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THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: OLD ACTORS, NEW KEYS

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Abstract:

The new regional conformation initiated with the Arab Spring in the whole Middle East since the beginning of this year poses a challenge to the main actors involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This document presents a complete summary of the new circumstances that nowadays influence and define the development of one of the most decisive conflicts for the security and stability of the entire International Community.

Keywords:

Arab spring, Palestinian statehood bid, Israel, Turkey, Egypt.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the Arab revolutions initiated the configuration of a new order in the Middle East. The exit of Ben Ali out of Tunisia and the fall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt tip the scales towards a change of structure in the whole region. The influence of the wind of change in the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been an exception. The new geopolitical configuration that can be inferred from the new regional order that is being created little by little is defining a new situation and new conditions for all the actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is a complex conflict that has filled the pages of the media for more than six decades; it does not have a steady course of action and it has not been solved yet. Nowadays, in a latent scenario where events are happening continually, there are some factors that in a few months have made it possible to talk about a key moment for the future of the conflict and the whole region.

Moreover, the wave of changes that is shaking the Middle East also represents a new political turning point that enables the International Community to implement changes and a true mediation for the conflict. The importance of this conflict influences the stability and relations of all the countries of the region; it has a big impact in the cohesion within the Arabic and Islamic world and at the same time it determines its attitude towards the Western world¹.

In this non-linear conflict, the Arab revolutions offer new conditions and pose new challenges to all the actors that are involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is a key moment when the two main actors, Israeli and Palestinian, are getting ready simultaneously, but each one in a very different way, to face the challenges that the new regional structure poses. In this lively context, the new circumstances have made that both sides of the conflict are more focused than ever on the United Nations General Assembly that will take place on September 23rd, in which Palestine might formally request full membership of the United Nations.

¹ El conflicto Árabe-Israelí: nuevas expectativas. Chapter 1. El conflicto árabe-israelí en el ámbito de la seguridad internacional, by Jesús Argumosa, page 10, CESEDEN Monograph Series, 87. 2006.

This document is not aimed at simplifying the conflict but at presenting a complete summary of the new circumstances that currently influence and delimit the development of one of the most decisive conflicts for the security and stability of the whole International Community. It is a deep analysis exercise in which the main objects of study are the new regional situation and the most recent events: on the one hand, the Palestinian request for full membership of the United Nations has awakened again Palestinian nationalism and has created a historical opportunity for the Palestinian to make listen their demands worldwide; on the other hand, Israel is getting adapted to a new geopolitical scenario with a new surge of violence in the south of the country, a new political orientation in Egypt and Turkey, or the drifting Syrian revolution. All the points mentioned are important and it is vital to study them in order to understand the current state of the conflict and the immediate prospects for the future in light of the decisive United Nations General Assembly.

THE AWAKENING OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

After four intense years of separation and division at the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by Hamas, and the West Bank, in the hands of Al Fatah, this spring came the Palestinian reconciliation that would finally bring some peace to the divided Palestinian nationalism. On April 27th 2011, the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, driven by the revolutionary movements all across the region and mediated by the Egyptian authorities², was confirmed. This agreement has driven popular pressure to a new nationalism supported by a region whose people are agitated and looking forward some advance in the halted situation in Palestine.

Given the increasing popular pressure, Mahmud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority (PA), supported by the majority of the Palestinian and having reached a reconciliation agreement with his main political rival, has decided to carry and request for full membership of the UN at the United Nations General Assembly that will take place on September 23rd 2011. Palestinian authorities are planning to request recognition of their State, including Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The West Bank and East Jerusalem have been controlled since 1967 —and are still controlled— by Israeli forces.

The petition is the formal step that the PA has chosen to improve its status and become the United Nations' member State number 194. The PLO has observer status in the United

² Fatah and Hamas sign a reconciliation deal. Al Jazeera English. 27th April 2011: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/2011427152119845721.html>

Nations since 1974. In order to become a full member State of the United Nations, Palestine will need the backing of the 15 member States of the UN Security Council and then the approval in a final vote at the United Nations General Assembly. If this happened, the decision would be in the hands of the 193 member States: Palestine's full membership of the UN State³ would have to be approved by 2/3 of the member States. If that option was vetoed by the Security Council, Palestine could still be recognized as an observer State without voting rights. If the US vetoed that option, the Palestine delegation would try as well to be recognized as an observer State.

The Palestinian request for full membership of the UN is the most important recent step towards the recognition of Palestine that the International Community must decide. Since 1993, when the Oslo Agreements were signed by Israeli and Arab and the current PA was created, there has not been any advance due to the standstill of the talks. If this request for full membership was approved and Palestine was recognized as a member State or as an observer State without voting rights, apart from the legal consequences that it would entail, there would be some political implications whose repercussion would be essential to solving the conflict.

Firstly, the legal recognition of Palestine would enable the new State to take Israel to the international courts and start an international protest campaign against the Israeli control of some territories since 1967. In addition, if Palestine was given full UN membership, the renowned United Nations Resolution 242 –which included the withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied in the Six-Day War – would be boosted.

However, if Palestine was given full UN membership, the territorial concessions or the policy of Israeli settlements would not be the only the factors to be negotiated. There would be other key factors that both parts would need to discuss, such as the double role of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine, the management of water resources, the security of the territories of the new State or the status of Palestine refugees, among others.

To reach that point, it is necessary that the intense diplomatic campaign carried out by the Palestine delegation is capable of fighting the US veto, as well as the Israeli counter-campaign, which is aimed at preventing that Palestine is given full UN membership against time.

³ Palestinians to present statehood bid to UN general assembly by Harriet Sherwood published on the Guardian, 14th August 2011: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/14/palestinian-statehood-un-general-assembly>

The negative response of the United States to the Palestinian full membership bid has been clear: the US has stated its intention to veto any unilateral decision that has not been negotiated with the Israeli counterpart. The US administration campaign is currently focused on avoiding that the vote at the United Nations General Assembly takes place. The US previous veto at the UN Security Council, which is very likely, would not stop the vote that would enable the recognition of Palestine as an observer State; this would imply, in turn, an improvement of the Palestine international status and would give Palestine access to some bodies of the international organisms⁴.

The diplomatic actions carried out by the United States, Israel and Europe in order to resume peace talks have not succeeded to convince the Palestinian leader. Last September 16th, Abbas made things clear during a televised address: he supported his own decision of applying for UN membership following his speech at the General Meeting of September 23th⁵. In this way, Abbas closed momentarily any alternative of Palestine becoming an observer State; he decided to face up in first place the possible veto of the UN Security Council, instead of using other diplomatic ways to be recognized as a State.

The US campaign, which has been more intense during the last few weeks, is aimed at dissuading Mahmud Abbas from presenting the bid to the UN Security Council; this campaign is also aimed at trying to reduce in a diplomatic way the support of most of the countries that, should the UN vote take place, would be in favor of recognizing Palestine. In this way, the speech leaves the prospects for changing Abbas' mind before the United Nations General Assembly in the hands of a last-minute proposal by the Middle East Quartet, formed by Russia, the UN, the United States and Europe. At this moment, neither the talks of the Middle East Quartet nor the talks of the American diplomacy with the Palestine and Israeli counterpart have succeeded to stop the Palestinian bid⁶.

Furthermore, the Arab League fully supports the decision of applying for the recognition of a Palestinian State. In the light of the events that are happening in the whole region, this organization gives its full support to the new diplomatic strategy of Abbas; the Arab League also considers that this strategy fits perfectly the demands of the Arab Spring. Thus, in the summit of May 2011 and later in the Arab League meeting in Qatar, in July 2011, the

⁴ US is appealing to Palestinians to Stall UN Vote. NY Times, 3rd September 2011:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/world/middleeast/04mideast.html>

⁵ Abbas: Palestinians to seek full UN membership. Haaretz, 16th September 2011:

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/abbas-palestinians-to-seek-full-un-membership-1.384943>

⁶ Las potencias intentan enfriar el afán palestino de ser un Estado de la ONU, 19th September 2011:

http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/potencias/intentan/enfriar/afan/palestino/ser/Estado/ONU/elpeuint/20110919elpeuint_15/Tes

organization showed publicly its support of the Palestinian statehood bid, whose capital⁷ would be Jerusalem.

The fact that the peace talks have been standstill since September 2010 is the main reason for the PA to seek the recognition of the United Nations, but the ideological role that the Arab revolutions have played is also very important. In addition, a denial by the United States or the International Community may constitute a risk of becoming the ideological motor of future conflicts in the area.

However, the Palestinian full membership bid will have to face up different weaknesses and challenges, such as the diplomatic opposition of the United States, Israel and other countries, which could prevent the success of the Palestinian bid. At the end of August, the US Republican Party presented a legislative proposal that would cut the US financial aid to the PA if the bid for full membership turned out to be successful. Following the announcement of the Palestinian bid⁸ to the UN Security Council, both the United States and Israel have reaffirmed their opposition to that movement. The main concern of the United States is the fact of having to use its right of veto before the whole International Community, if the Palestinian bid finally gets to the UN Security Council⁹.

Secondly, the weakness of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement signed on May 2011 poses a big challenge for the implantation of a Palestinian State. The reconciliation agreement engaged to a series of conditions to guide the Palestinian to free legislative elections in a year time as well as the constitution of a coalition transitional government. Currently, the difficulties and the lack of accuracy prevent a complete cohesion of all the Palestine factions that signed the reconciliation agreement for the Palestinian bid for full membership of the UN.

In this sense, just a week before the United Nations General Assembly, some media published statements by some leaders of the Islamic Jihad and Hamas in which they made

⁷ La Liga Árabe pedirá que se reconozca al Estado Palestino y su pertinencia a la ONU. El País, 14th July 2011: http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Liga/Arabe/pedira/reconozca/Estado/palestino/pertenencia/ONU/elpepuint/20110714elpepuint_9/Tes

⁸ US Palestinian aid could be cut if it continues to seek Statehood. The Telegraph, 31st August 2011: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/palestinianauthority/8733109/US-Palestinian-aid-could-be-cut-if-it-continues-to-seek-statehood.html>

⁹ US laboring to avoid veto of Palestinians statehood at UN sources say. Haaretz, 19th September 2011. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/u-s-laboring-to-avoid-veto-of-palestinian-statehood-bid-at-un-sources-say-1.385055>

clear that they distanced themselves from the bid initiated by the PA, as it did not represent the will of the population from the West Bank¹⁰.

Moreover, the last surge of violence with Southern Israel that took place at the end of August brought back the fears of a new military incursion of Israel in Gaza, similar to the one that took place within the Operation Cast Lead on December 2008. On that occasion, the Islamic Jihad's actions questioned the authority of Hamas and the strength of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement¹¹. A violent breakout by some extremist groups can be negative for the image of the unity of Palestine, which is essential to gain international support on the day of the diplomatic vote; that could also unleash a conflict which would delay the plans mentioned.

TIMES OF CHANGE FOR ISRAEL

The changes that are happening these months in the Middle East have made the different western democracies and Israel reevaluate their analysis of the role of the Islam, the extremist governments and the role that democracy plays in that scenario. At the beginning of this year, Israel saw with surprise how one of its most loyal allies, Hosni Mubarak, the main representative of the old geopolitical order of the Middle East, fell due to the revolutionary earthquake that hit the whole region. His fall, along with the continuous revolutions in all the neighboring countries, made Israel realize that the winds of change would also blow there.

There are some factors that have an influence on the current political situation of Israel. Firstly, the omnipresent conflict with Palestine is still the main reason for the demographic logic of the settlement policy that the country carries out. However, the diplomatic campaign initiated by the PA aimed at declaring a Palestine State in the United Nations has been the centre of the recent Israeli foreign policy. Secondly, the desire for changes of the Arab revolution has inspired Israeli society, who has exercised democracy by going out to the streets and asking for a real change in the social policy of the country. Finally, Israel has had to start facing up the changes that the Arab spring has produced in the new foreign policy with Egypt, the deterioration of its relations with Turkey or the uncertainty of the Syrian revolution.

¹⁰ Hamas distances itself from Palestinian statehood bid. Haaretz, 12th September 2011: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/hamas-distances-itself-from-palestinian-statehood-bid-at-un-1.384034>

¹¹ Nueve palestinos muertos por la escalada de violencia entre Israel y la Yihad por Sal Emergui. El Mundo, 25th August 2011: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/08/25/internacional/1314300501.html>

In this moment of change in the international context, the next Palestine bid for full membership of the UN is the element that can tip the scales of the conflict the most. It is very likely that the request is vetoed by the United States in the UN Security Council, but the symbolic recognition of the United Nations General Assembly may be the most problematic thing for Israel. The Israeli diplomatic campaign is working against the clock to try to avoid a vote that could question the country publicly. The Palestinian campaign has focused its efforts on getting the support of Latin American countries, whereas the Israeli campaign has focused its efforts on Europe. Europe could be the element that tips the scales in one direction or another. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, in order to counteract the Palestinian speech, is going to give a speech at the United Nations General Assembly that will take place on September 23rd, in which he will defend his opposition to a Palestinian State that is not based on the peace talks between the two parts.

The diplomatic option of both the United States and Israel to avoid the vote at the UN is trying to resume peace talks between the two parts under the framework of a negotiation of the borders of 1967. However, the refusal of Israel to hand over its territories, as well as its settlement policy, is one of the main obstacles that have made it impossible to make any real advance in the negotiations. The United States considered that the fact that Israel approved in August 2011 the building of 277 new houses in the settlement of Ariel, in the West Bank, constituted a complication for the peace negotiations and reduced to ashes any real possibility of stopping the diplomatic request of Palestine¹².

The building of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has become the main friction point between the two parts. Currently, the Palestinian counterpart is not willing to negotiate if Israel does not stop its building policy and negotiates the shared status of capital of East Jerusalem. The new US policies by President Barack Obama also made it clear in May of this year that the borders established in 1967 are their framework for negotiations¹³. With the approval of more units in the Israeli colonies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the settlement policy becomes a political point that separates more and more Israel and the United States.

¹² US deeply troubled by Israel settlement plans Reuters, 15th August 2011:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/15/us-palestinians-israel-settlements-idUSTRE77E4PY20110815>

¹³ Obama fija las fronteras de 1967 como base para el acuerdo entre palestinos y israelíes por Antonio Caño. El País, 19th May 2011 :

http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Obama/fija/fronteras/1967/base/acuerdo/palestinos/israelies/elpepuint/20110519elpepuint_2/Tes

Furthermore, the recent surge of violence in August 2011 in Southern Israel near the West Bank has been another conflictive point that has slowed down the advance of the negotiations and has reaffirmed the refusal of Israel to negotiate with any counterpart that includes Hamas.

At the same time, the political system contributes to the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the main friction points for the Israeli Government coalitions. Last summer, more factors of weakness were added to the Government of Israel, a political system in which electoral coalitions are usually very volatile and fragile. The beginning of an unprecedented social movement in Israel has added even more pressure to the Government of Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing party Likud.

This movement, which has been inspired by the events and revolutions that have taken place in the Arab countries, focused its demands on social objectives, without making reference explicitly to the foreign policy of Israel. The demonstrations reached a peak on September 3rd 2011, when more than 4,000 citizens went out to the streets to claim social justice and political changes¹⁴. However, the movement does not outstand for its influence on the foreign policy of Israel, but for being an important weak point of the Government that could volatilize the current coalition and establish new political actors and slow down the process.

Nevertheless, the factor that can affect Israel the most in the short term is the new international context and the geopolitical changes that are taking place at a frantic pace. The Arab spring has brought a new geopolitical configuration to most of the countries in the Middle East and thus, the relations with Israel are likely to change. The two countries that have radicalized the most their relations with Israel are Turkey and Egypt: Turkey, on the one hand, has gone from being an allied country of the non-Arab periphery to being a conflictive point of the diplomatic relations of the country; on the other hand, Egypt, one of the two Arab neighboring countries that has a peace treaty with Israel, has taken a new political orientation in the relations with the country since the departure of Hosni Mubarak.

In the case of Turkey, the deterioration of the relations between the two countries has been gradual and not a direct consequence of the Arab spring. However, the Arab revolutions have acted as a catalyst for an intransigent position of the Turkish Government. The controversial Operation Cast Lead, which took place during the winter of 2008, provoked

¹⁴ Más de 400.000 indignados reclaman en las calles de Israel justicia social. El Periódico, 3rd September 2011: <http://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/internacional/mas-400000-indignados-reclaman-las-calles-israel-justicia-social-1139367>

strong criticism from Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish Prime Minister; this established a new direction in the relations of these two countries¹⁵. Israel's naval assault of the Turkish flotilla Marmara, on May 31st 2010, which caused the death of 9 Turkish citizens constituted the point of no return in the bilateral relations of the countries.

However, the last straw that has broken the camel's back and provoked the annoyance of the Turkish Government is the publication of the results obtained by the United Nations Investigation Committee in the so-called Palmer report. In this report, it is stated that the Israeli forces acted according to international Law and that the blockade of the West Bank is legal. Equally, it criticizes the disproportionate actions of the naval military operation and regrets the death of the civilians. This report does not satisfy Turkey, whose indispensable prerequisite is still nowadays Israel's official apologies; thus, the Turkish Government has announced that it will not accept the results of this report. Turkey has also recently announced that, in retaliation for the publication of the conclusions of the report, it is going to demote its relations with Israel to the level of Second Secretary, which means there will no longer be an Israeli ambassador in Ankara. Turkey equally announced the end of all the commercial and military agreements with Israel¹⁶.

Turkey is a key actor in the relations within the region, but it has not been a main actor in the revolutions that are taking place in that area. Israel considers Turkey as one of its allies of the non-Arab periphery, just like Iran used to be. Since the creation of Turkey, Israel has relied on it to stabilize the weight of its relations with the Arab neighboring countries. The Arab spring seems to be a good opportunity for Turkey to increase its influence in the Middle East. It is a risky diplomatic option that distances the country from its European aspirations, but in this moment of exaltation of the popular feeling of the Arab spring, it also gives Turkey some recognition and reception in the new configuration of emerging power. The symbolic, warm welcoming that Erdogan received in Cairo some days ago during the 'Arab spring tour' he is carrying out in order to support the countries involved in that process is a proof of this new political orientation.

However, what has made Israel alarm just a few days before the Palestine request for full membership of the UN has been the recent and violent deterioration of its relations with Egypt. Since Hosni Mubarak fell, Egypt has started, under the commands of the Military Junta, led by general Tantawi, a policy of rapprochement towards Palestine. The incident

¹⁵ Has Israel lost key Muslim ally Turkey? Jonathan Head. BBC news, 1st June 2010:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8714983.stm>

¹⁶ Crisis entre Turquía e Israel. Editorial of La Vanguardia, 3rd September 2011:

<http://www.lavanguardia.com/20110903/54209604615/crisis-entre-turquia-e-israel.html>

that took place on August 19th, in which 5 Egyptian frontier policemen died due to altercations in the frontier with Israel, has sparked off the popular pressure in the country.

Since some weeks ago, Egyptian demonstrators have been unceasingly asking in the streets of Cairo for democratic elections, the end of military trials for civilians, as well as an investigation of the incident in the Israeli frontier. The attack to the Israeli embassy of Cairo that took place in the early morning hours of September 10th is just another proof of how vulnerable the diplomatic relations between Israel and Egypt are since Hosni Mubarak fell. The incident in which the demonstrators managed to have access to the facilities of the Israeli Embassy and caused great damage left the Prime Minister Netanyahu no option but ordering the diplomatic convoy to go back to Israel¹⁷.

Israel becomes, thus, a part of the revolutionary speech of its neighboring country. Egypt and Jordan are the only two Arab countries with which Israel has a peace treaty. The relations with Egypt have been a key factor to maintain its frontiers stable in the Sinai Peninsula and the military operations in Gaza. From now on, the country is going to face the uncertainty of not knowing if this is a transitory crisis or a deep decline. One day after the serious incident, the Prime Minister of Israel confirmed publicly in Jerusalem that he wanted the Israeli ambassador back in Egypt as soon as possible.

Furthermore, the country keeps an eye on the development of the revolution in Syria, a country with which it is constantly fighting over the Golan Heights; the uncertain direction of this country could make the situation of the northern frontier of Israel more complicated. The situation in Lebanon is rather quiet at the moment, though the great influence that Hezbollah has in the country and the strengthening of ties with Iran may change the situation of the frontier very quickly.

Finally, Jordan is the element that completes the regional context close to Israel. The Hashemite Kingdom has not confronted Israel directly for the moment. However, the risk of demonstrations is still present. In order to prevent possible altercates, and after the experience in Cairo, the Government of Israel decided to retire its diplomatic mission in Jordan and take it back to Israel. The demonstration celebrated on September 15th, whose aim was congregating a big popular support at the Israeli embassy in Amman, did not have much support in the end¹⁸. At the same time, the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, informed that

¹⁷ Israel evacuates ambassador to Egypt after embassy attack. The Guardian, 10th September 2011:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/10/egypt-declares-state-alert-embassy>

¹⁸ Hundreds rally near Israeli embassy. The Jordanian Times, 16th September 2011:

<http://www.jordantimes.com/index.php?news=41362>

Israel was going through a difficult situation and he confirmed that Jordan supported the creation of a Palestinian State in the current Palestinian Territories¹⁹.

In anticipation of the popular agitation that there will be in the next days, as the vote for the Palestinian accession to the United Nations gets closer, Israel has decided to start preparing itself against an escalation of incidents across its territory and frontiers. The police of Israel and the various national security forces have already received instructions and are now alert in and out of the Palestinian Territories. During the summer of 2011, some simulations of big confrontations with Palestinian masses trying to enter to Israeli territories or Arab towns in Israel²⁰ have been carried out. At the moment, the situation is controlled, but as the date gets closer, the tension between Palestinian and Israeli settlers grows bigger, which might cause direct confrontations between them.

Israel is facing up a historical moment that may inevitably influence the direction of the long conflict with the Palestinian. At the same time, a new configuration of power is emerging in the area and in just a few weeks, two of the most key allies of Israel, Turkey and Egypt, have turned their backs on the country. On the eve of the UN meeting that will determine the diplomatic future of the conflict and, to some extent, the future of the whole region, Israel faces an unexpected series of national and international events.

CONCLUSIONS

The beginning of the Arab spring offered an opportunity for most of the actors in the region to express new political visions and needs that were hidden behind the secrecy of the old regimes in the Middle East. At the same time a new geopolitical configuration started, a series of new conditions that affect the main actors in the Arab-Israeli conflict have also developed.

Since some months ago, Israel has been very attentive to all the changes that are taking place in the neighboring countries. The news of reconciliation with Palestine was not received with much optimism, as this adds more complications to the already complex new regional scenario. For Israel, the fact that a Palestinian agreement includes Hamas is a sine qua non condition for not accepting that agreement as legitimate. It is very unlikely that the

¹⁹ Jordan's Abdullah: Israel's situation today more difficult than ever. Ynetnews, 12th September 2011: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4121261,00.html>

²⁰ Israel police prep for riots when UN mulls Palestinian independence. Haaretz, 14th June 2011: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israel-police-prep-for-riots-when-un-mulls-palestinian-independence-1.367507>

position of Israel regarding a reconciliation that includes Hamas or any other group that does not recognize the right of Israel to exist might change.

Moreover, the Palestine request for full membership at the next United Nations Meeting on September 23rd has been the element that delimits the most the current foreign policy of Israel. Israel is facing an international diplomatic isolation than can become even more pronounced due to the possible recognition of a Palestinian State. The legal and politic consequences of giving Palestine full membership of the UN would undoubtedly establish a new pace in the negotiations between Israel and Palestine. If Palestine was recognized as a State, the controversial current legitimacy of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem would be one of the first consequences that Israel could face, apart from the possibility of new violent conflicts in the Palestinian Territories and its frontiers.

The movements initiated by the Arab spring were the opportunity for the Palestinian to relaunch internationally a proposal to solve the conflict which does not involve the direct or mediated negotiation with the United States or the Middle East Quartet. The weakness of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement of May 2011 may be one of the main causes for this proposal to fail or to be implemented later. Nowadays, the economic difficulties that the sanctions could imply and the fragility of the political cohesion suggest that the situation of the Palestinian part is going to be difficult in the short term. This poses a great challenge for the full development of a State that is divided territorially and ideologically.

In a time of changes and new regional alliances, as the new political orientation of Egypt or Turkey show, the role of the International Community seems to be essential in order to give a definitive solution for the conflict. The next United Nations General Assembly is the place Palestine has chosen to request for international recognition. The development of one of the current conflicts which are essential for the global security will depend on the answer and the welcoming that the Palestinian bid has. As a consequence of the new geopolitical conditions that are taking place frantically in the whole region, this conflict is facing a key moment that will break a linearity that is nowadays threatening all its parts to take the Arab-Israeli conflict to a scenario of unpredictable consequences.

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