

المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH & POLICY STUDIES
(Doha Institute)



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Assessment Report

The Israeli Position toward the Events in Syria

Policy Analysis Unit- ACRPS

Doha, February - 2012

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Introduction:

Israel's stake in what takes place in Syria stems from geographic proximity, the ongoing official state of war between the two countries, Syria's demands to recover the Golan, and Israel's fear that events in Syria could lead to the collapse of the ceasefire between the two countries and/or a re-heating of the Golan front. Israel's interest is also due to Syria's important influence, role and stature in the Arab world and the broader Middle East region – all of which have implications for Israel, its security, and its regional relations.

One permanent Israeli concern regards the fate of Syria's arsenal, especially missiles and non-conventional arms. Israel fears that the evolution of events in Syria could lead to these weapons' being turned against it, or to some, or all, of them falling into hands that Israel perceives as irresponsible. Another pressing matter for Israel is the state of Syrian-Iranian relations: Israel views Iran and its nuclear program as its greatest strategic threat, and it sees the persistence of Syrian-Iranian relations as a source of strength for Iran. Conversely, the rupture of these relations would be a blow to Iran and its influence in the region. The third dimension receiving the attention of decision-makers and opinion-shapers in Israel relates to Syria's support for Hizbullah, which has yet to settle accounts with Israel and is viewed by the Zionist state as its staunchest enemy. Israel fears that Hizbullah might acquire non-conventional weapons if the Syrian regime fell or was weakened; on the other hand, Israel hopes that the collapse of the regime would weaken the Lebanese organization. Furthermore, Syria has influence within the Palestinian national movement and interacts with its Arab surroundings in ways that could open the door to unexpected developments. Perhaps what worries Israel the most is the unknown alternative that could emerge in Syria.

Israeli officials have closely followed recent happenings in Syria, but they insist that Israel's influence over the course of events there is marginal and meager, despite the fact that what takes place in Syria may have strategic implications for the Hebrew state, its security, and even its very existence. In assessing the state of the Syrian regime, a divergence of positions has emerged in Israel; while a quasi-consensus exists to the effect that the regime is approaching its end, estimate of how long the process will take range from week or months to a handful of years.

Some analysts view the fall of the Syrian regime as being in the interest of the Hebrew state, since this would constitute a blow to the radical axis in the region. On the other hand, many insist that the collapse of the regime would constitute a threat to Israel since it could engender a dangerous level of chaos on the security level that could bring to power radical Islamist forces that harbor extreme hostility to Israel. Some of the same people predict that the fall of the regime could lead to a reopening of the Golan front and an end to the calm that has reigned there for more than three decades.

The factors affecting the Israeli position

Israeli strategy is based on the concept of “fronts”, which are continually changing and not necessarily linked to geography; Israeli strategy does not commit itself to the notion of borders, which are stable, acknowledged, and geographically specified. Since Syria is a state with significant regional stature and influence over several different fronts, the Israeli position is not only based on considerations relating to the Syrian-Israeli track, but also to Syria’s influence in other fronts where Israel believes Syria to be an effective actor:

1. **The Golan front:** Israel is extremely careful to maintain the calm that has reigned over this front since the October War of 1973; during the past twenty years, only one Israeli has been killed on the Golan front.¹ Naturally, what takes place in Syria can have a decisive impact on this front², where things are currently calm, and if they change, they can only change for the worse from the Israeli perspective. If the regime were replaced, it could increase the likelihood of destabilization on the front, including the possibility that a new regime might attempt to regain the Golan through force³; military confrontation also could erupt if the current regime were cornered and decided, as one Israeli writer put it, to “go crazy.”⁴

In the present circumstances, Israel has taken some practical measures, including placing its forces on high alert in anticipation of any emergency.⁵ In addition, the army has leveled extensive tracts of land near the ceasefire line in order to improve visibility, reinforced the fence that marks the line, and planted more anti-personnel mines. Furthermore, the army has established what it calls the “smart fence” in the region bordering Majdal Shams, and the unit garrisoning the Golan has been supplied with anti-riot gear following attempts to cross the fence during recent demonstrations on the anniversaries of the 1948 *Nakba* and the June War of 1967.⁶ The Syrian position is the decisive one in determining whether the Golan front will heat up or cool down. For decades, the Golan Heights were largely absent from media coverage since little of note

¹ Alex Fishman, “Bashar al-Asad, defender of the Israeli borders”, *Yediot Ahranot*, December 10, 2011.

² “Barak: loss of control in Syria will affect the Golan Heights”, website of Israel’s Channel 2 Television, January 8, 2012.

³ David Eshel, “Remaking the status quo for Israel”, *Aviation Week*, January 17, 2012.

http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_channel.jsp?channel=defense&id=news/dti/2012/01/01/DT_01_01_2012_p20-400645.xml&headline=Remaking%20The%20Status%20Quo%20For%20Israel

⁴ Aviel Magnezi, “When Asad goes mad: Syria may attack Israel”, *YNet website*, December 23, 2011.

<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4160689,00.html>

⁵ Barbara Opall-Rome, “Interview with Maj. Gen. Yair Golan, Commander of the Israeli Defense Forces’ Northern Command”, *Defense News*, December 19, 2011.

<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20111219/DEFBEAT06/112190307/Maj-Gen-Yair-Golan>

⁶ *Ibid.*

took place there. However, Israeli analysts, military commanders, and politicians believe that things could change if a new regime rose to power.⁷

2. The Israeli-Iranian front: This is considered one of the most important, heated, and threatening fronts to Israel. There is a quasi-consensus in the Zionist state that regime change in Syria would constitute a blow to the Iranian-led radical axis in the region.⁸ Israel's goal is to create distance between Iran and Syria⁹, thereby neutralizing the latter in any prospective military (or economic or political) confrontation with the former. Syria would have an important – but non-decisive – role in any such confrontation.

3. The Lebanese front: Syria is widely viewed as the main party supplying Hizbullah with arms and political support, as well as serving as a conduit for Iranian supplies to the Lebanese resistance. The outcome of the internal conflict in Syria will have a decisive impact on Hizbullah's strength and behavior¹⁰, as well as on the political and security situation in Lebanon generally, and on Israel's relationship with Lebanon.¹¹

4. The Palestinian resistance front: Israel sees no indications of a change in the Syrian position vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause if the regime were replaced, mainly because any new authority in Syria would need to develop its domestic legitimacy – and opposing Israel while supporting the people of Palestine is among the pillars of legitimacy of rule, any rule, in Syria.¹² Israel frequently criticizes Syria for harboring Palestinian factions, but in fact senior Israeli leaders fear the freeing of Palestinian organizations from any restraints and believe that the Syrian regime represents a central authority that regulates behavior and keeps events from slipping out of control.¹³

5. The emergence of new fronts: Israel fears that changes taking place in the Arab world could present it with threats on new fronts. These could include a new threat from Iraq, as described by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a Knesset address¹⁴, and/or the formation of a new anti-Israeli axis. The latter fear was expressed by a senior Israeli Defense Ministry official, Amos Gilad, who said during a radio interview that “if the

⁷ David Eshel, “Remaking the status quo for Israel”, *op. cit.*

⁸ “Barak: Asad's fall is a blessing to the Middle East”, *Maariv*, December 11, 2011.

⁹ Ben Caspit, “Interview with General Amos Yedlin, former chief of Military Intelligence”, *Maariv*, January 21, 2012.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Giora Eiland, “The upheavals in the Middle East and Israel's security”, Institute for National Security Studies, *Strategic Assessment*, Vol 14, no. 2 (July 2011).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Barbara Opall-Rome, “Interview with Maj. Gen. Yair Golan, Commander of the Israeli Defense Forces' Northern Command”, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ “Netanyahu's Knesset speech”, Official website of the Israeli Prime Minister, December 28, 2011.

<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speech40sig281211.htm>

Syrian regime changes, that would lead to the establishment of an Islamist empire led by the Muslim Brothers ... in the Middle East, for everything that is bad there is something worse. The ideology of the Muslim Brothers is the establishment of an empire on the lands of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and to erase Israel from the face of the earth.”¹⁵

There are also other influential factors, such as the question of the peace talks¹⁶ and the fate of Syrian arms (especially missiles), not to mention the effect of events in Syria on Jordan, on Israeli-Turkish relations¹⁷, and on Israeli-Russian relations, given that Russia is supporting the Syrian regime and supplying it with weapons.¹⁸

Israeli positions are determined by the factors mentioned above, and divergences among the stances of the political, military, media, and academic elites stem from the selections of factors taken into consideration and given the most weight in their respective assessments of the situation. Some believe that the most important element in the relationship with Syria is the ongoing calm on the Golan, and therefore that the survival of the regime is in Israel’s interest¹⁹; the same conclusion is reached by those fearing chaos or the rise of a more radical regime. On the other hand, those who prioritize dealing a blow to the radical axis in the context of the confrontation with Iran conclude that the fall of the Syrian regime is in Israel’s interest.

The preferred and the expected scenarios

Israeli estimates diverge regarding how long the Syrian regime can last. While many Israeli commentators, analysts, and political and military leaders have opined that President Bashar al-Asad will be out of power within weeks or months at the longest, some analysts warned against making hasty judgments. Alex Fishman, a military reporter for *Yediot Ahranot* known for being well-informed on debates within the Israeli security establishment, said that estimates in Israel and the West indicate that “if Asad falls, that would not be due to internal pressure; he would only be ejected from the palace by the public when serious outside pressure is applied in a manner paralyzing the regime, such as an international blockade or effective economic sanctions and a protracted isolation. It is in the nature of these methods that they produce effects – if at all – slowly and over time.”²⁰

This assessment differs from mainstream analyses in Israel. *Haaretz* reporters Avi Issacharoff and Amos Harel co-wrote an article on the Israeli military preparations for the post-Asad phase.

¹⁵ “Amos Gilad: the fall of the Asad regime prepares for the emergence of an Islamic empire”, Israeli Army Radio.

<http://glz.co.il/NewsArticle.aspx?newsid=95236>

¹⁶ Jay Bushinsky, “The less Israel speaks, the better for her”, Jerusalem Post, December 29, 2011.

¹⁷ Liad Borat, “The massacre in Syria, where is Israel?”, *Maariv website*, June 21, 2011.

<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/252/361.html>

¹⁸ Ronen Madzini, “Lieberman meets Putin”, *Ynet website*, December 7, 2011.

¹⁹ Anar Shilo, “In whose interest is the survival of Asad?”, *Haaretz*, January 20, 2011.

²⁰ Giora Eiland, “The upheavals in the Middle East and Israel’s security”, *op. cit.*

In the article, the authors explained that “in Military Intelligence, they are convinced that the fate of Bashar al-Asad will be sealed in 2012, but they are not prepared to commit to a specific date”. The authors added: “it is difficult to find anybody in the Middle East who would bet on Bashar remaining for many years”. Finally, the authors quoted what they described as the best indicator of the state of the Syrian regime: the position of Lebanese politician Walid Jumblatt, who oscillated repeatedly, only to come out, in the end, in favor of replacing the regime.²¹

Regarding Israel’s stance on the possible fall of the regime, Anar Shilo wrote in *Haaretz* that “the security services are panicking over the possibility that the struggle for freedom may succeed and that the regime in Syria may fall.” Shilo added: “we can read between the lines that Israel is not enthusiastic for the fall of Asad. It supports Asad without anyone seeing it. In secret, Israel prays to God that the murderous despotic regime remains. The despotic regime means calm in the Golan ... and Israel today prefers the status quo and the world of yesterday.”²²

In addition to Israeli predictions regarding the fate of the regime, analysts and leaders sketch different scenarios for what may happen in Syria, from the perspective of their effects on the Hebrew state and its security. Reservist General Giora Eiland, researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies and former head of the Israeli National Security Council, summarized four potential scenarios²³ that are also viewed by many Israeli researchers as likely:

- 1. The regime surviving for many years:** in describing this scenario, Eiland said that “some in Israel view this scenario as the desirable outcome, since Israel at least knows the regime and its tendencies.” Eiland revealed that “in 2005, Ariel Sharon rejected initiatives to exploit the temporary weakness of Syria – due to the Hariri assassination and Syria’s ouster from Lebanon – and seek to remove Asad. At the time, Sharon believed that the alternative scenarios (to Asad) would be worse for Israel.” Eiland estimates that Asad, if he survives, would be busy tidying up his internal house and strengthening his international legitimacy, adding: “in such conditions it is expected that (Asad) would not attempt to confront Israel militarily, and he may lessen his support to Hizbullah. If this scenario materializes (Asad’s survival), it is likely that calm would persist along the Israeli-Syrian borders.”²⁴ Other analysts also have spoken of the possibility of the current regime’s enduring for long years²⁵, including Reserve General Amos Yedlin, former head of Military Intelligence and current President of the Institute for National Security Studies, who told a conference titled “A Year after the Earthquake in the Middle East” that the Syrian regime was teetering: “tourism has ceased,

²¹ Avi Issacharof and Amos Harel, “In the army they are readying for the day after Asad”, *Haaretz*, January 6, 2012.

²² Anar Shilo, “In whose interest is the survival of Asad?”, *op. cit.*

²³ Giora Eiland, “The upheavals in the Middle East and Israel’s security”, *op. cit.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Alex Fishman, “Bashar al-Asad, defender of the Israeli borders”, *op. cit.*

investments have dried up, debts have escalated and the economy is on the brink of collapse”. He also stated, however, that the regime’s life could be extended “if it received Iranian support of USD 3-5 billion. Then it could survive longer, but Syria will not return to what is used to be.”²⁶

2. **A state of chaos:** according to this scenario, the regime falls and Syria enters into many years of conflict and instability. Some predict that Iran would exploit the state of chaos to operate across the Iraqi-Syrian border, and inside Syria as well.²⁷ Eiland expects Iranian influence to increase through links with the active parties (an assessment based on the Iraqi experience without accounting for the differences between the two cases), and that the Syrian military threat would decrease, but the fronts in the Golan and Lebanon would become less calm due to the activities of armed groups²⁸. There are also predictions that chaos could lead to missiles and even non-conventional weapons falling into the hands of organizations that Israel views as irresponsible, whether Lebanese (mainly referring to Hizbullah) or Syrian.²⁹ Israeli circles have expressed concern over a state of chaos that would have a negative effect on Israel’s security.³⁰
3. **The emergence of a radical Islamist regime:** after the demise of the current regime, power in Syria could be taken by a regime viewed by the Israelis as “Sunni, religious, and radical”. This scenario is seen as the worst possible one for Israel: a regime like this would adopt escalation, possibly including a military confrontation to regain the Golan, or other forms of armed force.³¹ Some argue that the rise of a regime of this sort would present Israel with total confrontation. A former director of Israeli Military Intelligence, Aharon Zeevi, refuses to use the term “Arab Spring” to describe the “earthquake” in the Middle East, saying: “extremist Sunni Islam is gaining in strength in Turkey and Egypt, and in the future in Syria, and that will change the map of the Middle East.”³² Gilad predicted that the fall of the Asad regime would lead to the emergence of an Islamist empire in the Levant that seeks to obliterate Israel.³³
4. **Transitioning to a moderate reformist regime:** according to this scenario, a “moderate democratic” regime with Western leanings would settle in Syria. Israel would view such a development as a blow to the “unholy” alliance with Iran, and therefore to Hizbullah.

²⁶ Avi Issacharof and Amos Harel, “In the army they are readying for the day after Asad”, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Michael Segall, “Iran. The Syrian highway to fighting Israel is still open”, **Website of the Jerusalem Institute for Public Affairs**, January 24, 2012.

²⁸ Giora Eiland, “The upheavals in the Middle East and Israel’s security”, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Ben Caspit, “Interview with General Amos Yedlin, former chief of Military Intelligence”, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Avi Issacharof and Amos Harel, “Syria deteriorating toward chaos”, *Haaretz*, June 6, 2011.

³¹ Jay Bushinsky, “The less Israel speaks, the better for her”, *op. cit.*

³² “Ben-Eliezer: throughout its existence, Israel was never in a catastrophic security situation such as today”, Official Knesset website, November 30, 2011.

³³ “Amos Gilad: the fall of the Asad regime prepares for the emergence of an Islamic empire”, *op. cit.*

However, this would not signify readiness for peace with Israel for, in the words of General Eiland, any new Arab regime secures itself by taking hostile positions toward Israel.³⁴ Nevertheless, the world may pressure Israel to reach a compromise and to return the Golan to Syria.³⁵

In addition to these scenarios, Yedlin has predicted that, after the fall of the current regime, a multi-sectarian coalition will emerge. He opined in a press interview: “eventually things will stabilize in Syria. I do not expect massacres, but instead, alliances between the Sunnis and the Christians and the Druze, and even with the Alawites”. Yedlin said that Syria, in such an eventuality, would exit the alliance with Iran and Hizbullah. However, he added: “any regime in Syria will not be easy for us; the Sunnis in Syria are like the Sunnis in Egypt.”³⁶

The foregoing arguments are representative of Israeli analytical assessments, usually presented by security experts, often affected by prejudice, and sometimes containing exaggerated claims of expertise and knowledge. We have repeatedly experienced the deficient knowledge of Arab experts in the affairs of the Arab world, despite their claims to the opposite. Therefore, these analyses should be taken into account, albeit with care and selectivity.

What the Israeli leadership says

There appears to be a difference between the positions of the military leadership and the political leadership. The military seems to prefer the survival of the Asad regime, primarily for fear of the alternatives and of the spreading of arms and chaos, which could inconvenience and even harm Israel³⁷. On the other hand, politicians want the regime to fall as this would weaken what they describe as the “axis of extremism” in the region, especially Iran and Hizbullah.

1. **Netanyahu:** The prime minister has warned his ministers against making statements on what is taking place in Syria, affirming that the less the matter is discussed publicly, the better.³⁸ Netanyahu himself has had little to say on the topic, and in an interview with Al-Arabiyya satellite channel he said that anything he might say would be exploited, not for use against him, but against any process of genuine reform sought by the people of Syria. He added that Israel was concerned and that it hopes for a continuation of the calm on the

³⁴ Giora Eiland, “The upheavals in the Middle East and Israel’s security”, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Jay Bushinsky, “The less Israel speaks, the better for her”, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Ben Caspit, “Interview with General Amos Yedlin, former chief of Military Intelligence”, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Anar Shilo, “In whose interest is the survival of Asad?”, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Jay Bushinsky, “The less Israel speaks, the better for her”, *op. cit.*

Syrian front. He also expressed his concern regarding the course of Arab revolutions in general.³⁹

2. **Ehud Barak, Israeli defense minister:** Barak has repeatedly predicted the fall of the Syrian regime, describing such an event as “a blessing to the Middle East.”⁴⁰ At one point he said he expected regime to collapse within weeks or months, asserting that “the fall of this regime would constitute a mighty blow to the entire radical front, with Iran and Hizbullah at its center.”⁴¹ Barak also expressed concerns regarding developments in Syria when participating in a panel for the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. The defense minister said: “there may be repercussions for what is happening in Syria in the Golan Heights or maybe wider areas, which is due to the loss of control.”⁴² He affirmed that “the situation of the Asad family is deteriorating”, and that while it was difficult to predict when the regime would fall, he viewed collapse as an inevitability.⁴³ In a statement to the press at the Davos Conference, Barak said Israel was watching the events “without nervousness, but with caution”, especially when it comes to the transfer of advanced weapons from Syria to Lebanon⁴⁴ – an issue that is jointly monitored by the United States and Israel.⁴⁵
3. **Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli foreign minister:** Lieberman has issued no official statements on the subject, but reports have emerged to the effect that he intervened with Russia to prevent the supply of more advanced weapons to Syria, especially in the current circumstances.⁴⁶
4. **General Benny Gantz, Israeli military’s chief of General Staff:** Gantz has said that the fall of the regime is just a matter of time, stating that Israel must prepare itself to receive “refugees from the Alawite sect” if the regime fell and they were being persecuted⁴⁷. It is unclear whether this rhetoric is for propaganda and meant to incite sectarianism against the rulers in Syria, or whether it really is a mis-assessment of the situation. Gantz said

³⁹ The full text of “Benjamin Netanyahu’s interview with al-Arabiyye satellite channel”, Official website of the Israeli Prime Minister, July 21, 2011.

⁴⁰ “Barak: Asad’s fall is a blessing to the Middle East”, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Yitzhak Woolf, “Barak: the Asad family will never stand on its feet again”, The News1 Website, June 12, 2011. <http://www.news1.co.il/Archive/001-D-283736-00.html>

⁴² “Barak: loss of control in Syria will affect the Golan Heights”, *op. cit.*

⁴³ “Barak: Asad’s fall is a blessing to the Middle East”, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ “Barak: Asad deserves to be removed by his people”, *Jerusalem Post Website*, January 29, 2012. <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=255541>

⁴⁵ Jay Solomon, “US, Israel monitor suspected Syrian WMD”, *Wall Street Journal*, August 27, 2011. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904009304576532652538547620.html>

⁴⁶ Ronen Madzini, “Lieberman meets Putin”, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Mooran Azolay, “Gantz: we are preparing to receive Alawite refugees in the Golan”, *The Ynet Website*, January 1, 2012.

there was a very weak possibility “of Asad directing his retaliation toward us to lessen domestic pressures.”⁴⁸

5. **General Aviv Kochavi, chief of Military Intelligence:** Kochavi has adopted the Syrian regime’s version of events, affirming that the leadership is telling the truth when it speaks of armed gangs attacking the army, and that the proportion of soldiers among the dead has reached almost a third of the total. Kochavi acknowledged that there is discomfort in the circle around President Asad, but that until now he alone runs things and no one else, surely not his brother Maher⁴⁹. Kochavi has argued that the Syrian regime is suffering from economic collapse, but that it is capable of holding out for at least a year or two because the army is completely loyal (for now, as Gantz pointed out).
6. **General Amir Eshel, chief of the Planning Department:** Eshel expressed concern over the fate of Syria’s large stockpile of chemical and biological weapons if the regime were to fall, warning that these supplies could be transferred, in whole or in part, to what he described as “irresponsible hands.”⁵⁰
7. **General Yair Golan, commander of the Northern Region:** Golan has expressed fear at the prospect of regime collapse and the transfer of advanced weaponry to non-state actors, especially Hizbullah. He said the army would have to change military strategies regarding Syria and Lebanon and the relationship between the two because there are massive changes in Syria, and the situation there is similar to that in Libya prior to the fall of Ghaddafi. He also added that there is a possibility of the rise of what he called Syrian “terrorist” organizations.⁵¹ His opinion is shared by former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy, who viewed “Asad’s fall as a disaster for Israel.”⁵²
8. **The senior Israeli Defense Ministry official, Gilad** posited a catastrophic scenario for Israel if the regime in Syria fell, warning of the emergence of a coalition of Islamist regimes desiring to annihilate Israel.⁵³

⁴⁸ Jonathan Lis, “Chief of Staff Gantz: a miniscule chance for Asad waging a military attack on Israel”, *Haaretz*, May 31, 2011.

⁴⁹ Ben Caspit, “The spring of the peoples: the coming challenge for the military intelligence”, *Maariv*, July 9, 2011.

⁵⁰ Ben Caspit, “Interview with General Amos Yedlin, former chief of Military Intelligence”, op. cit.

⁵¹ Barbara Opall-Rome, “Interview with Maj. Gen. Yair Golan, Commander of the Israeli Defense Forces’ Northern Command”, Op. Cit.

⁵² “Efraim Halevy: Asad’s fall is a danger to Israel”, **Israeli Army Radio Website**, December 12, 2011.

<http://glz.co.il/NewsArticle.aspx?newsid=95236>

⁵³ “Amos Gilad: the fall of the Asad regime prepares for the emergence of an Islamic empire”, Op. Cit.

Conclusion

There are varying opinions in Israel on whether or not the fall of the Syrian regime would be in Israel's interest. Regardless of this divergence, there is a near-consensus on central points relating to Israel's stake in what happens in Syria:

1. As regards the Golan, Israel is very comfortable with the current Syrian regime, and there is a fear in the Hebrew state that a new leadership would lead to the end of the calm on this front.
2. Any new regime in Syria will take a stance that is hostile to Israel because it will be in need of domestic legitimacy. On the other hand, the current regime (if it remains) will be in need of external legitimacy and would have to relax its position toward Israel.
3. On the other hand, the crisis is an opportunity to extract Syria from its alliance with Iran and Hizbullah, which is a higher Israeli interest.
4. The events in Syria could lead to the transfer of surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles, as well as chemical and/or biological weapons, to armed groups that are hostile to Israel, chief among them the Lebanese resistance movement, Hizbullah. This would be a disastrous development for Israel.
5. Israel has no influence over the course of events in Syria, but the events' repercussions affect Israel. Mainstream opinion calls for minimizing statements and avoiding interference unless there was a crossing of red lines, specifically the transfer of advanced or non-conventional weapons to Hizbullah.