

# UNDOF: The Catalyst for Peace Building on the Golan Heights

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## ABSTRACT

The avoidance of conflict on the Golan Heights for 28 years, in part through the presence of the UN, is a significant accomplishment in an unstable area of the world. This is despite the fact that UN peacekeeping missions are not necessarily oriented towards long-term peace building. Although the UN has worked hard to gain maximum success from the start of new missions, the requirement to adapt mature missions to a peace building focus has been somewhat neglected. This paper will comment on the peace building processes brought to bear on Israel and Syria over the past 28 years by the UN and emphasise the need for peacekeeping missions to evolve based on changing circumstances in the mission. The paper will then propose peace-building measures that can be used by the UN and other international organisations to build on the past successes of UNDOF towards the achievement of a lasting peace on the Golan Heights.

## THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

The United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission on the Golan Heights is one of the longest ongoing international peacekeeping missions in the world. Israel and Syria have avoided armed conflict, since establishment of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

(UNDOF) in 1974. The predominant benefit the long-term presence of multi-national peacekeepers has brought to the Golan Heights is stability. Between these two nations, a thin blue line of only 1050 peacekeepers patrols an Area of Separation (AOS) over 80 kilometres in length between Syria and Israel. The fact that conflict has been avoided for 28 years, in part through the presence of the UN, is a significant accomplishment in an unstable area of the world. This is despite the fact that UN peacekeeping missions are not necessarily oriented towards long-term peace building. UN peacekeeping missions are normally authorised by the UN Security Council for individual six-month mandates. However, in certain high conflict areas, peace building is necessarily a long-term and uncertain process. Consequently, the UN must be able, over time in missions such as UNDOF, to adapt a structure and orientation that is geared towards short-term goals and objectives to one that has a long-term focus which enables incremental change over time to establish conditions for a lasting peace.

Peace building is an essential element in the difficult transition from war to peace.<sup>1</sup> In effect, “peace building refers to those conditions that will enhance the transition from a state of conflict to coexistence and thus contribute to sustainable peace.”<sup>2</sup> Peace building is a process that involves at least three distinct phases.

1. The first phase is the cessation of hostilities and disengagement of opposing forces. An important objective in this initial phase is the lessening of tension and development of stability. UNDOF has successfully achieved, and maintained, the objectives of this first phase.
2. The second phase is the development and implementation of key enablers to achieve the international engagement of both combatants, combined with the establishment of both dialogue and structures, to build towards peaceful co-existence. Unfortunately, international engagement and dialogue between Israel and Syria has yet to be achieved.
3. The third phase consists of peace negotiations and subsequent settlement of the dispute.

Despite the fact that the UN has not brought peace to the Golan Heights, historical lessons learned from UN experiences in UNDOF can be an effective tool in assisting peace building in newer entrenched conflicts in the world, as long-term peace building in those locations matures. This paper begins with a review of the strategic position of Israel and Syria in the Post-Cold War era. Defence expenditure in each economy, inventories of tanks in Israel and Syria, as well as military personnel levels will then be examined. In particular, this paper will comment on the peace building processes brought to bear on Israel and Syria over the past 28 years by the UN and emphasise the need for peacekeeping missions to evolve: based on changing circumstances in the mission. Although the UN has worked hard to gain maximum success from the start of new missions, the requirement to adapt mature missions to that of a focus on peace building has been somewhat neglected. The paper will then propose peace-building measures that can be used by the UN and other international organisations to build on the past successes of UNDOF towards the achievement of a lasting peace on the Golan Heights.

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<sup>1</sup> Although essential to peace, peace building is difficult to achieve. The difficulty of peace building is highlighted in SIPRI (2001) pg. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Moshe (2001) pg.14.

## THE POST COLD WAR ERA

The end of the Cold War and increasing globalisation of the world economy has had a significant impact on both Syria and Israel. However, of these two nations, it is Syria that has been the most impacted by the changing international realignment of nation states in the past decade. In particular, the dismemberment and collapse of the USSR in late 1991 meant that client states, such as Syria, lost their primary source of weapons. Without an inexpensive, reliable source for advanced weapons and associated technical support, the potential for Syria to defeat Israel in armed conflict has significantly diminished over time. The lack of procurement of modern military equipment by Syria has resulted in a relative structural disarmament in Syria over the past decade.

The impact of the absence of a superpower patron has been compounded in Syria by a centrally controlled stagnant domestic economy, and the resource demands of a young and rapidly growing population. The Syrian economy is in the disadvantageous position of having to compete in the international marketplace with antiquated technology. This is compounded by the lack of hard currency required to import and use current technology. Despite these handicaps, Syria is gradually moving towards economic engagement with the world economy. The recent domestic reforms of currency exchange and banking laws are a start to the development of fundamental building blocks to increase international competitiveness.<sup>3</sup> These reforms will act as key enablers for future liberalisation and growth in the Syrian economy. Progress in Syria has been slow with real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of an estimated 2.0% in 2001 and a forecasted 1.8% growth in 2002. However with a population growth of approximately 2.5% per year, an estimated real GDP growth of 5.0% is needed to achieve significant improvements in the economy.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the absence of a major power influence in Syria, the patron-protector of Israel has become the only remaining superpower. Despite the end of the Cold War, Israel continues to receive significant military aid from the United States. Much of this aid is in the form of modern capital equipment. Combined with a strong domestic arms industry, and growing high technology sector, Israel is arguably in the best position militarily and economically since establishment of that nation as an independent state in May 1948. Israel has an army capable of mobilising up to 425,000<sup>5</sup> reserve personnel, many capable of fighting with heavy armour, of which the leading edge Merkava tank was developed and is produced by domestic industry. To compensate for the lack of strategic depth, Israel has an extensive early-warning system. The Israeli Air Force American supplied F16 aircraft and well-trained pilots provide effective air superiority in the region.<sup>6</sup> However, notwithstanding the extensive capabilities of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and Israeli Air Force (IAF) in the Middle East, Israel faces a significant terrorist threat and ongoing low-intensity conflicts in the West Bank and Gaza that utilise large personnel resources. This military establishment is complemented by an educated civilian populace that is embracing globalisation and the technological revolution now in progress. Israel had a GDP of US\$107B in 2000, in contrast

<sup>3</sup> For a report on the opening of the Syrian banking sector to foreign and private banks, see Martin (2001).

<sup>4</sup> See United States (2002) for a U.S. Department of Energy (Energy Information Administration) analysis of the Syrian economy and in particular the energy sector.

<sup>5</sup> *The Military Balance 2001-2002* page 135.

<sup>6</sup> See Rubinstein (2001) for an examination of the Israeli Strategic environment.

to the Syrian GDP of US\$13.79B.<sup>7</sup> The immigration of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews to Israel in the 1990s brought many immigrants to that country skilled in engineering, science and math. This has enhanced the knowledge base of the work force in the Israeli economy. Despite the unresolved conflict between Israel and Syria, Israel negotiated a peace treaty with Egypt in 1991 and Jordan in 1994. In addition, Israel recently conducted joint military manoeuvres and is co-operating on various armaments with Turkey.

### **DISENGAGEMENT OF MILITARY FORCES ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS**

The physical separation of parties following a conflict allows for a cooling off period and a subsequent time to reflect on the costs and benefits of continuing previous patterns of violent action. The stepping back from constant military engagement and the resulting hostile interaction is an important first step that cannot be overemphasised. The participation of international organisations, such as the UN, are needed to negotiate and facilitate this separation. The physical imposition of peacekeepers between the two warring parties provides the protagonists with confidence in the legitimacy and eventual success of the disengagement. International peacekeepers provided through troop contributing nations act as a continuous high profile multi-national presence in the area of conflict. These peacekeepers are also a constant daily independent witness of events occurring in the theatre of operations. The physical separation of forces and cessation of fighting allows the leaders and citizens of both nations the opportunity to devote their attention to options for peace. Indeed, it encourages other groups in each country, not involved in the military conflict, to step forward with peace building proposals.

The Area of Separation between Israel and Syria, monitored by the United Nations, is quite effective as a disengagement mechanism and provides a practical model for other nations in similar circumstances. In UNDOF, this disengagement is accomplished through three distinct measures. First, UNDOF monitors an Area of Separation (AOS), which is approximately 80 kilometres long and a width of less than one kilometre in the extreme south and expanding to approximately 10 kilometres in the centre over a variety of terrain. Military forces of either nation are not permitted to enter into this area. Second, the Disengagement Agreement also provided for an area of limitation outside the Area of Separation, consisting of three distinct zones. The first zone is from the Area of Separation out to 10 kilometres. The second zone is from 10 to 20 kilometres out from the Area of Separation. The last zone is from 20 to 25 kilometres out from the Area of Separation. Each area of limitation has specified limits of personnel and equipment.<sup>8</sup> The third distinct measure is the constant monitoring of the Area of Separation and Area of Limitation by UNDOF personnel, combined with the provision of regular reports to both parties on the numbers of military equipment and personnel in the Area of Limitation.

The practical impact of the work done by UNDOF personnel is the provision of transparency to both Israel and Syria. On a timely basis, a record of force strengths in the Area of Limitation is provided to both Syria and Israel. The consequence to both parties of the transparency provided by the UN is that it has allowed the two nations to draw down their

<sup>7</sup> *The Military Balance 2001-2002*, page 135, for Israeli GDP and page 147 for Syrian GDP.

<sup>8</sup> The first zone has a limit of 6000 troops, 75 tanks and 36 artillery (maximum 122mm). The second zone has a limit of 450 tanks and 162 artillery (maximum 20km range).

troops and equipment to levels well below the ceilings established in the Disengagement Agreement. Continued low levels of Syrian and Israeli troops and equipment on the Golan Heights demonstrates the confidence of both parties in the UN disengagement force.

The effects of the disengagement of forces of the two countries has allowed a de-escalation of tension between two countries and serves as a model for future conflicts of this nature. However, notwithstanding the effectiveness of the separation of forces, both parties can only achieve long-term peace through negotiation. This long-term disengagement has had a profound impact on the two societies. Syria and Israel both have vibrant, family based cultures, yet they exist side by side as two solitudes. The impact of several decades of conflict, then long-term separation has meant citizens of both countries have had little contact. Consequently, gradual engagement of both countries is required in order to bring the long-standing conflict on the Golan Heights to a peaceful resolution.

### **PEACE BUILDING MEASURES UNDERTAKEN BY UNDOF**

The United Nations through UNDOF, has been one of the main catalysts for peace building on the Golan Heights. Extensive on-going contact with both parties in an impartial manner has been the most effective peace-building measures used by UNDOF since establishment of this international peacekeeping mission in 1974. This is accomplished through the UNDOF Force Commander and his staff being in constant contact with both Syrian and Israeli authorities. This takes various forms including UN inspections, meetings, phone calls, official correspondence and social engagements on both sides of the Area of Separation. This is complimented through UNDOF personnel from both UNDOF HQ and Contingents developing personal and professional relationships with government authorities, business people and most importantly the ordinary citizens of the two host nations. UNDOF is one of the few effective, and the most important, independent communication links between these two conflicting countries. This enables UNDOF to be used as an unofficial and independent channel between Israel and Syria. Communication is important as it provides a mechanism to pass information informally in periods of tension and to de-escalate the situation.

UNDOF has two base camps. One is located in Syria and the other in Israel. Spread throughout the area of separation, UNDOF has 30 positions, 17 outposts, 11 observation posts and one military police checkpoint. In addition, through dismounted and mobile patrols: UNDOF supervises the area dividing both nations. Indeed, this is the main operational task assigned to UNDOF military personnel. Supervision of the Area of Separation is done on an irregular basis through predetermined routes at any time of the day. UNDOF personnel also intervene in instances when Israeli or Syrian military personnel enter or try to operate within the Area of Separation. To ensure compliance with limitations on armaments and personnel within the zones of limitation, UNDOF is assisted by United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) personnel through the Observer Group Golan who inspect these zones every two weeks. Complete results of these detailed inspections are provided to both parties by the UN — on a timely basis — to ensure transparency. Syria and Israel can rely upon this important peace building measure for use when making national decisions on troop and equipment rotations on the Golan Heights.

Neither Israel nor Syria are signatories to the land mines treaty. Both nations use security reasons for not signing the UN treaty. Land mines are used as inexpensive barriers to

opposing forces by both countries. However, the drawback is that planting land mines in specific corridors precludes civilian activities in those areas. In many locations throughout the Golan Heights, primarily in the area of separation; but also in the area of limitation, ageing minefields pose a severe hazard to both humans and animals. To reduce this threat to safety, UNDOF in consultation with the Syrian authorities, has implemented a minefield security and maintenance programme.<sup>9</sup>

This programme has the objective of identifying and marking minefields on the Syrian side of the Area of Separation. This is dangerous and slow work, but essential to the safety of UN personnel and citizens living in the area. This UNDOF initiative, started only in 2000, is a major new peace building initiative. The slow process of formally identifying mined areas also identifies clean fields and regions that could then be used for civilian purposes – such as agriculture. In addition, the United Nations Children's Fund promotes mine awareness among the civilian population with the assistance of UNDOF. The identification and marking of minefields is an important first step. However, to provide for the normal use of land on the Golan Heights, the next step needs to be removal of these land mines. Nevertheless, this step cannot be taken until Israel and Syria jointly move towards demining of the Golan Heights.

The establishment of the Area of Separation between the two countries and the subsequent building of a “technical fence” by Israel on the Israeli side of the Area of Separation has resulted in three Druze villages being separated from their relatives in Syria. UNDOF contributes to the stability of the region by assisting the International Committee of the Red Cross with the passage of persons through the Area of Separation. This largely involves students from the Druze villages departing to, or returning from, school or university in Syria. UNDOF also provides the UN Military Police checkpoint as the location for wedding ceremonies in the Area of Separation, assists the passage of pilgrims and mail facilities. Finally, UNDOF provides medical treatment to the local population on request and within resources available.

UNDOF has demonstrated flexibility in dealing with both Syria and Israel to promote peace-building measures. For example, through encouragement by Syrian authorities, civilians have continued to move back to locations within the Area of Separation. The population of Syrian civilians has doubled in the Area of Separation since establishment of UNDOF. To accommodate this return to normal lives of Syrians civilians from the Golan Heights area, UNDOF has made adjustments to its operation in light of these developments. In addition to military personnel, provided by Troop Contributing Nations, serving on the Golan Heights and International UN staff, UNDOF provides employment to a total of 87 locally engaged employees both in Israel and Syria. Individuals employed by the UN mission develop skills, knowledge of different cultures and are able to support their families through their income. Syrians or Israelis can then use skills learned through employment in UNDOF in their respective work forces through subsequent civilian employment.

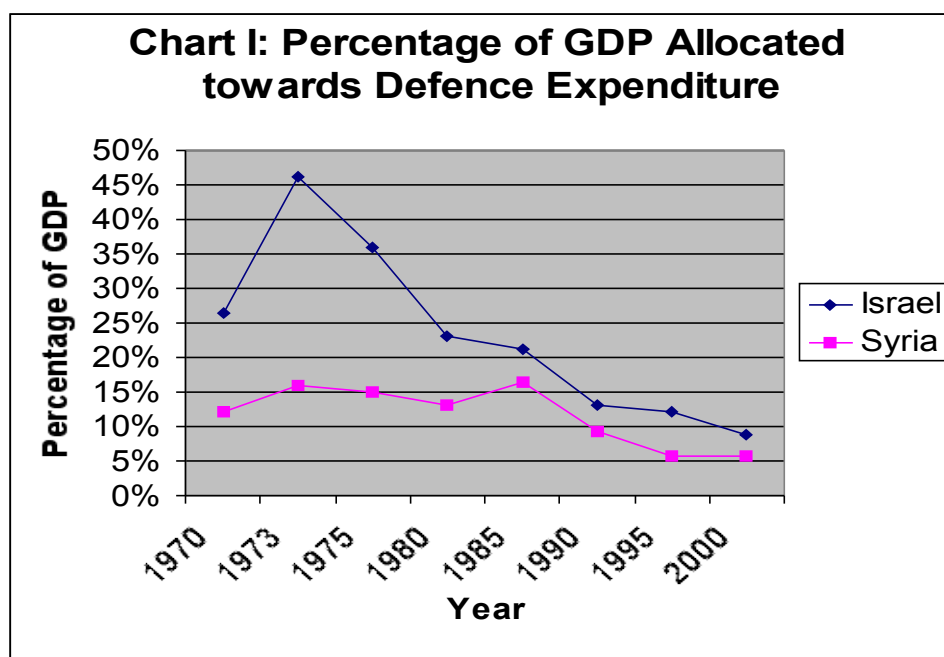
#### **DECLINE IN DEFENCE EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP**

One significant long-term trend in both Syria and Israel since the 1973 War, to which the UN Mission on the Golan Heights has facilitated through reducing tensions between the two

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<sup>9</sup> See the Land Mines Monitor (2001) country profile on Syria for more detailed information on the existence of land mines in Syria.

countries, is that defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP has declined gradually and continually through to 2001. This is illustrated in Chart I.<sup>10</sup>



*Chart I: Percentage of GDP allocated towards defence expenditure.*

The provision of security to a nation requires a wide variety of different resources. This includes the allocation of human and financial resources to defence departments. Resource allocations consist of allocations towards capital expenditures and personnel, as well as, to fund associated operations and maintenance costs. The resource allocation decisions by government result in defence budgets, from which expenditures are made. Consequently, the value of resource allocations towards security can be approximated by defence expenditures. Therefore, the resulting defence expenditure calculated as a percentage of GDP provides one key measure of the relative burden of defence on the economy. In theory, falling proportional resource allocations in the economy to defence should reflect, in part, a long-term decline in external threats to the nation. It also reflects the positive growth of the civilian sector in the economy.

Chart I demonstrates a gradual and ongoing drop in defence as a proportion of GDP. Although annual defence spending in current dollars has increased in Israel and Syria, its proportion of GDP has fallen. Although this may appear contradictory, it reflects the declining economic importance of military spending in the economy, a trend shared by much of the developed world. Nevertheless, the military expenditures of Syria and Israel remain significant consumers of finite resources in their countries. Small and developing nations lacking an extensive defence industrial base are required to import capital equipment, thus resulting in outflows of foreign exchange from the country. Military capital expenditures in developed nations tend to be concentrated in a relatively small number of large corporations.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the higher percentage of GDP spent on non-defence-related

<sup>10</sup> Data used in all charts is from respective annual editions of *The Military Balance*.

<sup>11</sup> The concentration of large defence corporations in Israel is significant. For more detail, see SIPRI (2001) pp. 307-312.

goods and services potentially lessens industrial concentration and increases competition in the economy.

## CHANGES IN NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT

The quantity and quality of equipment are also important variables in the measurement of defence capabilities of a nation. It is noteworthy in the case of Syria and Israel that the decline in defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP is not matched by corresponding declines in quantities of either military personnel or capital equipment. Specifically, over time, the number of main battle tanks and full-time armed forces personnel (including conscripts) has increased in both countries. In particular, an increase in the number of tanks in stock of both countries over time is dramatic. The increase in main battle tanks is illustrated by Chart II.

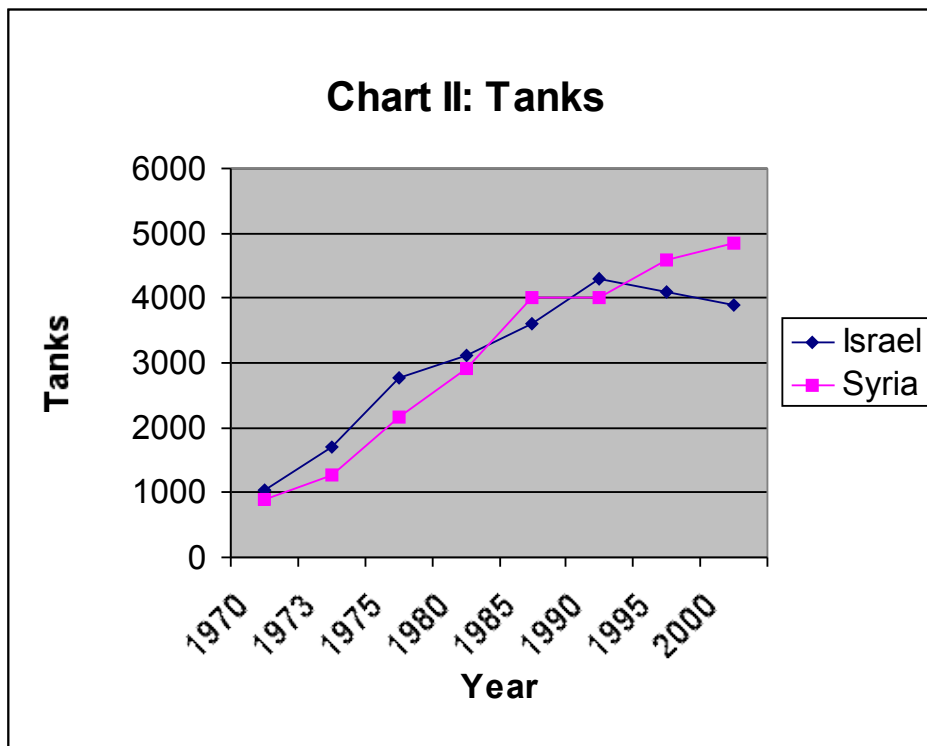


Chart II: The number of Israeli and Syrian Tanks.

This increase, however, is generally more quantitative than qualitative. It is important to note that a significant element of the growth is accounted for by both nations keeping old generation tanks in stock, when more modern models are received from the manufacturer. Indeed, it is estimated that 1,200 Syrian tanks are only capable of being used in static positions or are kept in storage.<sup>12</sup> Tanks manufactured prior to 1980 still on the order of battle for each country are listed in Table 1.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See *The Military Balance 2001-02* page 147.

<sup>13</sup> The quantity and type of tanks for Israel are in page 135 and for Syria in page 147 in *The Military Balance 2001-2002*. The generic production dates for each tank are in *The Military Balance 1996-1997* pages 312-314. See Jane's (2001) pp. 50-58 for a detailed description of the Israeli and Israeli modified tanks. In addition, see pp. 94-105 for a detailed description of the Russian tanks used by Syria.



<u>Israel</u>			<u>Syria</u>		
<u>Type</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Production</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Production</u>
Centurian	800	1959-62	T-55/MV	2,000	1958-61
M-48A5	250	1967-79	T-62M/K	1,000	1962-75
M-60/A1	300	1952-59			
M-60/A3	600	1967-79			
Magach 7	400	Upgraded m-60 series			
Ti-67 (T-54/- 55)	200	1949-61			
T-62	100	1962-75			
Total	2650			3,000	

*Table 1: 2001 Inventory of Pre-1980 Main Battle Tanks.*

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has placed a heavy reliance on armoured forces since the 1956 War.<sup>14</sup> This enduring Israeli emphasis on armour rests on the premise that Israel cannot afford to lose a war. Israeli doctrine states that this nation does not have any territorial ambitions outside its international borders.<sup>15</sup> From this over-riding foundation, Israel has adopted a defensive strategy through the use of offensive tactics. Through the use of mobile armoured units and air superiority, Israeli doctrine is to transfer the battle to enemy territory rapidly and win a war quickly and decisively. During the period following the 1956 War, and particularly since 1979, Israel has increased the qualitative advantage between the two nations in main battle tanks, through the domestic development and production of the Merkava tank. Nevertheless, the large stock of older generation tanks held by both countries is a significant barrier to peace.

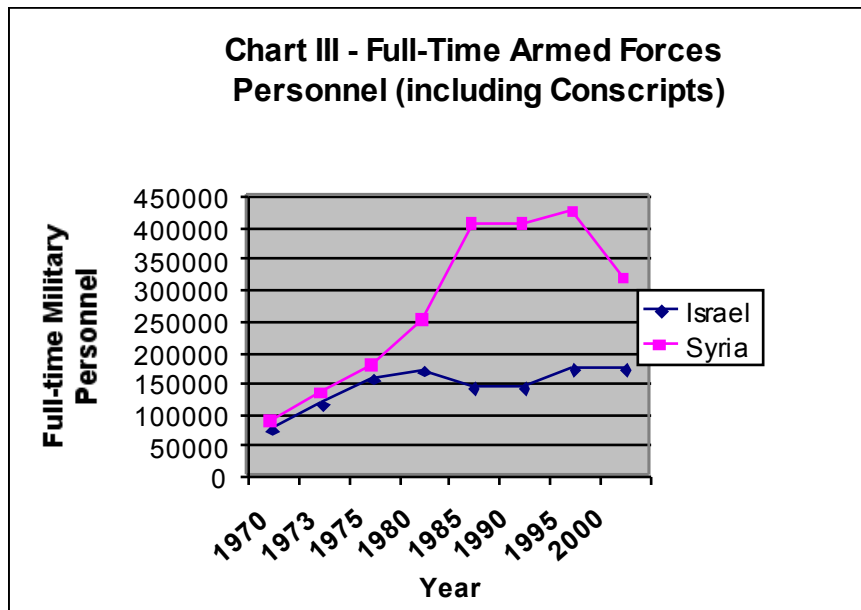
Both Israel and Syria have increased their full-time military personnel since 1973. This is illustrated in Chart III. In particular, the number of armed forces personnel in Syria has increased significantly since 1973. However, their full-time military personnel now appear to be declining. In contrast to the large build-up of full-time Syrian military personnel, the number of full-time Israeli armed forces personnel has remained fairly constant following a modest build-up after the 1973 War. The increase in Syrian armed forces personnel could be a response to the qualitative gap between Israeli-Syrian equipment, or a reflection of the growing number of youth in that country. However, in both countries, conscripts account for a large amount of full-time uniformed personnel. Consequently, to a certain extent, the focus of both militaries is that of the ongoing and time-consuming task of training new recruits. The result is that both societies have a significant element of their adult male population trained for military combat. In advanced Western nations, the emphasis on technology since the Second World War, has led to the subordination of military personnel to the procurement of advanced capital equipment.<sup>16</sup> Thus as a result of striving for the optimal use of resources allocated to defence, technology has been substituted for labour. One result is

<sup>14</sup> See Mearsheimer (1983) pp.134-164 for discussion of Israeli-Arab conflict from 1956 to 1973.

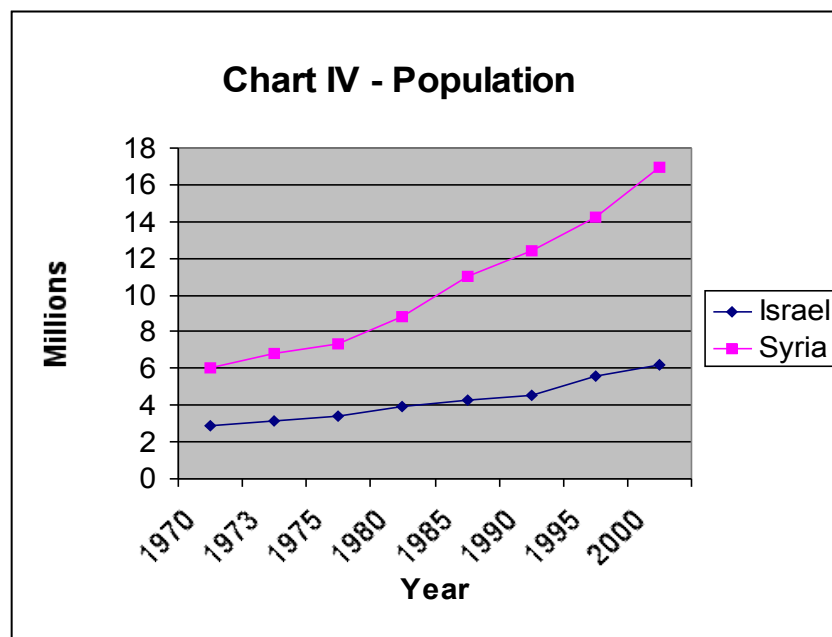
<sup>15</sup> Israeli security doctrine is summarised succinctly at [www.idf.il](http://www.idf.il).

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of military manpower in the military production function and national labour markets see Sandler and Hartley (1995) pp.156-176.

that only a minority of the adult male population has received military training in developed nations.



*Chart III:* Full-time armed forces personnel (including conscripts).



*Chart IV:* Population of Israel and Syria.

However, despite the extensive use of technology by the Israeli military establishment, both Syria and Israel continue to train and employ vast numbers of military forces for their modest populations. Chart IV, above, demonstrates that populations in Israel and Syria are growing at a significant pace. Syria through a high birth rate and Israel largely through immigration. Nevertheless, the absolute difference in population sizes is increasing. Whereas labour is relatively expensive in Israel, Syria has a labour surplus. Military conscription in Syria absorbs some of this surplus labour.

## DISARMAMENT AND THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE UN PEACE BUILDING

Recently, the UN Secretary General stated that:

*The situation in the Middle East continues to be potentially dangerous and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached.”<sup>17</sup>*

Clearly, the situation on the Golan Heights cannot be viewed in isolation. Nevertheless, peace on the Golan Heights is not solely dependent on a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East. The 1991 and 1994 peace treaties between Israel and both Egypt and Jordan respectively are recent examples of bi-lateral peace initiatives that have occurred in the Middle East, notwithstanding the lack of comprehensive peace in the region. Consequently, peace building between Syria and Israel should be encouraged by the international community as a preliminary step towards peace. As the most prominent international presence between Syria and Israel, UNDOF can play a leadership role in assisting other peace building initiatives.

Reductions in military personnel and equipment by both Syria and Israel would compliment the work done by UNDOF. Disarmament, in the short-term is a cost to the economy, although long-term reallocation of resources to the civilian sector benefits the economy. The Syrian/Israeli conflict has been ongoing for decades. Consequently, a rapid reduction in defence expenditures & disarmament by Syria and Israel is unrealistic. Nevertheless, regular and measured cutbacks in defence expenditures by both parties, matched by expanding economies and focused government policies on both retraining displaced military personnel and investment in the civilian sector can increase the return from disarmament.

Disarmament is a process that flows from peace building. The UN presence on the Golan Heights has been successful in separating the opposing forces. Although successful in fulfilling this mandate, the six-month focus at the time of mandate renewal has not provided a structure that works towards long-term disarmament and peace. Indeed, renewal of the UNDOF mandate is normally a routine matter undertaken by the Security Council without any serious debate. Consequently, there is currently no incentive for either conflicting party to amend — or enhance — the terms of the cease-fire, reached almost three decades ago. This, in effect, is a serious barrier to peace. The growth in quantitative terms of equipment and personnel is reflective of this fact. Long-term problems need long-term solutions. Consequently, this requires a mandate and organisational focus — within UNDOF — that specifically provides for the development and implementation of long-term peace building measures. This includes diplomats working at UN headquarters in New York City to add peace-building measures into Security Council mandate renewals; that are agreed to by both conflicting parties. It also requires greater international involvement by nations, NGOs and trans-national institutions. Enhanced support to the peace process on the Golan Heights can be achieved through a co-ordinated approach to peace building by concerned governments and NGOs.

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations Security Council S/2001/1079 Report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF pg.2.

Complimentary to the strategic work required in UN headquarters in New York, additional staff at UNDOF HQ at Camp Faouar are required, consisting of both UN International staff and military peacekeepers to develop and implement practical peace-building measures on the Golan Heights. In the Middle East, the UN already has two representatives in Iraq, a Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority in Israel and finally a Personal Representative of the Secretary-General stationed in Lebanon. Although the Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has a broad mandate, attention has been focused on Israel-Palestinian negotiations.

As a consequence, co-ordination of peace building activities on the Golan Heights should be done by a Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) appointed with a specific mandate to initiate and sustain a peace building process between Syria and Israel. This could include mine-clearing programs, support to establishing agricultural industries, enhancing local infrastructure and improving the quality of life. The objective of diplomatic efforts in New York City would be to incrementally move the peace process forward, with measures supported by both Syria and Israel. On the Golan Heights, the objective would be to return the life to normal as much as possible to local residents. The SRSG would be the focal point responsible for co-ordinating all these activities.

### **INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE BUILDING: DEVELOPMENT OF KEY ENABLERS**

The first phase of peace building has been effectively achieved through the work done by UNDOF. This has been the disengagement of forces between Israel and Syria and the lessening of tension between the two countries. Entrenched positions of warring parties are generally inflexible in the short-term. Consequently, it often takes new leadership brought into the political process through generational transitions to effect change. Left to themselves, the conflicting parties do not have a broad spectrum of mechanisms to bring their conflict to a resolution.

Assistance from outside respected parties is often a key to moving groups in conflict to a successful peace. A variety of nations and organisations can, over an extended period, assist in the reconciliation process as complimentary peace builders to the United Nations. Peacekeepers cannot function in isolation from a combination of the international community and host nations. Indeed, peace requires effective and robust institutions, combined with respect and understanding for differences within nations and across boundaries. This requires building a durable basis for peaceful alternatives to conflict. In effect, emphasising prevention to avoid escalation of conflict.

The process of generational change is slow in the Middle East. Although both Syria and Israel are slowly transitioning power to younger citizens, the possibility of a mutually agreed peace on the Golan Heights still remains elusive. The United Nations is doing an exceptional job of ensuring peaceful disengagement of both opposing parties on the Golan Heights. This has brought, at least, some stability to the region. However, for peace to become entrenched in the area, there must be active engagement of both conflicting nations. Peace building through engagement of both parties is key to this process. To be effective this must be done at various levels. Indeed facilitating the engagement of Israel and Syria is a task suited to a variety of NGOs, multi-national institutions and governments. Engagement means learning

about other peoples and cultures. It includes redirecting military efforts towards nation building. Furthermore it emphasizes inter-dependency through using and sharing natural and human resources, as well as capital, on a regional – not – national level (i.e. allocation of scarce water resources).

Indeed, the timing may now be appropriate to start planting the seeds of fundamental change in the relationship between Syria and Israel. Israel is an active participant in the international community. Syria was appointed to a two-year position on the UN Security Council on 1 January, 2002 and is beginning to increase international contacts.<sup>18</sup> Reform of the banking sector in Syria is a start of a process of opening that society to the world community. Businesses operating across national borders require certain basic prerequisites prior to significantly investing in a country.<sup>19</sup> This includes having transparent and fair business laws, as well as an effective judiciary, so that trans-national corporations can be confident that they will not be left to the fate of arbitrary, biased or corrupt laws when dealing with Syrian nationals, institutions or government.

The structure of rights and obligations among persons, businesses and the state are provided by the system of law in the nation.<sup>20</sup> Second, corporations require an honest, effective and efficient banking system with linkages to international capital. Third, businesses require an efficient and cost-effective transportation system and low distribution costs. In some industries, utility costs are also an important consideration. Fourth, they require at least a moderately educated population. In particular, the managerial skills of locally engaged employees are particularly important in building and sustaining national operations.

External support to assist Syria integrate further into the world economy could take several forms. Specifically this includes support to enhance its financial system, reform laws to facilitate growth and development as well as advancement of skills and training. Canada could provide assistance in developing banking regulations, regulatory oversight bodies and training. In addition, Canada has a banking industry that is experienced internationally and would be an experienced partner in any joint banking ventures in Syria. Reforming laws to facilitate the operation of international business could be provided by the European Union. The European Union has experience in drafting regulations applicable across diverse nations. The United States, with a wide range of excellent business programs in U.S. universities could provide support for management training to Syrian corporations developing international markets. International business corporations could partner with Israeli defence firms to benefit from their skills and assist in the diversification of those firms into civilian markets. Finally, all nations have a responsibility to provide support and assistance towards bringing peace to the Golan Heights through engagement of Syria and Israel in political, business or personal relations.

## LESSONS FROM UNDOF AND THE WAY FORWARD

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<sup>18</sup> This was evident in the changes made to the Syrian Cabinet in December 2001 by President Bashar al-Asad through the appointment of a number of new pro-reform ministers.

<sup>19</sup> Key factors in corporate business costs across different countries are highlighted in a recent KPMG study. See KPMG (2002) pg.1.

<sup>20</sup> A more detailed description of the importance of laws as a supporting condition to growth and development can be found in Mosche (2001) pg. 15.

This history of UNDOF has been one of success. However, the separation of forces in a conflict can only be the first step in a long-term peace building process. Consequently, to achieve a lasting peace in the Golan Heights, both Syria and Israel must be engaged in a dialogue of peace. UNDOF can be the catalyst for this dialogue. The peace process has become stalled on the Golan Heights and now requires an increased international focus, combined with the development of peace building measures on both sides of the Area of Separation. The main lesson learned from UNDOF is that UN peacekeeping missions cannot remain static, but must evolve based on the changing environment in the theatre of operations. Unfortunately, although UNDOF has met the mandate established in 1974, it has become frozen in time. As a consequence, mandate renewal happens uneventfully every six months without serious debate on the future tasks and missions required of UNDOF.

The lack of attention by the UN international staff and diplomatic community in New York City has let the Golan Heights slip from world attention. Given the many conflicts throughout the world and limited resources of the UN, it is not surprising that UN and diplomatic leaders will focus on immediate and pressing crisis. Nevertheless, resources still need to be allocated and attention devoted towards long-term and complex conflict situations. Consequently, peace building measures on the Golan Heights need to be built into future mandate renewals. Recently the UN has devoted significant attention to enhancing the potential success of the early phases of a peacekeeping mission.<sup>21</sup> To improve the impact of mature missions, such as UNDOF, the UN now needs to focus attention on developing a mechanism to ensure peacekeeping missions adapt to changing situations and are focused on peace building. Appointment of a SRSG with a mandate to develop peace-building measures on the Golan Heights would be a start.

This paper has identified several significant problems that could be addressed by the international community. First, mines represent a hazard to life on the Golan Heights. Support by the international community for mine clearance concurrently on both the Israeli and Syrian sides of the Area of Separation would be a positive joint step towards peace. Funding to support this activity could be raised through a UN Trust Fund established for this specific purpose. Locally engaged employees could do clearance of mines co-ordinated by a UN Mine Action Centre. Second, both countries are holding — rather than disposing of — obsolete military equipment. Destruction of large stocks of antiquated capital equipment would be a significant peace building measure.

However, destruction of older generation equipment, such as tanks, is an expensive undertaking. UN support for concurrent destruction of obsolete military equipment in Syria and Israel could be accomplished through establishment of a UN disarmament co-ordination organisation, embedded within UNDOF resources, and funded by international donors – with a mandate to work with both nations to encourage balanced force reductions. Third, decreasing conscript military forces in both nations would reduce the size of their armed forces considerably. Alternatives to military service to young adults could be offered by each state to their citizens. National service in hospitals, schools or parks provides a nation building and positive alternative to military service.

Addressing these problems would be a start to peace building between Israel and Syria. The international community cannot be content with the status quo on the Golan Heights. To employ UNDOF as a catalyst for change on the Golan Heights, the UN needs to refocus that

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<sup>21</sup> See for example, [Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations](#) (2001).

mission towards peace building and co-ordinating a dialogue of peace between Syria and Israel.

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