

The 2013 JINSA Generals and Admirals Trip to Israel and Jordan

A Report by the Trip Participants

October 2013



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DISCLAIMER

This report and its findings represent those of the participants in the 2013 JINSA Generals & Admirals Program in Israel. The report does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of JINSA, its founders or its board of directors.

Table of Contents

2013 Generals & Admirals Trip Participants	5
Introduction	6
Executive Summary	7
The Middle East in Transition	11
Iran and its Nuclear Weapons Program	12
<i>Regime Change</i>	
<i>The Ugly Deal</i>	
<i>The U.S., Israel, and the Iranian Nuclear Threat</i>	
<i>After an Iranian Nuclear Breakout</i>	
Syria	17
Egypt and Sinai	20
Lebanon	21
<i>Hezbollah</i>	
<i>The Lebanese Armed Forces</i>	
<i>Israel vs. Hezbollah: The Next Round</i>	
<i>Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis</i>	
Jordan	25
Turkey	26
The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict	27
Gaza	28
Israel	29
<i>Israel's Strategic Dilemma</i>	
<i>The Changing Nature of Warfare</i>	
<i>Security Changes</i>	
<i>Combatting Hezbollah the Next Time</i>	
<i>Maintaining the QME</i>	
<i>Hardening Against Missile Attack</i>	
<i>Challenges to Maritime Assets</i>	
<i>U.S.-Israel Relations</i>	

Israel and the Middle East



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Introduction

Thirteen recently retired American generals and admirals traveled to Israel this past summer to engage in discussions with Israel's most senior security, military, intelligence, and political leaders. The visit is an annual component of JINSA's Generals and Admirals (G&A) Program.

During the 2013 G&A Program, these American military leaders observed Israeli military exercises in the field, visited key IDF and national intelligence installations, and were briefed on the latest Israeli war fighting doctrine, national security plans, and technological and cyber innovations.

Since 1981, JINSA's G&A Program has brought these American generals and admirals to Israel on an annual basis, and today the number of past participants is nearly 400. In 1999, JINSA expanded the trip to include travel to Jordan for meetings with the highest echelon of the Jordanian military and intelligence services as well as senior members of the royal family.

By design, the JINSA trip is an intensive nine-day program that presents the participating American generals and admirals with an extremely candid look at the strategic environment and current political and security challenges facing Israel, one of America's closest and most important allies in the region and on the global stage.

The generals and admirals met with several dozen senior military and intelligence officials at locations across the Israel. Public officials with whom they met include Minister of Defense Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon, IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz, Director General of the Ministry of Defense Udi Shani, and Head of the National Security Council Yaakov Amidror.

Israel's Defense and Armed Forces Attaché to the United States and Canada, Maj. Gen. Yaakov Ayish, accompanied the trip participants during their entire time in Israel.

Executive Summary

This report, which has been continuously updated through October 2013, represents the findings of the thirteen American generals and admirals who traveled to Israel with JINSA during the period May 19-27, 2013. In the interest of providing a frank and accurate portrayal of their comments, the names of officials with whom the participants met have been omitted.

The old Middle East order is in a period of dramatic transformation and the new order has not yet fully coalesced. The Sunni-Shia conflict has become an important dynamic, most critically in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Lebanon, and Syria. Other elements include a rise of radical Islam, disgust with failed secular governments, Iranian and Turkish interference, rising meddling of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, and greater U.S. detachment and withdrawal from the region. Outside powers, particularly Russia, have in some cases sought to fill the void left by the U.S., with very negative consequences, such as in Syria.

MIDDLE EAST TRANSFORMATION

The old Middle East order is in a period of dramatic transformation and the new order has not yet fully coalesced. The Sunni-Shia conflict has become an important dynamic in the eastern ends of the Middle East, most critically in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, as well as playing a role in Lebanon and in the Syrian civil war. The conflict underlies regional tensions and informs the shifting alliances that are underway in the region, intensified by the Arab Awakening. The Arab Awakening swept secular authoritarian leaders from office in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen, contributed directly to the Syrian civil war, and produced instability in many other Arab countries. Notably, however, none of the Arab monarchies fell, due to a combination of factors centered on tighter control of financial resources.

Political Islam continues to gain power and influence in the Middle East due to its cross-border unifying message, tight organizational structures, and clean image compared to the often corrupt and inefficient ruling secular and monarchist regimes it opposes or has replaced. Political Islam's rise comes at a time when there has been a dramatic decrease in U.S. influence across the region.

In all the affected Arab states, there has been a colossal failure of secular liberal elements to gain or hold power or to balance less moderate Islamist elements. Western governments and observer groups contributed to the simplistic notion that holding elections in these formerly authoritarian states would signify that democracy was taking hold. It was a catastrophic mistake that has resulted in "one person, one vote, once" in elections across the Middle East. Meanwhile, outside powers, especially Russia, the European Union, and China, are exacerbating the ruptures caused by the Sunni-Shia conflict and the deleterious effects of political/fundamentalist Islam.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

An Iran with a nuclear weapons capability would pose an existential threat to Israel and cannot be allowed, Jerusalem has concluded. Containment is not a viable option. Consensus in Israel is that a military strike can at most delay the Iranian nuclear weapons program by three to five years. Any plan to prevent Iran from making further progress toward a nuclear

weapon needs to include sanctions, diplomatic engagement, covert operations, regime change, and a credible military option. These tactics are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, are mutually supportive. While a new Iranian regime could ultimately choose to forego the country's nuclear weapons program, regime change is considered unlikely, certainly in the near-term. The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran has already prompted an arms buildup by its neighbors, with the possibility that Saudi Arabia and others could pursue their own nuclear arsenals in the future.

SYRIA AND THE CIVIL WAR

The most likely end-game scenario for the civil war is Syria's disintegration into distinct cantons. The lack of a strong central government will allow for the various ethnic and religious groups to carve out their own areas of control and, most dangerously, conduct their own relations with neighboring powers.

The defeat of the Assad regime would break the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis and serve as an important disruption in the terrorist state-support network. At the same time, such a situation would provide a degree of safe haven for Salafist and al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups.

The disposition of the Assad regime's chemical weapons is of great concern to Israel and the United States, and it informs ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure and destroy these stockpiles in the wake of the Syrian government's September 2013 offer to surrender its chemical weapons to international authorities. Maintaining a credible military contingency plan, in the wake of the Obama Administration's declaration that the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons merits a military response, is critical. In fact, absent such a credible threat, the diplomatic initiative to remove or destroy the weapons would lose necessary force.

EGYPT AND THE SINAI

The driving factor determining Egypt's survival as a functioning state is not its form of government, but rather its economy, which is in a parlous state. Wealthy donor countries have not offered Egypt substantial aid packages, and subsidy-cutting conditions accompanying proposed IMF assistance would be so unpopular as to spell the end of any Egyptian government, regardless of its composition. The recently announced \$12 billion package of loans and grants from a coalition of Gulf Arab countries will be of only short-term benefit if Egypt does not make substantial structural changes to its spending priorities, especially regarding food and fuel subsidies.

The Sinai has become an arena for the stockpiling of weapons bound for Hamas, and a staging ground for their eventual smuggling into Gaza. It is also becoming a relative safe haven for other terrorist groups to launch attacks against Israel and Egyptian security forces. Recent Egyptian military efforts to re-impose security in Sinai, however, are supported by Israel, and appear to be achieving a degree of success, especially regarding the closing of smuggling tunnels into Gaza.

LEBANON AND HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah has shifted its strategic emphasis from pinprick cross border raids to targeting Israeli population centers with long-range rockets and missiles.

The Syrian government serves as Iran's corridor for military and other assistance to Hezbollah. Should the Assad regime fall, that access would be severely compromised. Such calculations inform Iran's decision to strongly support the Syrian government in the civil war.

Hezbollah's fighters and weapons stockpiles are situated in urban/civilian areas to complicate IDF plans to neutralize them and will likely require extensive use of IDF infantry and special operations forces to do so. To counter such a move, Hezbollah has created a dense belt of bunkers and other, concealed fighting positions to slow an IDF ground offensive.

Hezbollah seeks to exploit the ineffectiveness of the Lebanese Navy to deny Israel freedom of action in the Mediterranean Sea space, especially along the Lebanese littoral through the use of advanced anti-ship missiles such as the Chinese C-802 and the Russian P-800 Yakhont.

JORDAN

Spillover from the Syrian civil war has placed a severe strain on Jordan, as the kingdom now hosts approximately one million Syrian refugees. This compounds internal pressures emanating from economic difficulties and agitation by Muslim Brotherhood adherents, indigenous Palestinian nationalists, and, for the first time, Bedouin tribes that have long been the bulwark of the Hashemite monarchy. The royal family retains power in part because of Saudi, U.S., and Israeli financial support and other assistance.

Contacts between Israel and Jordan increased from 2012 as Jordan's relations with the Arab League became increasingly strained over divergent approaches to the Syrian civil war. Jordan strongly desires additional U.S. military aid to assist its military in planning for multiple scenarios triggered by the Syrian conflict.

TURKEY

Despite the recent decline in Prime Minister Erdoğan's regional standing, Turkey continues to play an unconstructive role with its support for Hamas and other Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups throughout the region, including rebel groups in Syria. Ankara's support for Hamas negatively impacts Israeli security by weakening the Palestinian Authority in particular. This undermines the prospects of success for Israeli-Palestinian peace talks championed by the United States.

GAZA

The ruling Hamas terrorist organization has been in a quiet phase since the IDF's Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012. Hamas desired not to embarrass Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, a vocal supporter who expended significant political capital to broker a ceasefire. Hamas is now in a difficult period, as the Egyptian military that deposed Morsi is targeting Hamas' revenue-generating smuggling tunnels between Sinai and Gaza and is confronting armed Hamas elements in Sinai.

THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Israeli officials believe that they must continue to manage the conflict and maintain the status quo with the PA/Fatah leadership in the West Bank. Increasing the prospects for peace will depend on bottom-up approaches to improve the Palestinian economy, governance, rule of law, security services, and — most problematically — the Palestinian education system, which inculcates a rejection of Israel and hatred of Jews.

If elections were held in the West Bank today, Hamas would most likely emerge the victor. This reality is a strong indicator that the near- and mid-term prospects for a durable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement are weak. Israel has removed, however, all preconditions to resuming negotiations with the PA in response to an initiative spearheaded by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas continues to insist upon preconditions, including the removal of settlements and the release of Palestinian prisoners. In August, Israel released twenty-six Palestinians imprisoned for violent crimes as part of the deal brokered by Secretary Kerry to resume peace talks.

ISRAEL

Israeli security depends on several key strategic factors, including Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons, internal political stability in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, growing asymmetric and irregular threats posed by transnational terrorist organizations, and broader regional developments including the Sunni-Shia conflict.

Israel has concluded that an Iran with the capability to rapidly field a nuclear weapon would be an existential threat. Therefore, the elimination of Iran’s nuclear weapons program is Jerusalem’s highest-priority national security issue.

In the next conflict with Hezbollah, which Israel believes to be inevitable, the IDF plans to employ lessons learned in the 2006 Lebanon War and accurately hit the terrorist group hard with air strikes and a simultaneous rapid ground advance. Hezbollah’s expected firing of its tens of thousands of rockets and missiles makes it likely Israel would take more casualties on the home front than on the front lines, necessitating a particularly powerful Israeli response.

Success against Hezbollah will be determined by several parameters, including the degree to which Hezbollah’s missile arsenal and launch sites are destroyed, the elimination of the top levels of Hezbollah leadership, and compelling a change in the Lebanese political landscape such that Hezbollah is no longer part of the national government.

Maintaining Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge (QME) remains crucial to Israeli military planners. Current U.S. defense systems under consideration for sale to Israel include additional F-35 fighters, V-22 Osprey VTOL aircraft, radars, and anti-radiation missiles. At the same time, cooperative missile defense programs remain a high priority for both Israel and the United States. Israel is hardening and dispersing critical assets against missile attack, and planning for a more robust maritime capability to defend offshore natural gas infrastructure. At this time, the state of U.S.- Israel strategic cooperation is considered to be excellent, especially in the areas of intelligence and military coordination.

The Middle East in Transition

The Middle East is in a period of dramatic transformation. The old order, based on borders resulting from the Anglo-French Sykes-Picot Agreement in the years following the First World War, will not endure. Indeed, those arbitrary borders are causing many of today's problems and, as a result, there are indications that the nation-state concept in the Middle East is collapsing in favor of identification along religious and ethnic lines. A new order, however, has not yet fully coalesced.

The Arab Awakening swept secular authoritarian leaders from office in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen. It has also led to the Syrian civil war, and produced clashes and instability in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco. However, none of the Arab monarchies have toppled. This is likely because those regimes possess a mix of necessary characteristics for survival: sufficient legitimacy to allow reforms to placate dissatisfied citizens, retention of the capability to suppress domestic opposition, and the ability to use oil revenues to buy domestic stability.

Turkey, Iran, and Egypt are struggling for influence over the post-Arab Awakening Middle East. Importantly, Egypt is the only Arab state of the three. Despite Israel being peripheral to this larger competition, it is nevertheless the target of persistent attacks by terrorist groups supported by these three powers, and suffers hostility and even direct threats of war from all three countries. At the same time, however, the fact that Egypt and Syria are consumed by internal tensions, has provided Israel with what could be called a strategic pause. How long this pause will last is unknown: however, it is clear that Israel will use the time to prepare for threats expected to emanate from the results of the neighboring conflicts.

The Sunni-Shia conflict has become an important dynamic across the Middle East, most critically in Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, as well as playing a role in Lebanon and in the Syrian civil war. It underlies regional tensions and informs the shifting alliances underway in the region. Shiite Arab Iraqis and Lebanese fight for the Alawi-dominated Syrian regime, which is also supported by Shiite Iran. Qataris and Saudi Arabians augment the mostly Sunni Arab Syrian rebel forces, with non-Arab Sunni Turkey supporting the rebel forces in the north.

The Sunni-Shia conflict has become an important dynamic across the Middle East ... it underlies regional tensions and informs the shifting alliances underway in the region.

Meanwhile, Russia, the European Union, and China are the conflict's major external actors. They exacerbate the ruptures caused by the Sunni-Shia conflict and the powerful push from political/fundamentalist Islam. Each outside power is attempting to shape the region's future, leading to the creation of alliances – such as the Moscow-Tehran nexus to preserve the Assad regime – based on specific interests. The main challenge for Israel is not only to understand these changes, but also to adapt to them militarily and politically.

Most of the governing regimes in the Middle East are either challenged by Islamic fundamentalists or have incorporated strict interpretations of Islamic law into national laws. Political Islam is gaining power and influence, in part, because of its cross-border unifying message, tight organizational structures, and clean image compared to the often corrupt

and inefficient ruling secular and monarchist regimes it opposes or has replaced. Political Islam's rise comes at a time when there has been a dramatic decrease in U.S. influence across the region.

In all the affected Arab states, there has been a colossal failure of secular liberal elements to gain or hold power or to balance less moderate Islamist elements. In most of these countries, the agenda of the anti-government forces is led by "street" masses and not by a coordinated political movement or party. These states are uniformly devoid of democratic traditions, processes, or institutions that would provide a natural outlet for protest. As centralized state control dissolves amid upheaval in these countries, anarchy and chaos are growing across the region.

There is a very low probability of Western-type democracies emerging from the rubble of the old order.

There is a very low probability of Western-type democracies emerging from the rubble of the old order. By rushing to hold elections (Libya, Iraq, Egypt, Gaza) absent the long, hard work of inculcating consensual liberal values and the rule of law, this democratic tenet has become a tool to seize power, especially by Islamist parties owing to their long experience with grassroots organization, provision of welfare to long-neglected masses, and their unifying message. While well-meaning Western governments and observer groups contributed to the simplistic notion that elections alone signified that democracy was taking hold. It was a catastrophic mistake that has resulted in "one person, one vote, once" in elections across the Middle East. Together these trends point to the transformation of the Arab Middle East from the post-World War I order to a new one along tribal, ethnic, and sectarian lines. A regional cascade of dramatic economic crises is accelerating this disintegration and, in some cases, will drive long-term instability in the territory of these failing states.

Iran and its Nuclear Weapons Program

Israel has concluded that Iran desires nuclear weapons, and that Tehran's ability to pursue them is driven by the international diplomatic environment and not technical hurdles. Israel believes a nuclear Iran would be an existential threat and, therefore, the Iranian nuclear weapons program is Jerusalem's highest-priority national security issue. The consensus in Israel is that a military strike can, at most, delay the program by three to five years. Indeed, Iran will not be easily deterred from its commitment to nuclear weapons, one indicator of which is that the regime has spent an estimated \$84 billion on the program.

While there is agreement that Iran is enriching as much uranium as possible to the 20 percent level while still avoiding Israeli and U.S. redlines, there is a gap between the United States and Israel over whether Iran has made the decision to construct a nuclear weapon when it has the means (the U.S. position that Iran has not made that decision was made clear in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate, reaffirmed in 2010, and endorsed by U.S. intelligence agencies as recently as 2012). Once a decision is made to construct a weapon, a specified quantity of 20 percent uranium would need to be further enriched to the 90 percent level necessary for a nuclear device. The capability to do so undetected between IAEA inspections – a breakout

capability – is a function of multiple elements, including both 20 percent uranium stockpile and the effectiveness of the centrifuges to enrich it. Iran is estimated to be roughly two to six months from this point, and the regime shows every indication of seeking to reach this point.

History shows that political, diplomatic, and military events in the next three to five years could very well compel a cancellation of Iran’s program or otherwise affect its future viability. Israeli attacks on the Iraqi and Syrian nuclear programs in 1981 and 2007, respectively, set each back significantly before unrelated events – the Gulf War and the ongoing Syrian civil war – ended them altogether.

Covert operations have had a demonstrable effect on the pace of Iran’s nuclear development. The regime’s goal of 40,000 operational centrifuges by summer 2012 has been reduced to the 12,000 to 13,000 today by a wide range of special operations, though Iran recently began installing more advanced centrifuges.

The Iranian nuclear weapons development program is not immune from diplomatic influence either. Tehran halted the program in 2003 from concern that the United States might launch an attack on the country after having already invaded two neighboring countries: Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. The regime then restarted the program in 2005 after this fear was assuaged.

Any plan to prevent Iran from making further progress toward a nuclear weapon should include sanctions, diplomatic engagement, covert operations, regime change, and a military option. These tactics are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, are mutually supportive. Beginning last year, the economic effects of the U.S.-led sanctions regime against Iran were sufficient for the government to become visibly concerned. At this time, however, those concerns remain insufficient to compel a stoppage of the nuclear program.

There is a sense within the Iranian government that even as the sanctions bite harder, the country’s substantial national monetary reserves – \$105 billion in currency reserves, plus an additional \$20 billion in gold – will cushion it against economic hardships that might compel a change in the course of the nuclear program. The threat of stronger sanctions, and with them added pressure on the Iranian regime and society, could help counteract Tehran’s confidence.

The Israeli consensus is that a military strike can at most delay Iran’s nuclear weapons program by three to five years. History shows that political, diplomatic, and military events over that same time period could very well compel a cancellation of Iran’s program or otherwise effect its future viability.

The Iranian regime exploits the P5+1’s eagerness for diplomatic engagement to buy time for additional uranium enrichment. Therefore the regime feigns interest in continued negotiations, only to drag its heels before ultimately rejecting compromise settlements proposed by the P5+1. Adding urgency to the issue of Iran’s enrichment plans, consensus holds that in late 2014 or early 2015 the Arak heavy water nuclear reactor, which is reported to be capable of producing a quantity of weapons grade plutonium sufficient for two warheads a year, will likely be operational. There is a unanimity of opinion in Israel that Arak must not become operational.

Regime Change

While a new Iranian regime could ultimately choose to forego the country's nuclear weapons program, regime change is considered unlikely, certainly in the near term. The Arab Awakening was to some degree inspired by the 2009 election protests in (non-Arab) Iran, but Tehran's response effectively quashed the protest movement – a stark contrast to what occurred in several Arab states.

In fact, the Iranian regime suppressed its opposition shrewdly and largely out of view of the news media. This included large-scale nighttime roundups of protest leaders, avoiding shooting unarmed demonstrators, and utilizing the Basij rather than regular internal security troops to break up demonstrations. By relying on the Basij, a fundamentalist paramilitary movement acting as the theocracy's private army, Tehran avoided having to rely publicly on uniformed soldiers to suppress civilian populations. Furthermore, the regime utilized Iranian imams to legitimize government actions against the protestors.

Since then, the government has asserted far greater control over the Internet, and the Basij are more actively intimidating the population. As a result, the Iranian people currently are dissuaded from taking to the streets en masse, despite widespread socioeconomic discontent. In the future, however, rising domestic problems could renew challenges to the regime's authority. The country's swelling ranks of disaffected youth would likely drive such developments. First, 45 percent of the population is age 24 or younger, with fully one-quarter under the age of 14. Second, educated urban youth, who disproportionately access non-regime news media via the Internet, have been hit especially hard by rising unemployment rates. Third, the government's attempts to blame current woes on the rule of the Shah have little effect, since this growing cohort was born after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 that swept the Shah from power. In fact, more than half the population was either born after Ayotallah Khomeini's death, or is too young to have a personal understanding of the factors that led to the Islamic Revolution. If Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei fears the domestic and international turmoil attending the regime's pursuit of nuclear weapons could ultimately sweep the Islamic Republic from power, the United States and its allies should ratchet up measures to accomplish just that. A delay to the nuclear program lasting three to five years resulting from a military strike may provide a sufficient window to allow this to occur.

The Ugly Deal

One alternative to the difficult choice between "Iran with the bomb" and "bomb Iran" is a proposal referred to in Israel as the "ugly deal." This would allow Tehran all key the elements of a civilian nuclear program, in exchange for limits on the amount of fissile material it could possess, and the number of centrifuges it could operate (1,000-3,000). If Iran later violated these terms, the caps imposed by this "ugly deal" would set back Iran's nuclear program by an estimated two years. Israeli strategists concede that Iran would only consider such a deal if sanctions generated far more pressure on the regime than currently, and if the United States conveys a much more credible threat of military action should Iran not acquiesce.

The U.S., Israel, and the Iranian Nuclear Threat

The United States and Israel are in broad agreement on the strategic goal of preventing Iran from possessing a nuclear weapon. However, the two allies diverge on a series of issues referred to as the “Four T’s”:

THREAT. Israel regards Iran’s possession of a nuclear weapons capability as an *existential* threat; the United States views an Iran with nuclear weapons as a *strategic* threat.

TRAUMA. The Holocaust resonates deeply in Israel. Iran’s threats to annihilate the Israeli population lead to a widespread conclusion that all options must be exercised to prevent Iran from possessing a weapon to carry out such threats. The United States, on the other hand, is suffering from the trauma of long, unpopular and inconclusive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This experience generates a strong aversion to becoming involved in another conflict in the region, despite the gravity of the situation.

TIMING. Israel has drawn its redline at an Iranian nuclear weapons capability; the United States has drawn its redline further down the road, at the point where Iran would assemble a working nuclear device. Therefore, Israel’s timetable is more pressing, since it cannot allow Iran to accumulate enough enriched uranium to execute an undetected breakout. For the United States, the trigger for action would be the breakout itself.

TRUST. The question for Israelis is one of credibility: can they trust the United States to take the necessary and likely costly actions to prevent a nuclear Iran?

Prime Minister Netanyahu is on record as advocating an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Each time, however, President Obama requested that diplomacy and sanctions be given more time. Concerns were heightened by the Obama Administration’s decision not to endorse the redline Netanyahu articulated before the UN General Assembly in 2012. The prime minister’s speech was effective, however, in focusing the world’s attention exclusively on the issue of uranium enrichment. Ironically, this may have encouraged Tehran to divert resources to other facets of the nuclear program, including delivery systems. As Iran accelerates its approach toward nuclear weapons capability, Israel still prefers the U.S. government be more adamant that it will take any and all measures – including military action – to prevent this occurrence.

Iran is convinced that Israel will not launch strikes without U.S. approval, and they believe President Obama will not grant approval anytime soon, if ever.

Israeli law mandates that the government authorize a decision by the prime minister to attack Iranian nuclear facilities, since this would constitute an act of war. If such an attack were declared to be an “operation” instead of an act of war, only the group of senior ministers known as the security cabinet would need to accede to the plan.

After two years of agreeing to go along with less forceful, and currently unsuccessful, measures against Iran – namely, diplomacy and sanctions – Netanyahu will be in a strong

position to advocate his views before the cabinet. At the same time, he will be weakened by the absence of Ehud Barak. During his time as defense minister (June 2007 to March 2013), Barak was considered an even more forceful proponent of preventive military action than was the prime minister. With Barak out of office, current Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon is the key to the security cabinet's decision-making.

It is believed that Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ya'alon are not bluffing when it comes to Iran. However, their determination is paralleled by that of Supreme Leader Khamenei and other leading regime figures, who equate relinquishing the nuclear weapons program with ending the Islamic Revolution itself. Therefore, President Obama's words and actions to either prevent or accede to a nuclear Iran will prove crucial to the decisions of both sides.

The question remains, however: what will trigger the Iranian decision to stage a breakout? Most clearly, Iran's leaders could opt to break out if they concluded no country would attack them for doing so, out of fear of the consequences and/or an inability to detect such a move. Currently, Tehran appears to believe that the United States will not try to prevent a breakout, and that any Israeli strike would not inflict a critical amount of damage on its nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, Iran is convinced that Israel will not launch strikes without U.S. approval, and they believe President Obama will not be granting approval anytime soon, if ever. There is also the possibility that Iran could decide to break out if the world's attention becomes focused on some other major crisis in the near future.

After an Iranian Nuclear Breakout

The Iranian leadership has not made a final decision to break out. However, once the decision is made, events will proceed quickly. The Iranian nuclear issue is a challenge to the international community, to the countries of the region, and most directly, to Israel. If Iran declares itself to be a nuclear power, it will become an even greater threat throughout the region, thus creating a major challenge to U.S. national security interests. Tehran will act more aggressively toward Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States. It will assert itself more forcefully in the Persian Gulf, raising the likelihood of a clash with patrolling U.S. or allied forces. Increased tensions there will cause global oil prices to rise.

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The intolerability of a nuclear-armed Iran has already begun to stir Tehran's neighbors, first and foremost Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt, to build up their own conventional arsenals, and to consider pursuing their own nuclear weapons. Meanwhile Israel hopes that, in the eventuality of a nuclear Iran, the United States would deploy elements of the U.S. Navy's Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System to protect Israel from Iran's significant ballistic missile arsenal. This could be of critical importance in an Iran-Israel standoff, as there is no "hot line" to defuse tension or misunderstanding between the two countries or the United States during a crisis.

Syria

Several possible scenarios were laid out for Syria's future. First, the Syrian military defeats the rebel forces and re-imposes central authority throughout the country. Alternatively, the civil war grinds on for an indefinite time with neither side tipping the current balance. A much more frightening outcome is what was referred to as the "Somalia Model", whereby Islamist al-Qaeda-backed rebels emerge victorious over the Syrian military and dominate the other rebel groups. Such an outcome would, it is feared, usher in a period of internecine conflict between rival warlords and their armed followers. Finally, there is a possibility that the relatively moderate rebels emerge victorious and consolidate power in the face of opposition from al-Qaeda-backed rebels. Were the United States to launch airstrikes in the September-October 2013 timeframe in retaliation for the alleged serial employment of chemical weapons, this could well tip the balance of power toward the various rebel factions.

The most likely scenario for Syria, however, will be the eventual disintegration of the country into distinct cantons as the central government's writ recedes. The vacuum of power could allow for Syria's various ethnic and religious groups to carve out their own areas of control and, most dangerously, conduct their own relations with neighboring powers. It is expected the Alawi will dominate their traditional homeland in northwest Syria, including the ports of Tartus and Latakia. If Bashar al-Assad and elements of his regime survive, they would move their strategic assets to this area. The Sunni Arabs may well create a republic encompassing territory extending to the Turkish border in the north. Outstanding questions concern the disposition of the Druze and the especially sensitive issue of whether the Kurds of Syria and Iraq would unite.

In each of those scenarios, it was posited that Israel would be better off than it was facing an Assad-controlled Syria, because then Iran would have lost its hold over the country. The old expression, "better the devil we know..." no longer holds, because it now seems highly unlikely that the Assad regime, should it survive, would be in any position to maintain a quiet border with Israel in the civil war's aftermath.

There are several key strategic considerations attendant to the Syrian government's potential demise. Under the rule of Hafez al-Assad and his son and successor Bashar, Syria served as Iran's gateway to the Arab world and a conduit for Tehran's support to Hamas, Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations. If the Assad regime is defeated, it will represent a break in the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis and an important disruption in the terrorist state-support network. Even if the worst of the Sunni rebel factions comes to power, they are unlikely to cooperate with Hezbollah and Iran, both of which are Shiite. Furthermore, it would represent the severe attrition of the most capable and battle-tested military of any country bordering Israel. Nevertheless, there is concern in Israel about the continued deterioration of stability, and hence security, in the Golan Heights area, which was previously ensured by the Syrian government under the two Assad regimes.

Like Afghanistan in the 1980s, Syria has become a gathering point for Islamist terrorist organizations from across the Middle East. These Sunni fighters – an estimated 6,000 – have joined the various indigenous religious militias fighting the Alawite Assad regime and its Shiite backers. These foreign fighters come from Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jordan, Europe, and elsewhere. Israelis refer to the phenomenon as "jihad tourism."

The Syrian regime's foreign support on the ground has come from its Shiite allies: Hezbollah fighters and Iranian special troops and technical advisors. Prior to February 2013, Hezbollah had refrained from sending its fighters into battle in Syria, but government setbacks prompted Iran to order Hezbollah to inject its fighters into the war against the rebels. Furthermore, Iran is the Syrian government's chief supplier of armaments, with flights from Tehran landing daily in Damascus loaded with weapons and ammunition.

If the Assad regime is defeated, it will represent a break in the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis and an important disruption in the terrorist state-support network.

Iraq's Shiite Arab prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, has allowed flights between Iran and Damascus to stop in Iraq, as well as permitting Iranian arms convoys to traverse Iraq on their way to Syria. This helps the Assad regime maintain its stark advantage in weaponry over the rebels.

Syrian and Iranian transfers of advanced weapons to Hezbollah, and the fact that al-Qaeda now has an established presence in Syria through the large al-Nusra rebel faction, is another cause for great concern. Israeli leaders have declared publicly they would not tolerate the transfer of advanced weaponry to Hezbollah or al-Qaeda. According to foreign reports, Israel has carried out several operations to destroy caches of such weapons when it believed their transfer was imminent. Some have cautioned Israel against declaring a redline for such transfers, since it would be constrained by the narrow policy options that follow such a declaration. When applying a redline in Syria, the audience is not only the Assad regime, but also Iran and North Korea.

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Provided with generous funding from oil-rich backers, extremist rebel factions are succeeding to an unknown degree in winning the hearts and minds of the beleaguered Syrian people through the provision of relief goods, including food and medicine. Divisions among rebel groups are mirrored by competition among their foreign backers for influence in Syria and in the region more broadly. Qatar and Turkey have been supporting Muslim Brotherhood elements, with Qatar also supporting some al-Qaeda-backed groups, while Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. have supported even more extremist Salafists as well as non-Islamist rebel forces. Saudi Arabia has also provided assistance to Jordan, which is struggling under a monumental refugee burden. Kuwait and Bahrain have avoided involvement in the war.

By contrast, more secular rebel factions fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army have received relatively little from the West or Arab countries. The outrage that greeted the Assad regime's alleged use of chemical weapons over the past year has increased prospects that the United States will significantly enhance its support for the rebels, including weapons and training.

While the Syrian military is not indisputably winning the war, the rebels (both secular and Islamist/Salafi) remain disorganized and have demonstrated a pronounced lack of battlefield competence. At the brigade level and higher, the Syrian army has maintained cohesiveness, based largely on loyalty to the regime. Observers in Jordan see two Syrian armies fighting for Assad: an elite army of some 70,000 Alawis and a regular army of 200,000 mainly Sunni Arabs serving under Alawi senior officers. If the conflict escalates further, they believe that defections from the latter will increase significantly.

Syria's economy has been devastated by the war. Vast swathes of the country are experiencing a very high level of destruction - no electricity, fuel, or stable food supply. By many estimates, Syria has been set back fifty years due to infrastructure and agriculture devastation. In human terms, somewhere between 80,000-130,000 people have been killed, a very large percentage of them civilians.

Nevertheless, consensus is that the Syrian government will not collapse any time soon, especially given its support from Russia, Iran, and China. Three signs were said to herald the demise of Bashar al-Assad's regime – an Alawite army division defects to the rebels and/or the Syrian army ceases to obey orders, Russia ceases its opposition to international intervention in the civil war, or the battered economy utterly collapses.

Handling the Syrian Government

The goal vis-a-vis the Assad regime still needs to be defined. The Western consensus that "something must be done" to stop the mass killing of civilians cannot be achieved short of a ground invasion – an option no country is advocating. Punitive airstrikes under consideration by the United States and Britain in response to Assad's use of chemical weapons appear not to be designed to force the government from power, but rather deter and degrade its ability to carry out further chemical-weapons attacks. A third option, the "no-fly zone," should be understood as a capability and not a strategy: simply grounding the Syrian Air Force absent a defined strategic goal would waste resources, potentially cost allied lives, and could have unforeseen negative consequences. At a minimum, Israeli leaders believe that convincing Russia not to provide the highly capable S-300 air defense system to Syria should be a high priority.

Jordan, Turkey, and Israel all have direct interests in the outcome of the Syrian civil war, and all three are tied to the United States in myriad ways. This allows ample space for collaboration on international solutions to this crisis.

If Russia provides the S-300 system to Syria, the subsequent likelihood of a "no-fly zone" or similar U.S.-led operation falls to near-zero, thus limiting U.S. airstrike options to those involving only cruise missiles. The S-300 in the hands of the Syrian regime also poses a threat to Israel, as the system's advanced capabilities would threaten IAF efforts to interdict weapons transfers to Hezbollah and allow Damascus to cover airspace deep into Israel.

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on international solutions to this crisis. It was noted in Israel that the United States would likely decide which actions to take to address the dilemmas posed by Syria, and Jordan, Turkey, and Israel could carry them out. These may or may not be conducted in a cooperative and/or clandestine manner.

Egypt and Sinai

Prior to the Egyptian army's overthrow of his government, it was concluded that President Mohamed Morsi did not have a strategy to guide his administration. Ultimately, no matter what type of government rules in Cairo, the driving factor determining Egypt's survival as a functioning state is the economy, which is in a parlous state.

While desperately in need of economic support, the wealthy countries of the world, including the oil-rich Arab states, had not rushed to offer Egypt substantial aid packages. By August 2013, the situation had changed. The removal of Mohamed Morsi from power by the Egyptian military, as well as announced holds on U.S. government financial and military aid due to the nature of that overthrow, prompted a coalition of Gulf Arab states to pledge to provide upwards of \$12 billion in grants and loans to Cairo.

Nevertheless, that infusion of money will be of only short-term benefit if Egypt does not make painful structural changes to its finances. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had attached conditions to any forthcoming aid that includes the cutting of food and fuel subsidies. Acceptance of such terms would be so broadly unpopular that it likely would spell the end of any Egyptian government, regardless of its composition.

Despite the turmoil in Egypt's financial and internal security sectors, cooperation between Israel and Egypt in the military and intelligence spheres is still regarded as strong, and is considered the key element keeping the peace accord intact.

Hence, for the foreseeable future, there is no urgent fear that Egypt will abrogate the peace treaty with Israel. Prior to Morsi's downfall, the government's rhetoric regarding Israel was not at all friendly. Moreover, Morsi chose not to meet with Israeli government officials. There is no expectation that the new military government will diverge from the long-standing policy of official Egyptian animosity toward Israel. Israeli officials continue to believe the U.S. can play a role in easing Egyptian animosity toward Israel.

The Sinai has seen a deterioration of security and a concomitant expansion of Salafist and al-Qaeda terrorist operations in the desert peninsula. Such groups are recruiting Sinai residents and proselytizing the local population. It is feared that they will eventually move west and conduct terrorist operations in the Suez Canal Zone. This would cause further economic hardship for Egypt and refocus the world's attention to the instability caused by the country's decline – a situation exacerbated by continued attacks on Egyptian oil and natural gas pipelines in the Sinai. Since Mubarak's ouster they have been attacked fourteen times, and are shut down at present. This has resulted in a substantial drop in much-needed government revenues, and an energy crisis in Jordan, which depends heavily on these supplies.

Preventing terrorism emanating from the Sinai has become easier now that Israel's border security fence is complete. The loss of smuggling income, however, has compelled some Bedouin groups to cooperate with Sinai-based terrorist organizations, including Hamas.

The Sinai has become an arena for the stockpiling of weapons, many bound for Hamas. Even if it was so inclined, it is unclear whether Egypt could completely prevent the weapons from entering its own territory from Libya and Sudan en route to Sinai. Chaos in every sector of Egyptian society has led to a dramatic drop in the efficacy of its security forces, and the Egyptian military's vast holdings of main battle tanks and capable fighter aircraft are of precious little use in patrolling the 1600 km of open borders with both Libya and Sudan. Since Morsi's ouster, however, the Egyptian military has carried out operations against Sinai-based terrorist groups and has blocked many of the smuggling tunnels into Gaza.

The surge in terrorist groups operating in Sinai has increased the threat to Israeli civil and military aviation have risen with the proliferation of modern MANPADS and other surface-to-air missile systems to Sinai-based groups and Hamas. Furthermore, Israeli shipping activity in the Suez Canal is under threat from attacks emanating from the canal's eastern banks.

The worst-case Egypt scenario for Israel would be an escalation in tensions with Egypt, possibly leading to direct clashes between the Egyptian military and the IDF, or a formal Egyptian renunciation of the peace treaty. Such risks have increased as Sinai-based terrorist groups launch more attacks. For example, in 2011 three Egyptian soldiers were killed mistakenly by an IDF helicopter pursuing terrorists who had fled to Sinai after carrying out an attack in Israel. Tensions in Egypt were high for weeks afterward, with many leading politicians calling for a withdrawal from the peace treaty with Israel.

Israel has consistently agreed to Cairo's requests to temporarily suspend the terms of the peace treaty, to allow the Egyptian army to deploy sufficient forces into Sinai to attack terrorist cells affiliated with al-Qaeda and Hamas.

Israeli preemption of an impending terrorist threat or a military response to a terrorist attack originating in the Sinai could place pressure on the Egyptian government to resist Israeli military actions. This is in fact the goal of al-Qaeda and other Sinai-based groups – a plan referred to by Israel as "Strategic Terrorism." While Israeli-Egyptian border security coordination has improved since Morsi's government was deposed, further strengthening of cooperation would improve the situation. Israel has consistently agreed to Cairo's requests to temporarily suspend the terms of the peace treaty, to allow the Egyptian army to deploy sufficient forces into Sinai to attack terrorist cells affiliated with al-Qaeda and Hamas. Lines of communication between the IDF and the Egyptian Army and Egyptian General Intelligence Service are considered to be good at present.

Lebanon

Hezbollah is the key political and military actor in Lebanon, and remains a key conduit for Iranian regional influence. As the Syrian civil war indicates, Hezbollah continues to receive

significant guidance and assistance from Tehran, including an estimated \$1 billion per year. However, there are signs Hezbollah is transforming from its traditional role as an Iranian terrorist and political proxy into an independent actor with its own agenda. This transformation carries profound implications for Israel.

In Lebanon itself, the Syrian civil war has caused parliamentary elections to be postponed until November 2014. If the Syria conflict persists until the date, it would likely mark the first time Syria would be unable to impact Lebanese politics. This could very well lead to Hezbollah suffering severe setbacks at the polls.

Syria's sectarian conflict has spread to Lebanon, where attacks by Sunni groups on the country's Shiite population have risen in response to Hezbollah's increased support for the Alawi-dominated Assad regime against the Sunni-dominated rebel coalition.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah, which translates to Party of God, is effectively running a state within a state in Southern Lebanon. Israeli leaders believe a future conflict with Hezbollah is nearly inevitable, though they believe the group is not seeking war with Israel at this point in time. In any foreseeable future conflict, Israelis are focused on Hezbollah's shift in strategic emphasis from cross-border raids to long-range rocket and missile attacks. To this end, Hezbollah has stockpiled missiles that bring all of Israel into range from launch sites located far behind the Lebanon border.

Hezbollah has dispatched its best combat forces to assist the Syrian army on the battlefield. While this has been a boon to Assad's forces, it has furthered Sunni-Shia animosity both in the Levant and the broader Middle East.

Hezbollah's practice of embedding its fighters and weapons stockpiles in urban/civilian areas complicates IDF plans for neutralizing this evolving threat. Hezbollah fighters live among civilian families in roughly one hundred southern Lebanese villages, where they have established complex networks of bunkers and concealed fighting positions with connecting tunnels and observation points.

This method of fighting may obviate the use of Israeli air power to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities, and will likely require extensive use of IDF infantry and special operations forces to destroy these targets. Given the casualty-averse nature of Israeli society, the risks and costs of such a strategy may be prohibitively high. Any Lebanese civilian casualties caused or blamed on IDF airpower will generate regional condemnation of Israel, which will be echoed in Western media.

Though the IDF is changing its doctrine and tactics to address the reality of ground combat against dug-in Hezbollah forces, it is unclear how they will succeed against the agility and speed with which Hezbollah can employ its rockets and missiles.

Though the IDF is changing its doctrine and tactics to address the reality of ground combat against dug-in Hezbollah forces, it is unclear how they will succeed against the agility and speed with which Hezbollah can employ its rockets and missiles. The point was made that improvements to Israeli close air-support capabilities are therefore necessary.

Hezbollah has dispatched its best combat forces to assist the Syrian Army on the battlefield. While this has been a boon to Assad's forces, it has furthered Sunni-Shia animosity both in the Levant and the broader Middle East. These units are gaining valuable combat experience despite suffering high casualty rates.

The Lebanese Armed Forces

Sections of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) – a pan-Lebanese security force receiving U.S. assistance – have been co-opted by Hezbollah. For years, Hezbollah has encouraged Shiite men to join the heretofore Christian and Sunni-dominated force. As LAF units incorporate more Shiites, doubts have arisen as to whether they would confront Hezbollah fighters if ordered to do so. Indeed, LAF units previously have departed southern Lebanon during Hezbollah attacks on Israel. There is a related worry that incidents between the LAF and IDF (such as the August 2010 tree-trimming incident that left soldiers on both sides dead), while rare in the past, may increase. This poses a dilemma for Israel, which still hopes the LAF can become a force for stability in Lebanon: retaliatory strikes against the LAF could weaken the latter's authority in Lebanon, creating an opportunity for Hezbollah in the process.

[B]ecause the Lebanese navy is ineffectual, [south Lebanon] coastal waters [are] unsecure and open to exploitation by a host of bad actors including Hezbollah. In addition, the hybrid use of anti-ship cruise missiles and overall anti-access threat posed by Hezbollah provides access challenges to the IDF Navy and potentially to commercial vessels.

The presence of UN forces in southern Lebanon is a complicating factor for Israeli security planning and operations. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has proven to be incapable of disarming Hezbollah and its impact is constrained by its mission, which dictates that UNIFIL work in tandem with the LAF, and the latter is not present in southern Lebanon for lengthy periods of time. The Syrian civil war compounds this difficulty, as the LAF has deployed forces traditionally stationed in southern Lebanon to the Syria border, thereby deepening the security vacuum in which Hezbollah thrives.

An additional concern for Israeli defense planners is the potential for Hezbollah to exploit the paucity of robust naval forces in the Lebanese littoral. Specifically, Hezbollah's potential use of anti-ship cruise missiles as part of its larger anti-access strategy in southern Lebanon poses a direct threat to commercial vessels and to the IDF Navy's role in full-spectrum operations against Hezbollah.

Israel vs. Hezbollah: The Next Round

Israel's investment in air-defense systems has helped improve the country's security situation, not least because of the reassurance it brings to the citizenry and its ability to prevent widespread socioeconomic paralysis in times of crisis. Nonetheless, the Israeli leadership is all too aware that wars are not won by defensive measures alone. It is critical to future stability that the next war in Lebanon be won decisively and in such a manner that Hezbollah's successors are not able to rebuild their rocket and missile arsenals.

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The next Israel-Hezbollah war will likely see all of Israel and Lebanon targeted, unlike in 2006. Absorbing hard-learned lessons from the 2006 war with Israel, when its long-range missile stocks were largely destroyed at the outset of the conflict, Hezbollah's long-range missiles are no longer concentrated in a small handful of bunkers but rather dispersed throughout the country, and even into Syria, to complicate the IAF's ability to locate and destroy them.

Moreover, Hezbollah's rocket and missile arsenal has grown to 50,000-60,000 units, and this expanded arsenal brings all of Israel into range. The arsenal includes Grad (30 km range), Fajr 3 (45 km range), and Fajr 5 rockets (75 km range), and M600 (250 km range) and Scud D (300 km range) missiles. Hezbollah has also invested in new capabilities not present in the 2006 conflict, including anti-ship missiles and UAVs.

Hezbollah is expected to attempt to avoid direct confrontation with IDF ground forces, preferring instead to attack Israel with its rockets and missiles and then bog down advancing IDF infantry in the fortified villages and bunker complexes it controls throughout southern Lebanon. Advances in Israel's air-to-ground support capabilities will be necessary to avoid a repeat of the 2006 Lebanon War, when it was expected that Israeli airpower would overwhelm Hezbollah's fighting ability and IDF ground troops would rapidly advance northward, pushing Hezbollah's short-range rocket launchers out of range of Israel. Those IDF troops were deployed more than a week after the conflict erupted, once it became clear that Israel Air Force attacks did not result in a lessening of Hezbollah rocket fire. Their advance was then slowed by Hezbollah's unanticipated, innovative combat abilities, which resulted in an unexpectedly high Israeli casualty count.

Iran-Syria-Hezbollah Axis

Syria's Assad regime provides Iran with access to Hezbollah. Should Assad fall, that access would be severely compromised. Such calculations inform Iran's decision to heavily back Assad's government in the Syrian civil war. Furthermore, it is believed in Israel that Hezbollah's close ties to Iran make it likely that Tehran would order the Lebanese group to launch attacks on Israeli targets in the event of military action against Iranian nuclear facilities. After the 2006 war, Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah was instructed by the Iranian leadership that he should never again initiate a conflict with Israel without explicit instruction to do so from Tehran.

Jordan

Increasing instability in Jordan is of grave concern to Israel. The two countries share Israel's longest border and, because of decades of close and productive security cooperation, the border remains to a large degree unfortified.

Spillover from the Syrian civil war – Jordan hosts approximately one million Syrian refugees – puts additional pressure on the kingdom, beyond the internal pressures emanating from Muslim Brotherhood loyalists, Palestinian nationalist movements, and, for the first time, Bedouin tribes that have long been the bulwark of the monarchy. The government has received some respite recently, however, as Mohamed Morsi's removal in Egypt has caused the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to lose some of the considerable allure it held just months ago.

In addition to one million Syrians, there are 250,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan (down from a peak of 850,000) compared to Jordan's total population of 6.3 million. These refugees place enormous stress on the kingdom's finances and infrastructure, and this will have enormous demographic and economic effects if these populations do not return to their home countries. Importantly, Bedouin tribes increasingly could become a minority in a sea of Palestinians and Syrians. The royal government suffered a severe blow to its ability to address the challenges when natural gas supplies from Egypt were cut off due to attacks on pipelines in the Sinai. Despite these challenges, a minority view, on the other hand, holds out hope that the brutal slaughter of civilians in Syria has been a sobering lesson to those in Jordan, chiefly Palestinians, advocating overthrowing the monarchy.

Amman is greatly concerned by the possibility that Salafist and al-Qaeda rebel factions could emerge victorious in Syria, leading to a Taliban-like enemy on Jordan's northern border.

The Hashemite monarchy retains power in part because of Saudi, U.S., and Israeli financial support and other assistance, including use of the Israeli port of Haifa as a vital lifeline for exports, which replaced the now closed route to Syrian ports. It was argued that the United States should pressure the oil-rich Persian Gulf monarchies to increase assistance to Jordan.

Arab League officials have frozen out the Jordanian government in response to Amman's urging of Western intervention in the Syrian civil war. Like other Arab states holding the same position, chiefly the Gulf monarchies, Jordan will not publicly acknowledge its position. At the same time, contacts between Israel and Jordan increased. One high-ranking Jordanian noted that while no fellow Arab states had offered support, he had been routinely contacted by his Israeli counterparts regarding the refugee crisis resulting from the Syrian civil war. Meanwhile, Islamist influence in Jordan is rising due to funding and encouragement from Turkey.

Amman is greatly concerned by the possibility that Salafist and al-Qaeda rebel factions could emerge victorious in Syria, leading to a Taliban-like enemy on Jordan's northern border. An added worry is the destination of the estimated 6,000 foreign Islamist fighters in Syria at the conclusion of that country's civil war, particularly the hundreds of Jordanians among these ranks. Therefore, it was advised that thorough vetting should precede the provision of advanced weapons to rebel groups in Syria.

There is already concern in Jordan over the disposition of the Syrian government's advanced and unconventional weapons if the Assad regime falls. It was said that Jordan would work with Israel to prevent those systems from coming under the control of Islamic fundamentalists. While the monarchy supports a no-fly zone over Syria, there is no consensus that it would have a significant influence on the ground. Additional U.S. military aid to Jordan remains highly desired and would assist the Jordanian military in planning for multiple scenarios emanating from the Syrian conflict.

Jordanian officials fear time is not on the side of Syrian rebel forces. To their view, the Assad regime is stronger today than it was a year ago, due to Russian support, an influx of Iranian weapons and technical advisers, the addition of Hezbollah fighters swelling the ranks of those fighting alongside the Syrian army, and the fact that the largely untrained rebel groups are still equipped with little more than small arms. Rebel battlefield successes in late August 2013 reportedly brought hundreds of anti-tank missiles, armored vehicles, and other equipment into rebel arsenals, but it is not clear if those forces will be able to employ the equipment effectively. In this context, possible American air strikes carried out in retaliation for the Assad regime's alleged use of chemical weapons would advance the rebel cause. At the same time, Russian success in forestalling such strikes, by prompting the Assad regime to declare its intention to surrender its chemical weapons arsenal to international inspectors, bolstered the Assad regime.

Turkey

The Turkish-Israeli relationship was severely strained by the Turkish government's repeated public denunciation of Israel following Operation Cast Lead. This was exacerbated by anti-Israel incitement by Turkish officials, most notably Prime Minister Erdoğan's publicly-delivered rebuke of Israeli President Shimon Peres at the January 2009 Davos conclave. Five months later, the Israeli raid on the MV *Mavi Marmara*, part of the so-called Gaza Flotilla that was attempting to break the Israeli cordon around Gaza, sent relations to their lowest point.

This deterioration was not the product of Erdoğan's mercurial personality, but rather a deeper strategic choice to bolster his claims for leadership of the Muslim world by downgrading Turkey's ties to Israel. This led directly to his support for breaking the Israeli-enforced blockade of Hamas-run Gaza – a blockade determined to be legal under international law. Quite simply, Erdoğan understood that he could not be both a friend to Israel and a leading figure in the Muslim world. What followed were firebrand, rabble-rousing anti-Israel speeches and increased Turkish support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, as well as Muslim Brotherhood-linked rebel groups fighting in Syria.

Turkey's support for Hamas (estimated at \$250 million per year) has weakened the Palestinian Authority.

Today, however, Erdoğan's regional standing has declined from its 2010 peak. The intersection of Egyptian societal chaos in the wake of the January 2011 revolution and the upsurge in terrorism emanating from the Sinai saw a resulting increase in pressure (destruction of smuggling tunnels and border closings) placed upon the Hamas government in Gaza, both by the Morsi government and the Egyptian military government that overthrew him in July 2013. Popular anger in Egypt with President Morsi's high-handed edicts in late 2012 served to

further dampen enthusiasm for Erdoğan as a regional leader. The eruption of the Syrian civil war in March 2011 quickly led to Hamas being displaced from its Damascus headquarters. Sunni rebels, including those backed by Erdoğan, initially captured the adulation of the Arab world but suffered a series of setbacks throughout 2012 at the hands of Assad regime loyalists and their Shiite Hezbollah allies. Turkish-supported rebel factions in Syria face competition from more radical Salafist groups (including al-Qaeda), which receive backing from Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. This reflects a larger struggle for primacy by Turkish-supported Sunni fundamentalist groups across the Middle East.

Over the past year Erdoğan has also faced growing domestic opposition for his backing of Islamist fundamentalist groups. His popularity suffered another blow when he directed government security forces to use heavy-handed tactics against unarmed Taksim Square protestors in May-June 2013.

For Israel, however, Turkey's support for Hamas (estimated at \$250 million per year) has weakened the Palestinian Authority. Erdoğan's support for Hamas was reinforced as recently as this past July when he hosted Hamas leaders Khaled Mashaal and Ismail Haniyeh in Ankara. Hopes for rapprochement with Turkey were raised by Israel's apology for the MV *Mavi Marmara* incident in March 2013. While this strict Turkish condition for resumption of normal ties has lessened bilateral tensions, relations have not returned to their pre-flotilla status.

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not about territory; it is about the Palestinian rejection of Israel's very existence as the sovereign nation-state of the Jewish people. The Oslo Process failed to show progress because of its top-down structure. Instead, bottom-up approaches must be initiated to improve the Palestinian economy, governance, rule of law, maintenance of order, provision of security, and, most problematically, the Palestinian education system, which inculcates a rejection of Israel and hatred of Jews.

It is important that the United States understand Israel's desire for stability in the West Bank. In the 2006 parliamentary elections, the majority of West Bank voters chose Hamas due to antipathy for the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA), and because Hamas completely rejected Israel and opposed any compromise or even working arrangements with Israel, whereas the PA was, in fact, cooperating with the Israeli government in a range of areas including security. Though the 2007 civil conflict between Hamas and Fatah ejected the former from the West Bank, Israel cannot abide the risk that Hamas could gain control of the West Bank in the future.

There is broad agreement that as long as Palestinian leaders and their backers believe that Israel can be defeated or forced to yield concessions, prospects for real peace are dim.

Today, Israel appears to be focused on maintaining the status quo with the Fatah leadership. The ability of PA President Mahmoud Abbas to implement a peace agreement with Israel

without controlling Gaza has been questioned. There is broad agreement that as long as Palestinian leaders and their backers believe that Israel can be defeated or forced to yield concessions, prospects for real peace are dim. Further confounding the situation is the fact that Abbas has not prepared a successor. There is a near-consensus that Abbas does not have the capacity to deliver the Palestinian half of a compromise that would be required for a durable peace.

At the same time, IDF cooperation with Palestinian security forces is considered strong, and is expected to improve as a new generation of Palestinian officers gains professional experience with new deployments.

These challenges are heightened by the prevalent expectation in Israel that, if elections were held in the West Bank now, Hamas would most likely win. Therefore, Israel's reactions to Palestinian provocations and handling of the Palestinian Authority must be carefully managed.

Gaza

Gaza's ruling Hamas terrorist organization has been in a quiet phase since the IDF's Operation Pillar of Defense in November 2012. Since then, Hamas has been rebuilding its weapons stores and consolidating its power base in Gaza with the ultimate goal of taking power from the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Another contributing factor to the lack of Hamas activity had been the desire of its leadership to not cause trouble for Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, whom they counted as a key supporter. Now that Morsi has been removed from office by the Egyptian military.

Turbulence in Egypt and the current levels of Egypt-Israel border cooperation may give Hamas pause but the terrorist organization remains a significant threat, especially if the IDF is compelled to engage in a multiple-front series of responses that could stretch its capabilities.

Most of Hamas' military capabilities are smuggled in from the Egyptian Sinai. Given the importance to Israel of the peace agreement with Egypt, Jerusalem is constrained in terms of how it can preclude Egyptian support for Hamas. Egypt's military rulers, as of September 2013, have moved to curb previous levels of government support for Hamas and are blocking smuggling tunnels, which have been a lucrative source of revenue for Hamas. In addition to crucial Egyptian support, Hamas receives roughly \$250 million per year from Turkey and Qatar, while Gaza's second-most-capable terrorist group, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), has begun to receive funding from Iran. Qatar most recently indicated that it would increase its support for Hamas to the tune of \$400 million.

The period of quiet should not be misconstrued. It is clear that Hamas has been rearming. Turbulence in Egypt and the current levels of Egypt-Israel border cooperation may give Hamas pause, but the terrorist organization remains a significant threat. This threat could become even more acute if the IDF is compelled to engage in a multiple-front series of responses that could stretch its capabilities.

Israel

For Israeli security officials, it is critical that stability in Jordan and Saudi Arabia be preserved. The Saudis act as a bulwark to Shia expansion in the Persian Gulf, while a friendly Jordan gives Israel strategic depth from short- and medium-range rockets and missiles as well as cross-border terrorist attacks. Israeli planners recognize that state stability to Israel's east does not necessarily preclude asymmetric and irregular threats posed by transnational terrorist organizations and broad regional developments like the Sunni-Shia conflict.

Israel's Strategic Dilemma

If Israel's leadership chooses to respond to a threat to national security, such as the movement of Hezbollah's long-range missiles, the conflict with that group would likely escalate; on the other hand, an Israeli failure to respond proactively to the detected threat would likely increase the costs and risks when the conflict inevitably occurs. This calculation leads to the conviction in Israel that conflicts will reoccur with Hamas in Gaza, and with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Changing Nature of Warfare

Deterrence was described as one of Israel's four pillars of national security that also includes Early Warning, Decisive Victory, and Defense. The dilemma confronting Israel can be described as the "Changing Nature of Warfare," a concept used to describe the new types of threats confronting the country. Increasingly, Israel must consider how to deter and defeat hybrid enemies - groups like Hamas and Hezbollah that act as both government and terrorist organizations, and which employ strategic weaponry while hiding amid civilian populations.

The questions challenging Israel are how to deter hybrid enemies and how to define decisive victory over a hybrid enemy.

Indeed, the tactics employed by Hamas, Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations have evolved. The hijacking of commercial airliners gave way to suicide bombers, which, though still employed, have been supplemented by rockets and missiles aimed at population centers. This "Asymmetric Formula" in which such groups intentionally target Israeli non-combatants and simultaneously hide amidst civilians, presents the Israeli government with the challenge of responding forcefully to protect its citizens while avoiding collateral damage during retaliation. Doing so necessarily lengthens any such conflict, thus gradually increasing the pressure on Israeli leaders from their own citizens as well as internationally to cease military operations. This asymmetric formula is meant to instill fear in the Israeli population and undermine confidence in its political leaders. Unlike previous terrorist actions, these threats directly target the legitimacy of the Israeli government and undermine its relationship with the United States.

In addition to a shifting strategic landscape, Israel must confront new, more powerful and more precise weaponry deployed by its enemies. These capabilities are designed specifically to counter traditional Israeli superiorities in technology and battlefield performance, thus negating the IDF's ability to deliver a knockout blow. As a result, the IDF

is expected to rely highly on an integration of tactical operations and intelligence fusion to maintain a tactical advantage for Israel.

Security Challenges

Israel confronts a multilayered threat picture, with challenges from state and non-state actors both on its immediate borders, and from hundreds of miles away. The spectrum of possible attacks ranges from terrorist bombings and shootings to the use of weapons of mass destruction. Such threats will not always take shape on a traditional battlefield crowded with vehicles and soldiers, thus requiring Israel to blend high-tech intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and cyber efforts with human intelligence. The IDF is developing systems to provide alternative perspectives so that security threats can be understood in non-traditional manners. Such systems are expected to play a key role in identifying and differentiating between political and military responses to future security threats.

Future enemies will likely be well-hidden among civilians, launching hit-and-run actions before quickly dispersing. Israel also confronts a no less insidious De-Legitimization movement, manifested in boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) efforts. Israeli leaders must combat the effects of these trends on national morale through the integrated exercise of information, diplomatic, and economic power.

Combatting Hezbollah the Next Time

Israelis believe that the only solution to neutralizing Hezbollah is through a rapid, highly coordinated ground and air campaign lasting no more than three weeks and relying on actionable intelligence, precise targeting, fast and accurate data transmission, overwhelming firepower, and rapid maneuver. Due to Hezbollah's expected heavy employment of rockets and missiles (launching as many as 2,000 rockets and missiles per day at Israeli population centers and military bases), Israel is expected to suffer more casualties on the home front than on the front lines.

Combating Hezbollah on the ground in southern Lebanon is a daunting prospect. Logistical challenges are most acute. In 2006, it was observed that the IDF was challenged to move as much manpower, equipment, and supplies as needed as fast as the battle plan called for. However, infantry and armor units became bogged down in small villages south of the main objectives, which was assumed to be in keeping with Hezbollah's plan at the time.

The uncertain outcomes of past conflicts with Hezbollah engendered a discussion of how Israel would define success in the next war. Several post-conflict markers were discussed, including: sufficient destruction of Hezbollah's missile arsenal and launch sites such that Israel is no longer under threat, the top levels of Hezbollah leadership have been eliminated, and a change in the Lebanese political landscape whereby Hezbollah is no longer part of the Lebanese government.

Maintaining the QME

Israelis acknowledge that strengthening Arab partners is important to U.S. security goals in the region, but question how Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME) can still be maintained.

Accordingly, Israel did not protest the recently announced major arms sale to Saudi Arabia, and Israeli officials have said they will work directly with the Department of Defense on maintaining the QME, rather than encourage Congress to become involved in a discussion of such issues.

Increases in American assistance in the areas of active defense, intelligence, precision munitions, and C⁴I capabilities are highly desired by Israel.

Acquiring and operating nineteen F-35 Lightning II (Joint Strike Fighter) multirole fighters will consume an enormous slice of Israel's defense spending capacity, especially as these aircraft will have different capabilities than those sold to other countries. These expenses are justified by the F-35's vital role in maintaining the QME in the realms of air superiority and long-range strike. Israel has urged that the United States make allowances so that unique Israeli systems can be plugged into the F-35's onboard computer architecture. In this manner, those F-35s will be connected to the IDF's integrated military network. It is hoped that in future purchases of F-35s, the planes will be able to carry Israeli weapons systems and make use of Israeli electronic warfare capabilities.

Israel has not yet finalized plans to acquire several other big-ticket systems to help maintain the QME, including a second F-35 squadron, V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor transport aircraft, air defense radar systems, JDAMs, AESA radar upgrades for Israeli F-15 and F-16 fighters, and anti-radiation missiles. U.S. proposals to sell KC-135 aerial refueling tanker aircraft were not greeted as enthusiastically by Israeli defense officials.

Increases in American assistance in the areas of active defense, intelligence, precision munitions, and C⁴I capabilities are highly desired by Israel. During the November 2012 Operation Pillar of Defense, Israel's active defense strategy provided time and space to eliminate thirty senior Hamas leaders and large stores of Hamas missiles, and cripple the Gaza economy. Within three days Hamas was calling for a ceasefire.

Hardening Against Missile Attack

Shoring up Israel's ability to defend against rocket and missile attacks was identified as a high priority. Therefore, the country's multi-layered missile defense architecture should be made more robust. At the short end of the range, priority is given to the acquisition of an additional five to seven Iron Dome batteries, with hundreds of interceptors, to complement the six in service today. The mid-range David's Sling system has not yet been deployed, but the need is for four or five batteries with 200-300 interceptors. The upper tier would see improvements to the Arrow II system and acquisition of Arrow III exo-atmospheric interceptors.

In the area of missile defense, Israel's multi-layered architecture should be made more robust.

Cyber capabilities are in constant need of development and improvement, as are passive defenses on the home front, where the civilian infrastructure must be improved for greater survivability.

Critical military assets are being moved from Israel's north and from the populous and territorially constrained coastline to the comparatively wide-open spaces of the Negev.

Nevatim Air Base, located south of Be'er Sheva in the northern Negev, has been expanded to accommodate units formerly housed at bases in the north or in the Tel Aviv metro area. A major underground facility in the Negev that will house the C4I headquarters is under construction.

Challenges to Maritime Assets

The large natural gas fields discovered off Israel's Mediterranean coast have engendered discussion of the Israeli Navy's ability to safeguard drilling platforms and attendant transport and processing facilities that would be required for their exploitation. The fields lie within Israel's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which encompasses an area twice the size of Israel's landmass. It has been estimated that within five years, sixty percent of Israel's natural gas needs will be satisfied by production from these fields.

The IDF has expressed an interest in acquiring four 1,200-ton corvettes, at a cost of some \$700 million, to give the Israeli Navy the capacity to patrol the EEZ. The main threat to the gas platforms (and to the Israeli vessels) are anti-ship missiles, including the Chinese C-802 and the Russian Yakhont P-800, as well as suicide attacks by vessels packed with explosives. In 2006, a Hezbollah-launched C-802 damaged the Saar 5-class corvette INS *Hanit*, killing four crewmembers. On July 5, 2013, an Israeli missile strike destroyed an indeterminate number of a reported fifty Yakhont missiles stored by the Syrian military in a warehouse at the port of Latakia.

The maritime missile threat emanates not only from Lebanon but also from Hamas-controlled Gaza.

The maritime missile threat emanates not only from Hezbollah in Lebanon but also from Hamas and other terrorist groups operating in Gaza. Furthermore, Egypt's naval capabilities must be taken into account. Additionally, a missile strike on a commercial cargo vessel traveling to an Israeli port would send insurance rates skyrocketing and cause a slowdown of maritime cargo delivery to Israel, consequently driving up the price of consumer goods and putting great pressure on the government to take action. Another maritime security issue is the transfer of weapons to Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Syrian army via the sea – from Iran via the Red Sea, Sudan and southern Egypt; from Iran via Yemen and the Sinai; from Libya to Gaza. Many times over the past decade, the Israeli Navy has intercepted ships loaded with weapons bound for Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority

While Iran is far from the eastern Mediterranean and has few long-range naval assets, its vessels traverse the area and can be expected to engage in provocative behavior while doing so. The 2010 MV *Mavi Marmara* episode, another incidence of maritime provocation, demonstrated the great harm that can befall Israel from these types of operations.

As the maritime arena rapidly grows in strategic importance, there is a growing need to ensure Israel's QME in naval forces.

U.S.-Israel Relations

An enduring cornerstone of the strategic relationship between the two democracies is that Israel fights its own fights and will not ask the United States engage in combat on its behalf.

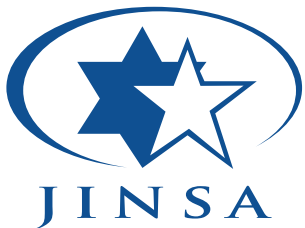
Prime Minister Netanyahu has never asked President Obama to attack Iran's nuclear weapons development program for Israel. President Obama, however, asked Prime Minister Netanyahu not to attack the sites.

[While] military and intelligence cooperation between the United States and Israel is considered to be better than ever... the two democracies remain separated by their dramatically differing perceptions of national security threats.

Military and intelligence cooperation between the United States and Israel is considered to be better than ever. Moreover, despite political differences, cooperation between the two countries' national security councils is very strong. Recent examples include efforts made by Obama's then chief counterterrorism advisor John Brennan (now CIA director) to convince Britain, France and Germany to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman's efforts to coordinate with Israel on the P5+1's diplomatic efforts with Iran.

Nevertheless, the two democracies remain separated by their dramatically differing perceptions of national security threats. For Israel, all wars are local, while for the United States, all wars are distant. While Israel strives to postpone wars as long as possible, it recognizes that for many of the most dangerous and imminent threats, it is better to preempt them to minimize the cost to its citizens. Today, the IDF appears to be preparing for what it views as a nearly inevitable conflict with Hezbollah within the next few years.

As an enduring ally that shares fundamental societal traits, Israel's commitment to the United States is unshakeable. Israel sees itself as a strategically located, permanent ally for the United States. Resilient and friendly bilateral relations with the United States remain a major pillar of Israel's national security.



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