I detect increasing signs that despite signs that Israeli diplomacy (particularly with Saudi Arabia and of course with the United States) and military prowess (particularly vis-a-vis Gaza) remains brutal and determined. The question facing all of us is what the Israelis will do next. Yesterday, they demonstrated at least a partial answer with another attack on Syria.

In this short essay, I want to avoid the tactical issue of individual attacks, or (as the Israelis call them) responses. Rather I want to identify the factors that are impelling them toward a larger strategic policy.

I assume that we all know sufficient detail to identify the United States part in Israeli decision-making and action so I will generally not discuss that.

The Saudi Arabian connection is newer, less well-known and more uncertain so I will have something to say about it.

But, at least some Israelis are aware of significant domestic dangers for which they have not found answers.

As has often been pointed out, the dilemma that Israel faces is that it cannot be at the same time a Jewish State, a Democracy and in control of all the land from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. It can, at best, only be two of them: if it is to be ethnically (or at least religiously) "pure," and keeps all the land, it cannot be a democracy; if a democracy it cannot engage in apartheid on the land it controls; if it opts for democracy and control of all the land (the so-called "one-state solution"), it cannot exclude the Arab majority.

Up to the present, Israeli regimes have managed to avoid facing this reality: in 1948-1949, the Ben Gurion regime drove out most (nearly 1 million) native, Arabic-speaking Christians and Muslims; successive regimes beat down one after another the challenges — both from other non-Palestinians, Palestiniansand from "Israeli Arabs." It fought and won wars against its neighbors, penetrated and "neutralized" its Palestinian opponents and imported over a million *Mizrahim.* [Mizrahim is the name given to a heterodox collection of non-European (Ashkenazi) Jews from Africa and Asia. Many of these Jews are almost certainly of non-Hebrew (Turkish, Berber and other) ancestry, are culturally distinct and do not share the Ashkenazim's memories of the Holocaust.

Integrating this wave, a virtual tidal wave, of immigrants was the "nation-building" task of the last twenty or so years. Given the scale of the problem and the

remarkable differences within the Jewish communities (plural), it was a remarkable success.

For this success, Israel inevitably paid a price: the new arrivals were driven by different needs, fears and objectives. In pursuit of these separate aims, these later arrivals morphed into the hard-right of Israeli politics which had arisen from earlier "muscular" Zionism. They inevitably set themselves against the humane aims of the early Zionists and such Israeli leaders as Judas Magnus and Martin Buber and the socialism of the *kibbutzim* movement, many of whom had been thoroughly "Europeanized" and for whom the memory of the Holocaust was raw. The attempt to introduce the Mizrahim into the powerful national myth of the Holocaust was a major thrust of Israeli education and was only partly successful.

In addition to the Ashkenazim and the Mizrahim a third group clearly identified itself. This is the Orthodox community which itself is divided by degree of strictness in the interpretation of Judaism. The Orthodox community demanded and was given exceptional privileges (exemption from military service and virtual exemption from taxation). This group is at least in part made up of the descendants of the medieval identification of Judaism with Palestine as the place of study and religious observance. In part, that is, it is the traditional tie — some would say the only tie — of Judaism to Palestine since the Exodus.

If the Jewish community can be thought of in these three parts, how do each of them approach the issues of the nature of Israel?

Of course, the answer can at best be only approximate, but it is worth considering. It is the topic that haunts the ruling Establishment. In the absence of useful, sensitive and impartial polls, I would guess something like this would hold:

The older, "Western European" brand of Zionism would put its emphasis on keeping Israel democratic with less emphasis on "Jewishness" and least of all on domination of "Greater Israel."

The newer, "Eastern European" brand of Zionism, augmented by Mizrahim and led by and joined with the more "muscular" of such of the earlier Zionists as the followers of Vladimir (Za'ev) Jabotinsky, that is, today's Hard Right, the Lukud, is determined to control all of, or in some cases more than, "Greater Israel." It is also determined to preserve Israel as the Jewish state. Its interest in Democracy is correspondingly lesser.

The Orthodox community, I suspect, would largely agree with the Hard Right but with less concern over actual land holdings and even less with Democracy. For the Orthodox, Judaism's survival and hope lies in a purified Judaism. Many of its

beliefs parallel those of American "Born Again" Christians and, not surprisingly, the two groups have often worked together.

If this is approximately correct, it suggests that the Hard Right is closest to what appears to be a national consensus. This is borne out by the dominant thrust in Israeli politics since the time of Ben Gurion. It remains, indeed, is growing today.

So how do the Arabs interface with these parts of the Jewish community?

First, it must be admitted that there has been and to a large extent still is no single Arab community. Before about 1967, the speakers of Arabic were divided by religion, not only between Muslims and Christians but among Muslims and a variety of Christian sects. Socially, the roughly 1 million Muslim and Christian Arabic speakers were divided into quasi-nations — virtually autonomous villages and towns and quarters (*haras*) of cities. Structurally and politically, these people were divided by their degree of literacy, education and "openness" with the more urban and wealthier living and thinking very differently from the rural and poorer members of each group. These divisions were carried over into the refugee experience: living far from their native homes, with the younger refugees not having actively participated in the former life, little clots of people who had regarded one another as foreigners began to form new societies. The process was slow and is still not complete. To the degree it has been accomplished, the major cause has been warfare, defeat and a shared perception of wrong.

The unification process has been further retarded by what may be considered as the three geographical divisions of the Palestinians: Arabic speakers, including large numbers of Christians, on the West Bank are internally divided into zones by military and communication obstructions and are largely cut off from the mainly Muslim and more unified Palestinian community in the Gaza strip. Both of these groups have been largely separated from the émigré Palestinian community which is, itself, divided by places of residence and by degree of liberty – the refugees who reached the United States, for example, have had a very different conditioning experience from those who exist in the refugee camps of, for example, Lebanon.

The results of the divisions are evident in the media almost day-by-day: Israel has achieved a large degree of *strategic* unity despite *tactical* difference among the political leadership while the Palestinian community remains fractured. I sense that this juxtaposition, which has been acutely monitored by the intelligence service, taken as the basic context for Israeli policy. It is to advance, step by step, paying lip service to negotiation but never giving ground, through the morass into which it has forced the Palestinian community toward the ultimate aim of Greater Israel. That is, frequent preemptive military strikes, covert action when useful against smaller targets, war when necessary, ceasefire when useful but settlement of peace, never.

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