take their concerns into account.

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[114] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Emerging Security Challenges Division, March 2011.
[114] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Operations Division, March 2011.
[115] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, March 2011.

3) A tailor-made mission: can NATO respond to the parties' requests and concerns?

NATO's ability to adapt the mission to the parties' requests will essentially depend on the Member States' willingness to accommodate these. If they agree to the parties' conditions, NATO will follow.[116]

However, requests to exclude specific nations from the force, such as Israeli opposition to Turkish participation, could prove very difficult for NATO to handle politically and could face harsh antagonism (also from Syria). Similarly, an approach that would be too US-centred or too obviously based on Israeli requests would be problematic for Syria, for the US and for the other Member States.

Such requests will be more easily handled and less problematic politically outside NATO, in the context of an ad hoc, independent organization.

## B. Should NATO accept such a mission?

1) Political considerations

More than a question of capacity, the issue of NATO's future involvement is mainly a matter of NATO's and the Member States' political considerations and cost-benefit calculations.

Hence, the legitimacy of the mission and its probability of success, the national political interests of the Member States, the risks the mission involves and its consistency with NATO's purposes will be the main considerations that will weigh in favor of or against the engagement of NATO in the Israeli-Syrian context.

a) Legitimacy of the mission

NATO's decision to engage in the context of the Israeli-Syrian conflict

[117] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Emerging Security Challenges Division and Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, March 2011.

is likely to depend on the same three conditions as the possibility of its engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,[117] as stated on 9 February 2011 by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the 11th Herzliya Conference in Israel:

> *"The three conditions for any possible NATO involvement are well known: if a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was reached; if both parties requested that NATO should help them with the implementation of that agreement; and if the United Nations endorsed NATO's possible involvement."*

Before considering a possible involvement, NATO will therefore seek two levels of legitimacy: the request of the parties themselves (in this case Israel and Syria) and the blessing of the UN.

b) National political considerations by NATO Member States

In addition to the three conditions described above, NATO's attitude to possible engagement will be based mainly on political considerations by Member States.

Such considerations will mainly be concerned with Member States' degree of willingness to play a role in the area, the anticipated impact of their involvement on their image in the world and in the region, and the organizational framework that will best serve their interests.

Within NATO's Member States, two main poles of influence can be observed with regard to foreign policy in the Middle East. Schematically, the first is represented by France, the UK and the US. Their interests do not necessarily converge, as in the case of Iraq, but they generally share the same objectives regarding the peace process in the Middle East and coordinate their positions within the Quartet. The second pole is Turkey, which is playing a growing role in the region but tends to support actors like Hamas and Syria, in contradiction with Western

[118] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, March 2011.

policy.

So while both poles are willing to play a role in the Middle East, their interests tend to differ when it comes to the image and policy they want to convey to the main players there. The implication is not necessarily that their positions will diverge on the question of NATO's engagement in supervising an Israeli-Syrian agreement, but that they will compete over their role vis-à-vis Israel and Syria. Turkey, in particular, is likely to do its best to represent Syria's interests in an effort to counterbalance the US position in relation to Israel. Whatever position Turkey will take in this regard, it is expected to do its best so that its stance will prove influential and not be ignored.[118] On the basis of such considerations, Turkey may therefore prefer its engagement to be in the context of NATO, where it has a right of veto. Conversely, other Member States may be in favor of contributing to the Israeli-Syrian peace process, but not see NATO as an appropriate framework for such engagement.

The decision to engage NATO in Libya in March 2011 is the perfect example of this type of disagreement over the right organizational umbrella to supervise a mission. Thus, France wanted to limit the role of NATO to the military coordination of the operation and keep the political supervision in the hands of the coalition.[119] It did everything to push Turkey away, causing deep upset in Ankara by not inviting its representative to the Paris Summit of 19 March 2011 to launch the military operation against Libya.[120] In reaction, Turkey reportedly pushed for NATO's engagement in Libya, since this would give Turkey

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[119] Author's interviews with NATO's international staff at the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division and Emerging Security Challenges Division.

[119] President Sarkozy (2011b) stated that: «les décisions sont prises par la coordination politique, les décisions de frapper sont prises par les autorités nationales, et l'OTAN répartit les créneaux et les missions, discute des objectifs que lui propose la coordination politique». See also Traynor, 2011a.

[120] Representatives of Spain, Germany, Canada, Poland, Denmark, Italy, Greece, Norway, Belgium, UK, Holland, US, UN, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Morocco, the EU and the Arab League were invited by President Sarkozy (Sarkozy, 2011a).

greater influence.[121]

The Libyan example illustrates clearly that the Member States' preference for NATO involvement rather than basing everything on a different organizational framework depends on a variety of political considerations, not just on security or operational factors. Among these considerations, a Member State's sense of Alliance cohesion may push it to accept a mission which it originally opposed.

c) Probability of success of the mission

If the mandate of the IM remains clear and simple as described in Chapter II (B), the functions requested should not raise major difficulties for NATO.

Hence, the monitoring and verification of demilitarization and limited force zones are important but not complex functions. NATO should not encounter major obstacles in the course of this task.

Regarding the capacity to deter Israel and Syria from violating the agreement and to act as a tripwire force between Israel and Syria, this function consists in the mere deployment of forces. No specific functions, except maybe patrolling and operating checkpoints, will have to be performed by this force. Therefore, its capacity will mainly be a matter of NATO's ability to maintain its deterrence power vis-à-vis Israel and Syria, and there is no reason to believe that it would not succeed in doing so.

For NATO, the main difficulty will be to engage in a mission for which the definition of success is to guarantee long-lasting stability, rather than to achieve specific outcomes and objectives. As further outlined below, this challenge is the most problematic from NATO's point of view as it is not consistent with the Alliance's original purpose.

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[122] Traynor, 2011b.

d) Perception of the risks involved

The risks involved in the IM could result from three different types of factor, explained below. The first two are not specific to NATO, but relevant to any IM mandated to supervise the Israeli-Syrian Peace Treaty. The third factor constitutes a specific political challenge for NATO.

- *Viability and reliability of the parties concerned*

  Setting aside the fact that, at the time of writing, the outcome of the Syrian internal uprising against Assad's regime is still unknown, both Syria and Israel are well established States with strong central authorities.

  In comparison with the Israeli-Palestinian context, in which a peacekeeping mission will have to deal with authorities whose strength and capacities to govern and control are still to be proven, the Israeli-Syrian context offers a more stable environment in which non-state actors are relatively under control.

  Having said that, the internal uprising in Syria that is currently challenging Assad's regime may well lead to the fall of the regime or to its weakening and the above assumptions on the stability and strength of Syria could be shaken. If this happens, however, the chance of a peace deal with Israel in the short or mid term will become even more remote. Such a possibility should be left aside as irrelevant to this research, because it actually precludes the possibility of a peace agreement.

- *Risks of confrontation with non-state actors (i.e. Hezbollah)*

  Despite Syria's strength, an isolated peace agreement between Israel and Syria, not followed by a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon, would not neutralize the risk of Hezbollah destabilizing the area. This risk will be even higher if no Israeli-

Palestinian agreement is signed, since hostile governmental and non-state players will maintain a certain level of tension against Israel in a show of solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

President Assad has addressed this risk on several occasions. In an interview with the Italian newspaper La Repubblica on 26 May 2010, he explained the following:

> *"An agreement limited to Syria and Israel will leave the Palestinian issue unresolved. Rather than peace, it will be a truce. With some five million Palestinian refugees scattered around the Arab world, tension will remain strong. There is popular solidarity with the Palestinians. They will keep fighting for their rights"*.[122]

- *Political risks that may increase for the Alliance*

  Besides increasing the risk of confrontation between the IM and non-state actors, the lack of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians may complicate the political implications of NATO's involvement in an Israeli-Syrian context. As regional and local pressure for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement will be voiced, NATO may have to face greater difficulty in keeping its distance on the Israeli-Palestinian issue while it is involved on the ground with Israel and Syria. In such a context, it will also be more difficult for NATO's Member States to reach consensus and show cohesion on the conditions of NATO's engagement.

  Therefore, the lack of an agreement between Israel and the Palestinian will also create a political risk for NATO if it engages as the guardian of the Israel-Syria peace agreement.

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[123] Assad, 2010a; see also Assad, 2010b and Assad, 2011.

e) Consistency of the mission with NATO's purpose

- *Lack of precedent*

  Even though NATO has already undertaken peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan, the contexts in which these missions were created differ dramatically from that in which an IM will be established following an Israeli-Syrian agreement.

  The common denominator of the missions in which NATO has participated is that it intervened to put an end to a violent conflict and help stabilize the area during and after the signing of a peace settlement. By contrast, the Israeli-Syrian border, even in the absence of a peace treaty, has been relatively quiet since 1974. The creation of an IM in the Israeli-Syrian context is therefore not about putting an end to bloodshed or about post-conflict reconstruction or stabilization. It is about guaranteeing the continued stability of the area after the signing of a peace agreement.

  NATO has never been involved in such a mission. It could easily perceive its involvement in such a context as a waste of its capacities and come to the conclusion that other organizations could fulfill the mission just as well. During interviews at NATO headquarters, several officers of NATO's international staff used the words of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and explained that NATO is not looking for a role[123] and will therefore not rush into missions where its involvement is perceived as not absolutely necessary.

  On the other hand, several political officers on NATO's international staff stressed that, if both Israel and Syria request the Alliance's involvement and its Member States conclude that this could serve their individual and collective interests, the lack of precedent will

[124] Before reiterating the three conditions for NATO's involvement in the Middle East, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that "NATO is not involved in the Middle East peace process and is not seeking a role in it." (Rasmussen, 2011).

not affect NATO's decision to intervene.[124]

Still, at both national and Alliance level, the main source of reluctance is likely to remain the request for long-term engagement. In a military organization whose purpose is by nature closer to "fire extinction" than long-term peacekeeping, Member States and NATO senior staff will be very reluctant to engage the Alliance in an open-ended mission devoid of any clear exit strategy prospects.[125] A mandate to be renewed periodically by the UN will be a minimum request, giving an opportunity for regular reassessment of the need for NATO's engagement.

- *Crisis management tasks in NATO's new Strategic Concept*

  NATO's new Strategic Concept adopted in Lisbon on 19 November 2010 gives a prominent place to the Alliance's Crisis Management role and describes the various aspects of this role in the "Security through Crisis Management" section. Among the tasks described, the new Strategic Concept specifically points out in paragraph 24 that the responsibility of NATO is not limited to conflict prevention or conflict management, but should also aim at sustaining lasting stability after a conflict has ended:

  > *"Even when conflict comes to an end, the international community must often provide continued support, to create the conditions for lasting stability. NATO will be prepared and capable to contribute to stabilization and reconstruction, in close cooperation and consultation wherever possible with other relevant international actors."*

  The Core Tasks and Principles defined in the Lisbon Strategic

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[125] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, March 2011.
[125] Author's interviews with staff of NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division and Operations Division, March 2011.

Concept also address NATO crisis management tasks, and specify that NATO should "help consolidate stability in post-conflict situations where that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security" (my underlining).

- *To what extent may Israeli-Syrian stability affect the Alliance's security?*

Even though the Middle East is outside NATO's borders, the ongoing conflict between Israel and its neighbors is regarded as the main source of instability in the Middle East. From the U.S.' point of view, it is not only a source of regional instability but has a direct impact on U.S. security interests in the region by generating tensions between the U.S and the Arab States. On 16 March 2010, CENTCOM General David. H. Petraeus made a statement on this matter before the Senate Armed Services Committee:

> *"The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the AOR. Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas."* [126]

Hence, peace between Israel and its neighbors is not only regarded

[127] Petraeus, 2010.

by the U.S. administration as an Israeli-Arab matter but also as a question of U.S. national security interest.[127] And whereas NATO's security is not only about U.S. national security interests, the two are very closely interlinked with each other, and also with European security.

In addition, although General Petraeus' and President Obama's statements highlight the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is clear that peace between Israel and Syria is a central part of a sustainable Middle East peace. Syria is playing a critical role in supporting both Hamas and Hezbollah activities, detrimental to Middle East stability. Hence, while peace between Israel and the Palestinians is essential, the region is likely to remain unstable until an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement is achieved, and vice-versa.

2) Operational considerations

Besides the political considerations outlined above, there will be operational considerations that will be taken into account in NATO's decision to engage in the Israeli-Syrian peace process.

a) Rules of engagement (ROE)

NATO will want to have the means to achieve its mission. It will therefore require rules of engagement that enable it to defend itself and resist forceful attempts to prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

Optimally, as outlined in Chapter II (C), the ROE should provide the means to ensure that the IM's area of operations is not used for hostile activities. While Israel will be very much in favor of a robust mandate, Syria is expected to resist over-intrusive rules of engagement.

As NATO is not asking for a role, it is likely to be inflexible in regard to the conditions of its engagement.

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[128] Obama, 2010.

b) Human resources available

The operational consideration that will probably be the most important factor in NATO's decision to engage is the availability of the number of forces required for the mission.

As outlined in Chapter III (E), the size of the force needed in the IM is estimated at approximately 2000 military personnel and 50 observers.

This represents a relatively small mission if compared with missions like ISAF in Afghanistan, with a strength of 93,000.

In order to allow for a pre-deployment training cycle and a post-deployment recovery period, the availability of three infantry battalions may be required so that one of them can be deployed at any given time.[128] Even in this case, the size of the force still remains relatively small and should not, from a practical point of view, be an obstacle in the decision to engage.

As said in Chapter II (D), the main practical problem may lie in the fact that a long-term engagement will be required by the peace agreement. However, as is the case in the MFO, the mission will be composed of various national contingents that could be replaced by others. In order to maintain the continuity of the mission, the terms of agreement between contributing nations and the IM will have to stipulate the conditions under which the forces will be able to withdraw, so as to enable the IM to find acceptable replacements for the contingents.

c) Financial considerations

In times of economic austerity, most European nations have in recent years cut their military budget. This could have direct consequences on the Alliance's ability to engage in long missions, especially if they are not directly related to NATO's security.[129]

However, as ISAF incrementally withdraws from Afghanistan, the

[129] Spoehr, 2000, pp. 109-25.
[129] Rasmussen, 2010a; Rasmussen, 2010b.

financial burden on both the national forces engaged in ISAF and on the NATO logistic apparatus will be alleviated significantly.

In addition, the engagement of NATO in Libya shows that financial considerations are easily overtaken by political ones, even when NATO's security is not directly at stake. This is also likely to be the case in the Israeli-Syrian peace process, which Member States like France, the US, the UK or Turkey will be eager to support.

Finally, although the IM will require a long-term engagement, the fact that it requires a relatively small number of forces in a rather stable environment will alleviate financial concern.

# Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there is a role for NATO in guaranteeing the implementation of the security arrangements of a future Israeli-Syrian peace agreement.

After having examined the parameters of the peacekeeping mission required for such a task, the bottom-line response is that NATO has the operational capacity to undertake such a mission but that it should not necessarily be regarded as the primary option for it to do so.

Two perspectives were examined in this research: the operational and political considerations of the parties concerned, namely Israel and Syria, and of NATO. On the basis of this analysis, the main pros and cons of NATO's prospective engagement will be outlined below.

## Pros

There are five main reasons that weigh in favor of NATO's engagement in the Israeli-Syrian peace process.

First, NATO, unlike UN peacekeeping forces, will be able to provide a credible and robust "tripwire" force capable of deterring the parties from violating the agreed security arrangements. This is the most important parameter needed in the IM, which could be fulfilled only by a force that has sufficient deterrence capacity and political credibility.

Second, NATO has gained enough experience in peacekeeping missions in central Europe and Afghanistan to undertake monitoring and supervisory functions.

Third, the risk of confrontations or of entanglement entailed in an Israeli-Syrian post-peace agreement mission is rather low. Even in the current context of deep hostilities between the main protagonists, both Israel and Syria have managed to maintain calm and stability at their

mutual borders.

Fourth, the required strength of the mission is estimated at approximately two thousand personnel. A small-scale mission of this kind does not imply financial difficulty for NATO or the Member States, nor should it be complicated to mobilize.

Fifth, the new Strategic Concept adopted by NATO in Lisbon highlights the need for NATO to engage in post-conflict stabilization missions and contribute to sustaining lasting stability in areas that are of strategic importance to the Alliance's security. The Middle East peace process has been at the center of international attention for at least two decades. There is no doubt that an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement will be an historic step on the path towards an end to the violent conflicts that have characterized the Middle East for the last 70 years. Hence, contributing to the sound implementation of an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement is in line with NATO's strategic security interests.

**Cons**

Without dismissing the value of the arguments in favor of NATO's engagement, NATO may not necessarily be the most appropriate organizational framework.

First, despite the principles formulated in the Lisbon Strategic Concept, the proposed peacekeeping mission is not fully consistent with NATO's natural purpose. The aim of NATO's engagement in previous and current peacekeeping missions has been to end a violent conflict and stabilize an area where violent hostilities have prevailed in the past. This would not be the case with an Israeli-Syrian post-peace agreement mission. The Israeli-Syrian context is not a post-war area in need of a rescue mission. It is a relatively stable border. It does not mean that NATO could not fulfill the tasks requested, but that other players could be more appropriate from both NATO's and the parties' point of view, whereas NATO prefers to act when there is no apparent

alternative.

Another important point is the long-term commitment that will be required from the peacekeeping force supervising the Israeli-Syrian agreement. As in the Israeli-Egyptian context, such international engagement will be critical to guarantee long-lasting stability in a rather unstable regional context. Most certainly, it will be highly problematic for NATO to provide such commitment. First, NATO will require a mandate to be approved and renewed on a periodic basis by the UN. Even if the UN generally renews this type of mandate without any problem, it could be perceived as a source of potential uncertainty. Second, and more importantly, the core problem will be for NATO to contemplate the possibility of a long-term engagement that could last for decades and that is devoid of a clear exit strategy. Indeed, since the Israeli-Syrian post-agreement context is not about ending a conflict or stabilizing and rebuilding a post-conflict area, it is rather impractical to foresee and define a point in time at which the mission could be considered as accomplished. The only viable and appropriate exit strategy for such a mission should be when both parties, Israel and Syria, mutually agree to dismantle the mission.

A third point weighing against NATO's engagement is that it may be unwise for NATO to engage with Israel and Syria in a peacekeeping mission if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still unsettled. First, in such a context, there will be more risks of confrontation and instability to which the NATO force could be exposed. Second, from a political point of view, it will be more difficult for NATO's Member States to reach consensus and show cohesion on the conditions of NATO's engagement, which could be harmful to both the Alliance and the parties concerned.

**In the light of all the above reasons, NATO is not necessarily the most appropriate organization to serve as a guarantor of the Israeli-Syrian security arrangements. A preferable option would be an ad hoc independent organization created especially for this**

**task, and shaped according to the parties' needs and concerns.**

**Recommended models to fulfill the role of the IM**

Schematically, three choices of ad hoc organization could be examined. First, an extension of the MFO could be considered, using the same headquarters in Rome but with a separate force and mission. The advantage of this option is that it would benefit from the important experience and know-how gained by the MFO in the last 30 years and would save the cost of establishing a totally new organization. It would also guarantee strong involvement of the US, which is an important parameter for both Israel and Syria. This strong involvement of the US could be balanced by appointing a force commander whose nationality would allay Syrian concerns, and by a tailored composition of the force agreed upon by both Israeli and Syria. A second option could be to create an ad hoc independent organization, with a similar triangular structure to the MFO but not connected in any way to it. This option is not the best, but could be chosen if this is what the parties concerned agree upon for political or operational reasons. Third, in order to accommodate the Syrian preference for a multilateral organization, an ad hoc organization could be created with a different organizational structure than the MFO, the agreement being that the US would share the political management with one or several additional States.

The advantage of a MFO model for the Israeli-Syrian context is that it perfectly combines a credible tripwire military force and a civilian observer force. It would also be able to commit to a long-term engagement, as the MFO did vis-à-vis Israel and Egypt, while enabling the national contingents to withdraw their forces under conditions agreed in advance with the parties. Moreover, unlike a UN peacekeeping mission or a NATO mission mandated by the UN, it would not require a mandate to be renewed. Finally, another important advantage of the MFO is that its small, close structure enables discreet and efficient diplomacy to take place when an incident occurs.

Until the IM is established and has recruited the contingents composing its force, UNDOF could serve as an interim mission supervising the phased withdrawal of Israel. By the time Israel will have completed its withdrawal, the formation of the new ad hoc organization should be in place and ready to deploy (as was the case in Sinai). The establishment of the IM would logically imply the dismantling of UNDOF. However, the parties could request that, in addition to the IM's deployment, the UN would maintain a presence in the area, by keeping a unit of UNTSO or UNDOF. Such a request was made by Egypt in Sinai, where UNTSO has maintained a group of observers despite the deployment of the MFO.

To conclude, while NATO could easily fulfill the tasks of a peacekeeping mission mandated to supervise the security arrangements of an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement, an ad hoc organization like the MFO would be more suitable for this type of mission. Reportedly, the option of an additional MFO mission for the Golan Heights has already been raised in informal circles in Israel and is considered by many as a preferable option for the Israeli-Syrian context. This conclusion does not exclude the possibility that NATO could play a role if Israel and Syria come to the joint understanding that NATO can better meet their reciprocal demands and concerns. In such a case, NATO will have to weigh up the pros and cons of the request according to the context prevailing at the time and its own interests, taking into account the importance of the contribution it will thus be asked to make to the stability of the Middle East.

# Annex I: Map of the Golan Heights in the Middle East

Map ECF – Ron Shatzberg

# Annex II: Physical map of the Golan Heights

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1989, “Israeli Settlements in the Golan Heights Physical Map 1989”

# Annex III:

## Geographic and Demographic background on the Golan Heights

The Golan Heights are bounded by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee to the west (in the Syrian-African Rift Valley), Mount Hermon to the north (2,814 m. high), and the Yarmouk River to the south. They dominate the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan and Hula Valleys (see pictures in Annex IV). Geologically, the plateau constitutes a volcanic field made mostly of basalt and other types of volcanic rock. It is crossed by a number of streams that flow into the Jordan Valley.

As of 2009, there are 32 Israeli Jewish settlements on the Golan Heights, with a population of 17,600 inhabitants. In addition, there are five "non-Jewish" settlements, with 23,800 inhabitants.[130] These non-Jewish inhabitants are Druze and Alawite Syrians who remained on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights after the six-day war. The Druze live in two Druze towns, Majdal Shams and Buqata, and in the villages of Mas'ade and Ayn Qiniyya. These Druze settlements are located in the north-eastern part of the Golan Heights.

In addition, as part of the Syrian population of the Golan Heights that remained in Israel after the six-day war, there is the particular case of the Alawite village of Ghajar, on the border between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Lebanon. Following the six-day war, a few months after the capture of the Golan Heights Ghajar was annexed by Israel at the request of the town's inhabitants.[131] Since the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, Ghajar has been split into two parts, between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Lebanon. During the 2006 Israeli-Lebanon war, Israel decided to close this breach in the

[130] Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009, quoted in Kipnis, 2010.
[131] Kaufman, 2009.

Israeli-Lebanese boundary by reoccupying the northern part of the town. On 17 November 2010, the Israeli security cabinet approved in principle a UN plan for Israeli withdrawal from the northern part of Ghajar.

There is another area that, though captured by Israel from Syria during the six-day war, has turned into an Israeli-Lebanese controversy: the so-called Shebaa Farms. These former plots of farmland are located on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon. More than a controversy over the exact location of the Israeli-Lebanese border, the Shebaa Farms issue is about the exact location of the Lebanese-Syrian border. Therefore, from an Israeli point of view, the fate of the area is to be decided between Syria and Lebanon, after the conclusion of an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement and subsequent Israeli withdrawal from the area.

# Annex IV: Views of the Golan Heights

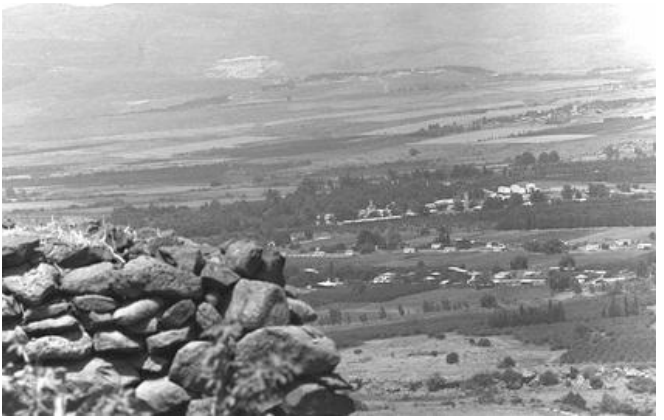
**View of Israel from the top of the Golan Heights**

View of the Sea of Galilee from the Golan Heights (Kfar Haruv).

One of the Syrian tanks in its fortified position at "Tawfik", dominating Kibbutz Tel Katzir and the settlements on the Sea of Galilee (*GPO 08/05/1967*).[132]

[132] http://www.sixdaywar.org/content/photos.asp

Kibbutz Daphna and Moshav Shear Yashuv seen from the “Tel Azaziat” position on the Syrian Heights (GPO 08/03/1967).[133]



**View of the Golan Heights from Israeli valleys**

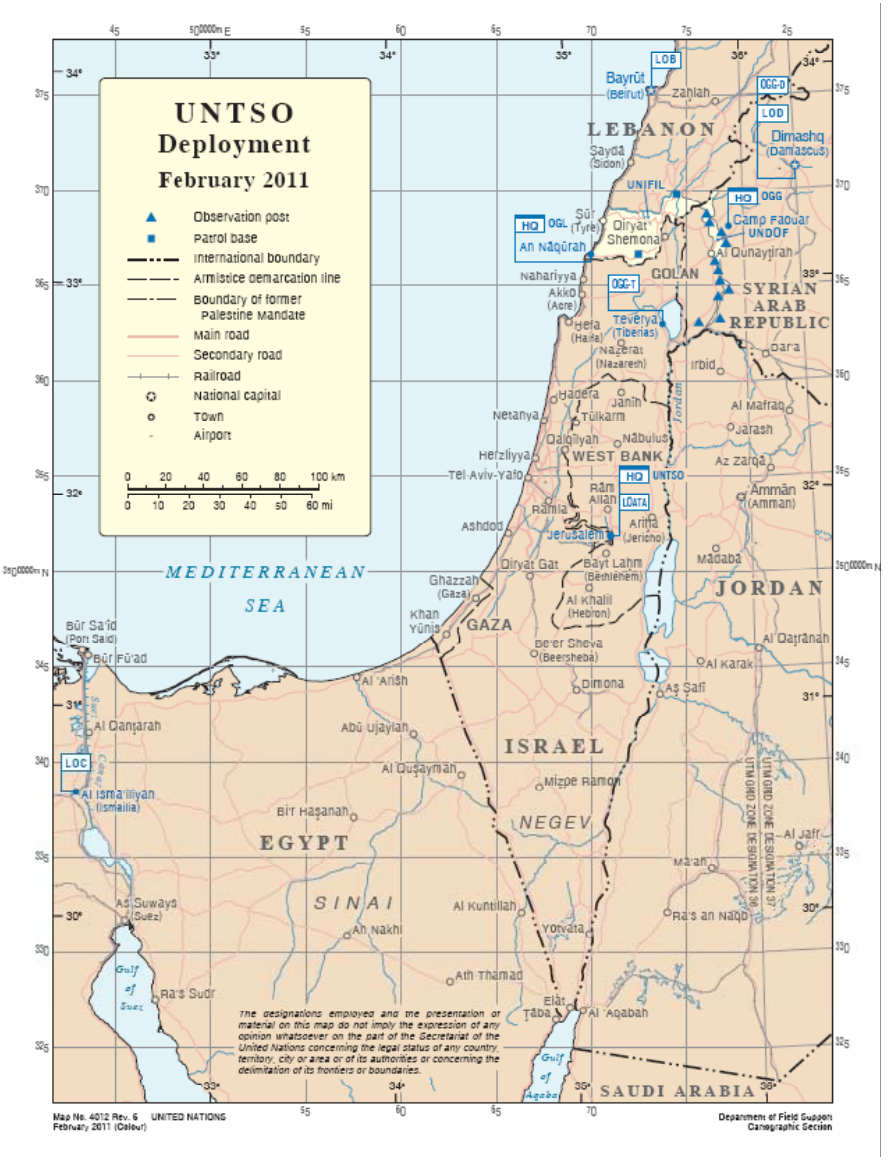
View of the Golan Heights from Hula Valley.

[133] ibid

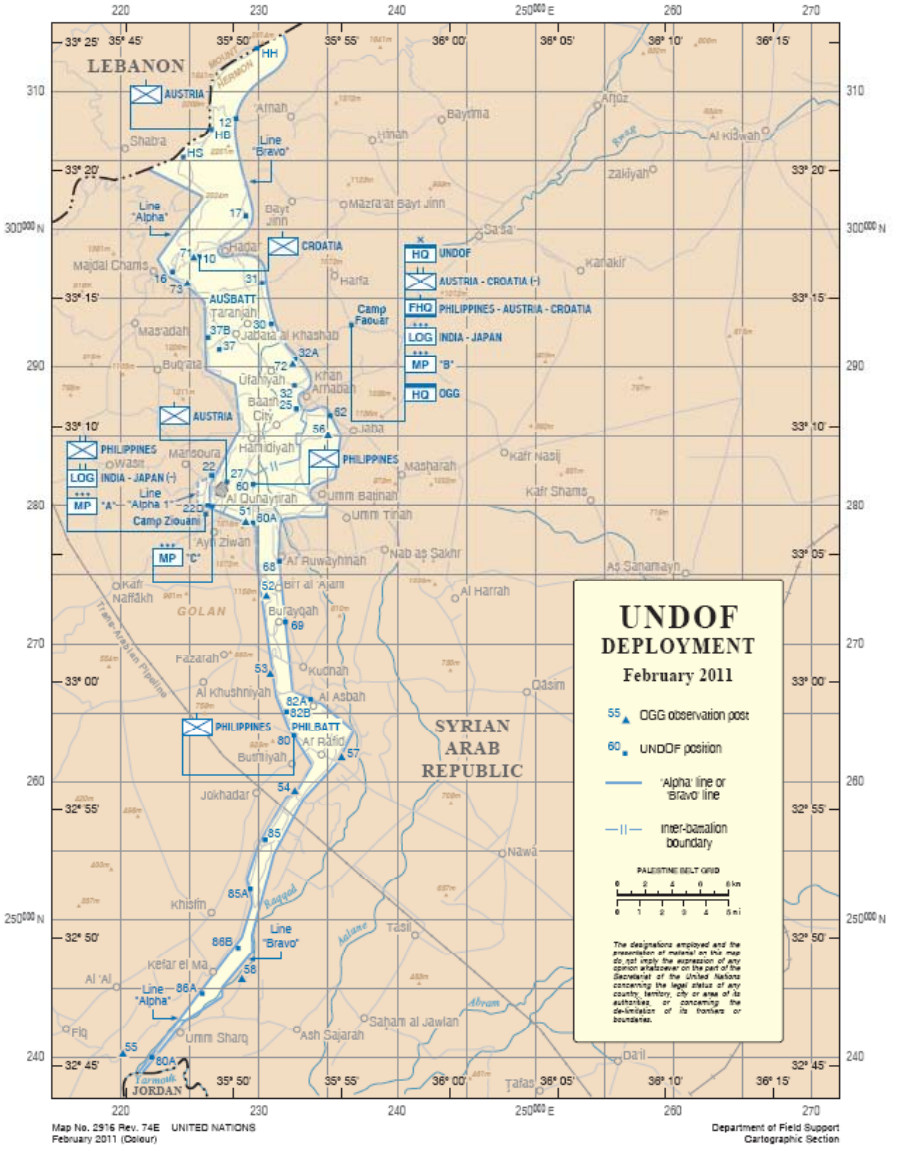
View of the Golan Heights from Tiberias.[134]

[134] http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/seaofgalilee.html

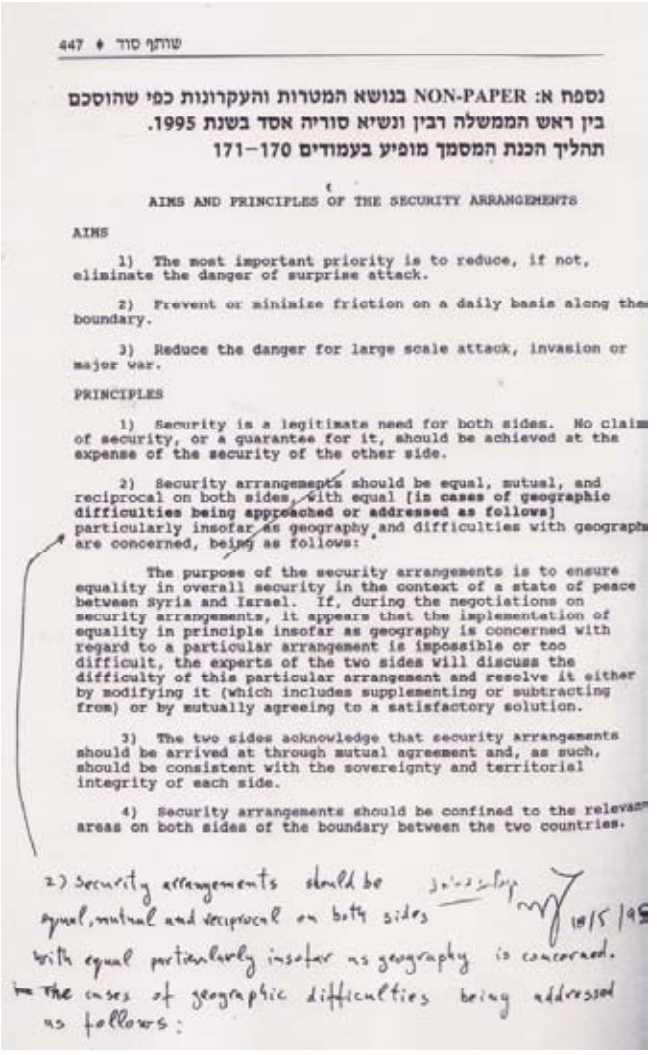
# Annex V: Map of UNTSO deployment



# Annex VI: Map of UNDOF deployment



# Annex VII: Aims and Principles of the Security Arrangements[135]



447 ♦ שותף סוד

נספח א: NON-PAPER בנושא המטרות והעקרונות כפי שהוסכם
בין ראש הממשלה רבין ונשיא סוריה אסד בשנת 1995.
תהליך הכנת המסמך מופיע בעמודים 170–171

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

AIMS

1) The most important priority is to reduce, if not, eliminate the danger of surprise attack.

2) Prevent or minimize friction on a daily basis along the boundary.

3) Reduce the danger for large scale attack, invasion or major war.

PRINCIPLES

1) Security is a legitimate need for both sides. No claim of security, or a guarantee for it, should be achieved at the expense of the security of the other side.

2) Security arrangements should be equal, mutual, and reciprocal on both sides, with equal [in cases of geographic difficulties being approached or addressed as follows] particularly insofar as geography and difficulties with geography are concerned, being as follows:

The purpose of the security arrangements is to ensure equality in overall security in the context of a state of peace between Syria and Israel. If, during the negotiations on security arrangements, it appears that the implementation of equality in principle insofar as geography is concerned with regard to a particular arrangement is impossible or too difficult, the experts of the two sides will discuss the difficulty of this particular arrangement and resolve it either by modifying it (which includes supplementing or subtracting from) or by mutually agreeing to a satisfactory solution.

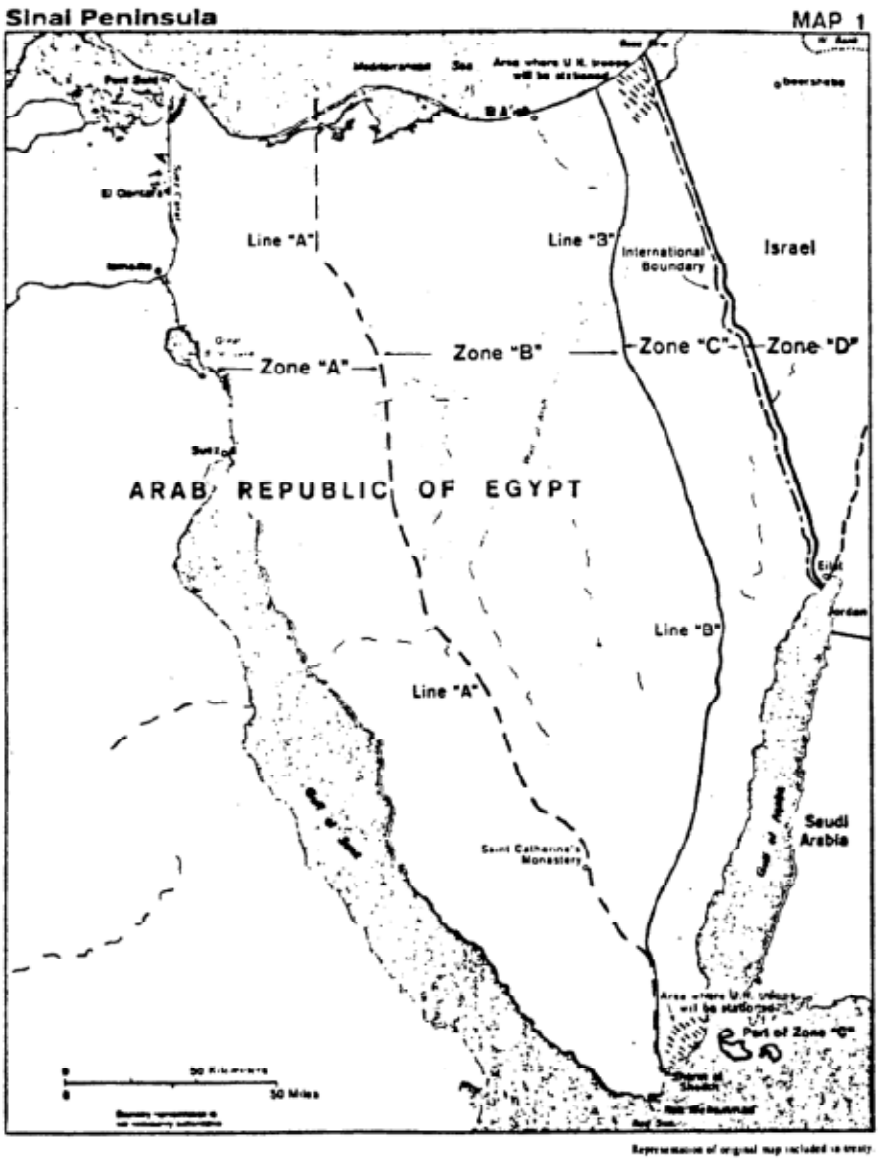
3) The two sides acknowledge that security arrangements should be arrived at through mutual agreement and, as such, should be consistent with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each side.

4) Security arrangements should be confined to the relevant areas on both sides of the boundary between the two countries.

2) Security arrangements should be [illegible] 10/5/95
equal, mutual and reciprocal on both sides
with equal particularly insofar as geography is concerned.
In the cases of geographic difficulties being addressed
as follows:

[135] Extracted from Yatom, 2009.

# Annex VIII: Map of MFO deployment



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