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Israel's Discourses and Practices in the Mediterranean Since 2001

Arab Studies Institute – Research and Education Methodologies (ASI-REM)

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Abstract

Israel constructs the Mediterranean according to a Manichean schema whereby it classifies the countries which constitute the area as either nations it considers allies or nations and socio-political movements it considers threatening. Furthermore, in certain cases, this construction leaves space for attempting to move countries from the latter category to the former. For the former, the Israeli construction of security discourse consists of trading and military compacts, as well as friendly diplomatic ties. For the latter, Israeli construction of the Mediterranean is based on a discourse of deterrence – preventing such countries from threatening Israeli interests, as Israeli planners understand them – as well as attempting to weaken such countries when possible. Such weakening can in fact be a prelude to transitioning them from the "enemy" category to the "ally" category. Finally, Israeli discourse and construction of its most immediate neighbour, the Palestinians, reflects a combination of both worldviews. On the one hand, it constructs this sector of the Mediterranean as one it seeks to neuter or disarm, identifying as security threats those portions of Palestinian society it considers cooptable – the wider and deeper the scope of cooptation and absorption into the Israeli social and economic fabric, and political containment, the better. On the other, it constructs a discourse around deterrence and weakening concerning those portions and segments of Palestinian society that it is unable to co-opt. The enemy/friend category is in large measure a question of the attitudes of the country in question to what Israel calls its security situation vis-à-vis Palestine. For that reason, it casts countries as security threats when they pursue policies Israel interprets as favourable to the Palestinian struggle, and casts them as friendlier when such countries align with Israeli colonial policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

Introduction

It is an old adage that there is no foreign policy, only domestic policy. In the Israeli case, planners construct both domestic and foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis the Mediterranean region which Israel daily constructs and re-constructs as a region of threat and possibility, including the domestic/foreign Palestinian question, through the lens of security. Israel has historically constructed its understanding of its security as tightly tied to good relationships with the United States and Europe. Indeed, it has viewed itself as a part of Europe from the outset of its settlement project – in the words of Theodor Herzl, Israel was to be "a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism" (Herzl 1917: 12). On the domestic front, it has imagined security in a non-conventional sense: Israel having full freedom of manoeuvre and dispensation in terms of the Palestinian population, with geopolitics not impinging on its doing whatever necessary in order to maintain the status quo. Israel's construction of its regional security in the Eastern Mediterranean has historically hinged on an amplification of that modus operandi to encompass all the states on the southern, far-eastern and northeastern segments of the Mediterranean littoral. As part of this, Israel's vision of

security is based on preserving it military, territorial and diplomatic freedom of action vis-à-vis the captive Palestinian population. Thus it constructs the countries immediately surrounding it, as well as those further afield such as Turkey and Tunisia, as targets or allies, who must be constituted as incapable of providing support to those elements of the Palestinian polity and society that might call for aid, particularly those unwilling to be co-opted. Furthermore, in its securitized discourse, it sees such countries – especially Egypt, Syria and Lebanon – as having directly warred with Israel, or as harbouring deeply-rooted militia groups that have contested Israeli dominance and territorial aggrandizement. Some of these conflicts have been linked to the Palestinian cause. Thus Israel constructs its Mediterranean freedom of action and its vision of the Mediterranean region in terms of security, a vision which means that such states must be (1) unwilling or (2) unable to muster a military challenge to Israel. In order to make them unable or unwilling, Israel has historically constructed them as targets of either (1) destabilization or (2) "cold peace" sufficient to ensure that their state elites do not assume a confrontational role vis-à-vis Israeli policy, both at the military–physical and cultural–symbolic level.

On its northern and western flanks, Israeli elites construct the Mediterranean as an arena of securitized trade and security flows, thus seeking to ensure that the states of those regions – Europe – enter security compacts with Israel, and partake in commerce with it. Furthermore, such commerce is increasingly of a military nature. Israel views security as ensuring that such states continue on their present policy path, or pursue it in an even more pronounced manner. It also means that Israel constructs the Mediterranean as a space vulnerable to transformations or popular movements within its constituent states, capable of changing their governments' orientation to Israel and the Palestinian case. In this sense, Israeli security doctrine vis-à-vis Europe also means that it views global popular campaigns to shift Israeli policy – and particularly the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement – as part of its broader securitized imaginary.

This paper first outlines Israeli construction of the Palestinian question, understanding it as the keystone of Israeli security policy in its construction of the Mediterranean. It then considers how Israel imagines its security policy vis-à-vis its immediate neighbours: Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. It then goes further afield to Turkey. Finally, it concludes by considering Israel's recent relations with Greece, and then with Europe as a whole.

In terms of methodology, it relies primarily on primary sources from Israeli security planners and states people, suggesting that their discourse offers a window into how the country constructs the region's constituent states and thus how it imagines the Mediterranean itself.

1. PALESTINE

Israel constructs Palestine as the ultimate Mediterranean security threat, since it touches on the core physical basis of the state itself: the land. Current Israeli security understandings of this issue are based on a belief of permanent threat. Israel constructs a discourse within which there is no short-term solution to the Palestine question, in the sense of a permanent status agreement. Thus Israeli understandings envisage political postponement and political containment. Israel's overall vision is to kick the can down the road until a permanent agreement on Israeli terms is possible. Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon's 2008 strategic treatise,

Derekh aruka ktzara (A Longer Shorter Way), clarifies that this belief also means that Israeli elites ought to firmly reject "solutionism" or "nowism", whether such demands emanate from Israeli society itself, Palestinians, the United States or elsewhere (Sachs 2015: 75). Such an immediatist framework for dealing with the conflict runs roughshod over a security horizon oriented to the containment of "chronic problems or open-ended conflicts", a form of low-level continual counter-insurgency. Furthermore, such solutionism miscasts the fundamental principle animating Israeli "security" thinking vis-à-vis the Palestinian population. Namely, state elites recognize that there is "a Palestinian refusal to accept the essence of Zionism, which is that Jews have a right to a state of their own in the land of Israel" (Sachs 2015: 75). Within this overall framework, Israel imagines it must take smaller steps to ensure that Palestinians are unable to shift the terms of negotiation in a more pro-Palestine direction – which is to say, also one more in accord with the relevant international covenants. Thus on the one hand, Israel, where and when possible, has sought to withdraw its military forces from places that it has not made strategic sense to secure through boots-on-the-ground occupation: namely, the Gaza Strip, where Israel nevertheless remains in effective control and thus the occupation endures. Meanwhile, there has emerged a new and politically loud if not yet influential current which imagines the Mediterranean as a place that can only be secured through a "solution" of the Palestine question through annexation of the West Bank.

Alongside the construction of the Palestinian question in securitarian terms, Israeli planners construct the question of Palestinian labour and overall human mobility with reference to security. We may see this through two distinct arenas: through the changing security regime in the territories Israel occupied after the 1967 war, and in its relation to security in the Sinai. In the former, since 1993 it has relied on a policy of what it terms "closure" vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip, which used to supply large portions of Israeli labour needs. Since that point – even more so since 2000 and close to hermetically since 2006 – Israel has constructed the Gaza Strip as a security threat, to which the 2005 disengagement, accompanied by an absolute cut-off of labour flows, was a "solution", tamping down the security threat while not eliminating it altogether (Sharvit 2005). In the West Bank, meanwhile, discourses of security construct a vision of a Palestinian population which must be walled off and can only gain access to territorial Israel through securitized passageways. Here questions of Palestinian physical labour and Israeli policy towards it war with Israeli construction of the Palestinian population as a security threat.

As for the Sinai, Israel has since the election of Mohamed Morsi (since deposed) constructed it as a zone of threat, where mobility is limited and where the question of migrant labour is thereby minimized. The question of human entry along the Sinai-territorial Israel frontier is constructed by the Israeli leadership as a question of "infiltration": in the words of Netanyahu in January 2013, "There hasn't been one infiltrator who has reached an Israeli city in seven months" (Mitnick 2015). "Infiltrators", or refugees, have also been a source of labour to replace Palestinians who remain in the Gaza Strip, a traditional source of manual labour in certain key industries, and thus again in the case of the Sinai we see how Israeli securitarian discourse creates the policy areas of labour, migration and mobility as subordinate to questions of security, which is in turn understood as a perpetual and structuring element of the Israeli worldview. And this, in turn, is based on a view of the world which sees threat as itself fundamental and constitutive rather than something than can be successfully eliminated through new policies.

Another aspect of how Israeli policy-makers construct the Mediterranean, and that construction's attendant impacts on the construction of policy in specific arenas, is the question of agriculture and water. Once again, the construction of the West Bank as a securitized arena informs an approach to water based on accumulation and expropriation of Palestinian water resources. Israeli settlements are often built in regions which have been constructed as crucial to security concerns; such regions are also often atop crucial aquifers. This then allows for the Israeli settler population in the West Bank to use water at a rate massively disproportionate to that of the Palestinian population.

Secondarily, the West Bank is a zone in which Israeli agriculture and Palestinian agriculture become embroiled in a zero-sum contest whereby additional land under Israeli cultivation is then a diminished amount of land under Palestinian cultivation. The construction of the West Bank as a place of danger justifies the routing of the "security" wall which cuts over the Green Line and into the West Bank, and also cuts into, cuts off, and thus absorbs some of the West Bank's most arable land. The Golan Heights in the Israeli conception is also a securitized zone, offering strategic high ground and a buffer against kinetic warfare from outside the Israeli boundary lines. Furthermore, "the Golan Heights also provides security for a strategic commodity – water", in the words of Israeli security analyst Efraim Inbar, and indeed a large percentage of Israel's water supply comes from this crucial securitized region (Inbar 2011: 12). Thus once again we see how security is an encompassing framework for Israeli's understanding of and construction of the region.

Thus overall the Mediterranean is constructed through a security-based local discourse based on putting in place the scaffolding that can assist in the future construction of a "permanent settlement", since fundamentally, argue Assaf Orion and Udi Dekel (2016a) in the *Strategic Survey for Israel*, negotiations are not currently possible. A crucial political-institutional component of this scaffolding is the Palestinians themselves, who are both part of the structure that will be used to build the permanent settlement, and, Israel hopes, the guarantors of that settlement. As Orion and Dekel continue, "Throughout this process, Israel has an interest in the survival of the PA leadership, which favors political processes and security cooperation over terrorism and violence" (Orion and Dekel 2016a: 167). Security is the dominant lens for Israeli planners to understand this policy, as well as to construct this keystone of the region. Thus, as they understand and imagine it, in this sense, longer term security through a form of permanent-status arrangement rests on the immediate-term security of tamping down threats, whether political or kinetic, to Israel from the Palestinians. As the authors continue,

> Threats of Palestinian terrorism will likely continue in the foreseeable future, whether on the part of those who continue to oppose Israel's right to exist and refuse to come to an agreement with Israel, or whether as a means for Palestinian authorities to exert pressure for political purposes or for internal Palestinian considerations. (Orion and Dekel 2016a: 167)

The rhetoric of "terrorism" is part-and-parcel of the overall "security" discourse within which Israel frames the Palestinian question and the Mediterranean more broadly. Israeli planners use the term to refer to all forms of Palestinian violence, including that from militia or other forces targeting Israeli armed forces. For that reason "security" and securitized visions are oriented to preventing Palestinian violence through deterrence, or constraining it through the work of compliant sectors of the native population. For that reason, Israeli planners

conceptualize security as a process of containment, or heading off such violence to the extent possible. This also means making sure that it does not involve any substantial portion of the Palestinian population, keeping "the number of people involved" at a minimum. Israel imagines this as necessary through military means when needed, and when not, through "civil and economic efforts and infrastructure development" (Orion and Dekel 2016: 167). This reflects the understanding that Palestinians' national claims inherently imperil the unequal arrangements Israeli elites understand as "security".

Such a line of thinking has been constitutive of Zionist security thinking from the days of Vladimir Jabotinsky's *The Iron Wall*. As the author insisted,

> Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of "Palestine" into the "Land of Israel". (Jabotinsky 1937)

Essentially, continued Palestinian contestation of the Jewish nature of the 1948 territories continues this practice of resistance, and Israeli security understandings continue to see this rejection of a Jewish state in the here-and-now as a threat to Israeli security. Based on this fact, a real solution can only come when it is "no longer in question" that the Jewish state may continue to be a Jewish state. This basic insight is the keystone in the arch of broader Israeli securitized understandings and constructions of the Mediterranean, and indeed of the rest of the world. However, Israeli security visions also recognize the problems that accompany the Israeli decision to conceptualize security in irredentist terms. Namely, "Israel's control over many aspects of Palestinian affairs has created widespread anger and disgust toward Israel abroad, with increasingly harsh consequences for its international standing and its relations with the United States" (Sachs 2015: 79) – and of course the European Union, and the surrounding Arab and Muslim states. The latter states have historic economic, cultural and popular links with the Palestinian population, as to a lesser measure do some of the EU states, for example Italy, which used to be far less aligned with German–US foreign policy in general and towards Israel in particular (Abu Samra 2014).

Furthermore, in the words of Michael Hudson, there are several "all Arab" issues that can legitimize or delegitimize any given social or political order. The "legitimacy of given leaders in a given state is determined to an important extent by their fidelity to these core concerns", and "Palestine is the foremost all-Arab concern, although not the only one" (cited in Takriti 2013: 234). Thus security issues in the Palestinian sphere are never restricted to Palestine or Palestinians alone. They reverberate far beyond the geographical span of historic Palestine. For that reason Israeli "security" concerns in the Mediterranean region, as Israeli planners understand them and as Israel constructs the Mediterranean based on them, are deeply imbricated in the question of Palestine itself. We now turn to those questions, by considering the current Israeli incarnation of security understandings of the portions of the Mediterranean just north of Palestine: Syria and Lebanon, especially Hezbollah. We also consider the manner in which Israeli conceptions of its policy have evolved since 2006, alongside Israeli conceptualizations of what it considers a threat, latent or imminent, emanating from social and political forces either within or governing those two neighbouring sites in the Eastern Mediterranean.

2. Syria and Lebanon

Current Israeli strategic construction of the Levant, as a constitutive element of how it constructs the Mediterranean, is an extension of the conclusions in the annex of the Reut's Report to the Winograd Committee, convened in the aftermath of the Hezbollah movement's victory over the IDF in the 2006 war. That victory – reflecting a massive increase in the asymmetric power of the Lebanese guerrilla resistance movement, and behind it, its supply line in Syria – represented trends which undermined what Israel understood as its national security strategy (Reut 2007: 1). The 2006 war challenged the dominant Israeli security doctrine of the "Wall of Legitimacy", based on the slow evaporation of "internal Arab legitimacy for continued fighting against Israel", as well as the contrapuntal global legitimacy needed for Israel to carry out reprisals – or "aggressive Israeli military response[s] in case Israel [was] attacked across the newly established [2000] border" (Reut 2007: 4), again with the addenda that Israel has no borders, merely armistice lines. One of the most significant of these trends was the emergence and consolidation of a "Resistance Network" led by Iran, Hezbollah and the Palestinian armed resistance networks, which in the perception of the planners of Israeli security, "effectively undermines any sustainable political or military achievement that would secure Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state" (Reut 2007: 1). Combined with what planners (not necessarily correctly, and arguably quite prematurely) perceived as the decline of US power in the region, the rise of Iran, and the "the erosion in the ability or will of the Arab side to fulfil its part in ending Israeli control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank", the result was a sense of mounting Israeli "strategic inferiority on the level of its national security" in its regional vision (Reut 2007: 1). All of these discursive frameworks merit more precise explication.

The first point to consider is how Israeli security doctrine understood and viewed the inability of the Arab side to "fulfill its part" in meeting Israeli constructions of the Arab role in the Mediterranean. This is a euphemism for the broader role of the Arab states in either undermining or securing what Israeli planners understand as security vis-à-vis the Palestinian question. Their apprehension of the shifting regional conjuncture is in line with what used to be called the Steadfastness or Rejection Front. That front historically took the position of the Palestinian national movement as an important point of reference. The post-2006 "Resistance Network" is an evolution of that logic, continuing to reject a full normalization of relations with Israel – for example, the continued official enmity of Syria and Lebanon to Israel.

Israel has framed the threat to its vision and conceptualization of the Mediterranean, a notion which is based purely in terms of security, only partially in military terms. As the Report continued, using language that the Reut Institute further refined over time,

> The organizing logic of the Resistance Network is political: Israel's implosion – The present organizing logic of the Resistance Network is to cause the implosion of Israel. This would happen through a combination of internal political and social unrest, de-legitimization and international economic and political pressure similar to the processes that brought about the collapse of White South Africa or the USSR. (Reut 2007: 7)

Of course, White South Africa democratized, it did not collapse, which offers a certain perspective on how Israeli planners construct their securitized discourse of the eastern Mediterranean. Still, in contrast to this, Israel in 2006 still viewed (and for that matter, still does view) the two-state settlement as the foundation of the political settlement with the

Palestinians. However, such a foundation was made of material broadly unacceptable to the Palestinian populace: the "Clinton Peace Plan," an array of land-swaps, demilitarization, minimal refugee return, and non-contiguous territory, not based on international law governing either refugees or occupied lands, that the Palestinian leadership has historically been unable to convince its constituent population to accept. It is in this sense that in 2006 Israel began to be correctly apprehensive that there was no longer an "Arab side" that was able to do its part in "in ending Israeli control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank" (Reut 2007: 1). Of course, this was an exaggeration and partially a misreading, given trends in the wealthier regions of the Gulf, for example, towards increased normalization with Israel. But what Israel thought that such an Arab side had to do, to ensure what Israel understood as its security, was to accede to the terms of the Clinton Plan, which were fundamentally reproduced in the Arab Peace Initiative. Those terms themselves reflected Israeli security interests, but they did not reflect the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian national movement. More significantly, when the planners refer to the diminishing "ability [...] of the Arab side" to oversee an "ending [of] Israeli control over the Palestinian population in the West Bank," they specifically mean an Arab side willing to push through and legitimize Israeli-imposed terms of defeat (Reut 2007: 1). The mounting political and military strength and credibility of the "Axis of Resistance" were correctly understood as undermining the ability of the more "moderate" Arab states to push through such terms.

Furthermore, in Israel's securitized understanding of the region, the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian movement require political vehicles in order to acquire meaning as material facts. It is in this sense that the Reut document understands that the "military logic of the Resistance Network is secondary" (Reut 2007: 7). The Network, they correctly apprehend, is not oriented to direct military assault on Israel. Rather, it is oriented to giving political institutions and movements such as the Palestinian resistance movements in the Gaza Strip, and behind them Hezbollah and Lebanon more broadly, and Syria, a sufficiently strong shield to advance legitimate political claims in the political and international arena. Such claims, founded minimally on international law and the 1967 line, if not entirely against Zionism, threaten Israel since it premises its safety on having uncontested access to land and resources over the Green line. Give the existence of these forces, Israel is unable to create "military or political achievements [...] that could guarantee its existence as a Jewish and democratic state" (Reut 2007: 7). Here in the Israeli imaginary, the question of the non-Palestinian Mediterranean component of the Resistance Network and that of the Palestinian component of the Network are actually one question, since Israel's ability to inflict a sharp enough defeat on the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip – or to simply impose a fait accompli on the West Bank – is limited by the support the Network is capable of offering to resistance movements in the West Bank, as well as the ratchet effect that support has on the Palestinian Authority and the terms it is able to sell to the population. The PA finds it more difficult to accept Israeli impositions, and certainly to convince the Palestinian population in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Diaspora that such impositions are in fact necessary concessions, when the Hamas movement and the remainder of the Palestinian national movement steadfastly reject the negotiation strategy of the Palestinian Authority and Fateh, as well as its capitulation to Israeli rejection of even minimal Palestinian national demands.

Furthermore, continuing with the Israeli understanding of such forces and their constituent role in constructing the Israeli vision of the Mediterranean, these actors, at the verbal and discursive level, have partially promoted the "One-State Solution of establishing a Palestinian/Arab/

Islamic state in place of Israel" (Reut 2007: 7). For Iran this is certainly the case. Hezbollah's position has a degree of strategic fluidity. Its 2009 strategy document, for example, does not advocate a one-state solution. In practice, Hezbollah has historically stated that it accepts the guidance of the Palestinian national movement vis-à-vis a long-term settlement. More recently, the movement has announced the death of the two-state settlement and called for continued resistance. In the current context, such a stance certainly has the effect of staking out a bargaining position, and makes it more difficult for the PA to accept Israeli negotiating terms. Finally, given that Israeli security visions, based on Israeli irredentism and Israel's right to dispose of its internal Palestinian population in the manner it sees fit and along ethnocratic lines, are threatened by any challenge to such a political vision or the principles upon which it stands, Israeli security is constantly threatened by what the Reut document refers to as "fundamental de-legitimization". This is the argument that the "The Resistance Network denies Israel's right to exist by rejecting the Jewish right to self-determination and challenging the moral foundations of Israel" (Reut 2007: 7). Given that the Israeli security establishment in its construction of the arena correctly understands the regional and pan-Arab implications and entanglements of the Palestinian cause, such delegitimization again provokes a security challenge to the extent, certainly real, that such ideologies find an audience amongst other regional populations.

Thus both Hezbollah and behind it, Syria and Iran, are fundamental challenges to Israel's securitized vision of the Mediterranean. For this reason, Israel constructs these actors as fundamental antagonists, while at the same time understanding that public intervention in Arab conflicts stands the risk of unifying Arab public opinion *against* Israel – as was clear amidst nearly universal regional acclaim for Hezbollah's military victory over Israel. As Israeli security analysts note,

> Israel has an interest in preventing the consolidation and strengthening of Iran's posture through its proxies in areas close to Israel. Israel is also eager to prevent the transfer of advanced Russian weapons – especially air defense systems – to Syrian forces commanded by Assad and the pro-Assad coalition, Iran and Hezbollah. (Orion and Dekel 2016b: 4)

"Proxy" strongly understates the degree of operational and ideological independence the Hezbollah movement, especially, has, vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, the statement makes clear that Israel views a stronger and militarily more capable Syrian Arab Army and Hezbollah as antithetical to an ideal conception of its interests as they constitute the larger securitized Mediterranean. Indeed, despite Israel's avowed decision to not openly intervene in internal Arab conflicts after the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, it still reserves the right to intervene when military capacities become overweening, capable of nullifying Israeli martial capacities and thereby imperilling Israel's ability to dictate the political agenda in the region. For that reason, the analysts continue, "the supply of advanced air defense systems to the Assad forces or Hezbollah might drag Israel into the campaign, should it decide to prevent this by means of a preemptive strike" (Orion and Dekel 2016b: 4). Here Israeli security is explicitly conditioned on and understood as based on socio-political arrangements outside historic Palestine, and is understood as ranging beyond Israel's armistice lines – swelling out into freedom of military action in abutting sovereign states.

This orientation and understanding of the Mediterranean as a space of threats-to-be-neutralized is also visible in Israel's approach to Syria. As Amos Yadlin (2016: 248) notes, "From Israel's perspective, the best scenario is the disappearance of the Assad regime, along with the removal of Iran and Hezbollah from Syria on the one hand, and the defeat of the Islamic State and the establishment of a moderate Sunni regime in Syria on the other".

As the son of Ariel Sharon has explained,

> The fall of Assad's regime would bring Islamic State to our borders – and that's a problem. But it would also be a fatal blow for Hezbollah. Without the Assad regime and the Hezbollah-Syria-Iran axis, the threat from Lebanon would fade significantly. It won't happen overnight, but it will happen for sure. [...] This is not to say that we would welcome the presence of the Islamic State lunatics on our border; but it's certainly no worse, and may even be better, than the presence there of Hezbollah, which is the Lebanese proxy of the Iranian regime. (Sharon 2015)

Or in the words of Michael Oren, "If we have to choose the lesser of evils here, the lesser evil is the Sunnis over the Shiites [...] who are they fighting against? They fighting against the proxy with Iran [...] So from Israel's perspective [...] if there has got be an evil that's going to prevail, [...] let the Sunni evil prevail (Aspen 2014).

As he continues, "Israel has got to guard its borders [...] we are going to have to hunker down for a while," thus echoing the anti-solutionism framework which other Israeli security officials and analysts likewise embrace. Thus although some insist that Israel prefers the "cold peace" manned by the sentinel of the Syrian government, Moshe Yaalon clarifies that Israeli security understandings are tied to keeping a disjuncture between internal strategic aspirations and the type of public rhetoric that expresses, however partially, such aspirations. As he writes, "Today, the Israeli government has deliberately adopted a neutral stance by not taking a public position on whether Bashar al-Assad should remain in power in Syria" (Yaalon 2016). Silence in the Syrian arena is thus a decision meant to prevent any perception that Israel in fact is full-bore against the Syrian government. Given the legitimating role of opposition to Israel in Arab politics, open Israeli mobilization against Syria would counter-intuitively *menace* Israeli security by mobilizing even sectarian Arab populations against it, particularly in so-called "moderate" states such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, where there are extant disjunctures between official policy and popular opinion, in spite of insistent anti-Palestinian propaganda.

This is in line with the Israeli conception of the Mediterranean as a securitized space which in turn requires it to imagine its allies as the "moderate" Sunni bloc. Such a bloc is "moderate" to the extent that it does not challenge Israeli unilateral management of the Palestinian question, and indeed moves openly toward peace – or normalization of relations – with Israel, before Israel has settled the question of Palestine on terms acceptable to the Palestinian population. This strategic orientation – of replacing unfriendly governments with friendly ones, through direct violence if necessary – has occurred, according to Yadlin (2016: 248), in some arenas of the Syrian territory, although he notes that it is "unlikely" for this model to spread across the breadth of Syria. "This model has materialized in limited form in the Golan Heights, where moderate Sunni rebels are successfully combating both the Assad regime and the Islamic State". This establishment of an Israeli security buffer in the area is now part of Israeli regional planning. To that end, Israel requires coordination with Russia, through the United States, to

"continue to enforce its security red lines – most notably, preventing both the establishment of Hezbollah forces in the region adjacent to the border in the Golan Heights and the penetration of Iranian influence in the region" (Dekel and Winter 2016: 4). Such coordination is required in order to prevent any accidental crossing of trip-wires that might incite an escalation.

Israel's securitization of the eastern Mediterranean is commonly counterpoised to the growth or power of "radical" Islamists. How Israel views the Syrian arena clarifies that this is not the case, and allows for a broader depth of insight into the Israeli conceptualization of "moderate" within its security discourse. In this case, Israel has carried out a mostly covert policy of providing medical aid to fighters in Syria that are certainly not "moderate" in terms of ideological colouration (Winstanley 2015). Furthermore, Israeli conception of its security has led to its continuously interdicting weapons supplies traversing Syrian soil to Lebanon, and there are numerous incidents of bombing of installations of the Syrian Arab Army that remain unaccounted for, but are widely perceived to have been the work of Israel. Thus at the very least Israel's security vision and construction of the region, as articulated in major broadsheets and by numerous government officials, has been "let them bleed", under the assumption that a severely weakened Syrian state is a less effective member of the Resistance Network than one at the full height of its military capacities. And a less effective, economically debilitated Syria (SCPR 2013) is less likely to be able to muster the diplomatic heft to ratchet up delegitimization strategies against Israel. In this way, Israeli orientation to and construction of both Hezbollah and Syria reflect tactics of weakening, the default option when the degree of ideological cohesion within an enemy state is too high for Israel to move such a state from the enemy to the friend camp. That Israeli security visions of the Mediterranean have led it to carry out policies which have resulted in the partial hardening of the armed forces, providing massive accounts of combat training, and inciting Hezbollah to reportedly set up a branch in Syria, has not meant that Israeli security has been oriented towards a weakening of the armed threat on its northeast frontier – so long as one keeps in mind that Israel does not always get what it wants. An example of Israel successfully moving a state from the "enemy" to the "ally" camp, and a crucial set-piece for Israeli Mediterranean security conceptualizations, is Egypt, the country to which we now turn.

3. EGYPT

Egypt is the major Arab population centre, the crèche of Nasserism, and historically what Israel has considered its major security concern within the Mediterranean region, and thus a major constituent element of Israel's broader construction of the region itself. After the 1967 military defeat of the Arab armies by Israel, Nasserism and to a lesser extent pan-Arabism were no longer unifying and progressive regional ideologies. With the Camp David accords, Israeli planners constructed Egypt as having undergone a transition from the "enemy" camp to the "friend" camp, while at the same time undergoing economic changes which rendered it internally weaker and less able to confront Israel. And without Egypt the Arab states had no credible military option against Israel.

The fall of Mubarak and the ascendancy of the Morsi government initially provoked disquiet in stable Israeli geopolitical renderings of this massive state on the southern Mediterranean littoral, as Israel saw its security situation deteriorating. Thus the subsequent move from Morsi, with

his need to palliate the interests of the Hamas movement, linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, to the renewed dictatorship under Sisi, has, in the words of Ephraim Kam (2016: 127), "been a good period in Egypt-Israel relations, with the nations' respective interests converging more than ever before. Israeli sources say that relations with Egypt have never been better". Israeli securitized conceptions of the Mediterranean, vis-à-vis Egypt, call for micro-level security coordination (macro-level coordination is ensured by the peace treaty) alongside support for the Egyptian security apparatus, the guarantor of the Camp David Treaty. Such local security coordination involves Israeli support for Egyptian counterinsurgency efforts within the Egyptian Sinai, as well as the intelligence sharing needed to shore up such efforts. Israel's acceding to an Egyptian military presence in excess of that allowed under the treaty is also part of this effort. Even more central in this context is Egypt's orientation to Hamas, part of the Resistance Network as a military force that can bodyguard political demands. In this respect, Israeli's construction of its regional interests and of the Mediterranean writ large means that it views it as a massive boon to its security that the Sisi government understands Hamas, and especially its military branch, "as a terrorist organization and an enemy, representing the link connecting the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas's parent organization) to tribal and Islamist groups in northern Sinai and cooperating with them" (Kam 2016: 128). In fact, the Egyptian courts decided to declare Hamas a terrorist organization in February 2015. The decision was later reversed with improvements in Sisi–Hamas relations, a response to deteriorating Hamas–Iran relations. That deterioration resulted from what Iran felt to be Hamas's deleterious neutralism vis-à-vis the Resistance Network in the Syrian conflict – as well as Hamas's decision to decamp from Damascus near the beginning of the conflict. Such moves have strained the bonds tying Hamas to the Resistance Network, and have been counterpoised against increasing flows of funds from Iran to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine as well as Islamic Jihad, although the latter too has come under strain (Balousha 2013).

Nevertheless, as Kam (2016: 128) notes, "the regime's fundamental stance toward the organization still stands". This has been reflected in the continued Egyptian decision to maintain the state of siege and economic and material isolation which the Egyptian governments have imposed on the Hamas movement for a decade now. Most concretely, this has meant that Egypt has destroyed the commercial and military supply tunnels traversing the Gaza Strip–Egypt boundary line, and cut down on transit between the Egyptian Sinai and the Gaza Strip (Kam 2016: 128). According to Egyptian reports, the Egyptian forces destroyed nearly 1,900 tunnels between 2011 and 2015, with a noticeable upswing occurring during the period since the Sisi regime took power. Egypt justifies this destruction of the tunnels as part of its security coordination, and crackdown "against Islamist militants" in the Sinai Peninsula more broadly – which is also part-and-parcel of Israeli security strategy in the peninsula, a direct result of how Israeli constructs the Mediterranean and its interests therein (Shay 2016). Egypt, as the sovereign of the Sinai, has more capacity to shut down the tunnels, which are one of the lifelines for the military resistance in the Gaza Strip, than does Israel. This point exemplifies the limits of military force in counterinsurgency and population control as it contributes to Israeli security planning, and shows how tools like supply constriction – akin to the techniques of blockade and sanctions that the US imposes on Iran – can be even more effective means of containment.

Finally, the Israeli securitized construction of the Mediterranean is also based on its perceived need to remove Egypt from the front lines. Thus the Sisi regime's strong commitment to the peace treaty, given Egypt's economic, political and demographic weight, is viewed as a crucial

structuring element of Israel's broader regional vision. Adherence to the treaty is a line of continuity from the Mubarak regime to the Sisi regime, as a strategic asset for both. But in the discourse of Israeli security analysts, "Sisi shows a more positive attitude to normalization and stresses its inherent benefits to Egypt, not only in terms of security but also in the political and economic spheres" (Kam 2016: 128). Sisi returned the Egyptian ambassador to Israel in early 2016 (withdrawn during Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012), and in July of that year the Egyptian foreign minister made a visit to Israel – the first visit of this kind in nine years. Furthermore, the minister refused to cast Israeli actions towards the Palestinians as terrorism, in a meeting with high school students. Finally, there are economic–material relationships between the two states, which are constitutive of and subservient to the securitized Israeli construction of the Mediterranean. The Egyptian oil minister has emphasized the acceptability and legitimacy of importing gas from Israel, and has continued to push for a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, not as a form of pressure, but rather as a move towards permanent normalization of Israel's regional presence in its current form (Kam 2016: 129). Such actions from Egypt also have a ratchet effect on Israeli security, promoting, against the Resistance Network strategy of "delegitimization", a different moderate strategy of normalization. Thus Egypt's consistent adherence to the normalization framework encourages other Arab states to pursue a similar path, given Egypt's historic and current geopolitical, social and symbolic weight amongst Arab politics: "The fact that at present there is a quiet process of messages being exchanged between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and there are closer relations between Israel and other Gulf states, is certainly seen as positive by the Sisi regime" (Kam 2016: 129). This process is also about building a common front not merely with Israel, but also against Iran, amongst the Sunni states of the region.

However, Israel's broader conceptualization of the Mediterranean in general and Egypt in particular is also constituted by an understanding that the Mediterranean is a place of mercurial attitudes. Thus in the Israeli construction of the region, the Egyptians government's expressed interest in strengthening cooperation with Israel does not reflect the interests of substantial segments of the Egyptian public: "Elements such as the Islamic establishment, the trade unions, groups of leftists and Nasserites, and some of the intellectual and student groups still show hostility to Israel" (Kam 2016: 129). The peace treaty is not popular nor is it broadly accepted as a legitimizing instrument, and there is lingering frustration with Israel's technological and military power and its serial defeats of the Arab armies. This disjuncture, between regime action and popular sentiment, as a core element of how Israel understands and constructs its regional conjuncture, in fact adds to the strength and utility of the Sisi regime – by controlling the polity it is able to prevent the transformation of sentiment into political positioning. However, there is a longer game at play: the regime furthermore continues to attempt to showcase the benefits to Egypt of accepting Israel's regional presence and normalization with Israel, thereby hoping to carry out a slow transition of the mindset amongst the Egyptian people, and shift them into seeing Israel as less of a regional blight than they currently do. Nevertheless, Egypt is a crucial part of the "the new strategic arc [which] spans [from] Egypt in the south to Greece in the northwest" (Eran 2015: 1). This arc is linked organically to Israel's security planning vis-à-vis Cyprus and Turkey, two other neighbouring countries. The post-2010 slight deterioration of Israel's relationship with Turkey is tied tightly to Israel's decision to retrench with the other two eastern Mediterranean countries. It is to Israel's relationship with Turkey that we now turn.

4. Turkey, Cyprus and Greece

Turkey has long been a part of the broader NATO–Israeli eastern Mediterranean strategic arc, an arc that is a crucial component of Israel's construction of the Mediterranean region as a securitized space. It has also been a key component of Israel's "Periphery Doctrine", an understanding of the region based on Israel securing regional non-Arab allies to counterbalance the enmity of the Arab arc against it. Turkey and Iran were the only regional states to initially recognize Israel. The Iranian relationship shattered with the revolution overthrowing the Shah in 1979. It was only in the 2000s with the rise of the Erdogan government that Turkey's orientation to Israel – almost entirely at the discursive level – began to shift. The flotilla affair, when Israel attacked a humanitarian flotilla on its way to the Gaza Strip, which included Turkish citizens and ships, strongly soured links between Turkey and Israel.

However, Israeli–Turkish security coordination improved (trade coordination had never ceased) on 28 June 2016 with a normalization agreement between the two countries, thus partially reworking Turkey's role in Israel's construction and understanding of the Mediterranean, and shifting the geographies of that conception by moving Turkey from slight foe to friend. The subsequent coup delayed the vote in the Turkish parliament, but nevertheless, the removal of Turkey from any sort of overt antagonism to Israel has been crucial (Lindenstrauss 2017). As a senior military officer stated,

> The main matter in the agreement is providing immunity to Israel Defense Force soldiers from claims filed in the International Court of Justice. The other things in the agreement are connected to relations between ourselves and Turkey. They wanted us to lift the blockade on Gaza, and we rejected that. But we agreed to assist the population in Gaza. (cited in Alsaftawi 2016: 12)

Thus through this agreement, Turkey essentially acceded to Israel's conflict-management approach to the occupation of Palestine. It also accepted the reduction of the horizons of even Palestinian "rights" to what researcher Darryl Li (2008) has called "essential humanitarianism", or in other words the reduction of the Gaza Strip-dwelling subsection of the Palestinian population to a population needing help, development, but certainly none of the means needed for independent social development – and above all no control of its own relationships to the outside world (Li 2008). Nevertheless, at least until recently, Turkey and Israel have also been relatively aligned in their approach to geostrategic matters, although still in some sense below the pre-Erdogan levels of coordination. Such alignment sees Turkey maintaining an open border for the passage of rightwing mercenaries into the Syrian arena, agitating and warring for the disintegration of the Syrian state, and Israel carrying out policies of low-key humanitarian assistance oriented towards, at the minimum, a goal of keeping the conflict inflamed as long as possible, and thus eradicating what economist Linda Matar (2016: ix) calls Syria's "social defense" structures, or its schools, universities, infrastructure and healthcare system. In this manner, once again Palestine emerges as a keystone of how Israel constructs the broader eastern Mediterranean, as regional rightwing rulers such as Erdogan and, decreasingly, the Gulf States, delicately merge gestures of concern for Palestine towards a broader orientation of integration into regional security networks and arcs of which Israel is inevitably a crucial component.

Nevertheless, Turkey's slightly declining position in Israel's securitized conception of the Mediterranean has found its counterweight in the ascendance of Cyprus and Greece, the latter under the nominally social-democratic aegis of the SYRIZA government. As Eran (2016: 2) notes, "The differences in the relative importance of Turkey versus Greece and Cyprus notwithstanding, Israel clearly sees Greece and Cyprus as greatly balancing the damage caused by the ongoing depreciation of its relations with Ankara". Indeed, in a move that Israel certainly interpreted as lending credence to its construction of the Mediterranean as a region in need of securitization and which can only be understood, contained, and constituted in Israeli interests through a discourse of securitization, in late 2015 Greek Prime Minister and SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras visited Israel. The visit came amidst increasing civil society opposition to Israel that is increasingly taking the form of campaigns to cut off cultural and economic links under the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) banner. It is notable that Greek congress with Israel has not been restricted to the symbolic realm. In 2015, Israel's air force carried out two large exercises in the airspace of Greece, and in concert with the Greek air force, involving transport planes, helicopters, an intelligence plane and fighter jets. There are reports that joint exercises between Israel, Greece and Cyprus will occur in the near future, with the visit of Tsipras to Israel leading to decisions for ever-closer cooperation (Eran 2016: 2). Needless to say, the same orientations that affect Israeli security internal to the Arab world are also, albeit in a less linear way, reflected in the social composition and political leadership of Israel vis-à-vis states in the European periphery. Greece, for example, under a KKE leadership would be far less amenable to security coordination with Israel than under the social-democratic management of SYRIZA.

Cyprus is also part of Israel's new security orientation in the region, and part of how it constructs the region through maritime economic and security infrastructure. This is in accord with Israeli construction of the Mediterranean not merely as a securitized space, but also one where economic and infrastructural exchange is constitutive of that broader securitized vision. Netanyahu visited Cyprus (the first time an Israeli Prime Minister did so) in 2012. There was another one-day visit in July 2015. Natural gas is a key arena for coordination. Israel holds drilling concessions in Cypriot waters, and since economic exploitation of gas requires an associated infrastructure, Cyprus, situated at the crossroads of the region's potential gas grid, is an inevitable actor. Furthermore, research is currently occurring concerning shared electricity grids between Israel, Cyprus and Greece, fostering material links in the most literal way.

In all of this we see how Israel's regional securitization and securitized constructions of the Mediterranean go hand-in-hand with a construction of the EU as a marginal or border space, where economic flows are understood as components of a broader vision of Israel resting on elite economic links. Such links are crucial in creating "facts on the ground" which assure Israeli security, given the unease that Israel's treatment of the Palestinian population is provoking amongst Member State populations. The EU need for consensus in terms of security and foreign affairs votes enables both Cyprus and Greece to punch well above their weight politically, particularly in the event that increasing portions of their infrastructure or defence links are with Israel. The relevance of Cyprus and Greece in assuring what Israeli elites conceptualize as the role of the Mediterranean in the nation's security, and the role of security in turn in constituting the Mediterranean, comes clear when they are viewed as the gateway to the EU as well as political–territorial threads weaving Israel ever more tightly into the trading, commercial, defence and cultural fabric of the EU. While many of the dominant states of the EU, such as Germany, are not Mediterranean, economic powers such as Italy and France are.

So it is to overall Israeli security orientation to the EU, and vice-versa, that we now turn.

5. The European Union

Four departure points are crucial here for appreciating how Israeli construction of the EU mediates Israeli construction of the Mediterranean as a securitized space – as well as a space whose substance and stability rest on an EU friendly to Israel. The first is to keep clear that Israel's orientation to the question of Palestine is that "Israel should manage the conflict rather than trying to solve it" (Yaalon 2016). The second is that this position is out of step with the official EU position on the conflict, which is formal although not substantive commitment to the resolution of the Palestine question. The third is that the EU has both formal and substantive commitments to Israel in the realms of political relations, defence and commerce – especially the arms trade – and what are often identified as shared values between the European nation states and Israel. The fourth is that there are sharp and mounting disjunctures between popular opinion in the EU states and elite activity, which call into question the endurance of the first three points, and perhaps threaten to reverse their polarity in the long run.

It is against this background that Israeli planners construct their understanding of what they call the "extensive" European engagement with the Palestine question. Indeed, the EU governments, in the opinion of Israeli analysts, "have become ever more vocal and harsh in their criticism of the Israeli government concerning the peace process" (Steiner 2015). A few pension funds and cities have begun to seriously implement planks of the BDS call against Israel.

Israeli security planners view this with apprehension as they insist that the EU–Israeli relationship "rests on a solid foundations – values, shared history, solid interests, and common threats" (Steiner 2015). Security planners see the EU and by extension its southern Mediterranean states as sharing a plethora of strategic interests with Israel, including curtailing, "and if possible destroy[ing], both the production and the world export of violence and instability through terror, WMD and missile proliferation, and radical Islamism", maintaining "energy security", already the focus of infrastructure planning with Greece and Cyprus, and providing "maritime security along the main global shipping routes crossing, and adjacent to, the Middle East" (Steiner 2015). Furthermore, Israeli security, in the discourse, imaginary and vision of planners, hinges geopolitically on its alliance and alignment with the EU goals and visions. Planners, at the level of politics and strategic interests as they construct them, see no difference between Israel and the EU. Both, for example, share a similar interest in promoting both the war in Syria as well as the isolation of Hezbollah.

Such links are concrete in other ways as well. Defence and military coordination has long been essential between the EU, its Member States and Israel. The latter used to lean heavily on France for the supply of its armaments. Now, to some extent, the direction has reversed. Israeli defence conglomerates not only market their wares to EU markets, expansively understanding security as economic security, and thus profit, for the Israeli arms-industrial base, but also engage in joint projects with the EU enterprises. Rafael, an Israeli defence manufacturer, for example, in concert with EU counterparts, reworked the anti-tank missile system "Spike" for European militaries. The armed forces of an array of Mediterranean rim states such as Italy

and Spain purchased and used the device. Similarly, half of the Israeli exports of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones) go to the EU, part of what has catapulted Israel to world leadership in the drone-export market. Finally, Israeli growth more broadly hinges heavily on its commercial flows with Europe.

This is not merely one of the crucial ties which bind. It also shows a weak point from the perspective of Israeli security planners, part of how they understand EU–Israel ties as one of the constitutive elements of the Mediterranean as an arena to be securitized, and one of the primary reasons they consider EU BDS campaigns such a threat. They understand the EU relation to Israel as resting on unsteady trade flows, and thus a source, also, of potential insecurity. Trade flows are contingent on the population acquiescing to them, or at least not actively opposing them or demanding their reorientation. Thus boon can easily turn to burden if popular sentiment in the EU states, which is strongly against the occupation, and in some sectors in favour of a broader range of Palestinian rights, is able to have an effect on the policies of states as well as the commercial and investment decisions of EU conglomerates. Businesses' investment decisions are based on expected profit, and if popular pressure might compel them to end an investment in which considerable capital has been invested, they simply will not make such investment in the first place. Furthermore, higher-level EU state decisions such as military coordination and training, as in Greece, again rely on the population not rejecting such measures. To return to the language of the Reut document, in its revised version, they see the BDS campaigns as a tool for achieving a one-state settlement in Israel/ Palestine or at a minimum for putting sufficient economic and political pressure on Israel to force it to revise drastically its current "security" arrangements vis-à-vis the Palestinian population. Such pressure is understood as capable of working in concert (although not communication) with the political–military pressures emanating from the regional groups which oppose Israel and rely on military force to put teeth and backing in political programmes. With increased pressure from the EU populations – for example, in Spain, where dozens of municipalities have declared themselves "apartheid-free" zones – the northern and western Mediterranean coasts are becoming less and less friendly to Israeli interests and the attitude to Palestine its planners and elites associate with "security". At least at the popular level. At the elite level it is quite the opposite, with the EU states embracing Israel ever more closely amidst increasing polarization between the EU and the countries its governments have consistently opposed – among them Israel's antagonists.

Conclusion

This briefing has assessed the securitized manner in which Israel constructs its economic, military and diplomatic relationships with discrete states and geopolitical and political unions in the Mediterranean arena, as constitutive elements of how Israel constructs the Mediterranean more broadly.

It has also shown the braided effects of how Israel constitutes the Mediterranean writ large and the very local regional arena, viewing and constructing both as deeply securitized arenas. This overarching framework and vision both informs and justifies policy in crucial areas, ranging from trade and economic ties and flows with the northern Mediterranean littoral, to the intermingled understanding of the Golan as both a space that can only be understood as a securitized zone,

as well as a source of water – itself a material resource integral to Israeli security.

Finally, it has shown that Israeli elites conceptualize their vision of a securitized Mediterranean by grouping states into "foe" camps against which to war and "friend" camps with whom to trade. Furthermore, as the 1967 experience shows, war can be a mechanism for moving states from the foe camp to the friend camp, at least provisionally.

Israeli securitized conceptualizations of the Mediterranean turn on a precise articulation between how it relates to foes, and how it relates to friends. It aims to damage or delegitimize any social force, political movement or popular militia capable of forwarding or defending political demands which threaten the keystone of Israeli security policy, its existence as a "Jewish state", and as a complement to that, its refusal to accept even the minimalist standards of international law as a non-negotiable demand for a sustainable resolution to the Palestine question. When faced with such groups, Israel has sought their military defeat and aspires, especially in the case of Hamas, to their extirpation from the society from which they hail. Failing that, it has opted for a long-term strategy of containment, seeking to repress, disorganize, disarm and throttle the armed forces capable of defending political demands which Israel regards as untenable. Finally, it has sought the destruction through endless warfare of any full state structure which offers logistical, diplomatic or materiel support to the non-state armed groups which forward these demands – Syria most notably in the present moment, while Israeli belligerence towards Iran is longstanding. Israel further seeks to "turn" such forces, even amongst the Arab populations most resistant to accepting Israel's claim to be a "Jewish state". Thus it has sought to cultivate and ally with moderate Arab forces capable of containing or repressing popular pro-Palestinian sentiment.

In the EU and northern Mediterranean arenas, the areas Israel has long constructed as its natural allies, Israel continues to understand the region as constructed through a notion of security, leaning on uninterrupted if not strengthening and widening commercial, defence, arms and treaty arrangement between it and the EU states which are the Mediterranean's major economic and military centres. Israeli "security" in this sense rests on those states' ability to continue with business as usual, and thus furthermore to ignore or oppose any popular initiative towards breaking the flows which constitute Israel's lifeline in the region.

All of this finally turns on a nested set of arrangements whereby Israeli construction of the Mediterranean as a securitized space is intermingled with Palestinian insecurity; and the formal and symbolic commitment of EU states to at least minimal Palestinian national demands, is tensely coupled with a more substantive and historic decision to avoid using coercion, whether diplomatic, economic, or otherwise, to force Israel into even the slightest compliance with those demands. Such framing and discursive construction of the Mediterranean is a crucial part of Israel's identity and self-representation, and guides Israeli policy narratives and practices by constructing the region in terms of threats to be neutralized. Such findings also indicate that EU policies must be changed if they are to create the Mediterranean as a less securitized space as well as one where EU policies more closely match the perspectives and outlooks of the EU populations. Such is the tableau of Israel's construction of the Mediterranean for the foreseeable future.

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