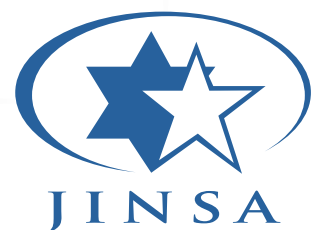


# The 2014 JINSA Generals and Admirals Program in Israel

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*A Report by the Program Participants*

November 2014



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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the U.S. and Israeli officials who provided information and insight to the JINSA delegation but cannot be recognized officially.

#### DISCLAIMER

This report and its findings represent those of the participants in the 2014 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.

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# Israel and the Middle East



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# Executive Summary

## Overview

For fifty-one days this summer, the world’s attention was riveted on the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In response to an increase in rocket fire aimed at Israeli civilians from Gaza, on July 8 the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) launched Operation Protective Edge. After ten days of responding to Hamas missile attacks and terrorist assaults via sea and land with airstrikes, the IDF launched a limited ground incursion into Gaza. By the time the twelfth and final ceasefire took hold on August 26, more than 2,100 Palestinians and 72 Israelis had been killed. Even as both sides claimed victory, the war did little more than restore the pre-conflict status quo between Israel and Hamas.

Yet despite dominating global headlines, Operation Protective Edge did little to change the broader contours of the security situation in the Middle East. The threats posed by Iranian proliferation, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the continuing mass slaughter of the Syrian civil war continued unabated. Although Hamas’s operational capacity in terms of rockets and attack tunnels were significantly depleted – approximately two-thirds of its missile arsenal was either fired or destroyed by IDF airstrikes, and 32 “terror tunnels” were destroyed by the IDF – the war similarly failed to significantly alter the array of strategic threats and operational challenges that Israel faces.

It was precisely to obtain a deeper understanding of these threats and challenges that from May 17 – May 27 JINSA took a group of twelve retired general and flag officers to Israel through its Generals and Admirals (G&A) Program to participate in discussions with senior Israeli security, military, intelligence, and political leaders. The G&A Trip to Israel has been an annual component of JINSA’s G&A Program, which was established in 1981. Over ten days, this year’s G&A delegation met with more than thirty senior policymakers, military commanders, and intelligence officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Avidor Lieberman, IDF Chief of Staff LTG Benjamin Gantz, Mossad Director Tamir Pardo, the Chiefs of Staff of the Israeli Air Force and Navy, and the commanders of Israel’s Gaza, Central, Northern, and Home Front Commands and Unit 8200. Additionally, Israel’s Defense and Armed Forces Attaché to the United States and Canada, Major General Yaakov Ayish joined the trip.

In addition to these briefings on the Middle East security situation, the latest Israeli war fighting doctrine and national security plans, and joint U.S.-Israeli security and technological initiatives, the delegation visited eight Israeli military bases and five field locations, including: the Gaza “Terror” Tunnels; the Yam Tethys natural gas platforms; an Iron Dome Battery outside Ashkelon; the Jordan River Valley; and the Golan Heights. Over the course of these ten days, it became apparent that: Israel faces multiple strategic threats that could permanently, negatively alter its way of life or possibly end its existence as a sovereign nation; the IDF faces a broad array of operational challenges as it fulfills its mission to defend Israel’s territorial integrity and the security of its population; and despite these threats and challenges, Israel brings several unique assets and resources to bear in its fight for survival and to its strategic partnership with the United States.

*Strategic Threats*

During the JINSA G&A delegation’s briefings, three clear strategic threats to Israel were discussed. First, and perhaps most importantly, is the threat posed by the Iranian nuclear program. Given its ideologically-based eliminationist rhetoric towards Israel and use of regional proxies to directly attack Israeli citizens, Iran’s potential acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability poses a grave threat to Israel’s survival as a sovereign nation. Moreover, even if Iran settles for being a “threshold” state capable of making a nuclear breakout on short notice, this will trigger a regional nuclear arms race that will further destabilize the Middle East.

Whereas Iranian nuclear proliferation poses the starkest, most immediate threat to Israel’s existence as a sovereign nation, it is not the only strategic threat Israel faces. Although the series of upheavals known in the West as “the Arab Spring” are not inherently threatening in and of themselves, their derivative effects threaten Israel in two ways: beyond the immediate danger of a nuclearized Middle East, regional proliferation means that Israeli security would be tied to the fate of many regimes that are as structurally unstable as those that have already been toppled since 2011. Additionally, the collapse of governance in key regions such as the Syrian side of the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula has brought “Global Jihad” to Israel’s northern and southern borders, thereby significantly increasing the chances of a catastrophic terrorist attack within Israel. Finally, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement is attempting to delegitimize Israel because it occupies the West Bank in the absence of a peace settlement with the Palestinians that addresses Israeli security concerns. Because Israel is dependent upon trade and access to the international financial system, the BDS Movement’s success would either threaten Israel’s economic security or push it into a deal that increases its security risks vis-à-vis the Palestinians to unacceptable levels.

*Operational Challenges*

In some respects, the IDF’s mission to defend Israel’s territorial integrity and the security of its citizenry was immediately recognizable to the generals and admirals of the JINSA delegation. Yet the IDF also faces several unique operational challenges that American officers never have to face themselves. Hence discussions of the IDF’s operational challenges covered a broad spectrum from the foreign to the all-too-familiar for the JINSA delegation. For example, Israel faces unique security challenges due to its lack of strategic depth, as at its narrowest point from Netanya to the West Bank Israel is only 8.5 miles wide, and it only takes fifteen minutes to fly across Israel from north-to-south. This lack of strategic depth is a particularly important factor in negotiations with the Palestinians over security arrangements for a possible Palestinian state. This lack of strategic depth makes Israel uniquely vulnerable to adversaries bypassing the IDF and directly targeting its citizenry through at least two means: The proliferation of over a hundred thousand rockets and missiles on Israel’s borders directly targeting its population centers; and the construction of “terror tunnels” used to bypass Israel’s border security and abduct or attack Israeli civilians.

Although the United States does not suffer a similar lack of strategic depth, many of the operational challenges with which the IDF grapples will grow in importance for future U.S. operations. For example, another means by which adversaries can also target Israeli civilians is through cyberattacks against Israel’s infrastructure. In addition to the operational challenges posed by adversaries who bypass the IDF in order to directly attack its citizens,



Israel also faces the problem of *whom* to target for deterrence, pre-emptive, or retaliatory purposes. Whereas for most of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel was able to address its problems by affecting the decision making of government leaders, today it faces a plethora of non-state actors that are as lethally armed as any nation-state, yet who possess decentralized command structures and hide amongst noncombatant populations to protect their weapons systems. Moreover, the increasing diversity of potential adversaries poses a formidable intelligence gathering challenge for Israel, as it must cast a wider net for collection than the autocratic leaders and military divisions on their borders. The importance of precise intelligence regarding adversary capabilities and intentions is especially critical given that Israel is currently in a situation described by several officers as “The Conflict Between the Wars,” in which Israel is neither at peace nor engaged in a conflict seeking a decisive victory. In this ambiguous state, Israel must have enough intelligence to effectively use force in discrete operations while possessing a clear enough picture of enemy decision making to avoid escalation to full-scale war. Finally, the IDF must shape its force structure to address all these geostrategic changes and operational changes in an era of increasingly restrictive budget constraints. Given the similarities of these challenges to those facing U.S. policymakers, the Israeli experience is especially instructive for American officers.

### *Assets and Resources*

Despite the daunting nature of the strategic threats and operational challenges outlined above, the IDF is able to draw upon a variety of resources and assets that enable it to successfully fulfill its mission. For example, the delegation was struck by the high state of morale amongst the IDF junior officers and personnel it encountered, as well as the strong sense of purpose and deep resolve of Israel's leaders. Israel also benefits from a stable economy that is being boosted by the discovery of new natural resources and by a culture of technological innovation. One area in which this military and technological innovation was evident is in the development of an open system in which all intelligence sensors and monitors and command and control systems will be entities on one network. This will allow intelligence to be distributed down to lower levels of command, achieve fusion between all units in the field, and allow for faster and more integrated fires. Israeli briefers noted that not only has security cooperation with Egypt increased over the past two years, but also that a convergence of interests has allowed for improved cooperation with regional actors beyond the traditional cold peace Israel enjoys with Egypt and Jordan. Finally, despite the political controversies over comments by both U.S. and Israeli officials in the wake of the collapse of the latest round of Israel-Palestinian negotiations just prior to the delegation's visit, Israeli leaders and commanders were unanimous in expressing their appreciation for U.S. support and the breadth and depth of defense cooperation between the two nations.

### *Outstanding Issues*

Despite the impressive breadth and depth of the issues covered during the ten day trip, several questions/concerns relating to Israel and the security situation in the Middle East remained unresolved. First, although Israeli leaders and commanders were united in discussing the potential necessity of a strike against Iran to degrade its nuclear capacity, the G&A delegation did not feel the uncertainties regarding the end state of such an operation had been fully addressed. Second, although the delegation acknowledged the inevitability of the IDF having to target civilian structures in future operations (a prediction borne out by Operation

Protective Edge), there was a sense that Israelis may underestimate the strategic importance of public affairs and information operations in such conflicts, as inaccurate reporting in previous conflicts has left the IDF predisposed to view the media as an adversary rather than another domain in which they must fight. Finally, although the delegation understood the immediate security threat posed by Hamas's control of Gaza and the necessity of military preparedness in the face of this threat, it was less clear whether or not Israel has a long-term plan to address this threat beyond constant military deterrence.

In the end, although this report is based upon the briefings and discussions the JINSA G&A Program delegation held with Israeli leaders and officers a month prior to the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas operatives that precipitated the events culminating in the Operation Protective Edge, neither the ensuing military operations nor the August 26 ceasefire significantly altered Israel's fundamental strategic or operational challenges the IDF faces. In fact, although none of the Israeli briefers conveyed an inkling that a major conflict was imminent, Operation Protective Edge validated many of their assessments about their adversaries' military capabilities and tactics and vividly confirmed their predictions regarding the nature of future IDF operations. Consequently, none of the conclusions in this report have been altered to reflect the events of this summer's war.

# Introduction

In May, JINSA took a group of twelve recently retired generals and admirals to Israel through its Generals and Admirals (G&A) Program to participate in discussions with senior Israeli security, military, intelligence, and political leaders. The visit is an annual component of JINSA's G&A Program, which was established in 1981 to educate retired U.S. general officers on the importance of a robust U.S.-Israel security partnership to America's national security. This year JINSA created an extensive pre-trip education process that included briefings by leading U.S. and Israeli experts. The actual trip featured over 30 briefings with senior policymakers, military commanders, and intelligence officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Avidor Lieberman, IDF Chief of Staff LTG Benjamin Gantz, Mossad Director Tamir Pardo, the Chiefs of Staff of the Israeli Air Force and Navy, and the commanders of Israel's Gaza, Central, Northern, and Home Front Commands and Unit 8200. Additionally, Israel's Defense and Armed Forces Attache to the United States and Canada, Major General Yaakov Ayish joined the trip.

In addition to these briefings on the Middle East security situation, the latest Israeli war fighting doctrine and national security plans, and joint U.S.-Israeli security and technological initiatives, the delegation visited eight Israeli military bases and five field locations, including: the Gaza "Terror" Tunnels; the Yam Tethys natural gas platforms; an Iron Dome Battery outside Ashkelon; the Jordan River Valley; and the Golan Heights. Although the JINSA delegation has visited Jordan for meetings with officials from the Jordanian military and intelligence services as part of the G&A Program since 1999, this year Jordanian leaders were unavailable due to preparations for the visit to the region by Pope Francis. This portion of the program will resume again next year.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section examines **strategic threats** to Israel that if left unchecked will be capable of imposing a catastrophic defeat on the country that potentially threaten its existence as a sovereign nation or as a Jewish state. The second section examines unique **operational challenges** the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) face in executing their mission to defend Israel's territorial integrity and the security of its citizenry. The third section examines **resources and assets** that enable the IDF to successfully fulfill its mission. The report's conclusion summarizes questions and/or concerns relating to Israel and the security situation in the Middle East that remain unresolved at the end of the ten-day trip.

This report is based upon the briefings and discussions the JINSA G&A Program delegation held with Israeli leaders and officers in May 2014, a month before the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas operatives that precipitated the events culminating in the 51-day Operation Protective Edge. Despite the tragic loss of life during the fighting between Israel and Hamas, neither the military operations nor the August 26 ceasefire significantly altered Israel's fundamental strategic or operational challenges the IDF faces. In fact, although none of the Israeli briefers conveyed an inkling that a major conflict was imminent, Operation Protective Edge validated many of their assessments about their adversaries' military capabilities and tactics and vividly confirmed their predictions regarding the nature of future IDF operations. Therefore, none of the conclusions in this report have been altered to reflect the events of this summer's war.

# Strategic Threats to Israel

During the JINSA G&A delegation's briefings and discussions with Israeli policymakers and senior officers, three clear strategic threats to Israel emerged: First, given its ideologically-based eliminationist rhetoric towards Israel and use of regional proxies to directly attack Israeli citizens, Iran's potential acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability poses a grave threat to Israel's survival as a sovereign nation. Second, the derivative effects of what some in the West term "the Arab Spring" threatens Israel's existence in two ways: even if Iran settles for being a "threshold" state capable of making a nuclear breakout on short notice, this will trigger a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. In addition to the inherent danger of a nuclearized Middle East, Israeli security would be tied to the fate of many structurally unstable regimes. Additionally, the collapse of governance in key regions has brought "Global Jihad" to Israel's borders, significantly increasing the chances of a catastrophic terrorist attack within Israel. Finally, because Israel is dependent upon trade and access to the international financial system, the attempt to delegitimize the Jewish state by the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement threatens either Israel's economic security or pushes Israel into a peace deal that increases its security risks to unacceptable levels.

## *Iran*

Over the course of the more than thirty briefings the delegation received, Israeli leaders and officers consistently expressed their belief that Iran posed the greatest threat to their nation's security. This sense of threat stems from Iranian intentions towards Israel as expressed in both its leaders statements and its actions. As one Israeli diplomat noted, Iran consistently talks about destroying Israel: former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad notoriously called for Israel to be wiped off the map, and former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsajani's infamously boasted that Israel could be destroyed with a single nuclear weapon. This is "not a theoretical threat," the diplomat concluded, "but a real threat." One senior Ministry of Defense official said that Iran with nuclear weapons is the only strategic threat Israel views as rising to the existential level, and another senior policymaker stated: "Iran's nuclear weapons capability is our primary concern."

Beyond its eliminationist rhetoric, Iran makes its hostile, offensive intentions towards Israel clear by supporting proxies such as Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). One Israeli general declared that Iran is "An octopus that puts its hands in the Gulf, in Gaza, towards Israel, from the sea." Another general noted that Hezbollah and PIJ fighters travel to Iran for training and theological indoctrination, and that when Hezbollah Chairman Hassan Nasrallah relays orders from Tehran, he speaks Persian. In recent years the Israeli Navy has interdicted shipments that suggest an increasingly sophisticated smuggling network to arm these terrorist organizations. In 2009, for example, the Merchant Vessel *Francop* was intercepted with thirty days' worth of Iranian munitions intended for Hezbollah concealed in containers. In March 2014, the *Klos C* was boarded with permission of its captain in the Red Sea, and found to be carrying forty 302 missiles (possessing a range of 90-160km) under bags of Iranian cement and 40,000 mortar rounds. Iran is also providing Hezbollah with low-signature UAVs, and advanced technology to Palestinian terrorist organizations improve the accuracy of rockets fired from Gaza.

Worse, Iran employs these terror networks as cat's paws with which to attack Israeli citizens. Iran has combatant commands similar to the United States that are used for terror activities,

and has used Hezbollah to attack Israeli targets on a global scale. Israeli tourists have been attacked in countries as widely dispersed as Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Kenya, and the wife of an Israeli diplomat was wounded in an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps bombing in New Delhi, India. Consequently, the Mossad has been forced to move beyond its traditional regional outlook in order to counter the Quds Force and Hezbollah's global operations, and has pursued Hezbollah agents as far afield as Bangkok, Thailand in order to disrupt a planned attack during Passover 2014.

It is in the light of this demonstrated intent that Israel must consider the strategic consequences of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. If such a radical regime feels it can conduct such terrorist attacks with impunity now, how will it behave under a nuclear umbrella? And subsequently, which course of action is more dangerous: a nuclear Iran or bombing Iran? As one senior policymaker noted, Iran is committed to a revolutionary ideology, its desire to become a global power is illustrated by its export of terrorism, missiles, and rockets to five continents. Thus, a nuclear Iran would be able to intimidate U.S. allies in the Middle East as it pursues regional hegemony, and possibly achieve its stated goal of evicting the U.S. military from the Middle East. At a minimum, the possession of nuclear weapons would allow Iran to deter an Israeli counterattack against Hezbollah's vast rocket arsenal (see below), thereby critically undermining Israel's deterrence of Hezbollah. As a consequence, many officials agreed with one general's assessment that in order to assure Israel's security, it is "very important to make sure Iran does not become a militarily nuclear capable country,"

Although they declined to discuss specifics, the officials and officers the delegation met with generally agreed that Israel possesses the capability for a long-range strike against Iranian nuclear facilities, with one officer saying the IDF has been prepared "to do something" about Iran for the past four years. Others said that although a strike is possible and could set the Iranian nuclear program back a few years, the Iranian nuclear program is not just a military problem, and Israel would need political support to prevent Iran from rebuilding. One senior policymaker stated that a successful strike would deter Iran from trying to re-nuclearize, as it "gives them something to think about," as Iran has just enough prosperity and infrastructure that it has something to lose by escalating a discrete, preventive Israeli raid into a major conflict. However, the Israeli officials who discussed this issue with the delegation stressed that a military strike against Iran is "*the last resort*" and that they hope for a "good deal" between Iran and the P5+1.

Yet even as Israeli leaders made clear their desire for such a deal, none expressed the belief that a satisfactory agreement will be reached. As they perceive the situation, there are two points of leverage with which to coerce Iran into abandoning its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability: sanctions, and a credible military option. Unfortunately, according to one retired senior official, the Iranians do not take Israel seriously with regards to a military strike. And given the repeated public declarations that the United States is exhausted from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Iranians believe the military option is off-the-table for the remainder of the Obama administration. One senior official claimed that the timing of the direct U.S.-Iranian negotiations were a mistake and undermined the credibility of the military option. He added that Iran was months away from reaching "The Junction" of making a decision between achieving a nuclear breakthrough or pursuing negotiations. Instead of waiting a few months to put more pressure on the Iranians, starting negotiations *before* the Iranian elections told them that the United States would never use force to prevent a nuclear breakthrough. Conversely, the sanctions imposed upon Iran had become an existential threat to the theocratic regime.

The regime feared sanctions would eventually translate into popular action similar to the turmoil threatening other regimes in the region (see below), and it was this sense of threat to Iran *internally* that pushed the regime into negotiations and allowed Hassan Rouhani to run for President and become the face of the regime.

One senior official conjectured that what the regime/Ayatollah Ali Khamanei ultimately wants is the *option* to obtain nuclear weapons, hence it is building the infrastructure – including delivery systems – necessary to create an easy breakthrough. If true, then accepting a deal in which it remains a threshold state in return for sanctions relief actually costs Iran nothing, as it would have achieved that status absent a deal with the P5+1. Senior Israeli officials estimate this will leave Iran two months away from a potential breakout, and that even if this estimate is overly pessimistic, any agreement will require intrusive monitoring that would be difficult under the best of circumstances.

In addition to concerns about monitoring and a potential Iranian nuclear breakthrough, Israeli officials expressed their concern about the second-order effects of Iran as a threshold power. If Iran is acknowledged as a threshold power, every other state in the region “puts their finger in the dyke,” either bandwagoning with Iran’s program of regional hegemony or seeking their own nuclear capability. Although the UN Security Council repeatedly denied the existence of a “Right to Enrich,” other countries in the region will cite the international community’s reversal on this point in an agreement with Iran to justify their own proliferation activities. Thus, Iran’s threshold status will push the Gulf Cooperation Council states (i.e. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) to, at a minimum, achieve a similar status, or worse, simply purchase a functioning weapon from a cash poor nuclear state. Either scenario would create a nuclear arms race in the Middle East – what one Israeli official called “the greatest damage ever to non-proliferation” – and further turn the region into a tinderbox, only now with nuclear weapons. As discussed below, this would mark not only a dangerous development for Israel, but for the United States and Western nations in general.

### *The Second-Order Effects of the Arab Spring*

On the morning the delegation met with a senior intelligence official, reports came in from Tripoli that a militia had attacked the Libyan parliament and taken hostages. The official said this was illustrative of the current situation in the Middle East three years into the Arab Spring, which the official said was “not an Arab Spring, but an Arab Winter.” The question of the proper term for the political disorder sweeping the region since 2011 was a recurring theme for the Israeli officers and officials we met with, as they variously referred to it as “the Arab Upheaval,” the “Arab Shakedown,” and “the Regional Turmoil.” Regardless of the nomenclature used, there was a strong consensus that what we are seeing today is the collapse of the artificial agreements in the Middle East that followed World War I, and that the region may be reshaping itself back to what it was prior to Sykes-Picot. An arc of instability is stretching from Libya to Syria to Iraq that has witnessed: a revolution and counterrevolution in Egypt; a civil war in Syria killing hundreds of thousands and creating millions of refugees; increasing violence in Lebanon; failed government in Iraqi provinces (that since May’s has seen large swatches of the country seized by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham [ISIS] and the virtual disappearance of the Syrian-Iraqi border); and Turkey’s slow descent from a secular state to “Muslim Brotherhood lite”.

Not all of these developments are inherently dangerous for Israel. As one retired general pointed out, whereas for thirty years Israel prepared to fight a Syrian army equipped with

Russian air defenses and missiles on its northern border, that country's disintegration means the Syrian military no longer exists as a threat to Israel. Similarly, since the Tahrir Square protests that produced the Egyptian revolution and counter-revolution, that country has become more active in combatting Hamas' smuggling of advanced weapons systems and in combating jihadist groups in the Sinai Peninsula. Therefore, in a sense the Arab Spring *itself* is not inherently threatening to Israel, but rather has produced at least two second-order effects that pose a strategic threat: exacerbating the effects of Iranian proliferation, and increasing the risk of a catastrophic terrorists attack by bringing "Global Jihad" to Israel's borders.

## **SYRIA**

Whereas the Syrian Army used to be the main planning reference for the IDF, today it no longer exists as a threat to Israel. Since the start of Syria's civil war, the Syrian army has lost manpower, is unable to acquire spare parts or conduct equipment maintenance, and has expended more than fifty percent of its missile arsenal. In fact, Syria barely exists as a state anymore, as most of its territory is controlled by an incoherent opposition. The Assad regime has lost control over the frontier region, with less than twenty percent of the 100-mile frontier in government hands. Thousands of members of the al-Qa'ida affiliated Al-Nusra Front have occupied the Syrian side of the border, so that whereas there were only two terrorist attacks across the Syrian border from the 1974 ceasefire agreement until 2013, as of May 2014 there had been 5-6 terror events in the past year. Thus, although Syria no longer poses a conventional military threat, it is now a terrorist threat to Israel.

In 2012 Israeli leaders thought President Bashar Assad would not survive another six months due to a lack of resources. This assessment was proven incorrect, however, due to Russian and Iranian foreign aid, the Syrian people's adaptability to a lower standard of living, and the fact that the government no longer needs to support a quarter of its population. Combined with the disjointed nature of the Syrian rebels, Israeli officials now believe the conflict that has killed over 190,000 Syrians will likely last another decade. And with rehabilitation costs for Syria expected to reach \$100 billion, Israeli officials expect the country to be unstable for much longer than that. Although one general said that the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis is more dangerous for Israel, most Israeli leaders did not express a clear preference for what outcome they would like to see in Syria. Instead, Israeli generals expressed their goals in Syria as being more limited: to prevent the smuggling of advanced weapons systems (i.e. chemical weapons, double-digit surface-to-air-missiles) out of the country, and to protect their borders from the growth of "Global Jihad."

The instability that has plagued the region since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011 amplifies the threat posed to Israel and the United States by multiple states in the Middle East either possessing nuclear weapons or the precursors to them as threshold states in response to Iranian proliferation. If Saudi Arabia were to buy nuclear weapons from Pakistan – a scenario envisioned by many Middle East experts – this would subsequently tie Israel's security to the Kingdom's fate. Despite the Saudi monarchy's apparent stability, this is at best a dubious proposition for Israel, as the Shah's regime in Iran was famously assessed to be stable just a

month prior to the revolution that toppled him in 1979. Given that Syria, Libya, Iraq, and South Sudan (and arguably Lebanon) are no longer functioning states, and that even Jordan is under significant pressure, the danger posed to the United States and Israel by nuclear proliferation security in a region plagued by such instability is exponential rather than multiplicative.

Another dangerous consequence of the Arab Spring for Israel is the dramatic increase in radical forces on its border in the past two-to-three years, especially those affiliated with what Israelis term the “Global Jihad.” Nowhere is this danger more evident than in Syria, where hundreds of militias are currently fighting the Iranian-Russian-Hezbollah-supported Assad regime, as well as each other. These militias include hardcore al-Qa’ida affiliates such as ISIS and the al-Nusra Front, which as of May had drawn roughly 15,000 “mercenaries” from all over the world, including second and third-generation jihadists. The JINSA delegation visited Israel’s border with Syria in the Golan Heights, and saw firsthand evidence of how the Assad regime has lost control over the frontier region in the form of the black al-Qa’ida flags flying over Quneitra. Israeli officers estimated that less than twenty percent of the 100-mile frontier is in Syrian government hands, and that thousands of al-Nusra fighters were on the Syrian side of the border. These jihadists see the Golan Heights as a “frontier” and a platform for expanding their activities against Israel, which is their third goal after defeating Assad regime and establishing Sharia in Syria.

## **EGYPT**

Israel continues to enjoy a cold peace with Egypt. Although Israel remains unpopular with the Egyptian people, it has a strong working relationship with the Egyptian government of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, with whom they share intelligence on common threats and cooperate to keep the Suez Canal open. Since the publicly-supported coup that overthrew Muslim Brotherhood President Muhammad Morsi, the Egyptian military has begun fighting terrorists in the Sinai for the first time. It has also stopped smuggling to Hamas in retaliation for the terror group’s support of the Brotherhood, shutting down ninety percent of the smuggling tunnels into Gaza.

Despite this increased security cooperation, Israeli briefers were not overly sanguine in their assessments of Egypt, which they noted is currently the main battlefield in the Middle East in the struggle between secular and religious forces. They noted that even with General Sisi in charge, Egypt’s economic

situation is dire: at Cairo’s airports the planes are either covered or under a layer of dust, and the \$18 billion in aid received from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait has already been expended. Thus, although relations are good now, Israeli intelligence officials raised the disturbing possibility of General Sisi or another leader using Israel as a scapegoat for Egypt’s economic problems.

“Global Jihad” has also taken advantage of regional instability to increase its presence on Israel’s southern border. The fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has led to increased radicalization of that country’s Islamists, and the terrain of the Sinai Peninsula provides an almost ideal sanctuary for terrorist networks, allowing the region to become a magnet for jihadists from various areas. Although the Egyptian regime of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is



the jihadists' main target, Global Jihad attacks against Israel from the Sinai date back to 2004, and the groups operating from there seek to take advantage of any available opportunities to try to execute attacks on Israel. In addition to numerous rocket attacks from the Sinai, in August 2012 an al-Qa'ida-affiliated group in the Sinai ambushed and killed 16 Egyptian soldiers, stole their Armored Personnel Carriers, and attempted to deploy them as suicide bombers in Beersheba before they were intercepted by the IDF and killed. Additionally, there is increasing evidence of Global Jihad activity in Gaza, which had directed multiple attacks against Israel in the months preceding the JINSA delegation's visit. Thus, whereas until a year ago al-Qa'ida and its affiliates were not directly threatening Israel, today Israel finds itself caught between two increasingly active Global Jihad arenas to the North and South.

This development is particularly concerning given that Israeli officials do not anticipate a resolution to the region's instability anytime soon, arguing that "the Arab Spring was a symptom" of a larger disease. More than 52% of the Middle East's population is under 24 years old, are more educated than in previous generations, and therefore are increasingly aware of other societies' prosperity and that their expectations cannot be met under the present system. Furthermore, as one senior policymaker noted, the Arab world lacks a liberal tradition. Only one hundred thousand books have been translated into Arabic from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, whereas Greece alone translates five times that number every year. There is a similar stagnation with regards to science and industry as represented by patents, as there are no Arab states amongst the top forty in patents issued per population.

Given these deep demographic trends, belief that changes in the region's political systems would solve its problems have proved mistaken. As one senior official noted, although it is easy for a rich country to transition its economy, it is difficult for poor countries or those where resources are centrally controlled to enact reforms. For example, in the eighteen months prior to the delegation's visit to Israel, Egypt received \$18 billion in aid from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but the money has already been depleted in order to buy stability through spending such as purchasing bread and on energy subsidies. In order to get more international funding, Egypt will need to reduce such subsidies, which in turn will likely trigger more violence. Given these underlying economic realities, Israeli officials believe Egypt's economic situation is impossible even with General Sisi in power. Similarly, whatever the eventual outcome of Syria's civil war, the country has less than \$1 billion in reserves, and without international support (mainly from Russia and Iran) there is the potential for mass starvation. Other neighboring states face similar challenges, as the conflict in Syria has produced 3.5 million refugees, placing increasing strain on Lebanon and Jordan's infrastructure. Even if regimes make it through such immediate crises, there is still ample cause for long-term pessimism. For as medical treatments advance and life expectancies increase, regional food shortages will become more acute. Israeli officials were attuned to the possibility that at some point an Arab ruler may use Israel as a convenient scapegoat for their economic problems, thereby drawing them into a conflict due to their neighbor's structural poverty.

### *The BDS Movement*

As a senior Israeli diplomat noted, Israel is an island of stability amidst this regional turmoil, and believes it has enough power to resolve threats such as Iran and Hezbollah on its own if need be. The problem, according to the diplomat, is that Israel is a small country dependent upon exports and participation in the international financial system. Consequently, Israel is more vulnerable to pressure from the European Union and United States than from its regional

adversaries. Another senior policymaker echoed this concern, saying that the Boycott, Disinvestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement's attempt to delegitimize Israel is an echo of previous attempts to delegitimize the Jewish people, and therefore represents not only a slander to the Jewish people, but an existential threat to Israel.

Ostensibly, the BDS Movement is built upon the myth that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are the cause of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Such a belief, however, is at best ahistorical, as it ignores systemic attacks against Jews predating Israel's independence in 1948 due to Palestinian Arab opposition to *any* Jews living in Palestine. It also ignores the Mufti of Jerusalem's alliance with Nazi Germany in World War II, pre-1967 guerrilla attacks against Israel, and that the first settlement was not built in territory conquered in the Six Day War until 1975. There was no peace between the Israelis and Palestinians between 1967 and 1975, and Israeli leaders do not believe that a complete, unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank as demanded by Western academics would end Palestinian demands nor the broader conflict.

They are not alone in this belief. One Palestinian journalist urged the delegation to listen to what Fatah leaders say in Arabic, not their English remarks. In Arabic, Palestinian Authority (PA) leader Mahmoud Abbas has told the Palestinians he will never give away the "Right of Return" or Jerusalem, and that they can take what is given in the interim until they are strong enough to obtain all their demands. In the meantime, an entire generation of Palestinians has been raised on vitriolic anti-Semitism, conspiracy theories, and the glorification of martyrdom. Much of this incitement is deliberately orchestrated by the PA itself, which names streets in the West Bank after suicide bombers, provides official salaries of up to \$3,500 to convicted Palestinian terrorists serving in the Israeli prison system, glorifies terrorism through PA-controlled television and radio broadcasts, and denies Israel's existence in maps and textbooks used by the Palestinian education system. Palestinians have been taught that four thousand years of Jewish history is a fabrication, that there was no Kingdom of David, no temples in Jerusalem, and that Jews only came to Palestine after the Holocaust. Palestinian Arabs have been so thoroughly radicalized, the Palestinian journalist said, that they can never accept peace with the Jews. Thus, similar to Yassir Arafat who in 2000 turned down an Israeli proposal at Camp David offering to relinquish 95% of contested territory to the Palestinians, Abbas is a hostage of the official Palestinian rhetoric he encouraged, unable to make a deal lest he suffer the fate of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat who was assassinated for making peace with Israel in the Camp David Accords.

Moreover, Israeli leaders point to the example of Gaza as a cautionary tale for what would happen if they complied with the BDS Movement's demands. In 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally withdrew Israel from Gaza, and IDF soldiers destroyed Jewish settlements and forcibly removed Israeli settlers. Yet Palestinians did not perceive the withdrawal as a peaceful gesture, but instead saw it as a vindication of a terror strategy and believed the violence should be escalated. Subsequently, from 2005 to May 2014, more than *12,000* rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel. Israeli leaders understandably have concerns regarding the consequences of a similar withdrawal from the West Bank, where a Palestinian state nourished on radicalization and incitement would occupy the high ground overlooking Israel's densely populated coastal areas (see below). Thus, Israeli leaders find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place, as compliance with the BDS Movement's demands would create an existential threat, while at the same time a successful movement to isolate Israel would be equally catastrophic.

## PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

The JINSA delegation visited Israel shortly after the collapse of the U.S.-initiated peace talks, the failure of which had increased tensions with the Palestinians. Although the IDF's Central Command noted it deals with hundreds of stone-throwers each month – as well as Israeli settlers committing violence against Palestinians – one Israeli general stated that Palestinians have just enough prosperity to be unwilling to risk a full-scale uprising. Approximately 40,000 Palestinians work in Israel through permits, and more than 100,000 Palestinians are paid from Israeli sources. Thus, any shutdown due to violence would hurt the Palestinians economically. Unfortunately, after Oslo Fatah brought massive corruption to Palestinian governance, and despite receiving massive amounts of international aid, the West Bank's economy is perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy.

Although Israeli officers were reluctant to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, one general suggested that rather than seeking a comprehensive solution both sides should pursue partial agreements and unilateral coordinated steps on the ground that would address Palestinian unemployment without compromising Israeli security. For example, relying more on intelligence than checkpoints for security in the West Bank would allow Palestinians easier movement and reduce friction with the IDF. Yet despite coordination with the Palestinian security forces, Israeli officers said they are not yet ready to take full responsibility for security in the West Bank, and more than one officer suggested Palestinian security officers still support terrorism. Moreover, the Palestinian strategy now appears to be to negotiate with the international community rather than have to acknowledge any of Israel's security concerns, much less make compromises to address them.

Consequently, Israeli briefers stated that a Palestinian state in the West Bank would pose an existential threat to Israel. Although the situation in the West Bank appears calm today, Israeli generals fear a minor incident could quickly escalate and spark a broader clash.

In addition to implicitly supporting mass murderers in the name of human rights, the BDS Movement singles out Jews and paradoxically ends up retarding a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the Middle East's only liberal democracy that protects the rights of minorities, women, and gays, Israeli leaders are frustrated by the BDS Movement's obsessive focus on their country when, as one Palestinian briever noted, Palestinians are living under Apartheid conditions in other Arab states. Under Kuwaiti law Palestinians are banned from buying property or attending Kuwaiti schools. In Lebanon, by law Palestinians are banned from 52 professions including carpenter, nurse, and teacher. There are no similar laws in Israel, and approximately 100,000 Palestinians earn their livings through Israeli sources, with those who work legally in Israel through permits earning 150 shekels/day as opposed to the average income of 85 shekels/day for Palestinian workers in the West Bank.

Although Israelis feel that the American public understands this, they believe the European Union is a lost cause because it views the conflict strictly through its own colonialist past

and Europe's history of deep anti-Semitism. Sadly, the BDS Movement may inadvertently be undermining its own stated objective of achieving peace between Israelis and Palestinians. A senior policymaker said that Mahmoud Abbas will not seriously discuss Israeli concerns because he is buoyed by international opinion that only says "settlements, settlements, settlements." Similarly, a Palestinian analyst noted that Palestinian strategy is to negotiate with the international community, since it knows it will not get one hundred percent of its demands from Israel.

## Israel's Operational Challenges

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the briefings and discussions the G&A delegation participated in was the glimpse it afforded into the IDF's operational challenges. In some respects, the IDF's mission to defend Israel's territorial integrity and the security of its citizenry is immediately recognizable to general and flag officers from a Western, democratic nation, as well as the operations that derive from this mission. Yet the IDF also faces several unique operational challenges that American senior officers either never have to consider or grapple with themselves. Hence discussions of the IDF's operational challenges – from Israel's lack of strategic depth to its budgeting and preparedness struggles – covered the spectrum from the foreign to the all-too-familiar for the JINSA delegation. Moreover, it was clear that some challenges with which the IDF grapples, such as the problem of targeting terrorist entities dispersed amongst civilian populations in urban environments, will grow in importance for future U.S. operations, and thus the Israeli experience is especially useful for American officers.

### *Challenge of Lacking Strategic Depth*

From the perspective of an American officer, accustomed to the vastness of a U.S. homeland traditionally protected from direct attack by two oceans, perhaps the most striking operational challenge the IDF faces stems from Israel's lack of strategic depth. As one Israeli general observed, "To write our [country's] name on a map, we need to use the sea." At its narrowest point from Netanya to the West Bank, Israel is only 8.5 miles wide. Major population centers such as Haifa and Ashdod are only 23 miles from the Palestinian territories, and Tel Aviv is only 14.8 miles away. Jerusalem represents the eastern most point of a salient between Judea and Samaria, and is only 19.3 miles away from the Jordanian border. It only takes three minutes to fly across Israel from east-to-west, and fifteen minutes to fly from north-to-south. The JINSA delegation visited an Israeli air base in southern Israel that was only two minutes flight time from Jordan, ten minutes from Syria, and 15 minutes from the Red Sea. Consequently, because of this lack of depth, the fighters on the base actually have to scramble 2-3 times per day in response to potential threats.

This lack of strategic depth is an especially important consideration in negotiations with the Palestinians over security arrangements for a possible Palestinian state. Palestinian leaders insist any future Palestinian state must include the Judean Mountains, which dominate the coastal areas where seventy percent of Israel's population lives and eighty percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is produced. This would also allow a hostile power to visually observe directed rocket and missile fire into Israel's population and commercial centers. Although Israeli officers were generally reluctant to discuss Palestinian issues due to their extreme political sensitivity, one general noted that official Israeli policy is to pursue a two-state solution,

which is important because the lack of progress aids the movement to delegitimize Israel noted above. Yet the officer was adamant that if “we fail to have the right concept of security, the best result will be an agreement that will collapse some time later.” Thus, as one retired Israeli general noted, the question is not one of “land for peace,” but rather one of “land for peace and security.”

## **JORDAN**

Israel continues to enjoy peace with Jordan, which Israel sees as a lynchpin to their security. Coordination with Jordan has stopped the threat of terrorism emanating from its longest shared border, and although Jordanian leaders do not say much publicly, Israeli officials say they concur with Israel's proposed solutions for securing the border in any eventual agreement to create a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank. Specifically, they said Jordan supports a residual Israeli troop presence in the Jordan River Valley to support a system of monitored fences, cameras, and sensors, with Palestinians controlling the border crossings.

Although Jordan appears calm on the surface, Israeli briefers noted some potentially dangerous undercurrents. They warned that because Jordan lies at the junction between Syria and Iraq, it is a magnet for refugees fleeing those conflicts that threaten to strain Jordan's infrastructure, as well as for ideological and religious extremists seeking to overthrow the country's Hashemite monarchy. Although the region's monarchies appear to have survived the Arab Spring, events of the past several years have shown how quickly circumstances in the Middle East can change. Israeli leaders are keenly aware that the Jordanian monarchy's fall would lead to 10,000-15,000 jihadists on their eastern border, and hence that maintaining Jordanian stability is a vital national interest for Israel. Consequently, Israel is working hard to help Jordan economically with Dead Sea agriculture and water projects, natural gas deals, and other assistance.

The problem of how to address Israel's security concerns in the peace negotiations is perhaps most contentious with regards to the future disposition of the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley is 120 kilometers long, running from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. The JINSA delegation received a briefing in East Jerusalem on high ground overlooking the breadth of the valley, with the mountains and hilltops on the Jordanian border visible fifteen kilometers away. Whereas the Palestinians consider their conflict with Israel strictly in terms of bilateral relations, in the absence of a broader peace agreement with the Arab states Israel has always had to approach the problem as a regional issue, and hence considers the Jordan Valley its eastern security front. If the owner of this strategic terrain turns hostile, the front line would be approximately ten miles from Tel Aviv and its 3.4 million residents. Israel has to consider what would happen if the Jordanian monarchy falls and there were suddenly 10,000-15,000 jihadists at the border, a scenario that was already plausible in May given the presence of 30,000 jihadists on the Syrian border in the Golan Heights, and has only become more pertinent given ISIS' subsequent seizure of Western Iraq. Consequently, Israel wants to be able to station forces on this eastern border in order to compensate for its lack of strategic depth. Rather than maintaining perpetual sovereignty over this terrain, it is seeking a special security

regime on both sides of the Jordan River with technical capabilities to prevent smuggling and a long-term security arrangement to establish a trip wire and provide deterrence, an arrangement also favored by the Jordanians. Yet whereas the Palestinians say such an arrangement should only be for five years, Israeli leaders believe specific criteria for withdrawal should be defined rather than establishing an arbitrary time limit.

Other sticking points to reaching a security agreement with the Palestinians similarly revolve around the vulnerability created by Israel's lack of strategic depth. Because it already only takes minutes to fly across Israeli air space, Israel wants to retain operational control of the air space above a Palestinian state in the West Bank in order to extend its decision time for addressing threats. Yet whereas the Palestinians have agreed to forego tanks and planes in any future security force, they insist on retaining an anti-air capability. Additionally, because a future Palestinian state would occupy the high ground overlooking Israel's coastal plain and major airport, Israel needs reassurances regarding maintenance of the electro-magnetic spectrum to prevent the disruption of Israeli communications systems.

### *Challenge of Missiles and Rockets*

Throughout history, states have created armies, navies, and other military forces in order to shield their citizens from the potential of violence directed at them by external actors. When those military forces are defeated and unable to play this protective role, the state surrenders and subjects itself to the victorious state's will on the political issue in dispute in order prevent their citizens from suffering. This has traditionally been the IDF's role as well, as from Israel's independence in 1948 through 1967, neighboring states believed they could eradicate Israel and attacked Israel directly through conventional cross-border attacks. Although Israel has no official written strategic doctrine, it attempted to address the challenge of conventional war by seeking decisive victories to deter future aggression, relying on early warning and pre-emption to compensate for its lack of strategic depth, and when all else failed, to be capable of fighting in the defense.

From 1967 on, however, Israeli's adversaries realized they could not defeat Israel by force, and increasingly began to adopt tactics that directly targeted Israel's civilian population instead. Whereas the main references for the IDF's operational planning had traditionally been the Egyptian army in the Sinai and the Syrian army to the north, Israel increasingly confronted an enemy seeking to affect Israel's strong points in the rear and shifting tactics from airplane hijackings to suicide attacks to missiles. Consequently, as one Israeli commander framed the problem, whereas traditionally the civilian's "duty is to be citizens," today "the rear is not the rear anymore," it is the new front.

Nowhere is this evolving operational challenge more vividly illustrated than in the proliferation of rockets and missiles on Israel's borders targeting its civilian population. Israel faces the threat of rockets from Gaza, short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) from Syria and from Hezbollah in Lebanon, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and SRBMs from Iran. Both Hamas and PIJ have created a military industry in Gaza, building rockets ranging from the \$150 Grad rocket to rockets with ranges up to 100 kilometers capable of striking Tel Aviv. Although these systems are not yet accurate, their relative lack of quality can easily be made up for through quantity, as prior to Operation Protective Edge Hamas had produced thousands of rockets with a range up to 40km. Prior to this summer's war, moreover, Israeli officers noted that rocket and mortar attacks emanating from Gaza usually occurred at 7:45AM, to coincide with

when children in the kibbutzim and towns near Gaza were on their school buses. Hezbollah possesses an arsenal of over 100,000 rockets, including:

- Tens of thousands of short range missiles, including 122mm Grad (range 25km), Falak, artillery shells and mortars;
- Tens of thousands of medium range missiles, including the Fajr 3 (range 50km) and Fajr 5 (75km); and
- Dozens to hundreds of long range missiles, including M-600 (300km), Scud-D (600km), and Zilzals.

Together, these systems can effectively target all of Israel. On the high end of the missile threat, Iran possess Scuds and Shahab-3 missiles with a range from 1,650-1,950km to the Musudan with a range of 2,500km. Photographic evidence shows that Iran is mass producing these missiles, indicating a plan to conduct salvo attacks in the event of a conflict.

Israeli commanders admitted they did not fully appreciate the magnitude of this threat until the Second Lebanon War in 2006, before which they thought the other side's rockets and missiles would "be rusty." During that conflict, Hezbollah launched 4,500 missiles aimed at Israel's civilian population centers, killing 41 Israelis and wounding over 600. That conflict taught the IDF that quantity has a quality of its own, and that they have no margin for error due to Israel's size and strategic situation. One officer noted that Israel's vulnerability to missiles and rockets stems from the fact that destroying 50-100 critical strategic targets could set Israel back decades. Consequently, they recognize Israel's next war will not be between large conventional divisions, but with 50,000 rockets.

To mitigate this threat, Israel has undertaken a serious effort to boost its missile defense capabilities. This system will, of necessity, be multi-layered in order to deal with different levels of present threats: Iron Dome will counter rockets ranging from 70km to 200km; the not-yet-operational David's Sling will address missiles and cruise missiles; Arrow II will target exo-atmospheric threats such as the Shahab III; and Arrow III is in development. Although in May Israeli officials touted Iron Dome's 85-86 percent success rate in intercepting incoming rockets (a percentage that increased to 90 percent during Operation Protective Edge), they acknowledged that Arrow II will have to be 99 percent effective given the lethality of the incoming missiles.

Israeli officials also acknowledged that as effective as Iron Dome has been, it does not eliminate the operational challenges posed by the enemies' missile and rocket arsenal. First, at approximately \$40,000-\$50,000 per interceptor missile, Israel's defensive interceptors cost more than the offensive munitions Hezbollah and Hamas will fire. Moreover, Hezbollah understands that because of Iron Dome it will have to strike massively and quickly to overwhelm the system. Israeli commanders predict that whereas in 2006 Hezbollah launched roughly 120 rockets per day and during Operation Protective Edge roughly 80-90 rockets or mortars were fired from Gaza, in a full-scale conflict they will face anywhere from 800-1,000 rockets per day, possibly receiving 1,200 missiles in a single day. Furthermore, this threat will come simultaneously from multiple directions. Israeli commanders acknowledge that in such a scenario they will not be able to intercept every threat entering Israel, and that in the absence of such a hermetic seal, they will need to prioritize which sites or targets are critical to defend.

*Challenge of “Terror Tunnels”*

Another manner in which Israel’s adversaries will try to bypass the IDF and directly target the civilian population is through the construction of tunnels. While visiting the IDF’s Gaza Command, the delegation descended twenty meters underground to inspect a tunnel discovered less than a kilometer from an Israeli kindergarten. The three-mile-long tunnel was reinforced with concrete, lined with telephone wires, rails for disposal of dirt and transportation of digging machinery. The G&A delegation was briefed on how the tunnel – which included cabins for holding hostages – was one of dozens dug by Hamas in order to launch terror attacks and kidnapping raids against Israeli civilians. Everyday Hamas had more than 800 people working on the tunnels. As of May 2014, Israeli officers estimated that 35km worth of tunnels had been dug towards Israel, more than two dozen of which had been discovered. Others were known to exist, but had not crossed the border yet. The three tons of cement used for the “terror tunnel” the JINSA delegation visited could have built a three-story hospital in Gaza, and when one considers that this was just one of approximately fifty tunnels Hamas constructed with the intention of conducting terrorist attacks in Israel, it demonstrates the terror network’s moral depravity in that it would rather harm Israelis than help Palestinians.

*Challenge of Cyber Attacks*

A third way in which adversaries can directly target Israeli civilians is through cyber attacks against Israel’s infrastructure. Like the United States, Israel is reliant upon an interconnected network that runs the country’s basic services, finance sectors, and industrial production through SCADAs (supervisory control and data acquisition systems) that control its automated infrastructure. Attacks against such targets have already proven themselves to be a facet of modern low-intensity warfare in the Middle East. In 2009-2010 the Stuxnet computer virus (allegedly designed by the United States and Israel, although neither country has officially claimed responsibility for the attacks) sabotaged the computers controlling centrifuges in Iran’s nuclear plants, causing the centrifuges to spin too fast and breakdown, thereby setting Iran’s nuclear program back. In August 2012 – shortly after the announcement of sanctions against the Iranian oil sector – the Saudi national oil company ARAMCO was attacked by a computer virus that wiped out the hard drives of 30,000 of its computers, damage that would have taken multiple missile strikes to accomplish through a kinetic attack.

In addition to posing a unique threat to a society as reliant on networked technology as Israel’s, cyberwarfare may be especially appealing to its adversaries. First, in cyberwarfare a potential adversary does not require the vast resources necessary to defeat the IDF in a conventional conflict. Due to the proliferation of knowledge regarding hacking and the development of other forms of malware, the barrier to entry for this field of conflict is significantly lower than other forms of warfare as it does not rely upon training hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Hezbollah was able to send a dozen graduates from the American University in Beirut for 4-5 months training with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran to drastically improve their cyberattack capabilities in less than a year, so much so that Israeli officers believe they may be on the verge of successfully exploiting Israeli networks.

Second, unlike missile launches that produce a clear launch point, conflict in the cyber realm allows attacks without immediate attribution, thereby delaying Israel’s ability to respond effectively. Worse, unlike obtaining weapons of mass destruction or other prohibited weapons systems, Iran, Hezbollah, and other actors can develop the capability for launching massive



cyber attacks without having to avoid UN Security Council resolutions or face accompanying sanctions. Additionally, cyber renders the physical distance between an adversary and Israel irrelevant. This not only allows an adversary such as Hezbollah to route an attack through a nation half way across the world – which it in fact did while attacking Israeli computer networks during the 2006 war – it also introduces new potential adversaries (i.e. China and Russia) through worldwide networks, adding another variable for Israel to consider in this realm of conflict. Yet although Israel has been thinking seriously about the implications of cyber warfare since 2010, two Israeli officers compared cyber warfare to the debates around air power after World War I, stating that few officers know how to discuss this realm of conflict and that no one at present can extrapolate precisely where it is going.

### *Challenge of Hybrid Actors*

In addition to the operational challenges posed by adversaries who bypass the IDF in order to directly target its citizens, Israel also faces the problem of *whom* to target for deterrence, pre-emptive, or retaliatory purposes. For most of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel was able to address its problems by affecting the decision making of the monarch or strongmen occupying the palaces of the Middle East. Israel's borders are increasingly occupied by non-state actors, however, particularly by terrorist groups that serve as parts of governments or are sovereign over territory. Many of these non-state actors have military capabilities either matching or surpassing that of states but without the accountability, a phenomena U.S. strategists sometimes refer to as a "hybrid actor." Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than on Israel's northern border, where Hezbollah has evolved into much more than a militia. Hezbollah calls into question the standard definitions of terrorist or guerrilla organizations as it controls a state-within-a-state, providing services and running a political party that controls areas of Lebanon and is part of the national government. Worse, Hezbollah has 130,000 missiles and rockets that can cover all of Israel, and possesses more UAVs than Israel does. Hezbollah is also gaining conventional combat experience, as between 3,000-5,000 of its fighters are engaged in combat in Syria on behalf of Iran and the Assad regime. In exchange, Hezbollah is receiving advanced weapons systems such as SA-17 and SA-22 anti-air missile systems, and the P-800 Oniks (Yakhont) land-to-sea missiles.

Whereas democracies such as the United States and Israel use their military to protect their civilian populations, hybrid actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas use their civilian populations to protect their weapons systems, creating a significant dilemma when it comes to targeting. Hezbollah places its weapons systems in civilian structures such as schools and apartment buildings, and from a hilltop overlooking the Lebanese border, the JINSA delegation saw new housing built by Hezbollah since the 2006 Second Lebanon War to mask missile launch sites. This poses a dilemma for Israeli policymakers and planners: since all of Hezbollah's offensive capabilities are already forward deployed, when tensions rise, should Israel wait for them to be fired or strike them pre-emptively? Similarly, in May, even before Operation Protective Edge, Israeli commanders noted Hamas' asymmetric usage of civilian structures as rocket launch points and of hospitals as command and control centers, and their simultaneous use of human shields. This forces Israel to rely on precision guided munitions in developed areas as opposed to artillery or mortars, and requires them to target on a room-by-room basis. Israeli officers repeatedly expressed their desire not to harm Palestinian civilians, but stressed their obligation to defend Israel's citizens. During a classified discussion of targeting procedures, the delegation was impressed by Israeli diligence with regards to targeting, and especially by Israeli procedures to warn civilians to leave a targeted structure through phone calls and leaflets.

## LEBANON

Israeli leaders believe that events in Lebanon are inextricably linked with the conflict in Syria. Hezbollah currently has 3,000-5,000 fighters deployed in Syria, where they are propping up the Assad regime and gaining combat experience. Yet by perpetuating the war in Syria, Hezbollah's intervention has generated a flood of refugees that strain Lebanon's infrastructure. Although Lebanon's Shi'a population has gained strength within Lebanese society, with Hezbollah as its most visible entity, the influx of Sunni Syrian refugees could alter Lebanese demographics. Consequently, tensions between Sunni and Shi'a within Lebanon have increased, with two thousand people killed in political clashes over the past two years, and Global Jihad has followed Hezbollah home to Lebanon to operate against its Shi'a population in retaliation for its support of the Assad regime. Thus, Lebanon's biggest concern is currently its refugee problem, not Israel.

Israeli briefers called Lebanon a "constitution without a state" and noted Hezbollah's state-within-a-state and provision of services in areas it controls. They consistently cited Hezbollah as the main problem in Lebanon, and whereas the Israeli government differentiates between the Government of Lebanon and Hezbollah, one general said the increasing connections between Hezbollah and the Lebanese army make it difficult to distinguish between the two. Another official predicted that the Lebanese army will join Hezbollah in any future conflict with Israel. The Israeli briefers did not believe that Hezbollah is currently seeking a conflict, however, as the large-scale damage to the civilian infrastructure Hezbollah used to shield its rockets and fighters during the 2006 war has achieved deterrence. But Israeli officers recognize the situation is fragile, as the continuing low-intensity conflict between Israel and Hezbollah over weapons smuggling could rapidly escalate into a full-scale conflict. If so, Israeli generals expect that Hezbollah will strike quickly and massively in order to overwhelm Israel's missile defenses.

These hybrid actors pose an additional further targeting challenge through their decentralized operational structure. Hamas, for example, is divided into six brigades, but no single unit controls all its rockets. Consequently, instead of fighting battalions and companies, Hamas's dispersion of its forces requires Israel to target individuals on a man-by-man basis. The targeting challenge posed by these irregular forces also applies to Israel's Navy. In the Mediterranean, terrorist groups operating from Gaza intentionally use the same type of vessels as Palestinian fishermen. They abuse this civilian cover and use fishing boats to gather intelligence, create provocations, and disguise suicide vessels. Given that none of these forces wear recognizable military uniforms, Israel faces a unique challenge when trying to distinguish combatants from the civilians they hide behind.

### *Challenge of Intelligence*

In addition to the targeting challenges posed by such groups, the increasing diversity of potential adversaries creates a formidable intelligence gathering challenge for Israel. Traditionally, Israel's intelligence collection and analysis has been able to focus on state

leaders, as before 1973 one only needed to know what Anwar Sadat or Hafez al-Assad were thinking to predict Egyptian and Syrian actions. Yet today, most of Syria is controlled by a disjointed, uncoordinated opposition, with between 5,000-10,000 rebel operatives belonging to twenty-five distinct groups operating in the Golan alone. Consequently, it is a significant intelligence challenge to know who is who and to establish which groups are extremists versus moderates. Israel must now start collecting intelligence on the strategies and micro-tactics of each group in order to assure the effectiveness of their Syria policy. For if their analysis of the situation is incorrect, they could inadvertently make groups indifferent to Israel into enemies.

Even the nature of basic political intelligence has changed dramatically with the turmoil accompanying the Arab Spring. Again, rather than simply studying the neighboring strongmen, analysis and research on public sentiments has become a critical factor with regards to Egypt and Lebanon. One Israeli analyst noted that a young researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies correctly predicted the coup that overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt by watching Egyptian online social networks. Thus, as one Israeli intelligence official noted, the Middle East is becoming a paradox of connectivity and complexity – although the world has less secrets, the sheer volume of data points means it is becoming more mysterious. This paradox calls into question analysts’ ability to make the reliable predictions upon which Israeli policymakers – already operating with a thin margin of error – must base their decisions.

### *Challenge of “The Conflict between the Wars”*

The importance of precise intelligence regarding adversary capabilities and intentions is especially critical given that Israel is currently in a situation described by more than one officer as “The Conflict between the Wars,” in which Israel is neither at peace nor engaged in a conflict seeking a decisive victory. In this ambiguous state, Israel must have enough intelligence to effectively use force in discrete operations, while possessing a clear enough picture of enemy decision making in order to avoid escalation to full-scale war. One Israeli general suggested that the IDF’s mission during this interregnum period is threefold: First, to obtain intelligence; second, to disrupt the enemy; and third, to prepare the battlefield for the next war. Amongst the specific operations this mission entails are targeted strikes at terrorists and preventing the flow of strategic capabilities to its adversaries, such as air strikes to prevent the transfer of double-digit surface-to-air-missiles (i.e. SA-17s and SA-22s) from Syria to Hezbollah or the seizure of the Klos-C that captured forty 302 missiles (capable of striking Haifa from Gaza) and 40,000 mortar rounds en route from Iran to Gaza.

Even before this summer’s conflict, Israeli officers acknowledged that this “Conflict between the Wars” is inherently fragile. Low-intensity conflict over isolated rockets fired from Gaza – or between Hezbollah and Israel over the interdiction of smuggling – can escalate quickly. The revelation of the extent of Hamas’s rocket arsenal and hardened underground infrastructure during Operation Protective Edge demonstrates the dilemma Israel faces over how much low-intensity conflict to absorb while Hamas continues to develop new, more lethal technologies. Consequently, Israel faces the need for periodic pre-emption of its adversaries, and as one general observed, “We are living in an era of small wars every few years.”

# Challenge of Fiscal Constraints

While discussing “operations other than war” such as those outlined above, one officer conjectured that such operations may now be more critical than full-scale war given that their *purpose* is to deter or to shape the conditions of that future war. If true, this development would have significant implications for the IDF’s force structure, warranting greater emphasis on special operations and air/sea interdiction capabilities. Yet in addition to the geostrategic changes and operational challenges shaping its future force structure, the IDF also faces the challenge of increasingly tight fiscal constraints, which a senior general called “the toughest part” of his job. Although Israel is at the eye of the storm sweeping over the Middle East, (as of this May at least) the Israeli public thinks the security situation has never been better. And as people feel more secure, they want to spend less on defense. Consequently, the IDF finds itself caught between Israelis’ increasing demand for resources and a false dichotomy between choosing spending on social needs versus defense, propelled by Minister of the Economy Naftali Bennett’s shrewd argument that every dollar for defense is one less for medicine, education, and other domestic needs. Additionally, the Minister of Finance is from a different party with diverging priorities than the Prime Minister, and the Israeli media is focused on domestic issues.

As a result of all these factors, the IDF recently saw its budget cut fifteen percent in one year. This plunge in defense spending has led to dramatic changes in the IDF force structure over the last six-to-twelve months. Although the Israeli Air Force has survived because it enjoys budgetary priority, the IDF has shut down many armor, artillery, and logistics brigades, as well as some division headquarters, elements of the Navy’s fleet, and some older air platforms. The IDF has also been forced to place restrictions on the training of reserves, which led one general to candidly state: “We have hit the wall.” The biggest concern amongst the officers and officials the delegation spoke to was that an immediate cut would restrict their ability to accomplish their current missions. As one general explained, there may have only been four hundred sailors on the ships that intercepted the Klos C, but that operation was preceded by a months-long campaign by the IDF’s intelligence apparatus and other elements now perceived as a burden on the budget. Although the debate on these budget battles is ongoing – one Ministry of Defense (MOD) official suggested “A good war could change the situation, but we are not striving for it” – at least one Israeli general believes the IDF has already lost the campaign for public opinion.

Whether this conclusion holds true in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge remains to be seen.

## Israel’s Assets and Resources

In the face of the strategic threats and operational challenges outlined above, however, Israelis possess several unique resources and assets they can bring to bear. First, the delegation was struck by the high state of morale amongst the IDF junior officers and personnel we met, as well as the strong sense of purpose and deep resolve of Israel’s leaders. Evidence of this is seen in Israel’s system of national conscription. Whereas the United States switched to an all-volunteer force in the 1970s because of conscription’s damaging effects to morale and unit effectiveness, Israeli youth remain highly motivated and focused. Rather than asking to be in less arduous, specialized units, 70-75 percent of Israeli conscripts volunteer to serve in the infantry. The IDF’s conscription system has positive externalities, such as identifying

talented individuals as early as the eleventh grade when Israeli youth are called up by the IDF Recruitment branch for testing. As a result, the Commander of Unit 8200 (Israel's elite cyber command) noted they get the thousand best brains on the Israeli market each year and are able educate and groom these talented individuals. ("How much would you pay to have the best youth in the U.S. military?" asked one MOD official). Although the conscription system does have some negative economic effects, Israeli officials believe it is affordable and that the IDF's edge would be lost by a move to a professional force.

Israel's national resolve was also evident during discussions of resilience and the role of civilians during times of conflict. As one commander noted, Israeli citizens are not ordinary citizens, and that the first responders in a crisis are not the local fire or police departments, "but your neighbors." Soldiers from the IDF's Home Front Command serve as preparedness instructors in Israeli schools and offices, and Israelis volunteer to serve as first responders in towns throughout Israel.

### *Natural Resources and Technological Innovation*

Israel also benefits from a reasonably stable economy that is being boosted by the discovery of new natural resources. Whereas most of Israel's neighbors have per capita GDP ranging from \$5,000-\$6,000, Israel's per capita GDP is \$34,900. The Israeli economy will further be bolstered by the discovery of large natural gas fields in Israel's Economic Exclusion Zone in the Mediterranean Sea. The Tamar gas field ninety kilometers west of Haifa has a potential yield of 247 billion cubic meters (BCM) of natural gas, and the Leviathan field 135km off shore has an even greater potential yield of 453 BCM. Israeli leaders estimate that within five years, the origins of sixty percent of Israeli gas will be from the sea.

Israel's economic strength and new resources are not without risks, however. Although one senior Israeli official noted that "We have enough innovation and creativity to move the world," another lamented the fact that there is no market for Israeli goods in the region, because whereas Israel is talking high-tech, its neighbors are "talking pickles." For example, although Israel's defense industry represents the cutting edge of military technology, with six separate companies in Israel developing or building UAVs, Israel must look to export its defense industry capabilities due to the limited size of the Israeli market. Only 20-25 percent of Israeli defense products are destined for indigenous consumption, versus 75-80 percent for export.

#### **ISRAEL'S MARITIME BORDERS**

Israel's territorial waters are growing in significance for the country's national security. Over 99 percent of all Israeli imports, and 93 percent of its military imports arrive via the sea. The large gas fields found in Israel's Economic Exclusion Zone in the Mediterranean mean the future of the Israeli energy market is at sea. Yet as Israel's economy becomes increasingly tied to its maritime domain, it faces an increase in threats originating from the sea. This includes terror threats via naval infiltration, Iran's efforts to smuggle advanced weapons systems to Hezbollah and Palestinian terror groups, and the proliferation of regional naval forces in response to Iran's naval expansion.

Consequently, Israel is dependent upon exports in order to keep this high tech industry alive, which is also the pillar of their own national defense capability. Not only does this dependency on their export sector make the Israeli economy potentially vulnerable to boycotts as noted above, it also carries the risks inherent in having lethal technology in the hands of other country's hands. Even the gas discoveries in the Mediterranean create new vulnerabilities, as Israelis know Hezbollah is looking at gas rigs as a target for their Yakhont missiles. Thus, the future of the Israeli energy market – and to some extent its economy – is dependent upon a naval infrastructure that was never designed for such a central role.

### *Command and Control/Intelligence Innovations*

One area in which Israeli military and technological innovation was evident is in the development of a new command and control system. As one senior Israeli intelligence official noted, the command and control system utilized a few years ago was the same used when he began his career with the Mossad in 1980. During the Second Lebanon War in 2006, operational commanders did not have access to old intelligence on Hezbollah positions because it was over classified. Given the IDF's need to make its fires effort as strong and accurate as possible in order to maximize Israel's advantage over its adversaries, ideally attacking thousands of targets per day with precision in a future conflict, senior Israeli officials realized this intelligence was of little value if it could not be disseminated to operational units. Consequently, the IDF developed a unique doctrine for injecting intelligence down to lower levels of command, described by one Israeli general as "Battle Driven by Intelligence." Another senior intelligence official specifically acknowledged General Stanley McChrystal's development of the "It takes a network to beat a network" concept while at Joint Special Operation Command as an important influence on Israeli efforts to better integrate the Mossad and IDF and move to a less hierarchical structure. Israel is developing an open system in which all sensors and monitors and command and control systems will be entities in one net. In the future, software will assess the situation, make the targeting and munitions decision, and allow units to attack within an operational time window. If successful, this new doctrine and command and control system will ensure that all intelligence coming into the Mossad will be distributed to the IDF services in real time, and will achieve fusion between all units in the field.

### *Regional Cooperation*

One seldom discussed asset Israel enjoys as it seeks to address the strategic threats noted at the outset of this report is improving relations over the past two years with several other key states in the region. Israel enjoys good relations – or at least a "cold peace" – with Egypt and Jordan. The peace accords with these neighbors form the pillars of Israel's strategic concept, as the Camp David Accords with Egypt allowed reductions in defense spending in the 1980s that were crushing the Israeli economy, and the post-Oslo accord with Jordan ensures peace along Israel's longest border. As one Israeli analyst noted, despite the widespread perception that these were a "peace of leaders" not peoples, both accords survived the Arab Upheaval, with even the Muslim Brotherhood government of Muhammad Morsi in Egypt honoring it. Security cooperation with Egypt has improved since the counter-revolution that deposed Morsi, as General al-Sisi perceives al-Qa'ida and the Muslim Brotherhood as strategic threats that must be destroyed. Consequently, for the first time the Egyptian military is conducting counterterrorism operations in the Sinai Peninsula, which

Israel supports despite the fact they technically violate the Camp David Accords' restrictions on Egyptian military forces in the Sinai. Hamas has also been ostracized by Egypt because of their support for the Muslim Brotherhood. Both Israel and Egypt have a vested interest in stopping smuggling into Gaza, and thus al-Sisi has shut down ninety percent of the tunnels to Gaza. Israel is cooperating with Saudi Arabia and Egypt to keep the Suez Canal open.

In what one senior official describes as “a sea change,” Israel also for the first time shares a clear convergence of interests with the Gulf States over shared concerns about Iran’s nuclear program, Tehran’s aspirations for regional hegemony, and with the Muslim Brotherhood’s activities. One senior intelligence official acknowledged that Israel has relations with intelligence agencies from countries with whom they have no formal diplomatic relations, and former head of Israeli military intelligence Amos Yadlin was scheduled to appear with Prince Turki al-Faisal in Brussels for the first ever joint appearance by former Saudi and Israeli intelligence chiefs. Although these steps are important, their significance should not be overstated. As one senior Ministry of Defense official admitted, no Saudi king nor his heirs will ever work publicly with Israel. Although Israel enjoys good relations with the Egyptian government, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic views still prevail in the Parliament and in the states. And whereas Israeli officials believe Arab leaders would be happy if Israel conducted air strikes against Iran’s nuclear program, they readily admitted such an operation would trigger widespread resentment in the Arab world.

### *U.S.-Israel Cooperation*

The uncertainty and limitations inherent to any cooperation with regional states only reiterates the importance of U.S. support for Israel, and of Israeli leaders’ appreciation of [this](#) strategic partnership. Given the political controversies over comments by both U.S. and Israeli officials on the collapse of Secretary of State John Kerry’s peace initiative in the weeks preceding the delegation’s visit to Israel, some criticisms of Obama administration policy were expected. Yet the leaders and officers the delegation met with were unanimous in expressing their appreciation for U.S. support. One Israeli general said Israel does not feel alone because of the United States, and another commander agreed that Israel does not have another United States. We might argue sometimes, this commander said, but given our similarities as democracies we “remember our common values and interests” and why our relations are so important. From joint disaster response training with the National Guard in Indiana to providing military working dog training for the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, and Special Operations Command, the U.S. and Israeli militaries cooperate in a myriad of mutually beneficial training programs. Coincidentally, while the delegation was in Israel, 583 U.S. soldiers were training side-by-side with their IDF counterparts in the Operation Juniper Cobra air defense exercises.

Yet Israeli officers repeatedly stressed that while U.S. support is crucial, “Israel does not want a single American mother to mourn” because their son or daughter in the U.S. military was killed fighting for Israel, and they took pride in the fact they have never asked for U.S. soldiers to fight for them. Israeli officials are also pleased to make a significant contribution to U.S. security through intelligence sharing. Given that the United States has to consider the problem of counterterrorism from a global perspective, Israeli officials believe they can relieve us of the burden of monitoring some vital areas. As one general noted, Israel believes that when good intelligence is shared with the United States it supports U.S. dominance, which in turns improves Israeli security. And although a senior intelligence

official noted Israel's good relations with British and French intelligence, he was adamant that Israel's most important cooperation is with the CIA and other U.S. agencies. Several Israeli officers went out of their way to address recent media reports alleging Israeli espionage against the United States. Because "of the importance of this relationship," one general declared, "Israel does not spy on the United States. Period." Another defense official acknowledged that Israel erred in 2006 by selling China a twenty-year old system, but that since then, Israel has acted by the letter of the law and not even sold second-, third-hand items despite the country's dependence on defense exports noted above.

Indeed, nowhere is U.S.-Israeli defense cooperation more evident than in the area of research and development. Under a 1987 Memorandum of Understanding, Israel's Defense Directorate of Defense Research and Development (R&D) conducts annual review meetings with the U.S. Department of Defense's Acquisitions, Technology, and Logistics directorate. U.S.-Israeli (R&D) cooperation focuses on three areas: Data exchange agreements, joint projects, and scientist exchanges. There are currently 37 data exchange agreements in effect, including 23 with the U.S. Army, six with the Navy, and five with the Air Force. A counterterrorism Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) established in 1994 outlines the joint development of technologies and systems for fighting terrorism. The budget frame for this effort for the ten-year period from 2005-2015 is \$250 million, equally funded by both sides. Amongst the areas of activities covered by the counterterrorism MOA are counter-improvised explosive device efforts, as well as innovations such as:

- Improved Armor Recipes;
- Micro Tactical Ground Robot;
- Red House and Green Field (dispersion of aerosol research) explosive detection; and
- SPIDER – An optic, ground-based radar for automatic intruder detection, used for base, counterintelligence, and border protection that has already been fielded by the U.S. Army.

Yet unquestionably the most fruitful joint (R&D) program has been Israel's intensive cooperation with the U.S. Missile Defense Agency that began in 1988 and produced the Iron Dome. As the delegation drove through Ashkelon – a city of 113,000 barely ten kilometers north of Gaza and within range of thousands of Hamas and PIJ rockets – an Israeli officer noted that Iron Dome's value is not only physical, but psychological. "The normalcy you see around you," the general said, "is possible because of Iron Dome."

## Outstanding Issues

Despite the breadth and depth of the briefings the JINSA delegation received, there were still several issues which the officers felt remained unresolved.

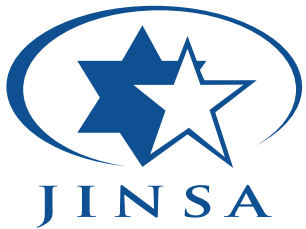
1. Although Israeli officers were on message regarding the potential necessity of a strike against Iran to degrade its nuclear production capabilities, and of their capability to conduct such an operation as a last resort, the JINSA delegation did not feel the question of the end state after a potential strike had been fully addressed. As noted above, at least one senior policy maker was confident that this would not lead to a full scale war. Other officials



acknowledged that Israel would face a significant retaliation from Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah, but that it would be able to weather that storm at an acceptable cost. However, the JINSA delegation noted that given the lengths Iran has gone to in order to hide the program, a damage assessment of a preemptive strike would be difficult to assess. Also, even if Israelis think they can set the program back a few years through a unilateral strike, preventing Iran from re-nuclearizing would be dependent upon external variables outside Israel's control that were more uncertain and perhaps had not been fully thought out.

2. The delegation was struck by the lengths Israel's adversaries have gone to in dispersing their military assets amongst civilian populations, and the subsequent inevitability of having to target civilian structures in future operations (a prediction borne out by Operation Protective Edge). However, the officers also felt that this needs to be better understood outside Israel. Instead of seeing the media as another domain in which they must fight, some officers felt there was a tendency to either see the media as an adversary, or to only tell the media as much as necessary. Although one Israeli briefer acknowledged "At the end of the day, the world is judging us differently" no matter what they do to avoid civilian casualties, there was no sense of whether or how Israel is working to improve its strategic communications on this topic.

3. Finally, although the delegation understood the immediate security threat posed by Hamas' control of Gaza and the necessity of constant deterrence and/or preparedness in the face of this threat, it was less clear whether or not the Israelis had a long-term plan to address this threat. Even if Hamas were not intractably committed to Israel's destruction, the fact is that Gaza is overpopulated and its already limited resources are quickly dwindling to nothing. Consequently, it was not clear whether Israel had any strategy to counter Hamas' incitement of the Gaza population, or if so, how it can be prevented from continuing to be a breeding ground of extremism as conditions deteriorate and people become desperate. Although this dilemma may epitomize what the U.S. military calls "a wicked problem" (i.e. one in which the solution introduces a new set of problems equally or more difficult to resolve), it is especially pertinent in the wake of this summer's conflict.



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