EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: There are many implications to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's impressive presentation in which he revealed the Iranian plan to turn itself into a nuclear superpower. One of them is the message to the Arab world that Israel is determined to stop this process, which it views as disastrous. There is no doubt that one of the presentation’s main target audiences was the leaders of the Sunni Arab countries.

One of the main challenges of Israel’s foreign policy since its establishment has been, and still is, achieving peace with its neighbors. In Israel’s early years, peace was limited to gaining the Arab states’ recognition of the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

After the 1967 Six-Day War and especially the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, another objective was added to Jerusalem’s peace strategy: a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Dialectically, the current crisis in the region actually creates an opportunity for strategic rapprochement between the Arab states and Israel, at the end of which is a comprehensive Jewish-Arab peace.

This possibility, which has not existed since the outbreak of the conflict about a century ago, may be possible according to the rule that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend.” The Iranian threat opens up possibilities that were not available in the past.

A misconception that has taken root in Western liberal political culture is that peace is achieved when parties to a conflict reach a better recognition of one another. The best example of this thinking is supposedly the regional peace that has prevailed in Europe since World War II. Europe, torn apart by religious, ethnic, and interstate conflicts for hundreds of years, has finally reached a state...
of calm and unity because the community members understood the horrors of the war and therefore decided to put an end to the bloodshed.

The truth is quite different. It was the Soviet threat from the East that forced Western European countries to unite under the American umbrella. Indeed, the NATO alliance preceded the establishment of the European Common Market, which developed into the European Community that became the European Union (EU).

The Middle East of nation-states is now undergoing processes similar to those of Europe. Ethnic, religious, and interstate conflicts are dwarfed by the Iranian threat, which is headed by a Shiite militant religious leadership. The Arab states, most of which are Sunni, are anxiously watching a country with an imperial past that is close to developing nuclear weapons. Tehran, which foresaw this Sunni anxiety, is trying to inflict it on the other non-Sunni state in the region as well: the Jewish state.

So far, this move has not worked. It appears that at this stage, Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt are not convinced that the Jewish threat is worse to the Shiite. This is a good start.

This dialectical thinking is not only theoretical; it is realistic. Israeli Arabs, as well as the Palestinian leadership, have begun to recognize and even speak out against the possibility of a strategic alliance between Israel and several Sunni Arab states. Concerns can be found among Arab members of the Knesset and the Palestinian leadership who fear that such an alliance will translate into pressure to give up their aspirations against the Jewish state.

Lord Palmerston, the British prime minister in the mid-nineteenth century, was quoted as saying that Britain has neither permanent allies nor permanent enemies but permanent interests. This logic is largely true in the Israeli context. At the end of the 1950s, Ben-Gurion initiated the "Periphery Alliance" with Iran and Turkey; since then, those allies have become enemies. Instead, a door is opening to the Arab world today. This rapprochement will be a more significant contribution to achieving peace than concessions made to the Palestinian Authority.

While the Palestinians understand the danger they face from a rapprochement between Israel and the Arab states in light of the Iranian threat, Europe is caught up in the concept of liberal doctrines that stem from the "conflict resolution" approach, which believes in mediation, compromise, and the application of international law to international politics.
The Europeans are unwilling to admit that it was only the Russian threat that brought them closer to one another and ended a bloody history. It appears that the rough and unsophisticated President Trump understands the logic of alliances better than the continent where the theory of international politics developed. At the center of that logic is the rationale of the balance of power.

There is no certainty that the understanding that the Iranian threat is greater than that of Israel, and hence that an Israeli-Arab alliance is wise, will not be undermined. In parallel with the creation of coalitions against imperialism, there exist processes of geopolitical strategy called "bandwagoning": countries that cannot face the expansion of another state tend to "bandwagon" with the hegemonic state. Threatened countries will join the wagon train when they cannot find a potential ally.

America's abandonment of the Middle East and perceived Israeli weakness could create such a situation for countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The Israeli attempt to prevent Iran's growing military buildup in Syria, as well as the exposure of the Iranian nuclear program by Prime Minister Netanyahu to the rest of the world, strengthens the image in the Arab capitals of Israeli determination to curb Iranian expansion. Similarly, the departure of the US from the Iranian nuclear agreement of July 2015 will most likely strengthen the readiness of the Sunni Arab states to remain in the anti-Iran coalition.

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