



Israel Debates No. 4

25. August 2010

The Raid on the Gaza Flotilla – Controversial Debates in Israel and Increasing International Isolation

On June 3, 2010, a convoy of the “Free Gaza” organization consisting of seven vessels was raided by elite soldiers of the Israeli navy at approximately 120 nautical miles off the Israeli shore and prevented from continuing its journey. The ships were carrying about 12,000 tons of relief supplies for the population of the Gaza Strip under naval blockade by Israel, as well as 600 activists from 42 countries. Nine pro-Palestine activists were killed and more than 40 injured during the military intervention on the Turkish-flagged “Mavi Marmara”, the largest vessel of the convoy. There were no people killed or injured on the other five ships.

In June 2007, Israel put the Gaza Strip under complete blockade when the radical Islamist Hamas took power after a sanguinary coup against the secular Fatah led by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas. Israel’s main argument for the blockade is the prevention of arms and missiles smuggling to the Gaza Strip. Particularly since Hamas’ takeover, Israel has been shelled with thousands of missiles and mortar shells. Furthermore, the blockade also aims at forcing Hamas to release Gilad Shalit, a soldier kidnapped by Hamas in 2006.

The goal of the Free Gaza organization that organized the convoy is to support Gaza’s population with relief supplies. The organization’s representatives, however, leave no doubt in wanting to denounce and break through Israel’s blockade on the territory. Israel blames the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) to maintain relations to Hamas, al-Qaeda, and other terrorist networks. However, no convincing evidence could be presented by Israel yet. Moreover, Turkish newspapers reported that some of the activists aboard the ship were known to be members of Islamist organizations who had said goodbye to their families in order to die as shahid, that is as a martyr, in this action.

The public’s reaction the event was protests, harsh criticism and consternation. In an emergency meeting, the UN Security Council condemned the events leading to the death of civilians and demanded unbiased investigations. German Chancellor Angela Merkel questioned the proportionality of the military action, called on Israel to abandon the blockade and argued for international participation in the investigation. Turkey leveled particularly harsh criticism. Prime Minister Erdogan referred to the action as state terrorism and foreign minister Davutoglu said to the UN Security Council, Israel had violated international law by raiding the aid convoy thus losing any international legitimacy. US president Barack Obama called it a tragedy and demanded a thorough clarification. He described the situation in the Gaza Strip as untenable and promised an aid of 400 million dollars. As a result of the fierce international reactions, Egypt loosened its blockade on the Gaza Strip.

Israeli prime minister Netanyahu said: “Responsibility lies with the organizers of the ship convoy” and

explained his country's procedure as an act of self-defense claiming that Israel cannot tolerate the free influx of weapons and missiles to the Gaza Strip, a terror basis to Hamas and a stronghold of Iran. Netanyahu further said: "Israel acted in accordance with international law, and the naval blockade exists due to the armed conflict with the Hamas. The implementation of the blockade is lawful and serves the security of Israel and its population."

Israel, facing increasing international isolation, is not up to radically changing its blockade politics so far, not even after this sanguinary episode and worldwide protests. Due to international pressure, in particular from the US, two international members have been included into the deployed national commission of enquiry: the Northern Irish peace Nobel Prize winner David Trimble and the Canadian ret. general and law expert Ken Watkin. Simultaneously, an inner-Israeli military commission investigates the occurrences.

The events around the "Gaza flotilla" are subject to intensive debate in Israel. This debate is characterized by the fact that the fundamental orientation of Israeli politics behind this event is hardly criticized or if at all, only sporadically such in the left-liberal daily "Haaretz". The majority of Israel's population stands behind the government and the military. They shift the responsibility for the escalation of the events and for Israel's increasing isolation on to „the others“, the range comprising radical Islamist players of the region up to members of the EU. They hardly ever challenge their own actions and politics and reflexively take up a position of all-round defense against external criticism, backing their leaders like a wagon fort. It is mainly the operative faults that are subject to critical debates, that is the military, intelligence, and logistic shortcomings of the action.

Subsequently we present you with the positions of two renowned Israeli security experts, Dr. Reuven Pedatzur from Netanya Academic College and Prof. Dan Shifan from Haifa University that reflect the spectrum of the inner-Israeli debate around these topics.

In his analysis, **Dr. Pedatzur** defines the failure of Israel's blockade politics in the Gaza Strip and towards Hamas as point of departure for his political assessment of the events with regard to the Gaza flotilla. He analyzes different aspects of the preparation and implementation of the military operation against the ship convoy in detail and certifies vast failure of politics and military based on incapacity and arrogance. He sees Israel's worldwide reputation heavily damaged because of the consistently disproportionate deployment of its military power not even sparing the civil population. This leads to an increasing isolation of Israel and its stigmatization.

Prof. Shifan considers the event to be a purposeful provocation by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan with the help of a radical, partially terrorist organization. He assesses the political dimensions of the event as follows: 1) The event is insignificant in terms of the proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians since they are doomed to failure in any case; 2) an anti-Kemalist counterrevolution is taking place in Turkey, characterized by an approximation to Iran, Syria, Hamas, and the Hezbollah in terms of foreign policy; 3) Barack Obama's politics of dialogue has failed being a sign of the US' lack of political power; 4) in a cynical bigotry, Europe betrays its own political values and has embarked on the wrong track. Further he states that Israel's population is not irritated by the events and worldwide reactions and is standing firmly behind its government. They hope for an improvement of Israel's difficult situation in terms of foreign policy by a change of Barack Obama's politics, or even through a new government in Washington.

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Herzliya, 25 August 2010

Israel Failed and Fell into the Gaza Flotilla Trap

Dr. Reuven Pedatzur

By its decision to instruct the IDF to forcibly take over the Mavi Marmara, a ship flying a Turkish flag, the Israeli government exhibited distorted judgment and blatant indifference to the impact of such an action on Israel's international status. The boarding, during which nine activists were killed and dozens were wounded, invoked an international outcry, a UN Security Council decision to request an international investigation, public condemnation by many governments, pressure on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza and increased tension between Israel and Turkey to the point where the diplomatic relations between the two countries are at risk.

Failure of the Gaza Blockade

The background of the takeover of the Turkish ship is a policy adopted by the Israeli government over three years ago to blockade the Gaza Strip. The chief rationale was to prevent weapons-smuggling from the sea, to create shortages that would induce pressure on Hamas to change its policy towards Israel, and perhaps even to bring about the demise of the Hamas government due to pressure from the Gaza population, which is the main victim of the blockade. Banned materials include cement (for fear it will be used to build bunkers), various food products (the criteria are vague, for instance chocolate and coriander are banned), and products such as stationary wares, notebooks and toys. In due course, Israel further justified the blockade by the need to apply pressure on Hamas to free the Israeli captive soldier, Gilad Shalit.

After three years it can be said with certainty that the Israeli blockade policy of Gaza has failed. The Hamas government has not been overthrown and Gilad Shalit is still not home. Nevertheless, the desire to prevent weapons smuggling is logical. The question of course is, what measures are taken to discover the smuggling attempts from the sea and how they are being thwarted. In any case, Israel was determined not to allow ships into Gaza port, even if they carried humanitarian aid.

The Military Operation to board the Gaza-Flotilla

This was the background of the decision to board and seize the six ships on their way to Gaza, to lead them into Ashdod port, to unload the cargo and to transfer it, after inspection, by land to Gaza. It was decided that the maritime action would take place in international waters, based on an interpretation of the International Laws of Naval War compiled in the 1909 "London Declaration". This code was updated in 1994 in a document entitled "San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea". The document states that a country can lay siege to the ports of a hostile entity that it is in a state of war with. It can notify all states and maritime movements, and can hence impose the blockade by means of force.

Israel's mistake was to ignore the international consequences of military action against civilian boats. Apparently, Israel believed that the ships would be boarded and seized quickly and without casualties, and would therefore not evoke condemnation in the world. It seems that the policymakers failed to consider the possibility that the military action would become complicated and cause the deaths of civilians, and the global impact this would have. But, beyond the policymakers' failure to foresee the implications of military action, this was an IDF military-operational failure. It is hard to understand how an action that had been planned for so long by the Israeli Navy failed so miserably. Let's begin with the intelligence failure. The Israeli Navy and other intelligence agencies had the rare opportunity to monitor the ships and the people on board for days. How is it possible that they didn't spot the preparations on board the boat (there was a riot only on one ship) to attack the soldiers? How did they not know that there was a stash of knives, axes and other cold weapons aboard?

The intelligence agencies had ample time to learn the identity of the people on the ships and to estimate the danger. It is probable that known peace activists were not the ones who attacked the soldiers with axes and gunfire. Therefore, the commandos' surprise at the counter-attack is inconceivable. Alternatively, if the navy did fear a violent reaction by the

activists on the boat, then the actual boarding and seizing raises questions. Why didn't they throw tear gas grenades onto the decks before the commandos descended?

The IDF Spokesman's claim that the soldiers were in mortal danger and thought they would be lynched, does not do justice with the commandos. Are soldiers, whose commanders describe as "the best-trained and most efficient in the world", supposed to find themselves in a situation where they fear lynching by a bunch of civilians equipped with knives and axes, especially when this was a military operation that had been planned for days? The soldiers were sent onto the Mavi Marmara deck poorly equipped for the task at hand. The IDF has the means to control rioting crowds without killing. These soldiers did not have these means, so they had to use firearms when attacked by the people on the ship. The operation's planners' and commanders' mistake was underestimation of the expected resistance on board, which ended up with the soldiers rappelling down onto the deck, where they were awaited and attacked with clubs and iron rods. This created a situation in which lone soldiers faced a violent rioting mob.

The decision to act at night is problematic too. It can be supposed that some of the mayhem and hysterics were a result of the fact that neither the soldiers nor the civilians could see what was going on. This is an obvious recipe for escalation by those who guess, but cannot see, who is approaching and what they are doing.

International Protests and Israel's growing Isolation

As stated, the action of gaining control and its consequences led to an unprecedented wave of protest all over the world. It seems that the Israeli government did not plan for the possibility that the military operation would evoke such reactions, and therefore the Israeli information system was unprepared, so that in the first few hours following the operation on the ship the Turkish IHH organization, which had organized the flotilla, had a clear advantage – they released audio and video materials to all of the TV and radio networks. The IDF Spokesman, who was in charge of releasing the information to the public, was very overdue in using the materials he had

(including video tapes depicting the people on board the ship beating the soldiers with clubs). At the time this is being written, one country – Nicaragua – has severed its diplomatic relations with Israel, and Vietnam has informed President Shimon Peres that he should cancel his planned visit. South Korea has demoted President Peres' impending visit from "state" to "working". But it seems that the harshest consequence, from the Israeli point of view, is that the issue of the Israeli blockade on Gaza has been put on the international agenda. Up to this operation, the international community was not concerned with the Israeli blockade on Gaza, and therefore did not apply pressure to end it. Since the Marmara incident, the entire world, including the UN, has been busy with the Israeli blockade. Various forums have reached decisions that demand that Israel cancel the blockade on Gaza.

Thus, the EU has called on Israel to remove the blockade and investigate the military operation. The American administration, although it has managed to mitigate the UN Security Council resolution, also demanded an investigation committee to examine the events, which should include international observers. At the moment, Israel has decided to establish an Israeli investigative committee headed by Former Supreme Court Justice Yaakov Turkel. It is not clear whether this committee will satisfy the US, Europe or the Security Council.

One must view the reactions to Israel's military operation on the background of its constantly deteriorating position in the world. Israel is perceived by many as a country that occasionally exercises its military force disproportionately to achieve goals that cannot be achieved by military measures, constantly harming civilian population. A long list of Israeli actions have brought this on – from the Second Lebanon War in 2006, to operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, the ostentatious building in East Jerusalem and the assassination of the Hamas operative Mahmud al-Mabhuh in a Dubai hotel. All these depict Israel as an irresponsible country that does not hesitate to harm innocent people or to break international laws.

Israel's unstable position and negative image have practical consequences, which started before the Marmara operation. In quite a few

countries voices are heard, primarily of academics, to boycott Israel, its products and its academic community. Israeli scholars are not invited to certain conferences and petitions are signed in many universities throughout the world to boycott them. Israeli politicians and army officers avoid traveling to certain countries in fear of being arrested and charged with crimes against humanity. One of the countries that are primarily feared is Britain, in which the law permits to arrest foreign citizens and charge them with crimes against humanity. Israel's unstable position is also what allows the US administration to apply pressure the likes of which has heretofore never been experienced. Thus, for example, the US joined the unanimous decision of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in which only Israel is mentioned as a problem regarding nuclear weapons in the Middle East, and which requests Israel to join the NPT and commence discussions about a nuclear-free Middle East. Iran is not even mentioned in this decision. This indicates a change in American policy regarding the Israeli nuclear issue, on which there has been agreement between the two countries since 1979.

The full consequences of the military action aboard the Marmara are not clear yet, but there is no doubt that it accelerated processes that started a number of years ago, the results of which lead to Israel's isolation and its being "marked" as a "leprous" state.

The Incapacity and Arrogance of the Political Echelon

The operation also revealed the failures of Israel's policymaking processes. Decisions are made in limited forums, without including professional authorities outside the defense system, whilst completely ignoring the strategic consequences of tactical actions. It seems that Israel's arrogant and demeaning attitude towards its rivals continues, and no lessons are learned from previous failures. That is exactly how Israel became involved in the Second Lebanon War. No in-depth discussions took place before the IDF was ordered to attack in Lebanon, the impact of a war in Lebanon on Israel's international standing was not considered, and primarily – decisions were made with contempt of the enemy (Hezbollah) and a sense of arrogance and overconfidence. Finally, the action to take over the Turkish ship is yet another instance in the chain of failures

by policymakers in Israel to formulate a policy based on rational analysis and a sensible worldview.

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The Flotilla and its Implications

Prof. Dan Schiffan

The flotilla affair is, in itself, unimportant; the dramatic and dangerous processes exposed by the hysterical reactions to Israel's actions are worthy of discussion. Essentially, this was a provocation by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan by means of a radical organization with terroristic features. The aim of the flotilla was to secure Erdoğan's status in Turkey itself and among the radical factors in the region, with which he has recently and openly joined forces (Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas) and other radical forces in the Arab world. It has meant to grant "humanitarian" legitimization to Turkey's and Iran's attempt to open an unsupervised sea passage that will allow Hamas in Gaza, as well as Hezbollah in Lebanon, to stockpile thousands of missiles to fire at civilian targets in Israel.

Israel was not faced with a real dilemma. It had to prevent the opening of this channel. When diplomatic efforts failed, the use of force was inevitable. Indeed, Israel made disproportionate use of force – it used too little force, relative to the severity of the threat and the violent nature of the Turkish terror-supporters aboard the Marmara. Instead of a handful of soldiers armed with toy paint-guns, a much larger force was necessary from the start. In retrospect, it is clear that deterrent force was required against the hard core of hooligans on the upper deck, before softer police action could be utilized against the assortment of fools and propagandists in other parts of the ship, masquerading as human rights activists.

The media and public debate focus, as always, on unimportant matters – the action itself, the dispute over Israel's minor mistakes, and meaningless reflections on the flotilla's implications for the "peace process" with the Palestinians.

The "Peace Process"

To remove this analytical obstacle from the serious discussion of the flotilla's implications, it is important to note that the predictable failure of the "proximity talks" is not a by-

product of the Marmara events. A year and a half ago former Prime Minister Olmert presented Abu-Mazen with an Israeli plan, the essence of which was a Palestinian state in the entire West bank, with land exchanges of a few percent, the division of Jerusalem and even a symbolic gesture concerning the Palestinian right of return. The Palestinians, as usual, missed the opportunity and did not continue direct talks with Netanyahu. During Obama's presidency, they have no motivation to re-enter direct negotiations, as the US is pressing Israel to except their major claims with no real benefit for Israel. For the very same reason, Israel is not motivated to examine new ideas, knowing that the Palestinians lack leadership that can negotiate in the name of the West Bank inhabitants, even more so in the name of the residents of the Gaza Strip. It is unable, even if it wanted to, to forgo the "right of return" to Israeli territories or to mobilize the Palestinian public to accept a Jewish state alongside a Palestinian state. (Netanyahu could have exercised better judgment with Obama and suggested his own outline, but to the Palestinians it would have been to no avail.) In view of these structural obstacles, the flotilla and Israel's reaction are inconsequential.

The obsessive and futile interest in the "peace process" and the operational trifles of the flotilla divert our attention from the really important issues, which are all about the regional and global power balance and the de-legitimization of Israel. The three main topics are, in order of severity: *first*, the counter-revolution in Turkey and its influence on the power balance; *second*, the impotence and structural misunderstandings of the Obama administration; and *third*, the latest political and moral low point of Europe.

The Counter-Revolution in Turkey

For a few years now, a counter-revolution has been occurring in Turkey, gradually undermining the structure of modern Turkey established in the 1920s by Mustafa Kemal ("Ataturk"). In addition to the profound changes to Turkish society and administration, Erdoğan's government is leading a dramatic change in Turkey's foreign policy, based on an alliance with Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, using a harsh style that has earned them the enthusiastic support of the radical mainstream of the elites and the Arab public. Erdoğan is

very aware that fiery tongue-lashings of Israel, including unfounded and blatantly asinine accusations (he claimed, among other things, that Avigdor Lieberman had threatened to drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza) excite the Arabs more than anything. He also knows that in the warped atmosphere prevalent in Europe towards Israel, even Turkey – despite its brutal and dark history, both recent and ancient – can appear to rebuke Israel with impunity.

This change in Turkey is strategic, deep and touches upon its very essence as a modern state. Whoever attributes it to the flotilla, the war in Gaza (or even the justifiable European reluctance to accept Turkey to the EU) displays, at the best, basic misunderstanding. The change in Turkey is indeed very important, but not in the trivial Palestinian context. It is important because Turkey is a large, stable, strong and important country, and its joining the radical elements could influence the regional and global power balance. The change threatens to have an impact similar to the shift of Iran in the late 1970s from the camp of those who maintain a modicum of stability in the region to a country that is a threat to the world. The consequences to Israel's national security are extensive, but Israel's ability to influence the change trends or even their pace – is negligible. If one seeks an illuminating historical equivalent to such a process (although not to its severity), one can examine the deep change in France's attitude towards Israel since the end of the Algerian War (1962) and until De-Gaulle came up with the appropriate rationale to separate from Israel in June 1967.

The Obama Administration's Impotence

The change in the United States during the Obama administration is less profound than the change in Turkey, but the critical importance of American leadership in the global arena explains the dramatic impact on every important issue throughout the world. Obama proposed a vision of engagement and multilateralism, intended to replace the oppositional, unilateral and preemptive approach that had been common in Washington during previous administrations, primarily in Bush's time. It soon became clear that this wasn't a first step to promote understanding and to strive for compromise, if and when possible, but the only step, without

any real backup of an option of measured force, which could indicate to radical forces that compromise is preferable over an expensive and dangerous confrontation.

In a variation of Teddy Roosevelt's famous saying: "Speak softly and carry a big stick", it seems that Obama's policy is perceived throughout the world as: "Speak softly and carry a toothpick". Even in the highly unlikely event that Obama comes round in the future and acts decisively against North Korea and Iran, the political reality in our region and the world today is derived from the premise of American impotence and the expectation of an inevitable victory of radical elements. In his attempts to find favor with the radicals, the US president turned a cold shoulder to Israel and joined, albeit with some restraint, the moral criticism prevalent in Europe of Israel's self-defense efforts. His policy, which distances America from its traditional allies (Britain, the new democracies in Eastern Europe and its customary supporters in the Middle East) and tries to placate its enemies, has removed certain important obstructions of trends that even prior to that wanted to isolate Israel and undermine its legitimacy.

Until the Obama switch, Israel's enemies and those who wanted to join them had to (against their nature) consider their relations with the US. In his days and with his encouragement open-season on Israel began in Europe. Even fair pro-Israel leaders, who had bravely confronted de-legitimization tendencies among the anti-Israel leftist elites in their countries (which are tainted with anti-Semitism), have found it hard under the new conditions to withstand the demagoguery spread by the mainstream media. It is impossible to separate the worldwide responses to the flotilla and its results from the assumption that Israel is isolated, and that even the US will not take her side. Specific remarks (notably by Vice-President Biden) could not balance the general atmosphere (expressed, for instance, by the anti-Israel decision reached in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Committee), because the US is almost always willing to pay in Israeli currency to achieve widespread accord in bodies that essentially struggle against the legitimacy of Israel's very existence, under the guise of hypocritical and selective concern for "human rights" of terrorists and their

supporters.

To avoid doubt, it should be emphasized at the end of this discussion that this is neither about American anti-Israel policy nor about ignoring Israel's special needs. The Obama administration has not curtailed military aid to Israel; in fact it has marginally increased it. It is about an American attempt to push Israel into political moves that are derived from simplistic and unfounded perceptions of the Middle East and the world, which are supported by moralistic claims; these, in turn, are integrated into the de-legitimization drive in the international arena and in vast parts of European public opinion. The US is not part of the de-legitimization process, but by distancing itself from Israel and refraining from defending it, in fact it encourages the people who run it. The combination of America's weakness and this encouragement – intensifies Israel's troubles.

Europe's Failure

The most important and depressing phenomenon that the flotilla brought to the surface is the political and moral failure of Europe. The blatant lie of the Turkish hooligans aboard the Marmara and of their leader, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, as if the flotilla was about extending humanitarian aid to a million and a half hungry Palestinians under Israeli siege, was avidly lapped up by the media, public opinion and even by European leadership. No one allowed the easily-verifiable simple facts to stand in the way of the powerful need to blame the Jewish state for starving children and killing "human rights activists". Even if one who is swamped with disinformation by the European media, it is quite easy to discover that there is no hunger in Gaza, that Israel transfers hundreds of tons of food daily into Gaza, that most of the water and electricity in Gaza come from Israel, and that thousands of Palestinian patients are treated in Israeli hospitals. Even this media could not hide the fact that Israel offered to transfer the humanitarian aid from the ships or any other source into Gaza, if it was found that no weaponry was included in the shipment. Everyone knows, but prefers to forget, that the Gaza Strip borders on another Arab country, namely Egypt, and chooses to lay the false accusation of starvation at Israel's doorstep.

At the same time, Hamas does not try to deny the fact that its aim is the destruction of Israel (and in its writings – of the Jewish people), and that its anti-Semitic ideology is based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. It is well-known that Hamas fires rockets at civilian targets in an attempt to hurt people and cause terror, and that it is concentrating its efforts on opening a sea channel to smuggle in weapons in quantities that could kill thousands of Israeli citizens.

Although the Europeans (and certainly their leaders) know all this, and even officially acknowledge that Hamas is a terrorist organization, the flotilla events exposed deep strata of European consciousness, which enables them to disregard the facts and to become engrossed in the narrative that, in fact, denies the Jewish state the elementary right to defend its citizens. This disregard allows them to hitch a ride on the wagon of hypocrisy and lies, led by terrorists in Gaza, hooligans in Turkey and barbaric regimes such as Sudan, which formulate the discourse of the UN Human Rights Commission. Europe is more upset about Hamas' distress than about the fact that the most despicable players in the world arena today, by Europe's own standards, are able to impose twisted versions of the very values that Europe contributed to the world on the UN and other international institutions. Europeans are reconciled to the moral prostitution by which Syria defines the essence of democracy, Cuba – pluralism, Sudan – human rights, Saudi Arabia – women's rights, Iran – tolerance and peace seeking, and Hugo Chavez – sanity.

The sweeping European de-legitimization of use of force by Western democracies, anchored in a simplistic perception of history and of *realpolitik* in fact serves, as it did in the 1930s, the radical forces, which specialize in the manipulation of public opinion and the elites in Europe. Obama, the most "European" American president of all, has been encouraging them to expand this tendency, to the degree that it was expressed by Europe's reactions to the Israeli action against the flotilla and by the demand to ease the "humanitarian siege" on Gaza.

Israel's Situation

Israel finds itself isolated and condemned. The flotilla did not create, but revealed, the hostility and hypocrisy of Europe's public opinion and Washington's alienation. Due to them, Israel's situation is worse than it was in the 1970s, when the UN General Assembly declared that Zionism was racism. The chance to successfully cope with this negative situation should focus on two areas: first, the determination of the Israeli public; and second, the high chance of change in the United States. The Israeli public is not confused. Alongside the severe criticism of the political leadership's failure to prepare the political arena properly against the Turkish provocation and of the intelligence fiasco that sent soldiers armed with paint guns to deal with violent terrorists and hooligans, the mainstream public opinion in Israel does not accept the lies of starvation and humanitarian blockade or the libelous accusations of murder of human rights activists. The public that will eventually suffer the missiles from Gaza understands that the ships that might bring them must be stopped, and realizes that force is required where diplomacy has failed. It spurns Erdoğan's preaching and ignores Europe's sanctimonious hypocrisy.

The US (and Europe) will probably manage to compel Israel to significantly ease the blockade, but the Israeli public will not demand that its leaders express remorse, nor does it believe that this is a humanitarian issue. They know that the deception of European supervision of shipments to Gaza would be as effective as the so-called prevention of Hezbollah rearmament by UNIFIL, and just like the European supervisors who fled the Gaza crossing-points in panic several years ago. They also know that whatever reaches Gaza under humanitarian guise only makes the next war closer, more violent and more prone to sanctimonious European censure of Israel.

The next administration in Washington, possibly in two and a half years time, might improve Israel's situation. The American ethos is not "European". Europe could continuously persist in its radicals-appeasing policy, because when the crunch came the US saved it from the unbearable consequences of this irresponsible policy. Europe cannot continue to be Europe, if the US is "European" too. The US is the only possible leader of the free world.

Such leadership cannot exist without the determination and deterrent force, which this administration is apparently unable to provide. This is not an Israeli or Middle Eastern question. This is a global question.

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The author has not revised the translation from Hebrew

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