The Fueling of Unrest in Syria, Israel's Territorial Ambitions

Why We Must Change The Narrative On Syria

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For some time now, the predominant narrative about Syria has been that the unrest has been fueled in order to weaken Iran. This prevalent account is common to neoconservatives and liberals alike. While [The New York Times](#) trumpeted Israeli-firsters Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham message that "rebel fighters deserved to be armed and that helping them take on the Syrian government [would aid Washington's effort to weaken Iran](#)", moderate and independent outlets such as [Truthout](#), [Counterpunch](#), and numerous others echoed this same objective – but whilst decrying the plan. Even Iran 's state-run media shares this account.

This is sheer misdirection — deliberate or otherwise. Undisputed, Syria and Iran have been staunch allies since the Iranian Revolution in their joint cause to protect Palestinian rights and to stand up Israel and America, and any change in Syria would adversely affect Iran (as it would Russia). But this is a secondary consideration. The generally accepted narrative takes the focus away from the primary reason for the current assault on Syria – Israel .

Since the 1948 war, Syria and Israel have been in a state of war (with brief periods of unsuccessful negotiations). The conflict has been primarily over land and water (see a previous essay [The Syria Imperative](#)). Since the 1950's, conflict over water (and land) has been at the root of hostilities between the two. In the 1950's, Eisenhower commissioned Eric Johnston to generate a regional water allocation agreement. The failure of the Johnston plan exacerbated the conflict. The published diaries of Israeli Foreign Minister Sharett helps understand why the Johnston negotiations were unsuccessful. Sharett maintained: "[P]olitical decisions concerning the occupation of the rest of Eretz Israel were taken as early as 1954, although implemented in 1967.[i]"

The 1967 occupation of Syria Golan (Golan Heights) and the Upper Mount Hermon by Israel enabled Israel to seize the entire Upper Jordan River giving Israel the advantage of placing its riparian position to fully upstream. Consequently, not only was Syria denied access to Upper Jordan waters, but its territorial and national integrity were assaulted.

Some years later, Haaretz would reveal the existence of a study (Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel-Aviv university) under General Aaron Yariv, former intelligence services chief, which outlined a "zone of hydraulic security", which called for placing water resources in Syria and Lebanon under full Israeli control[ii]. Disputes continued unabated and the status quo maintained until 1982 when the military prowess of both sides were tested.

A 1987 book by Col. Emmanuel Wald of the Israeli General Staff entitled "The Ruse of the

Broken Vessels: The Twilight of Israeli Military Might (1967-1982) reveals the aims of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the month of pre-planning that had gone into it. Wald writes that Ariel Sharon's master plan codenamed "Oranim" was to defeat the Syrian troops deployed in the Bekaa Valley all the way to the district of Baalbek in North of Lebanon. According to Wald, "during the fist days, it was quietly approved by the U.S. ".

With this aim, on June 6, 1982, Israeli advanced into Lebanon.   However, the Syrian army halted the Israeli army advance in the battle of Sultan Yakub and the battle of Ain Zahalta. Sharon 's plan to conquer all of Lebanon and destroy Syria as a military power was thwarted. In reviewing the book and the battles, the famous scholar and activist, Israel Shahak, opined that "the principal purpose of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was destruction of the Syrian Army"[iii].

Shahak posits that Israel needs to win its wars quickly or not at all. In spite of technological and nuclear superiority, another assault on Syria would not predictably bring an easy win to Israel and defenses could 'drag out a war endlessly'.   He further argues that during the entire history of   Israel , Israeli Jews have shown themselves to be highly sensitive to their losses, and high losses make Israelis "susceptible to political arguments against modes of domination and oppression which they otherwise would accept".

Shahak's analysis shed a light on events which pursued the failure of "Oranim" as outlined in The Syria Imperative.   Israel continues to pursue its grand strategy, using a different tactic given its awareness of, and its familiarity with the strengths of the Syrian army – an army which must be disrupted from within given Israel 's 1982 failure to do so. And this is the primary reason for arming terrorists posing as "opposition".

It is not without irony that Netanyahu has recently admitted that he does not rule out arming Syrian rebels, given Israel's age-old tactic of arming minorities or rebels and cultivating dissent and chaos (such as the Anya Nya in Sudan , later the Sudanese People Liberation Army (SPLA), and the leader of the Sudanese rebels, John Garang armed by Israel from neighboring countries). This is a scenario being repeated in Syria .

Paradoxically, the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) who are today on a mission to secure Israel's vision (with a nod from Washington) by arming rebels and undermining Syria, were all in favor of securing Syria in 2003 when they told Washington: "We think the threat to Syria should stop. We don't think Syria wants a war or to escalate any situation. We reject any infringement of Syria 's security."[iv]   There is no end to their duplicity.

Amos Yadlin, the outgoing military intelligence chief warnedthe Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in November 2010 that Israel 's next war would take longer and be fought on more fronts.   Yaldin warned that Syria in particular, posed a greater military obstacle to Israel than at any time in the past three decades. It would appear that the Syria unrest has allayed his concerns.   The Syrian forces which put up such a resistance in 1982, are now engaged fighting terrorists, while the world is being told that they are the violators. Perhaps Netanyahu's plan will succeed where Sharon 's Oranim failed.

Regardless, it is important to change the accepted narrative about Syrian uprisings.   Given the decades lone demonization of Iran, it may be more palatable to associate the fueling of unrest in Syria point to a 'weaker' Iran, but let there be no mistake – Syria today is in turmoil in order to promote Israel's grand strategy – even as the perpetrator – Israel, plays

the victim and warns of chemical weapons use by Assad's regime, demanding intervention. "Evil requires the sanction of the victim." Ayn Rand.

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Notes

[i] Livia Rokach, " Israeli State Terrorism: An Analysis of the Sharett Diaries," Journal of Palestine Studies 9, no. 3 (Spring, 1980), 3-28.

[ii] Zeev Shiff, "The Censored Report Revealed," Ha'aretz, 8 October 1993

[iii] Sahak , Israel . Israel Considers War With Syria as It Ponders 1982 Invasion of Lebanon ,The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (September 30, 1992).

[iv] Janardhan, N, Iraq: Gulf Council Urges U.S. to Stop Threats to Syria , Global Information Network [New York] 17 Apr 2003

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