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ISRAEL INSTITUTE MAGAZINE

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR ISRAEL?

After summer conflict, experts debate the way forward

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LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2014

Building a Community of Israel Experts



IN THIS ISSUE:

Examining Israel

Experts discuss Israel's policies, laws and regional challenges



Welcome to the first issue of *Israel Institute Magazine*! The Institute was founded in 2012 in a partnership between Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation in order to expand the field of Israel Studies and enhance knowledge of modern Israel. The Institute does not engage in political activism or advocacy. Rather, we aspire to advance excellence in scholarship, as well as to promote high quality resources for professors, students and others curious about Israel to study the country in a deep and well-informed way. We believe that our mission can best be achieved through robust support for exceptional, academically rigorous analysis on a range of topics, and the Institute partners with elite universities, think tanks and cultural institutions on a variety of programs in order to strengthen the development of a broad and multi-faceted field of study related to Israel.

Israel Studies is an interdisciplinary field that draws on experts who examine the country through numerous different lenses, from the social sciences and law to the humanities, cultural studies and the arts. Taken together, these experts illustrate the myriad ways that research on Israel can be relevant to the broader pool of knowledge on domestic, regional and global subjects, not only in the Middle East but around the world. The magazine that you are holding showcases the range of disciplines and topics of study represented in Israel Studies.

In these pages you will find articles about the Institute's solo initiatives and collaborations. You can read about this past summer's Leadership Summit, an event that brought together a group of Israel Studies leaders from around the globe, specializing in academia, the policy world and the arts. You will also find articles by several Israel Institute

grantees discussing recent Israel-focused research, as well as profiles of Institute-affiliated scholars and artists teaching at U.S. and European campuses.

This magazine also attempts to contribute to knowledge of Israel and the field of Israel Studies beyond our specific programs, through the introduction of several regular columns: Our book review section – in this issue, an analysis of Professor Guy Ben-Porat's award-winning book on secularism in Israel – seeks to highlight recently published scholarship on Israel. Meanwhile, our "State of Israel" feature addresses Israeli current events. The violence that engulfed Israel and Gaza this summer was underway as this article was being written. In this issue, in an effort to understand "what's next" for the region, we have turned to leading think tank experts who work with the Institute to get a first cut of what the events of this summer mean for Israel going forward. And for a wider historical perspective of regional issues, be sure to read the column of our president, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich. In this issue, he looks at the so-called "New Middle East," a term that has evolved over two decades, most recently in the turmoil of the past few years.

Finally, as you should expect from a magazine such as this, you will find a comprehensive description of Institute programs, as well as a section of "News & Notes" to keep you up to date on our recent activities and keep you informed of opportunities that may be relevant to you.

I hope you enjoy the magazine and look forward to our future issues!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ariel Roth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Ariel Ilan Roth
Executive Director, Israel Institute

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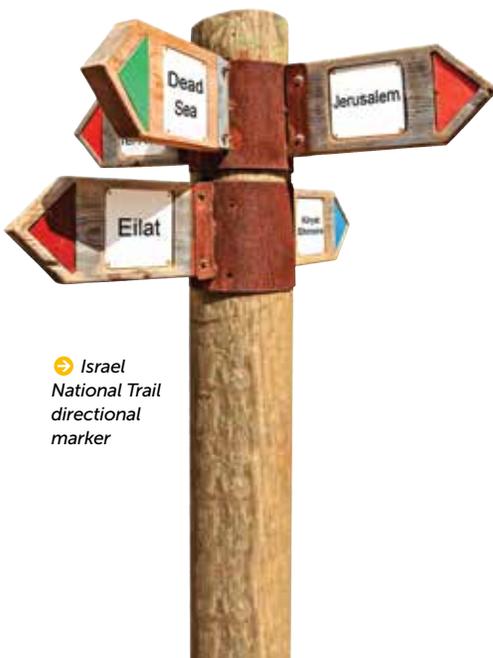
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☞ Israel National Trail directional marker

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📌 *Amb. Itamar Rabinovich,
Israel Institute President*

Israel and the

The pattern of regional politics in the Middle East has changed dramatically in the 21st century, particularly in the violent turmoil of the past few years. In this chaotic context, Israel faces many challenges but also potential opportunities.

BY AMBASSADOR ITAMAR RABINOVICH

The term “New Middle East” is ever changing. It was given currency by the title of Shimon Peres’ 1993 book in which he argued that a political diplomatic peace between Israel and the Arabs was not a final but an interim goal.

The real challenge facing the region, he argued, was the discrepancy between limited resources and an exploding population. Political peace, he proceeded, should enable Israel and the Arab world to collaborate in building a new Middle East, a region predicated on economic development and growth. The book was not well received in the Arab world where the dominant view held that such economic cooperation would in practice become an instrument of Israeli domination.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the emergence of “a new New Middle East” took place. It was defined by several fresh developments, primarily the new role assumed by Turkey and Iran. These two successor states of the Turkish and Persian empires that had dominated the Middle East for centuries had played relatively marginal roles in the Middle East during much of the 20th century. Turkey looked west toward Europe and Iran was

preoccupied with the Soviet threat and by domestic problems. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 had transformed Iran’s outlook on the region. It was determined to export its revolution, and countries like Lebanon became the arena of a massive Iranian investment. But it was only in 2003 that the destruction of Saddam Hussein’s regime removed the chief obstacle to its expansion. It was also at about that time that Iran’s nuclear program was given a fresh impetus. Iran’s quest for regional hegemony became manifest and ominous. In Turkey, Erdogan’s rise to power established the first durable Islamist government in that country. Turkey’s rejection by Europe reinforced the new government’s decision to seek compensation in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. The combined effect of these developments was a new role played in the Middle East by two large, powerful, Muslim, non-Arab states that changed the face of the regional arena.

The new century’s second decade brought with it profound changes. The hopes generated in late 2010 and early 2011 by the “Arab Spring” were dashed soon thereafter, but some of its immediate consequences remained important: the fall of Mubarak’s regime in Egypt, the outbreak

“New Middle East”

of the Syrian civil war and a vague, pervasive change that the domestic status quo in much of the Arab world was not acceptable to the majority of the population. The “Arab Spring” was replaced by the “Arab Turmoil,” the collapse of several Arab states – Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and, in a different fashion, Lebanon. Egypt was stabilized by General Sisi’s takeover, but the conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood was suspended rather than terminated. The impact of these developments was enhanced by international trends, most significantly the Obama administration’s new view of the Middle East. Washington shifted its focus to the Asia Pacific region. It did not lose all interest in the Middle East, but the latter became less important to Obama’s policy planners, as America’s dependence on Middle Eastern oil has declined. There is evidence of fatigue with the arena that has produced too many American failures, two costly failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a series of failed diplomatic efforts in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. President Obama is determined not to be drawn into another significant military involvement in the Middle East. But as the tragic civil war in Syria has amply demonstrated, failure to help the moderate secular opposition in 2012 only served to deliver large parts of Syria (and Iraq) into the hands of the radical, jihadist Islamic State organization.

The old pattern of regional politics has vanished. There is no comprehensive new order. But there are new possibilities and prospects. Some of them are negative. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza are three radical, Islamist organizations well entrenched and in control of territory and advanced weapons systems. Turkey and

Qatar support the Muslim Brotherhood (and the affiliated Hamas). Iran is Hizbullah’s patron and its shadow is cast across the region. But there are countervailing forces. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other moderate Arab states are quite eager to collaborate with Israel. Israel’s ability to provide its neighbors with natural gas and desalinated water is a welcome new development. A hostile Turkey sends hundreds of trucks through Israel to the Gulf using Israel as a substitute for Syria. Israeli leaders and policy planners look at these developments and are toying with notions of regional peace and new alliances and partnerships. But there is an elephant in the room – the Palestinian issue. Regional peace is not the escape route from the Palestinian issue. But if Israel addresses the issue squarely and is willing to move along towards its resolution, in partnership with regional actors and with the Palestinian Authority, the current version of the New Middle East could become a blessing rather than a curse. ▲

Itamar Rabinovich

- Founding President of the Israel Institute
- Former Ambassador of Israel to the United States and chief negotiator with Syria
- Former President of Tel Aviv University
- Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University
- Distinguished Global Professor at New York University
- Non-Resident Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution
- Recent books include *The Lingering Conflict: Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* (2011) and *The View from Damascus* (2009)
- Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles



Remaining articles from this issue of the magazine will be coming online soon.

Stay tuned!