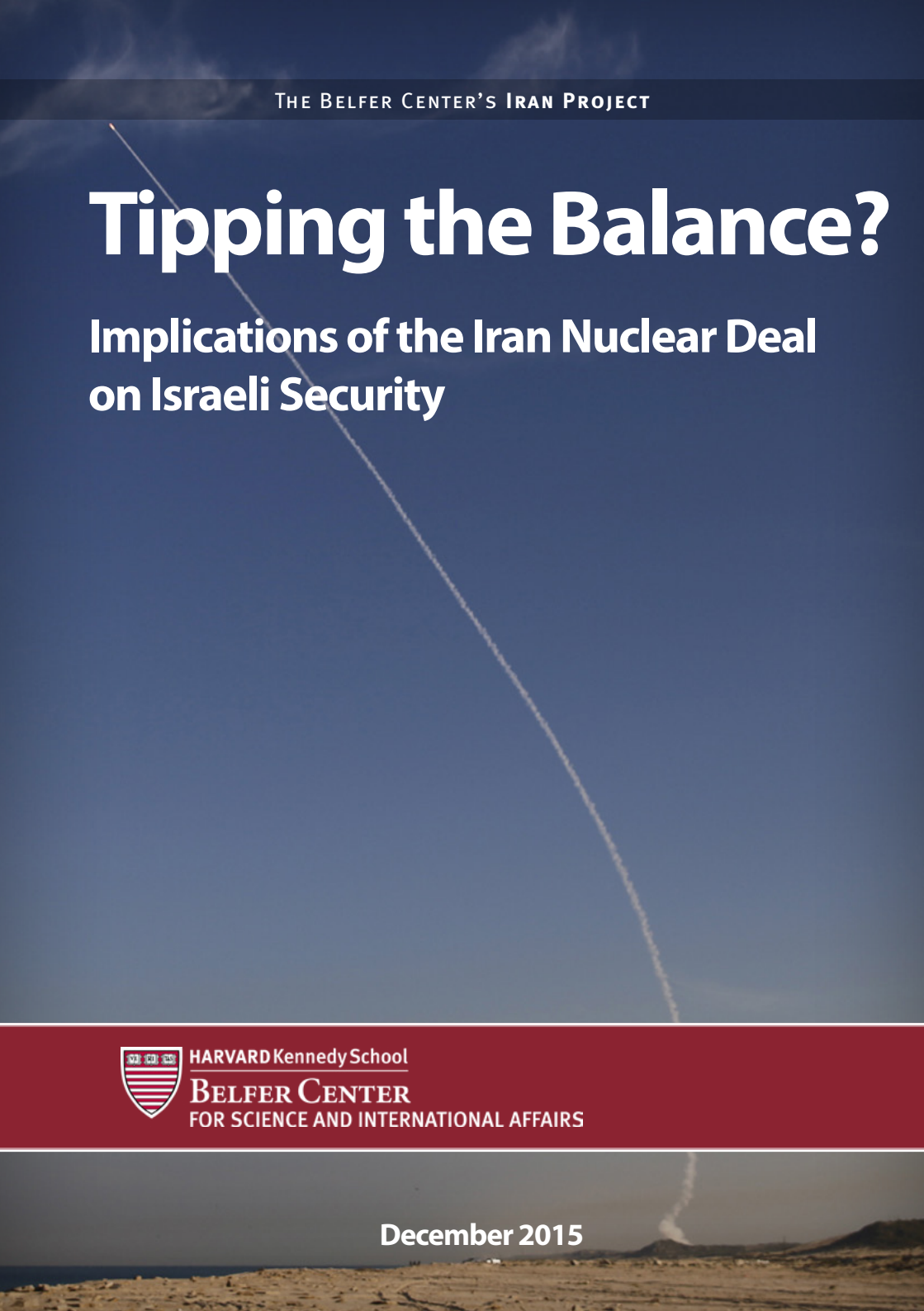


The Belfer Center's Iran Project

# Tipping the Balance?

## Implications of the Iran Nuclear Deal on Israeli Security

HARVARD Kennedy School
Belfer Center
FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

December 2015

**The Iran Project**

**Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs**

Harvard Kennedy School
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Fax: (617) 495-8963
Email: belfer_center@harvard.edu
Website: http://belfercenter.org/theiranproject

Design & Layout by Andrew Facini

Cover Photo: An "Arrow 3" ballistic missile interceptor is seen during its test launch near Ashdod December 10, 2015. REUTERS/Amir Cohen

Copyright 2015, President and Fellows of Harvard College

Printed in the United States of America

THE BELFER CENTER'S **IRAN PROJECT**

# Tipping the Balance?

## Implications of the Iran Nuclear Deal on Israeli Security

HARVARD Kennedy School
BELFER CENTER
FOR SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**December 2015**

# Editor


## Payam Mohseni

Inaugural Director, Belfer Center's Iran Project
Fellow for Iran Studies, Belfer Center
Lecturer on Government, Department of Government,
Harvard University
Telephone: 617-495-4793
Email: payam_mohseni@hks.harvard.edu

# Table of Contents

Part I:
**Israel, Hezbollah, and the Iran Nuclear Deal**

Payam Mohseni
Introduction:
**Implications of the Iran Deal on Israel ..... 1**

*The View from Iran ..... 5*

Hussein Kalout
**The Dynamics of Hezbollah-Israel Mutual Deterrence and Reshaping the Rules of the Game ..... 9**

*Impact of the Nuclear Deal on the Hezbollah-Israel Military Equation ..... 11*

*The Political Impact of the Nuclear Deal and the Rise to Dominance of Hezbollah in Lebanese Political Dynamics ..... 13*

*Conclusion ..... 19*

Daniel Sobelman
**A Shifting Center of Gravity across Israel's Northern Border ..... 23**

*Israeli Perception of a Nuclear-Threshold Iran ..... 24*

*Russia: Securing a Regional Asset ..... 25*

*Safeguarding the 'Axis of Resistance' ..... 26*

*Bargaining over Israel's Red Lines ..... 29*

*Hezbollah's Increasing Regional Clout ..... 31*

Part II:
## Israeli Perspectives on the Implications of the Iran Deal

Biography of Contributors ..... 35

Yaakov Amidror
**After the Agreement—Israel's Perspective** ..... **45**

Ephraim Asculai
**The Implications of the Iranian Nuclear Agreement for Israel** ..... **49**

Oren Barak
**After the Nuclear Deal with Iran: An Israeli-Iranian Accommodation?** ..... **53**

Martin van Creveld
**Iran and the Future of Regional Nuclear Politics** ..... **57**

Ehud Eiran
**Israel's Response to the JCPOA** ..... **61**

Chuck Freilich
**Consequences of the JCPOA** ..... **65**

Nimrod Goren
**The Iran Deal and the Need for an Alternative Israeli Foreign Policy Paradigm** ... **69**

Ephraim Kam
**The Nuclear Agreement with Iran: Significance for Israel** ..... **73**

Yossi Kuperwasser
**The Impact of the Nuclear Agreement on Israel's Security** ..... **77**

Emily B. Landau
**How the Iran Deal Affects Israeli Politics and Security Thinking** ..... **81**

Daniel Radovsky
**Iran's Inter-Connected Nuclear and Regional Policies:**
**A Challenge and Opportunity for Israel** ..... **85**

Gilad Raik
**Sustaining the Cold War between Israel and Hezbollah after the Iranian Deal** .... **91**

Gerald M. Steinberg
**The Impact of the Iran Nuclear Agreement on Israeli Politics and Security** ..... **95**

Amos Yadlin
**Coping with the JCPOA: Time for a US-Israeli Plan of Action** ..... **99**

# Part I:
# Israel, Hezbollah, and the Iran Nuclear Deal

*June 22, 2015:*
***Israeli soldiers work on their tanks during a military excise in the Golan Heights.***
*AP Photo/Ariel Schalit*

# Introduction: **Implications of the Iran Deal on Israel**

***Payam Mohseni***

Standing before the United States Congress early in March 2015, in the face of a looming deadline in the Iran and P5+1 talks over the Iranian nuclear program, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu portrayed the negotiations in stark terms. Drawing a direct parallel between biblical plots to persecute Jews in pre-Islamic Persia and modern Iran's nuclear program, Netanyahu framed Iran as nothing less than an existential threat to Israel. Anything short of a practical dismantling of Iranian nuclear infrastructure would be unacceptable. Largely perceived as an attempt to undermine President Barack Obama's efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with Iran, Netanyahu's actions thus proved quite contentious inside the United States.

The Prime Minister's speech, however, proved just as divisive inside Israel as in America. For some Israelis, Netanyahu's aggressive denunciations of President Obama's negotiation policies threatened to weaken the alliance and trust between the two countries. As the Israeli President, Reuven Rivlin, stated: "The prime minister has waged a campaign against the United States as if the two sides were equal, and this is liable to hurt Israel." Nearly 200 top retired Israeli security officials echoed Rivlin's statements in a warning against Netanyahu's campaign. Others, however, welcomed Netanyahu's approach as they believed that Israel needed to demonstrate more strength in order to

minimize concessions granted to Iran and ensure a more complete dismantling of an indigenous Iranian nuclear program.

These clashing perspectives inside Israel in part reflect broader debates over not only the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) but also regarding larger Israeli strategy for dealing with Iran's regional influence and power. This publication sheds light on these debates as well as the nature of Israeli security and foreign policy thinking in light of the recent agreement.

Given the significant implications that the nuclear deal will have on Israel and its regional security environment, it is critical to directly assess these rapidly changing dynamics, particularly by engaging with the viewpoints of scholars and analysts inside Israel.

In previous publications, we similarly examined perspectives of Arab experts on the subject of the impact of the Iranian nuclear agreement on the politics and security of Arab states in our report, *Iran and the Arab World after the Nuclear Deal: Engagement and Rivalry in a New Era*. Likewise, the purpose of this publication is to gain a greater understanding of Israeli views on a similar subject—namely their perspectives on how the nuclear agreement affects Israel and regional developments. Accordingly, in this series of reports, we seek to enrich our understanding of the key players in the Middle East and the multilayered factors which impact regional political struggles and balance of power.

This report begins, in Part I, with an in-depth examination of a key arena of regional politics directly affected by the nuclear

deal: Hezbollah and Israel's northern borders. As a crucial Iranian ally, Hezbollah serves as an important case study to assess how the nuclear deal will shape and impact Iranian regional influence and rivalries. Part I, accordingly, includes two chapters focusing on this specific topic. Hussein Kalout provides an analysis of the nuclear deal's impact on Hezbollah from the perspective of domestic Lebanese politics, while Daniel Sobelman analyzes the impact of Hezbollah-Israeli dynamics from Israel's perspective. Both agree that Hezbollah has been empowered by the agreement for the time being. While Hussein sees this empowerment as more political than military in nature, Daniel considers the military dimension to be important as well and examines the changing rules of the game between Hezbollah and Israel.

In Part II, the publication turns to a presentation of brief, yet strategic, viewpoints of the larger question of the impact of the Iranian nuclear agreement on Israeli politics and security. We asked fourteen experts from Israel to respond to the following prompt in a manner of their own choosing:

*(1) What are the implications of the nuclear agreement on Israeli domestic and foreign policy?*

*(2) How will the deal impact the regional security architecture?*

In response, our contributors provided analysis on diverse topics ranging from Israeli domestic politics and the Palestinian question to US-Israel and Israeli-Arab relations. These viewpoints showcase the various intellectual, political, and discursive positions held by our authors, reflective of more fundamental thinking within elite Israeli policy circles.

Two important positions are largely shared across the contributions. The first is that Iran will be empowered regionally because of the agreement due to its increased recognition, the legitimization of its nuclear program, the lifting of sanctions, and the end of the country's political and economic isolation. Consequently, many of our writers offer different proposals for how Israel should recalibrate its policies in the face of such empowerment, particularly on regional issues. While most of our contributors advocated a more aggressive stance in countering Iran, some argued for the benefits of tacit accommodation of Iranian interests in the region as well as those of Iran's allies. In addition, topics such as the Israeli-American alliance and the future course of Israeli-Arab relations and cooperation are discussed in the context of such proposals.

The second position regards how Israel can work on monitoring Iran's compliance with the JCPOA and deter or respond to potential Iranian violations. These discussions are directly related to Iran's implementation and abiding of the nuclear agreement over the next ten to fifteen years. Most of our experts were silent on what happens afterwards regarding the contours of the Iranian nuclear program, but it seems that many are disquieted by the possibility of Iran expanding its program on an industrial scale and reducing its potential breakout time. As we move forward in the implementation and monitoring of the agreement, it becomes increasingly important to engage these different perspectives in order to better inform policymaking decisions.

## *The View from Iran*

While most of our contributions present Israeli perspectives of Iran, it is also important to understand the Iranian perspective of Israel in the context of the nuclear agreement and regional politics. I offer several points for consideration here:

First, there is an asymmetry of focus between Iran and Israel. While Iran assumes an over-sized subject in Israeli political and security discourse, particularly in the nuclear realm, Israel does not play nearly as significant a role in Iranian discourse and decision-making. This is in part because Iran's nuclear program, from a security standpoint, is not a response to a sense of threat from Israel—much more salient for Iran is its highly insecure neighborhood, its threat perception of America, and its desire to become a powerful and technologically advanced state.

Second, the Iranians view the nuclear agreement as beneficial to its regional standing and power, thus contributing to the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance" bloc that focuses on the Palestinian cause and resistance to Israel. Israel figures into Iranian rhetoric and strategic thought as a target of its revolutionary and moral ideals and geopolitical posturing. Iran's backing of the Syrian government, Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and its aim to arm groups in the West Bank or create another front in the Golan Heights are extensions of what Iran sees as its revolutionary, anti-status quo role in the region.

Third, Iran considers the international crisis over its nuclear program a political issue that has benefited Israeli interests. From Iran's perspective, reaching a nuclear agreement thus

deprives Israel of such a benefit, in particular its use of the Iranian nuclear program as an excuse to deflect attention from its own domestic problems. The Iranians hope that the resolution of the nuclear file will consequently re-focus international attention on the Palestinian situation and work to isolate Israel internationally and undermine its stability from within.

Fourth, Iran has always highlighted the double-standards of the international community in dealing with the Iranian nuclear program by pointing to Israel's possession of nuclear weapons. With the final agreement, Iran will further push this narrative and work towards a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East.

Finally, in its standard narratives, Iran intimately links Israel, Saudi Arabia, and ISIS (as well as America) together as partners in the Middle East. This narrative seeks to undermine the legitimacy of Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies. Iran's discursive strategy thus preempts any potential warming of relations between the Israelis and the Saudis that Iran will fully exploit to delegitimize Saudi Arabia, one of the greatest losers of the nuclear agreement from the Iranian perspective.

Consequently, while discussions in Israel and the United States are increasingly shifting from the technical aspects of the Iranian nuclear program to the larger geopolitical consequences of the agreement, geopolitical concerns have consistently been the focus of Iran from the start of the negotiations. With the conclusion of the deal, the main changes in discourse in Iran have been in the economic realm, with the administration of President Hasan Rouhani highlighting the potential economic windfall that the deal will bring with the end of sanctions. As all of our

contributors attest, what the exact impact of the nuclear agreement will be on Iranian influence and power in the region, however, is dependent on other regional conditions independent of the nuclear issue. These conditions are volatile and uncertain due to the many conflict zones in the region from Syria to Yemen and will be important for driving both Iranian and Israeli security concerns for the years to come.

***Payam Mohseni*** *is Inaugural Director of the Belfer Center's Iran Project and Fellow for Iran Studies at the Center. He is also a Lecturer on Government in the Department of Government at Harvard University and co-chair of the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe Study Group at Harvard's Center for European Studies. Dr. Mohseni's research focuses on the internal policymaking process of the Iranian state and the dynamics of factional politics in post-revolutionary Iran.*

*October 27, 2015:*
***Hezbollah fighters stand atop a truck mounted with mock rockets as supporters chant slogans during a rally to mark the 13th day of Muharram, in Nabatiyeh, Lebanon.***

*AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari*

# The Dynamics of Hezbollah-Israel Mutual Deterrence and Reshaping the Rules of the Game

*Hussein Kalout*

One of the main concerns expressed by the Israeli government on the nuclear deal between the P5+1 and Iran was based on the view that an Iran free from international isolation and endowed by financial resources would automatically sponsor the foremost enemy of the State of Israel: Hezbollah. During the negotiation process, Netanyahu's government emphasized repeatedly that the removal of sanctions would allow Tehran to use newfound resources from expanded trade as leverage to enhance Hezbollah's capabilities to fight Israel on the northern front by financing more sophisticated weapons for Hezbollah.

With a closer inspection, however, we can conclude that the impact of the nuclear agreement on Hezbollah-Israeli relations could be far more political in nature than impacting the military dynamic between these longstanding rivals. In other words, it can be argued that the nuclear deal will have no more than peripheral implications on the dynamics of mutual deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel. The real crux of the agreement is how it will allow the Iran-Hezbollah alliance to reshape regional political alliances and forge new political links outside of the region.

First, the armaments that Iran would most likely provide Hezbollah would not be qualitatively different from those already provided with sanctions in place. The Iranians are currently not capable to transfer to Hezbollah any advanced military materials due to the sanctions on ballistic technology. While in the long term, the acquisition of an equivalent of the Russian S-300 long-range surface-to-air missile system by the Iranians would be a game-changer, undermining Israel's ability to navigate freely in East-Mediterranean airspace, this is not yet a feasible possibility.

Second, Hezbollah believes that it is politically stronger than ever as a consequence of the nuclear deal. The group perceives that the deal has reshaped the balance of power domestically inside of Lebanon, giving them a leg up on the pro-Saudi bloc inside the country. In Hezbollah's view, the failure of Saudi Arabia and Israel to have sabotaged the Iranian agreement in any way, enhances Hezbollah's narrative inside of Lebanon and its ability to pursue its political objectives. Prior to the deal, Hezbollah was more reticent in using its political leverage in such a manner. While the political implications of the deal for Hezbollah do not reduce the asymmetries in the balance of power between Hezbollah and Israel militarily, the deal strengthens Hezbollah's position as a dominant political actor in Lebanese politics that could directly affect the interests of Israel regionally. Lebanese polarization has always been one of the important factors that the State of Israel has relied on in order to constrain Hezbollah's dominance over the Lebanese political system—a condition that will end as a result of the nuclear agreement and the rise to dominance of Hezbollah.

## *Impact of the Nuclear Deal on the Hezbollah-Israel Military Equation*

After the second war of Lebanon in 2006, Hezbollah became an indispensable priority in the budget of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), thus deepening Hezbollah's strategic partnership with Tehran. In the last nine years, Hezbollah has rapidly increased operational and infrastructural capabilities of its military wing. Indirect hints from the Secretary General of Hezbollah, Hassan Nassrallah, indicate that the Lebanese group today possesses hundreds of thousands of missiles including missiles with long range and high precision. Furthermore, since 2000, as a part of its national security agenda, Iranian investments in Hezbollah have been directed to transform the Lebanese group into a real deterrent to Israel's military superiority in the region.

The general perception that Hezbollah relies on Iran fails to recognize that Iran also needs Hezbollah as its anchor for its geopolitical ambitions in the Middle East. Therefore, irrespective of the nuclear agreement, IRGC will continue to supply Hezbollah with a multitude of armaments. The armaments that Iran would provide Hezbollah after the deal, however, will not be qualitatively different from those provided under sanctions. With the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the P5+1 and Iran, along with a new UN Security Council resolution (2231) on the nuclear deal, strict restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile activities and trade remain in place, thus reducing the potential threat of Iranian ballistic missiles reaching Hezbollah. Moreover, UN Security Council Resolution 1929, established a comprehensive arms embargo on Iran, banning the sale of "battle tanks, armored combat

vehicles, large caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems" to Iran. UN Security Council Resolution 2231, unanimously adopted on July 20 2015, also contains an eight-year restriction on Iranian (nuclear-capable) ballistic missile activities and a five-year ban on conventional arms transfers to Iran. [1]

In the long term, the most dangerous consequence to Israel by the deal in terms of preserving its regional security is, incontestably, the creation of a new armed front in the Golan Heights. The implication of this hypothesis could be even more harmful than the improvement of the conventional military capabilities of Hezbollah. A new front in the Golan would undermine the stability of the "cold peace" that has been in place since the Yom Kippur war in 1973 between Syria and Israel, and it would demand from Israel huge efforts economically and militarily in order to contain such initiative.

Such a threat, however, seems unlikely based on the investment and very clear political cost to Iran that would accompany such an initiative in the Golan Heights. First, an armed resistance front cannot survive without strong support from the local population, which requires persistent efforts and cultural foundations, which the situation in Syria would likely not allow. Second, as both Iran and Hezbollah are readily aware, Israel would fiercely counter such an initiative at any cost. Finally, there is the very real perception that Russia's involvement in Syria the leverage it brings could work to limit Iran and Hezbollah's anti-Israeli efforts in the Golan Heights, as Russia would seemingly have little interest in creating an undesirable animosity with Israel, an historical partner.

1 https://www.armscontrol.org/Issue-Briefs/2015-07-27/Addressing-Irans-Ballistic-Missiles-in-the-JCPOA-and-UNSC-Resolution. Volume 7, Issue 8, July 27, 2015.

## *The Political Impact of the Nuclear Deal and the Rise to Dominance of Hezbollah in Lebanese Political Dynamics*

A divided and polarized Lebanon has always served Israel's national security interests. In this context, the outcome of the nuclear deal could have an important political impact on the Hezbollah-Israel dynamic, as Hezbollah would seemingly come away much stronger politically inside of Lebanon, making internal divisions in Lebanon less stark. As a result of the deal, Hezbollah would be provided newfound diplomatic protections and the chance for rapprochement with some European countries, giving them a decided political victory. The sum of these changes, politically speaking, would lead to greater leverage for Hezbollah inside Lebanon.

Israeli strength in Lebanon is based almost entirely on the depth of the sectarian cleavages there, with the longstanding national fragmentation among multiple political factions having helped Israel to keep a strong hand vis-à-vis Lebanon and Hezbollah. Israel understands that a united Lebanon with Hezbollah in a prominent role is a potent counter to Israeli interests. In fact, Israel has never faced a united Lebanon in any of its wars against Hezbollah. Furthermore, Israel's old connections with the Lebanese Phalanges (known as al-Katā'ib), with the Lebanese Forces (known as al-Quwwāt al-Libnānīyah), and with some of the Druze politicians have always facilitated Israeli interests in Lebanon in a way that would likely diminish significantly as Hezbollah gains political strength.

Since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 and the Second war of Lebanon between Hezbollah and

Israel in 2006, the country has seen wave after wave of political antagonism eroding its tenuous sectarian balance. Religious cleavages have hardened and intensified, leading to the breaking of the National Pact and the surge of two extremist factions in the Lebanese landscape: the March 8 alliance and the March 14 alliance. The March 8 bloc represent the pro-Hezbollah alignment and the March 14 belongs to the Hariri group.

Lebanese society has thus been pulled between two distinct political poles: one revolves around a Western-Saudi alliance while the other promotes a Syrian-Iranian-Russian relationship. The former, as represented by the March 14 coalition, claims that Lebanon can only achieve true independence and peace if it distances itself from Syria and Iran and ceases its armed resistance to Israel. The latter, as represented by the March 8 alliance, argues that Lebanese sovereignty and national security would be imperiled if the country ceased its armed resistance to Israel. Therefore, in light of the ongoing regional struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the disarmament of Hezbollah has become the main inflection point between these coalitions. Freeing Iran from the international penalty box will provide Hezbollah a wider diplomatic shelter, and Tehran can play an important role by persuading some European countries to remove Hezbollah from the list of terrorism threats, reestablishing the previous status quo when most of the EU states recognized Hezbollah as a legitimate nationalist resistance movement. The European commercial interests in the Iranian market may eventually lead some countries like Germany, Italy, and Spain to signal the removal of Hezbollah from the list of terrorist entities in order to send a political signal to the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and to facilitate the opening of the Iranian market for Europeans companies.

Moreover, after the conclusion of the nuclear talks between Iran and the six world powers last July, Tehran has become one the most visited Middle-Eastern capitals. Tehran received high-level governmental missions from nearly 20 countries, such as Germany, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, and South Korea. According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry, over the past 15 months, about 100 delegations of investors and entrepreneurs visited the country, of which about 90% belong to companies in the Western world, including the United States.[2] In this atmosphere, European countries seem eager to boost trade relations with Iran and become flexible to reconsider Hezbollah's status. For the IRGC and hardliners in Tehran, it would be provocative if the European states were to conduct business with Iran while also maintaining a dubious position with regard to Hezbollah and the so-called "Axis of Resistance." Israel, on the other hand, could lose its grip on constraining Hezbollah's rapprochement with certain European states vis-à-vis the commercial interests of Western countries in Iran.

The perception today in the Lebanese political mainstream is grounded on the premises that no opposition group can contain Hezbollah's primacy in the country. In the context of domestic politics, Nassrallah's continued assertiveness on pivotal topics has undoubtedly brought him concrete leverage to maneuver the internal alliances in Lebanon since Hezbollah appears as a winner in the internal scene. Additionally, Russian intervention in Syria as well as the invitation to Iran to participate in the Vienna talks on the Syrian civil war is perceived by the pro-Saudi bloc in Lebanon as the consolidation of Iranian power in regional affairs, particularly, in Arab matters.

2 Information received from the Iranian Foreign Ministry after official request.

The political effect of the nuclear deal has thus repositioned Hezbollah as a winner in domestic politics, particularly as most of its claims regarding the nuclear talks have seemingly come true. For quite some time Hezbollah's political machine has put forth three main arguments about the nuclear issue. First, that Iran and Western powers are capable of engaging in a peaceful dialogue with one another and that the only solution to the impasse in the Iranian nuclear program is diplomatic—the use of force is not an option. Second, that Saudi and Israeli diplomacy will fail to prevent the rise of Iranian power in the Middle East and to obstruct the nuclear deal by relying on their alliance with Washington. Third, that Iran is a pivotal nation that holds the key to solving diverse issues facing the region and the world, and that the United States will be pragmatic enough to reinsert Tehran in the international community in order to prepare the route for a future engagement with the country. Iranian participation in the Vienna talks on the Syrian civil war therefore confers this recognition and the importance of Iran's greater role in the Middle East, leading to the reinsertion of Tehran in major global diplomatic negotiations after decades of American-imposed marginalization.

As a result, Iran will categorically endow Hezbollah with sponsorship of several social and political projects beyond the Shia boundaries, effectively countering the March 14 alliance. This is an important advantage that Hezbollah is going to count on to finance some Lebanese political parties, including in the Sunni sect of groups antagonistic to the Hariri family. This would be accomplished with Iranian funding and with the ambition to expand its influence in the national arena, taking into account that Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is almost unfeasible under King's Salman government.

Domestically in Lebanon, Hezbollah's core objective is to reinforce the leadership of Sunni politicians opposed to the Hariri alliance. As a tangible option, Hezbollah is keen to invest in the leader of the Arab Liberation Party, Faisal Omar Karami, a prominent Sunni leader from Tripoli, a crucial city in northern Lebanon and the second most important Sunni stronghold after Beirut. Another alternative is to support Osama Saad, the leader of the Popular Nasserist Party in the southern city of Sidon and the third largest Sunni powerhouse. This strategy will likely undermine the capabilities of the Future Movement of Saad Hariri to win all the Sunni seats in the parliament in future electoral disputes. To Hariri, Beirut would remain his untouchable fort though not a sufficient political pinnacle to maintain the majority seats for his religious sect.

However ironic due to their past enmity, Hezbollah's strategy will focus on repairing and rebuilding a fluid dialogue with the Phalange Party (al-Katā'ib), a former Israeli associate during the 1980's. In the last few months, Sami Gemayel, the Phalangist leader from one of the most traditional Christian Maronite families in politics, has moderated his opposition to Hezbollah and is a pragmatic politician seeking to preserve the leadership of his oligarchic dominance upon a part of the Lebanese Maronite citizens. Looking at the political future of his conglomerate, the more Gemayel comes to the center the easier it will be for him to preserve the declining power of his clan and his 5 out of 34 Maronite seats in the parliament. In the medium- to long-term, this political move could theoretically qualify Sami Gemayel to become a possible alternative for the presidency on behalf of his religious sect—the Maronites—and most importantly free from Hezbollah's veto.

The third target of Hezbollah is the passage of a new electoral bill, the so-called "al-Nissbiya" or "the Orthodox Gathering Proposal." The core theme of this legislation is about delimiting the boundaries of religious representation. Consequently, each voter would be able to vote for a candidate only from his/her own religious sect,[3] whereas current legislation allows a citizen to vote for any politician regardless of which religious sect the candidate belongs to. This new format would dramatically change the balance of power in Lebanese politics. Upon approval of this new legislation, the March 8 coalition would benefit by preserving and eventually expanding the number of its seats in the parliament. On the other hand, the new bill would fragment the powerful parties in the March 14 alliance, like the Future Movement, and will radically shrink the parliamentary strength of Progressive Socialist Party.[4]

The political groups opposing the new bill are precisely Hariri and Jumblat, as the current political status quo is favorable only to them, due to their superficial majority in the parliament. Nevertheless, what is interesting in this equation is that the Lebanese Forces (al-Quwwāt al-Libnānīyah) and the Christian-Orthodox Murr Party, both members of the March 14 alliance, support the new bill. Christians in Lebanon have long complained about unfair representation in spite of their widespread distribution across the country. According to the electoral law, which was

3 Designed so that a proportionate number of seats represent the electoral strength of each religious sect. The idea of proportional representation was born in Europe in order to protect minorities. Many liberal thinkers in history including Aristotle, Marquis de Condorcet claimed that a Representative body should be a thumbnail replica of the social body that it represents. It was first adopted in Denmark (1855), Switzerland (1891), Belgium (1895), and Finland (1906), countries characterized by religious, ethnic or linguistic diversity. Source (in Arabic): http://www.arabiclawyer.org/nh.htm (accessed October 16th 2015).

4 The Progressive Socialist Party today has a total of 10 seats in the parliament of which 40% are non-Druze. However, according to Taif Agreements, the Druze has 8 seats. With the new legislation the 8 seats will be divided between three Druze parties. This means that Jumblat is not capable to winning more than 8 seats, most likely he will lose 40% of his strength in the parliament.

established in 1960, Lebanon was divided into 26 electoral districts, dominated by mostly Muslim and Druze voters. Ultimately, the Lebanese Forces, in addition to the Phalange Party (al-Katā'ib) and the Orthodox-Murr "Metn Bloc," will more or less preserve their seats in the parliament, and Lebanese Christians would be entitled to elect their own representatives.[5] Of course, all these issues may be up for discussion and bargaining between Iran and Saudi Arabia if they are to reach any type of understanding on regional issues.

Under the influence of a major political bloc aligned with Hezbollah, Lebanon will be more inclined to abandon neutralism as a diplomatic route in order to assume a declared position in complex regional affairs, such as the Syrian civil war, Saudi military intervention in Yemen, and to take a more aggressive position—in the international legal fora—regarding Israel's gas exploration in the disputed maritime area near Lebanese-Israeli borders. Hence, in the macro geopolitical game, Lebanon will likely become an official part of the so-called "Axis of the Resistance."[6]

## *Conclusion*

The impact of the nuclear deal, from Hezbollah's perspective, will predominantly be political through strengthening the Lebanese organization's power of manipulation; galvanization of broader sociopolitical support for their regional aspirations; and, a hike in the financial aid from Iran to invest in its political agenda beyond the Shi'a boundaries.

5 http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2013/02/orthodox-law-threatens-march-14.html#ixzz3off4loEh (accessed on October 1st 2015)

6 The '*Axis of the Resistance*' or the '*Shi'a Crescent*' is an alliance among countries aligned with Iran and acts geopolitically under the same umbrella. This bloc is composed of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah.

One way to evaluate the implication of the Iranian nuclear deal on reinforcing Hezbollah's political power would be to watch closely the following: 1) who will occupy the vacant Lebanese presidency, and 2) what is the outcome of the new electoral legislation, the so called "al-Nissbiya".

In a broader picture, aside from Lebanese domestic politics, it is important to watch the emergence of political and intelligence coordination among the self-proclaimed P4+1, composed of Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah, focused on shaping new patterns in regional security. From the perspective of the P4+1, the alliance of the United States with Israel and Saudi Arabia is losing its ability to stabilize the Middle East. The future political, military, and economic decisions in the region will thus have to involve the emerging Iranian-aligned corridor, a loose confederation of strategic actors encompassing more than 100 million people, from Tehran all the way to Beirut.

When it comes to military capabilities, Israel remains unquestionably the strongest force in the region. However, the crucial question that has to be asked about the mutual deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel is: how and to what extent does the Israeli military superiority matter today? The military and the political evolution of Hezbollah since 2000 has transformed the Lebanese organization from a domestic actor into a regional contender capable of impacting the balance of power and determining new rules of the game in its confrontation with Israel. As today Hezbollah is capable of giving a tough fight to Israel, capitalizing on a confrontation with Israel, in a way, inexorably undermines the stature of the Israeli image to that of Hezbollah's, and this condition is irrespective of the nuclear agreement.

The war for Israel today is costlier than in the past, and Israel is unwilling to pay an asymmetric price as compared to Hezbollah. Although this equation is obliging Israel to invest in modernization of its military industrial complex, it has ultimately given rise to a mutual deterrence status quo.

Finally, the decision making process from Riyadh to Tel Aviv and from Tehran to Damascus will inevitably involve Beirut and preponderantly Hezbollah—one of the architects of the regional security order today. As the nuclear deal does not have any direct impact on military capabilities of Hezbollah—a rational enemy to Israel—the rules of the game will remain temporarily unchanged, and both sides seem to not dislike the option.

***Hussein Kalout*** *is a Research Affiliate at the Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center's Iran Project. Mr. Kalout is a political scientist, professor of International Relations, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies expert, Research Scholar at Weatherhead Center for International Affairs of Harvard University, member of the Advisory Board of the Harvard International Review, and Senior Associate Fellow (non-resident) at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS).*

*May 9, 2015:*
***Hezbollah artillery is directed toward Syria in the fields of the Lebanese border village of Brital.***

*AP Photo/Bassem Mroue*

# A Shifting Center of Gravity across Israel's Northern Border

*Daniel Sobelman*

Syria's descent into all-out civil war and territorial disintegration has paved the way for unprecedented Iranian involvement and long-term influence in the Syrian arena. And while Syria might still end up constituting more of a liability than an asset for Iran, Tehran has spearheaded a so far successful effort to postpone and possibly prevent the downfall of its longtime strategic ally. Iran has thus secured a critical component of its regional enterprise, the so-called "Axis of Resistance."

Encompassing Iran, Syria, Iraq, and the Lebanese organization Hezbollah, the "axis" emerged in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, which ended hundreds of years of Sunni domination of the country, bringing it ever closer to Iran's sphere of influence. A decade later, this tectonic shift has reshaped Iran's regional standing, with actual implications on its ability to promote its interests and deter its adversaries.

It is against the backdrop of this geopolitical shift that Israel analyzes the recent nuclear deal with Iran. In this regard, the prevailing view in Israel contends that beyond the complicated technical dimensions of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the agreement holds several broader regional implications. Most importantly, it legitimates Iran's drive to obtain recognition as a legitimate regional power to be reckoned with.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the deal, Iran secured a seat at the high table of policy-making regarding Syria. This could have strategic implications on Israel's security environment.

Israel's upcoming security challenges along its volatile northern front will be shaped by the behavior of a sanctions-free Iran that is also increasingly determined to preserve and employ its regional assets—including Hezbollah. Israel faces the threatening prospect of unprecedented Iranian and Hezbollah influence across yet another border, a development that will have a long-term effect on the stability of Israel's northern arena, including on the prospects for another confrontation with Hezbollah.

## *Israeli Perception of a Nuclear-Threshold Iran*

Analyzing the prospect of a nuclear Iran, Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak spoke in July 2012 of a scenario in which Israel would find itself constrained vis-à-vis Hezbollah because of an Iranian warning that "an attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon is an attack on us."[1] Whether or not Iran ever becomes an actual nuclear power remains to be seen. But the very appearance of an unconstrained and hence more assertive post-deal Iran could cast a powerful image that in Israel's view could stretch into reality and further contribute to the hegemonic adrenalin driving Iran's behavior. In the wake of the agreement, former Prime Minister Barak pointed out at the Harvard Kennedy School that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action practically upgrades Iran into "a de-facto threshold nuclear power," thus rendering it "much more capable of intimidating neighbors.

1 "In Conversation with Ehud Barak," YouTube, July 2, 2012. Interview can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI2_kt1cfI8

They are basically recognized now by the United States, China, Russia, and the rest of the world as a legitimate Middle Eastern power."[2] Echoing this assessment, retired IDF General Amos Gilad, director of the diplomatic-security bureau in the Israeli Defense Ministry, noted that Iran is interested in gaining the perception of a nuclear threshold state. Armed with the "perception of a regional power," Gilad told me, "the Iranians will be able to destabilize the Middle East even without a nuclear bomb."[3]

## *Russia: Securing a Regional Asset*

Russia's decision to expand its military presence in Syria and engage in active military warfare was triggered not just by Moscow's fear of Islamic State expansion towards its doorstep in the Caucasus,[4] but also by the Kremlin's determination to secure a decades-long regional asset. Driving its intervention was Moscow's concern that Damascus could get cut off from the country's Mediterranean coast, where Russia has held a naval base in Tartus for over four decades.[5] That Mediterranean base is now Russia's last remaining asset in the region.

Nowhere were Russia's worries over Syria's future more evident than in the words of Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Bogdanov, who told a Lebanese delegation in early September that "the security of Damascus is the security of Moscow." He further stressed that if the Syrian regime were to cave in, "Damascus

2 Harvard Institute of Politics John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, "A Conversation With Ehud Barak," September 17, 2015. The talk can be accessed at: http://forum.iop.harvard.edu/content/conversation-ehud-barak.
3 In an on-the-record telephone conversation with the author, October 5, 2015.
4 Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Vivian Salama, "Iran lobbied for Russian campaign in Syria, officials say," *Associated Press*, October 8, 2015; and Henry A. Kissinger, "A Path Out of the Middle East Collapse," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2015.
5 *Al-Mayadeen TV Channel*, September 25, 2015.

would become the capital of ISIS."[6]

And although Israel is not the focal point of Russia's Syria gambit, Moscow's decision to join forces with Iran, Hezbollah, and Syria suggests that Israel's upcoming challenges will be shaped by the interplay between these various actors. In that respect, Israel's strategic environment will be affected by the degree to which Moscow will be mindful of Israel's security interests across its northern border as Russia sets out to remove or reduce the threats to the survival of its Syrian ally. Regardless of whether Russia's decision to join the Syrian fray will protract or mitigate the conflict, its intervention introduces some short-term gains to Israel, namely a powerful interlocutor within Syria. As such, Russia could serve as an informal backchannel between Israel on the one hand, and Iran and Hezbollah on the other. Whether Moscow will be willing and capable of tempering Iran's role in Syria in the long run and prevent the transfer of certain weapon systems to Hezbollah remains, however, to be seen.

## *Safeguarding the 'Axis of Resistance'*

Throughout the Syrian conflict, which started out in March 2011 as a local uprising in the southern city of Dar'a, Israel followed the developments across its northern border mainly through the prism of the conflict's potential impact on Iranian standing in the Middle East in general and its ability to maintain its support for Hezbollah in particular. Israel has so far placed ISIS at a lower priority. [7]

6 *Al-Akhbar*, September 14, 2015.

7 In the wake of the US-led air campaign on ISIS, a high-ranking IDF commander claimed the West was making a mistake by focusing on the group. "Ad odd situation has emerged, in which the United States, Canada and France are on the same side with Hezbollah, Iran, and Assad. This is illogical." Ha'aretz, October 31, 2014. More recently, a top IDF remarked: "Do we want Iran sitting on our doorstep? Do we want Iran, a country that de facto rules Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and enjoys Russian backup — to win in this confrontation? A country that maintains its standing as a nuclear-threshold state?" See: *Al-Monitor*, September 21, 2015.

Iran and its allies shared Israel's reading of Syria's instrumental role in its regional enterprise, as well as in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah pointed out, "all that Iran wants in Syria is for the country to remain within the Axis of Resistance."[8] The survival of President Assad, he added, would bode a "victory for the Axis of Resistance, which constitutes a strategic threat to Israel." Therefore, he continued, "if Syria emerges victorious from this battle, it would mean a stronger Axis of Resistance."[9]

In sharp contrast, a defeat of the Syrian regime would have had far-reaching ramifications for Hezbollah and Iran. A removal of the Syrian regime could dispossess Iran of several strategic and intelligence assets, such as the Damascus international airport and certain locations along the Syrian-Lebanese border. The loss of such assets would deprive Iran of its strategic corridor into Lebanon and thus pose a serious threat to Hezbollah's main logistical supply line. This, neither Iran nor Hezbollah can afford.

The increase in Iranian control of Syria began in 2012, when Iran instructed Hezbollah—arguably the most formidable violent non-state actor in the region—to throw its military weight behind a deteriorating Syrian army. Beyond its success at guaranteeing its vital contiguous passageway to Hezbollah, one of the inevitable consequences of Iran's intervention in Syria has been the Assad regime's increasing dependence on its Iranian lifeline, in which Hezbollah is a key element. The Iranians have so far invested billions of dollars in credit lines, loans, manpower, and military hardware to keep the regime afloat.[10] In addition,

8 *Al-Manar*, September 25, 2015.
9 *Ibid*.
10 *Financial Times*, September 30, 2015.

Tehran obtained "sovereign guarantees" from the Syrian government and is now reportedly the owner of hotels and real estate, thousands of hectares of Syrian land, and a Shia pilgrimage site outside of Damascus.[11] Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has deployed thousands of foreign fighters to Syria, established cultural institutions in the country, and spearheaded the creation of the National Defense Forces, currently the largest militia network active in Syria.[12]

Moreover, some Syrian military units are today directly answerable to Hezbollah commanders—a turn of events unthinkable just a few years back, when the Lebanese group was perceived a mere proxy in the hands of Syria. Another interesting indication of Hezbollah's growing influence in Syria came earlier this year when two rockets were fired into Israel from within a Syrian military post. Speaking in the wake of the incident, a top IDF commander remarked that such an attack could not be carried out "without the approval of Hezbollah."[13]

While not necessarily irreversible in the long run, this shifting center of gravity in the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah triad will impact Israel's strategic environment in the foreseeable future. Hezbollah's ever increasing political and military clout will likely constitute one of Israel's primary security challenges in the years to come, as the country, in the words of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, acts to deter and actively prevent Iran from creating a "terror front against us" in Syria, second to the one it gradually established in Lebanon following the Second Lebanon War.[14]

11 *Al-Nahar*, March 21, 2015; *Al-Hayat*, February 3, 2015.
12 *Reuters*, April 4, 2013; *Al-Hayat*, February 26, 2015.
13 *Ha'aretz*, January 28, 2015.
14 *Times of Israel*, September 21, 2015.

## *Bargaining over Israel's Red Lines*

It has been in this context that Israel, in the wake of the nuclear deal and Iran's subsequent deployment of hundreds of IRGC troops to Syria,[15] warned Iran against massing forces nearby the Israeli border.[16] Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, have in recent weeks re-emphasized the three strategic "red lines" underlying Israel's deterrence posture towards its northern front. Israel's oft-repeated "red lines" stipulate the following: Israel will prevent Hezbollah's acquisition of advance "balance-breaking" military hardware such as sophisticated air defense systems; it will forcefully prevent Syria's chemical arsenal from falling into the hands of terrorists, namely Hezbollah; and it will retaliate against any violation, deliberate or otherwise, of its sovereignty from within Syria. 17

While Israel has actively enforced at least two of its "red lines" since early 2013, in a series of pinpointed air raids on Lebanon-bound advanced military equipment, it has fallen short of stopping or deterring Hezbollah from arming itself with a long list of Iranian-supplied potential "game changers." Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, the Israeli prime minister has accused Iran of smuggling advanced SA-22 anti-aircraft missiles to Hezbollah in Lebanon as well as Yakhont precision anti-ship cruise missiles and precision-guided surface-to-surface missiles and attack drones.[18] It bears noting that Hezbollah's acquisition of these and other advanced military hardware long precedes the nuclear deal.[19]

15 *Jerusalem Post*, September 10, 2015.
16 *Jerusalem Post*, September 29, 2015.
17 *Ynet*, September 29, 2015.
18 *Ha'aretz*, October 2, 2015.
19 Moreover, according to Nasrallah, his Hezbollah already possesses the various weapon systems destroyed by the Israeli air raids in recent years. See: *Al-Mayadeen TV*, January 15, 2015.

Hezbollah's unprecedented acquisition of such sophisticated systems illustrates the structural risk involved in the introduction of "red lines." Red lines bring rise to two paradoxes. First, even if they are respected or effectively enforced, their very delineation implies a tacit acceptance of certain adversarial behavior. This sets off a dynamic of violent bargaining, which leads to the emergence of certain rules of the game "below" and "above" the "red line." In the case of Israel and Hezbollah, tacit rules of the game have evolved since early 2013, "prohibiting" Israeli attacks on weapons shipments that have made their way past the international border into Lebanon. While Israeli air raids on Hezbollah targets in Lebanon would elicit a retaliation, Israeli air raids in Syria are perceived, albeit tacitly, "fair game." In other words, Israel is effectively deterred from striking Hezbollah shipments once physically on Lebanese territory.

The second paradox that comes with the introduction of red lines is that the acquisition of vast quantity of low-tech weapons can ultimately become quality. A critical mass of unsophisticated military capability (in Hezbollah's case, over 100,000 mostly short-range rockets) can prove sufficient for advancing a relatively weak actor to the stage where it is capable of deterring an overwhelmingly superior adversary and upgrading its military capabilities.

Israel and Hezbollah have indeed reached the stage of what both parties acknowledge as mutual deterrence along a mostly stable Israel-Lebanon frontier.[20] However, future friction could stem from the parties' attempts to reshape the rules of the game along the Syrian border as well. Further down the line, Hezbollah may attempt to extend its deterrence to the Syrian front

20 See: Daniel Sobelman, "Israel, Hezbollah Recalibrate Mutual Deterrence," *Al-Monitor*, October 2, 2014.

in a bid to establish a foothold across the Israeli border. The Syrian Golan Heights is currently controlled mostly by local rebel groups, who constitute a de-facto buffer zone and occasionally receive medical treatment in Israel. Any attempt by Iran and Hezbollah to defeat, disband, or replace these groups will pose a dilemma for Israel and create friction, as Israel would have to navigate between various perilous alternatives such as acquiescing to Iranian presence across its border, targeting Iranian and Hezbollah commanders in Syria, or shoring up the rebel-held buffer zone.

## *Hezbollah's Increasing Regional Clout*

But beyond Hezbollah's immediate conflict with Israel, the Party of God's involvement in the Syrian crisis and elsewhere in the Middle East (namely Iraq and Yemen) has benefited it and granted it a degree of regional clout (albeit at considerable cost.) In Nasrallah's own words, Hezbollah is today "a Lebanese party with regional influence."[21] This could not have been more evident than in Nasrallah's December 2014 meeting with Russia's Bogdanov, in which the long-time Hezbollah leader informed his interlocutor that Bashar al-Assad was a "red line" for Hezbollah.[22] It was not that long ago that world leaders would travel to Damascus in a bid to exert influence on Hezbollah. It currently appears to be the other way around.

In addition, Nasrallah's public statements in recent years

21 *Al-Manar*, September 25, 2015.

22 *Al-Akhbar*, December 25, 2014. He later added that he had told Russian deputy foreign minister that "any solution that comes at President al-Assad's expense is not a solution," and confided that "according to my information, Russia has no intention of abandoning President Al-Assad." See: *Al-Manar*, January 15, 2015.

suggest a high level of coordination and cohesion among the various components of the "Axis of Resistance." In one stark example, Nasrallah cited his own private discussions with "Iranian decision-makers and the Iranian operational level," when announcing that Iran would retaliate "extremely forcefully" against an attack by the United States and/or Israel on its nuclear facilities. "Indeed, American military bases in the entire region could be the target of Iranian attacks," he said. "This is not my own analysis. This is my own information."[23] The following year he cited "the Iranian brethren" when arguing that Iran's negotiators had repeatedly rejected U.S. attempts to include other issues, presumably regional non-nuclear issues, in the negotiations. "It is not in Iran's interest that all issues will be on the table," he explained.[24] More recently, Nasrallah offered behind-the-scenes details about the discussions between Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria over the formation of their new intelligence sharing mechanism, in the run up to Moscow's intervention in Syria. "According to my information," he noted, Russia's decision to intervene directly was the result of the U.S. failure to defeat ISIS.[25] Hezbollah representatives are reportedly taking part in said intelligence sharing mechanism, details about which have systematically made their way to the pro-Hezbollah Beirut daily *Al-Akhbar*. On more than one occasion, Nasrallah told his listeners that his group was playing an active role in shaping the region and determining its future—an effort that has come at considerable cost for the organization, which according to Israeli assessments has lost as many as 1,500 fighters in the Syrian war.[26] This too could have a long-term bearing on Hezbollah's motivation to engage in a confrontation with Israel.

23 *Al-Mayadeen*, September 3, 2012.
24 *OTV*, December 3, 2013.
25 *Al-Manar*, September 25, 2015.
26 *Ha'aretz*, October 14, 2015; *Israel Today*, October 15, 2015; *Ha'aretz*, October 21, 2015.

As the conflict in Syria draws closer to its fifth year, the country has become the theater of a fierce regional proxy war, with no immediate end in sight, many moving parts, and countless non-state groups shaping the events. In the long run, however, Israel's challenges will be decreasingly determined by Syria's unraveling and increasingly shaped by the current effort by Iran and Russia to put the country, as it were, back together, and turn the Syrian crisis into an opportunity.

It bears reminding that Israel's security environment and maneuvering space could be subject to change as a result of unpredictable developments unrelated to Iran or Syria. Such was the case following the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, which then constrained its ability to confront Hezbollah. Meanwhile, and at a broader strategic level, Israel's security environment will be shaped by Iran and Hezbollah's ability to retain Syria as a functioning component within the "Axis of Resistance," and by Israel's own ability to deter those actors from infringing on its vital interests.

**Dr. Daniel Sobelman** *is a research fellow with the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs' International Security Program, and a postdoctoral fellow of the Washington-based Israel Institute. A Former Arab affairs correspondent for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Sobelman's current research analyzes Hezbollah's deterrence strategy vis-à-vis Israel.*

# Part II:
# Israeli Perspectives on the Implications of the Iran Deal

*March 9, 2015:*
***Israeli soldiers march during training in the Golan Heights.***
*AP Photo/Ariel Schalit*

# Biography of Contributors

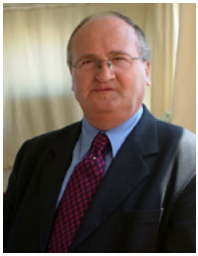
**Yaacov Amidror** (Major General, Ret.) served as the National Security Advisor to the P.M. of Israel and the Head of the National Security Council from April 2011 to November 2013. He also served with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for 36 years (1966-2002). During his long military career, Gen. Amidror held the following positions:

1. Commander of IDF Military Colleges, including The National Defense College, Staff and Command College, and Junior (tactical) Command Academy;
2. Military Secretary for the Minister of Defense;
3. Director of the Intelligence Analysis Division, responsible for National Intelligence Assessment;
4. Head of a large-scale technology project.

General Amidror received a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Haifa and various other degrees and certificates from IDF colleges. After his retirement, he has served as Senior Research Fellow to the Institute for Middle East Research in Washington (in 2002). He is now the Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar - Ilan Universit, and he is a Distinguish Fellow of JINSA's Gemunder Center. He was a member of several large Israeli companies' boards as well as numerous high-tech start-ups. Since retiring from the armed forces, General Amidror has published: 1. *Reflections on Army and Security*, a book containing several articles on the subject of military affairs and national security (in Hebrew); 2. A second book: *Intelligence, Theory and Practice*, March 2006 (in Hebrew); 3. *A Strategic Prospective, Winning Counterinsurgency War, the Israeli Experience*, November 2008 (in English). His articles appear frequently in Israeli and international publications. General Amidror was born in Israel in 1948, he is married to Dorith and they have 5 children.

**Ephraim Asculai** (Ph.D.) is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), worked at the Israel Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) for over forty years, including a term at the International Atomic Energy Agency, working on issues of nuclear safety. During the latter part of this term he was the Scientific Secretary of the International Chernobyl Project. Upon returning to Israel he participated in the deliberations towards the conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and worked on the establishment of its verification mechanism. Later he was appointed as the Director of External Relations at the IAEC, of which he also became a Member. In 2000-2001 he spent a sabbatical year at ISIS, during which he authored "Verification Revisited: the Nuclear Case". He joined the Jaffee Center (later to become the INSS) in 2002. He has since published tens of articles and papers, including, in 2004, his Monograph: "Rethinking the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime". His research focuses on strategies for stemming WMD proliferation, with emphasis on the issue of Iran's nuclear ambitions. Dr. Asculai received his Ph.D. in Atmospheric Sciences from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

**Oren Barak** (Ph.D.) is an associate professor in political science and international relations at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was visiting scholar at Harvard University and a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin and at Cornell University. His research areas include the relationship between the state, society and security in non-Western settings with an emphasis on the Middle East. He is the author of *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society* (SUNY Press, 2009) and *Israel's Security Networks: A Theoretical and Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2013, with G. Sheffer). He edited several books including most recently *Nonstate Actors in Intrastate Conflicts* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, with D. Miodownik).



**Martin van Creveld** (Ph.D.) is Prof. Emeritus at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and one of the world's best-known experts on military history and strategy. Born in the Netherlands, educated in Israel and the United Kingdom, van Creveld is the author of twenty-five books. Most are about military history and strategy; but he has also written on political history, women's history, American history, Israeli history, the history of conscience, and the history of equality. Between them, these works have now been published in twenty different languages. Prof. van Creveld has taught or lectured in virtually every important institute of higher strategic learning, both military and civilian, in the world. He is the author of several hundred newspaper- and magazine articles and has appeared on radio and television programs in many countries.

**Ehud Eiran** (Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor of International Relations in the School of Political Science at the University of Haifa, Israel and the Founding Co-Director of the Haifa Research Center for Maritime Strategy. Dr. Eiran is also a board member in Mitvim, the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies. He holds degrees in Law and Political Science from Tel-Aviv University, Cambridge University, and Brandeis University. He held research appointments at Harvard Law School, Harvard's Kennedy School, and Brandeis University and was a visiting lecturer in the Department of Political Science at MIT. Prior to his academic career Dr. Eiran held a number of positions in the Israeli civil service including as Assistant to the Prime Minister's Foreign Policy Advisor. Dr. Eiran has published numerous analytical pieces in popular and scholarly outlets including the New York Times.com, Foreign Affairs.com, Washington Quarterly, and Newsweek. He was a guest on leading American shows such Charlie Rose and NPR's On-Point.

**Chuck Freilich** (Ph.D.) was a deputy national security adviser in Israel. He is now a senior fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center where he specializes in Middle Eastern affairs, US-Middle East policy and Israeli national security policy. He also teaches political science at Harvard, NYU, and the Herzliya IDC. Chuck is the author of "Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy" (Cornell Press, 2012). He is now completing a new book entitled "Israeli National Security: A New Strategy for an Era of Change." Chuck has appeared as a commentator for ABC, CNN, NPR, El Jezira and various US, Israeli and foreign radio and TV stations. He has been quoted in the NY Times and other media and published numerous academic articles and over 100 op-eds. Chuck was a Senior Analyst at the Israel Ministry of Defense, policy adviser to a cabinet minister, a delegate at the Israeli Mission to the UN and the executive director of two non-profits. He served in the IDF for five years and is a reserve major. Chuck earned his Ph.D from Columbia University. Born in New York, he immigrated to Israel in his teens.

**Nimrod Goren** (Ph.D.) is the Founder and Head of Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies and a Teaching Fellow in Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Psychology from the Hebrew University, and his dissertation topic was "The role of external incentives in promoting peace: the cases of Israel and Turkey". After completing his doctorate, Nimrod was selected to take part in Public Policy training at Syracuse University as the Israeli participant in the 2009-10 US State Department's Fulbright Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program. Nimrod is the former Executive Director of the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC), and in this capacity he was awarded the 2009 Victor J. Goldberg IIE Prize for Peace in the Middle East. In addition, Nimrod has worked at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, the Nehemia Levtzion

Center for Islamic Studies, and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. He is also a Board Member at MALI—The Center for Enterprising Citizens.

**Ephraim Kam** (Ph.D.; Colonel, Ret.) is a senior research associate at The Institute for National Security Studies, and formerly the deputy director of the institute for 18 years. Before he joined the institute, he served for many years as a senior officer at the Research Division of IDF's Military Intelligence. He took his BA degree in Economics and Middle East Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and his MA and PhD degrees at Harvard University. He is teaching MA seminars at the security studies program in Tel-Aviv University. His main fields of expertise are: the Iranian challenge; security concerns of the Arab states; stability of regimes in the Middle East; Israel's security problems; and intelligence failures. He wrote two books, in addition to numerous articles: "Surprise Attack: The Victim's Perspective" (Harvard University Press 1988, 2004) and "From Terror to Nuclear Bombs: The Significance of the Iranian Threat" (in Hebrew, 2007). "Surprise Attack" was awarded the National Intelligence Study Center (Washington, DC) 1988 prize for the best book on intelligence.

**Yosef Kuperwasser** (Brigadier General, Ret.) is a senior project manager at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He is former Director General of the Ministry of International Affairs and Strategy. In his long career at the IDF, Brig. Gen. (res.) Kuperwasser served as Assistant Defense Attaché for Intelligence at the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC (1992-1994) and Intelligence Officer of the IDF Central Command (1998-2001), and Head of the Analysis and Production Division of the IDF Directorate of Military Intelligence (2001-2006). He had a significant role in determining Israel's coping methods with

terror as well as regional developments, and sharing such analysis with the US and other foreign entities. Kuperwasser authored a wide variety of publications on the Middle East, terrorism and intelligence and he is an opinion contributor to the Israeli daily paper Haaretz. Brig. Gen. (Res.) Kuperwasser was the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Visiting Fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution (2006-2007). Following his retirement, Brig. Gen. (Res.) Kuperwasser was VP of Global CST, a security consultancy firm.

**Emily Landau** (Ph.D.) is a senior research fellow at INSS, where she heads the Arms Control and Regional Security Program, leading its research, conference outreach, and mentorship plans and programs. Dr. Landau has published and lectured extensively on nuclear proliferation, arms control, and regional security dynamics in the Middle East (including Israel's policy); WMD proliferation challenges in the post-Cold War era; and developments in global nuclear arms control thinking. She has written and edited books on these topics, and is the author of many book chapters and articles published in professional journals. Dr. Landau currently teaches in the executive MA program on Diplomacy and Security at Tel Aviv University, at IDC Herzliya, and the International School at the University of Haifa. She is a frequent expert commentator in Israeli and leading international media, guest lecturer and public speaker, and briefs many audiences on the Iranian nuclear crisis. She served on the steering committee of the Euro-Mediterranean network of research institutes EuroMeSCo for eight years, and currently serves on the board of advisory editors of *Fathom* and is a member of IISS, London. Dr. Landau holds a PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Forbes magazine chose Dr. Landau as one of Israel's fifty most influential women for 2015, in recognition of her public profile regarding the Iranian nuclear crisis.

**Daniel Radovsky** (Ph.D.) is a physicist, working in the fields of R&D management and policy at the Israel Prime Minister's Office. He is currently a research fellow at the International Security Program and Project on Managing the Atom of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School.

**Gilad Raik** is a Recanti-Kaplan Fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School. He holds a Bachelor Degree *Magna Cum Laude* in Political Science and Art from Tel Aviv University. In the last 17 years he served in the defense establishment in Israel.

**Gerald Steinberg** (Ph.D.) is professor of Political Science, Bar Ilan University, Israel; founded the Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation, and is the founder/president of NGO Monitor, a Jerusalem-based public affairs institute. His research focuses on Middle East diplomacy and security, including nuclear proliferation and arms control, as well as the use and abuse of soft-power, and Israeli politics. Steinberg participated in the IAEA's academic conferences on a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction; served as team leader, Israel at the Polls chapters on the peace process and Israel-American relations (1988–2005); member of Israel Council of Foreign Affairs; the Israel Higher-Education Council, Committee on Public Policy (2013); and MidEast research group of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Academic publications include "NGOs, Human Rights, and Political Warfare in the Arab-Israel Conflict" (Israel Studies); "Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East", (Survival, Vol. 36:1); Examining Israel's NPT Exceptionality: 1998-2005, (Non-Proliferation Review, Vol. 13:1); "Realism, Politics and Culture in Middle East Arms Control Negotiations" (International Negotiation, Vol. 10), "The UN, the ICJ and the Separation Barrier: War by Other Means" (Israel Law Review); and Best Practices for Human Rights and Humanitarian NGOs, (co-author), Nijhoff, Leiden, 2012.

**Amos Yadlin** (Major General, Ret.) has been the Director of Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) since November 2011. INSS is the leading Think Tank in Israel. General Yadlin served for over 40 years in the Israel Defense Forces, ten of which as a member of the IDF General Staff. From 2006–2010, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yadlin served as the Israel chief of Defense Intelligence. From 2004-2006, he served as the IDF attaché to the United States. In February 2002, he earned the rank of major general and was named commander of the IDF Military Colleges and the National Defense College. Yadlin is a former deputy commander of the Israel Air Force, and has commanded two fighter squadrons and two airbases. He has also served as Head of IAF Planning Department (1990–1993). He accumulated about 5,000 flight hours and flew more than 250 combat missions behind enemy lines. He participated in the Yom Kippur War (1973), Operation Peace for Galilee (1982) and Operation Tamuz—the destruction of the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq (1981). Yadlin holds a B.A. in economics and business administration from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (1985). He also holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (1994). Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yadlin was the Zionist Union's candidate for Defense Minister in the 2015 national election in Israel.

*The statements and views presented in this report are solely those of the individual authors and do not imply endorsements of other views and assessments of this report.*

# After the Agreement—Israel's Perspective


## *Yaakov Amidror*

Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan Universit, and Distinguish Fellow of JINSA's Gemunder Center


The agreement with Iran is a bad one, but it is now an established fact. The question now is: What happens next? Looking toward the future, then, Israel must make four assumptions that will serve as the foundations for its actions from now on:

1. Iran will try to cheat at some stage, probably not right away but at some stage. Either during the period covered by the agreement or at its end, Iran will try to attain nuclear weapons capability.

2. The international community has no interest in uncovering Iranian cheating, and no Western leader will jeopardize the agreement in order to achieve better intelligence that can identify cheating. Thus in the relevant countries, intelligence priorities will, after a short period, be diverted to other worrying events, and the level of intelligence available on Iran's actions will drop.

3. Even if Iran is caught acting in contravention of the agreement, no leader in the world has any real intention of stopping it, not by renewing sanctions, and certainly not by the use of force.

4. The Iranian leadership will not change its behavior in the

region for the better. Its hatred for the Jewish state will continue to be a hugely influential factor in its policy and actions, including efforts to isolate Israel, harm it, and if possible even destroy it. After the agreement, and to a large extent because of it, Iran will have improved tools at its disposal to pursue these efforts both immediately and in the long term.

In light of the above, Israel's security efforts in the Iranian context need to be focused on the following three areas:

1. Obtaining additional aid from the United States, in the form of funding, technology, and weapons systems, so as to be able to develop responses to the growing Iranian threat (both directly and via organizations Iran supports) in all relevant fields. Similarly, it will be necessary to create a better balance in light of the increasing military capabilities of Arab countries, which are being provided with US assistance, in response to fears about Iran.

2. Reinforcing independent intelligence efforts that will enable Israel to identify changes in Iranian policy, especially any indication of a move toward obtaining the bomb, and to track Iran's efforts in the field of nuclear activity, in declared and undeclared nuclear facilities and missile activities.

3. Improving the military capabilities required to destroy the Iranian nuclear facilities, should the need arise, and preparing international opinion for such a possibility.

All these efforts do not address the other problem brought about by the agreement and which is not even mentioned in the agreement itself: the change in Iran's geostrategic status. The

beginnings of this shift can be seen in events in Syria, where the Russian premier has decided to join forces with the Iranians. The success of this alliance is a first indication of a greater change in the Middle East, of which the next stage will be a similar compact in Iraq in order to stabilize the Shia influence in that region. For the Iranians, this will be the fulfillment of a dream of historic proportions: the creation of a contiguous Shia zone running from Tehran via Damascus to Beirut. Russia wants this alliance for its own needs, but Iran stands to gain from it just as much. The huge arms deal between Russia and Iran is another sign of the change underway in the region following the agreement.

It is fairly clear that Iran, with an active Russia at its side, will be more militant, becoming even more involved in the crucible of Middle East events, including the flammable aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and will be more energetic in its grey-area activities such as arming Hezbollah, an activity which the world now appears to accept with perfect acquiescence.

Israel will have to rise to the challenge of a Middle East in which Iran is a real power, both in terms of the deployment of its military forces, and in terms of its relations with various organizations and states which it supports and to which it supplies funding and arms. This challenge will require increased cooperation with neighboring states that fear Iran, whether this cooperation is conducted secretly or openly. It will also require complex intelligence efforts and other operations, both covert and not, to hamper Iran's development of its ability to strike at Israel. There is no doubt that Israeli actions of this kind, against the backdrop of Iran being welcomed into the family of normal states, will make things difficult for Israel internationally.

Washington's understanding for these kinds of actions cannot be assumed, due to the prominent commitment of the White House to the agreement with Iran. Hence Israel must try to coordinate these efforts with the United States as much as possible, but must also be willing to act without American approval.

In summary: the agreement leaves Israel facing serious security challenges, first and foremost being the possibility that it will have to act independently to halt Iran's race to nuclear weapons. The agreement also creates a new reality for Israel in which Iran becomes a regional power, with international acceptance, without having abandoned its regular efforts to harm Israel. In both these arenas, Israel will have to act largely alone, and contrary to the prevailing international atmosphere, which is influenced by the economic potential of Iran as a future partner, and by the possibilities of cooperation with Iran—as patron of the region's Shias—in combating the Islamic State.

Even now, and in parallel with its negotiations with the United States over an increased aid package, Israel must continue to explain that this is a bad agreement. This is important in order that Israel will be able to act militarily against Iran, should the need arise, with "clean hands;" this will not be possible unless it is first made clear that, from Israel's perspective, this is a bad agreement to which it is not bound.

# The Implications of the Iranian Nuclear Agreement for Israel


## *Ephraim Asculai*

Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)


Three basic facts and some additional worries established the fierce opposition of the Israeli public and its government to the Iranian nuclear project and its potential to produce nuclear explosive devices within a relatively short time if it decided to do so. The three basic facts are: (1) the declared animosity of Iran towards Israel and the wish to annihilate it (including the blatant and active denial of the holocaust); (2) Iran's wish and activities to become a regional and world Islamic power as manifested in its regional military and terrorist involvement (Syria, Yemen, Hezbollah, etc.); and (3) Iran's achievements in the nuclear field bringing it to within two months of producing a nuclear explosive device (as stated by US president Obama).

The additional worries include the following: Iran cannot be trusted to uphold its commitments, as manifested in the Security Council's confirmed non-compliance with the NPT and its safeguards commitments, and many concealed activities enroute to its nuclear achievements; Iran is developing a strong offensive capability in its longer-range missile program eminently suitable for the delivery of nuclear weapons; based on historical facts, Israel cannot really depend on any external forces to actively come its aid (except for some US air defenses); the P5+1

disregard of many of Israel's concerns during the negotiations of the deal with Iran; the imperfect JCPOA that includes many loopholes that could bring Iran much closer to consummating its nuclear capabilities should it so desire; the fact that Iran has made no commitments to regional peace, human rights, and so on.

It has to be noted that public opinion in Israel is not unanimous in its condemnation of the agreement. There are those who believe that the JCPOA is, on the whole, a good agreement in that it postpones the almost inevitable by a decade or more, tacitly believing that Iran shall uphold its commitments. If one weighs the options, this agreement could be better than no agreement. Not reaching an agreement could instigate an almost immediate serious regional crisis. On the other hand, there are those who see the present situation as postponing a much more serious and almost inevitable crisis of the future.

What will the implications of the nuclear agreement be on Israeli domestic and foreign policy? Israel is at the moment in an inferior international political situation. The major battle against the terms of the agreement is all but lost, and all that remains is to guarantee that its implementation is carried out meticulously. And, given the secret side-agreements between the IAEA and Iran, even this cannot be assured. Israel will have to use all that is in its power to press the P5+1 and the IAEA to do a decent job. Israel will need to use to the utmost limit its own information-gathering capabilities, strengthen its information exchanges with friendly countries, and especially reestablish its strong strategic relationship with the US. If something amiss comes to light, it must use all means to assure that nothing is overlooked and is treated in the most serious manner. Nothing today

guarantees that others will assume this role. And, in parallel, the Israeli government must do its utmost to assure its public that everything possible is being done for its security and that Israel is strong enough to protect itself and respond to any attack on it.

Will the future regional security architecture depend on how the regional states view the implementation of the JCPOA? The two conflicting issues that will determine the regional response will be the implementation of the JCPOA, and the approaching deadlines—i.e. when Iran will again be fully capable (and even more so) of constructing nuclear weapons. A decade may now seem distant, but it is really a very short time in the annals of man. As Iran becomes much stronger, as a result of the lifting of the sanctions if it behaves well, regional states will become more anxious and will seek to strengthen their safety and security. They have three main options: give in to Iran; unite against Iran politically, and with expanded conventional weapons and defense setups; and, indigenously develop nuclear weapons. These last two are not mutually exclusive.

Iran will need to change considerably if it wants to make a good impression that will convince its strategic neighborhood that it has become a peace-seeking nation. It will be a difficult task for them, given their horrible history of terrorist support, human rights abuse, and the constantly fueled hatred of the US and Israel. It will take much more than a charm offensive to convince the world that it is ripe to be accepted into the family of nations. The history of Iran since the 1979 revolution does not bode well for this possibility.

# After the Nuclear Deal with Iran: An Israeli-Iranian Accommodation?


## *Oren Barak*

Associate Professor, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem


What are the possible implications of the agreement reached between the P5+1 and Iran for Israel, a state that, in recent years, has placed itself at the forefront of the struggle against Iran's nuclear project? The US posits that the agreement "will verifiably prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful going forward."[1] If these goals would indeed be attained, what ramifications would this have for Israel?

In recent years, politicians, security officials, and large segments of the public in Israel have been greatly concerned by the possible threat posed by Iran's nuclear program to Israel's security, and even to its existence as a state. At the same time, members of Israel's political and security elite disagreed on the appropriate response to the "Iranian Question." Several leaders, like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak, reportedly favored an Israeli attack against Iran's nuclear facilities, as Israel had done in 1981 with regard to Iraq's nuclear reactor and reportedly also in 2007 with regard to Syria's. But other officials, including Mossad Director Meir Dagan and Shin-Bet Director Yuval Diskin, as well as senior members of Israel's military, advocated a more assertive international policy towards

1 https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/foreign-policy/iran-deal

Iran to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons, and some spoke openly against an Israeli attack.

The first point that needs to be made in this context is that the Iranian threat to Israel's security, though sometimes inflated (see below), has not been entirely fabricated. In recent decades, Iran stepped up its involvement in Lebanon, mainly through its client, the Shia party-militia Hezbollah, which acquired thousands of rockets and other weapons that are aimed at Israel. At the same time, Tehran has extended political and military support to Palestinian opponents of the PLO and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Iran has also provided political and military support to Syria, Israel's longtime foe. Last but not least, Iranian leaders have explicitly threatened Israel and argued that it would soon disappear off the map.[2] In sum, Iran gradually emerged—and also presented itself—as Israel's foremost rival in the Middle East.

Still, the tendency of Israel's leaders to present the Iranian threat to Israel as "existential" is unjustified. First, after 67 years of independence, Israel's existence is no longer at stake. Second, Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors are highly complex and cannot be viewed only through the Iranian "lens." Third, Iran, which has close ties with the large Shia communities in Lebanon and Iraq, but also elsewhere in the Middle East (e.g. in the Gulf States), could be expected to foster closer ties with these groups. Lastly, at least some of the steps taken by Tehran in the area of security, including in the nuclear realm were, or so it seems, defensive in nature, and had little to do with Israel. In 2002, after the US labeled Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as part of an "Axis

2 http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/06/03/us-iran-israel-usa-idUSL0261250620080603

of Evil," reminiscent of the axis powers in World War II,[3] and in 2003, following the US-led invasion of Iraq, which trampled the latter's sovereignty, it was not at all surprising that the two remaining "members" of the "axis"—Iran and North Korea—tried to buttress their security by other means besides their sovereignty. In sum, the arguments made by PM Netanyahu that "the year is 1938 and Iran is Germany"[4] and similar arguments made by other Israeli leaders (for example President Shimon Peres, one of the architects of Israel's nuclear project, who, in 2009, argued that the world has no choice but to compare the threat posed by Iran to that of Nazi Germany before World War II)[5] were exaggerated.

But the existential discourse in Israel with regard to Iran had crippling effects also domestically. A recent report by the Israeli daily *Haaretz* shows that in his speeches before the UN General Assembly in the period 2009-2014, Prime Minister Netanyahu mentioned Iran 167 times, far more than "peace" (106 times) and "the Palestinians" (59 times).[6] Indeed, as Israeli leaders and large segments of the Israeli public discussed and debated the "Iranian Question"—a discussion that involved the use of existential terms—other issues and problems that beleaguered Israel, including some that might be detrimental to its future such as its policy towards the Palestinians, were shoved aside.

Herein lies the promise of the nuclear agreement between the P5+1 and Iran for Israel. If successful, the agreement could de-existentialize the "Iranian Question" in Israeli politics,

3 http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644
4 http://www.haaretz.com/news/netanyahu-it-s-1938-and-iran-is-germany-ahmadinejad-is-preparing-another-holocaust-1.205137
5 http://www.haaretz.com/news/peres-to-obama-no-choice-but-to-compare-iran-to-nazis-1.275427
6 http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.678389

allowing for a more balanced discussion of Israel's policies and options. While this might be bad news for Prime Minister Netanyahu and other supporters of the de facto binational state in Israel/Palestine, it might bode well for those advocating an Israeli nation-state in its pre-1967 borders that enjoys international legitimacy and lives in peace with its neighbors.

Among other things, Israel could even consider adopting a more pragmatic approach towards Iran. Such an approach would acknowledge Iran's interests in the Middle East while safeguarding Israel's regional interests. After all, both states have little to gain from the weakening and possible disintegration of Arab states such as Iraq and Syria; from the rise of predatory non-state actors such as the Islamic State; and from full-fledged military intervention by external powers in the region, most recently Russia. After decades of mutual fear, animosity, and harsh rhetoric between Israel and Iran, the time may have come for mutual accommodation.

# Iran and the Future of Regional Nuclear Politics[1]


## *Martin van Creveld*

Prof. Emeritus at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem


Unlike most people, with regard to Iran I do not think the debate on the merits or shortfalls of the nuclear agreement matters very much. That is why I allow myself to look into the future as best I can.

1. Whatever happens, the Mullahs are not going to give up their nuclear program. Partly that is because of the number of times the US has waged war in or against foreign countries over the last half century or so. Partly because, not counting the US forces in the Gulf, they have three nuclear neighbors right in their backyard; and partly because Israel, which is not an NPT member, has repeatedly threatened to bomb them. That does not mean they are going to test any time soon. What it does mean is that they will continue to shape the program in such a way as to allow them to build the weapons fairly quickly in case they feel under threat. They will also continue to build increasingly sophisticated delivery vehicles in the form of ballistic missiles and, perhaps, cruise missiles.

2. Whatever happens, the same Mullahs are not going to drop their bomb, if and when they have it, on anyone. No more so than the other members of the nuclear club, i.e. the US, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and

1 This article appeared originally as "In Re. Iran," Sept. 10, 2015, at http://www.martin-van-creveld.com/?p=397

North Korea (which has recently resolved the latest of its countless crises with the South) did. It is indeed possible that the Iranians, in an attempt to further their political interests, will threaten to use the bomb. If so, however, they will hardly be able to do so in more crude and blatant a way than Truman did in 1948, Khruschev in 1956, Kennedy in 1962, Nixon in 1973, and so on.

3. Whatever happens, several other countries in the Middle East are going to push their nuclear programs forward, just so as to be on the safe side. Among them are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and perhaps Jordan as well. The only question is, how fast they will proceed and how long it will take them to produce results (however that may unfold).

4. Whatever happens, Iran's nuclear program will continue to figure large in the ongoing wars between Democrats and the Republicans. Considering that elections are only a little less than a year away, and also the importance of the Jewish-American vote, this is just too good an issue for either side to drop. And even should they want to do so, there will always be Netanyahu to stir up things and ensure that they don't.

5. Whatever happens, the sanctions will gradually come to an end. Already now Russia, by agreeing to sell Iran SA-300 surface-to-air missiles, has occasioned a major breach in the international consensus. Delegations from China, Germany, France, and Japan are flooding Tehran, seeking opportunities for trade. Pressure in this direction can only increase. History will not stand still merely because President Obama cannot agree with Congress, or the other way around. At a time when the world economy seems to be faltering, by and large the return to normalcy is a good thing. It should cause

the price of oil to fall. Until it starts rising again, of course.

6. Whatever happens, and occasional talk about an eventual nuclear-free Middle East notwithstanding, Israel will continue to maintain a formidable nuclear arsenal. One which is fully capable of wiping out Iran and/or quite some other countries within striking range of its ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, fighter-bombers, and submarines. Probably meaning, even without taking the submarines into account, at least three and a half thousand kilometers from Tel Aviv.

7. Whatever happens, Netanyahu, as long as he stays in power, will continue to huff and puff about the "Iranian threat" and the urgent need to counter it. Partly he will do so in order to impress his electorate which, following years of sustained propaganda, has become paranoid and believes that no Iranian ever thinks of anything except for getting to paradise with its seventy-two "big breasted" virgins. And partly because, each time he does so, the spigots open and Israel gets more and more weapons from the US and Germany in particular. Speaking to *The New York Times*, Obama personally has offered help in building "a successor to Iron Dome." Israeli reports also have it that he is prepared to help in finding solutions to the problem posed by the "attack tunnels" Hamas, and perhaps Hezbollah, are digging along the borders of the Gaza Strip and Southern Lebanon respectively.

8. Whatever happens, Netanyahu, as long as he stays in power, will not launch an offensive against Iran. Partly that is because some of his advisers have repeatedly told him that such a strike may very well fail to achieve its aim. Partly because of the fear of Iranian retaliation, which is certain to follow; and partly because he knows that the US opposes to

> such a strike and may not rush to his assistance in case he runs into difficulties. Above all, however, it is because, as the so-called Barak tapes have recently shown once again, the man does not have the necessary guts. The only opponents he will wage war on are very weak ones such as Hamas.

And once he is gone? Remember that, a decade ago, Netanyahu's predecessor, Ariel Sharon, a much braver man than he, also threatened to attack Iran. And that nothing came of it at that time either.

# Israel's Response to the JCPOA


## *Ehud Eiran*

Assistant Professor of International Relations in the School of Political Science at the University of Haifa, Israel and the Founding Co-Director of the Haifa Research Center for Maritime Strategy


The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran's nuclear program was accepted in Israel with deep skepticism. In his October 1, 2015 speech at the United Nations, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that "after three days of listening to world leaders praise the nuclear deal," his recommendation for them is to "check your enthusiasm at the door."[1] The Prime Minister's words reflected, but also shaped, the broader Israeli response to the deal. Shortly after it was signed in July 2015, polling showed that 71% of Israelis believed that the agreement will get Iran closer to deploying a nuclear weapon, while 78% feared that the agreement compromises Israeli security.[2]

Israel's critique can be divided into four categories. First, Israeli officials criticized the specific stipulations of the agreement regarding Iran's nuclear future capabilities. Concerns included, for example, the notion that the agreement legitimizes Iran's status as a nuclear threshold state, and that it will make it easier for Tehran to deploy a weapon at the end of the decade of restrictions set in the JCPOA.

Israelis further fear that Iran would not comply with the agreement and will continue to covertly advance its military nuclear program.

1 Full text of Netanyahu 2015 address to the UN General Assembly, Times of Israel, October 1, 2015. See: http://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-netanyahu-2015-address-to-the-un-general-assembly/

2 Galit Edut, "Survey: 47% of Israeli support an Attack on Iran following the nuclear deal", Maariv, July 17, 2015. See: http://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-489265

After all, almost all military programs for the development and deployment of weapons of mass destruction in the region since the 1950s were covert. In many cases, this was in order to avoid the cost of breaching an international norm.

The concern regarding possible Iranian cheating draws on the realist world view that dominates the Israeli perspective, including a deep distrust in the power of diplomacy and international norms. Israelis point out, in this context, to the failure of the NPT to stem the military nuclear programs in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Iran over the years.

Prime Minister Netanyahu summed up these critiques by stating in August 2015 that "Iran can get to the bomb by keeping the deal or Iran can get to the bomb by violating the deal."[3]

The agreement bought some more time before Israel would need to deal with the challenge posed by an Iranian nuclear weapon. This should lead Jerusalem to take a number of steps. First, it should try to make sure that the agreement will be followed through. Most notably, Israel would benefit if all relevant parties will develop an agreed upon approach for the expected grey violations by Iran. If Israel is truly serious about the existential threat posed by an Iranian nuclear weapon, it should subject all other policies, including on the Palestinian front, to this end. However, tension with the EU and the US, as well as the lack of a feasible deal on the Palestinian front, will probably mean that both logical steps suggested above will not be pursued. The continued threat of an Iranian weapon in the future will keep providing the Prime Minister the possibility of using the Iranian

3 PM Netanyahu Addresses Jewish Communities on Iran Deal, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 4, 2015. See: http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2015/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-addresses-Jewish-Federations-on-Iran-4-Aug-2015.aspx

issue as a tool to secure political gains. Although he had failed in preventing the deal, even at a cost of tension with the US, he is unlikely to suffer on the internal front. The general consensus is that he did whatever he could in the face of enormous pressure.

A third Israeli concern moves from existential fears to strategic ones.[4] This includes the power Iran will gain following the deal, notably, the weakening of its isolation and the financial gains it will reap with some sanctions coming to an end. Indeed, some in Israel attribute the enhanced recent Iranian and even Russian actions in Syria to the legitimacy conferred on Iran by the deal. These strategic concerns should strengthen Israel's resolve to coordinate with the Sunni states that share the same concerns, notably the Saudis and the Gulf states. Here, again, Israel's hard line on the Palestinian issue will limit its ability to transform an ad-hoc confluence of interests to be transformed into a deeper, perhaps even public, alliance.

The final Israeli concern flows not from the content of the deal but rather from what it represents in Israeli eyes: an American naiveté. Perhaps even more frightening, it signifies an American desire to detach from the region, coupled with a diminished commitment to the alliance with Israel. This is likely to lead the Prime Minister to support, yet again, a Republican candidate in the 2016 US elections, thus further eroding the Israeli-American alliance if a Democrat will enter the White House in January 2017. It should also lead Israel to open lines of communication with the new actors that are replacing the vacuum created by the US, such as Russia and Turkey.

4 For a detailed analysis of Israel's concerns regarding the Iranian military nuclear project see: Eiran, Ehud and Malin, Martin B. "The Sum of all Fears: Israel's Perception of a Nuclear-Armed Iran." Washington Quarterly 3, no. 36 (Summer 2013): 77-89.

# Consequences of the JCPOA


## *Chuck Freilich*

Senior Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University


No country has more at stake in the JCPOA than Israel, for whom a nuclear Iran would potentially pose an existential threat. That statement alone should give pause to all observers of the issue; no other country has to think in existential terms. Netanyahu's determination to fight the deal to the end in Congress was deeply misguided, but his fundamental concern was not.

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, there has been considerable support for the deal in Israel. A former chief of staff, Mossad director, Shin Bet director, a number of former generals and defense officials, and myself, have all come out with assessments to the effect that while a better deal might have been negotiated, the final outcome is not bad for Israel, especially considering the alternatives.

The common assumption in Israel is that Iran has not given up its long-term nuclear aspirations, but that the price of crossing the final threshold, which it is already near, has become too great, and it is biding its time. Iran can thus be expected to take advantage of every ambiguity and loophole in the agreement to continue advancing the nuclear program and to position itself to rapidly cross the threshold, at a future timing of its choosing. If, however, Iran does generally observe the agreement in the meantime, Israel will have gained a period of 10-15 years.

A postponement of this length, though far less than what Israel sought, is a major achievement, one which provides it with a breathing space to achieve other national security objectives, such as a resolution of the Palestinian issue, the foremost challenge Israel faces, and to address pressing domestic needs. It is also an opportunity for other changes in Israel's national security strategy, such as a significant downsizing and restructuring of the IDF.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that Israel's current leadership will embrace these opportunities, and, in any event, given the West-Bank Gaza divide and the positions of Palestinian President Abbas, the only realistic prospects for progress for the foreseeable future are based on unilateral Israeli moves. Whereas the settlements and territorial issues can be resolved, the completely unrealistic Palestinian demand for an unlimited "right of return" and refusal to recognize Israel as the Jewish state, as well as both sides' positions on Jerusalem, mean that the gaps between them are unbridgeable for the foreseeable future.

The nuclear agreement certainly gives further impetus to the Sunni-Shia divide, the driving force in the region, now being played out in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Much press speculation has focused on the unusual confluence of interests today between Israel and the Sunni states, especially Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, as well as with Egypt and Jordan too. All are deeply threatened by Iran and concerned over the nuclear agreement's potential flaws. All view the regional instability in recent years as a threat to their security and are particularly concerned by the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) and other non-state actors, and of terrorism, as the primary military threats. This has already translated into heightened Israeli security cooperation

with Egypt and Jordan, but it is unlikely to lead to significant concrete action with the others. The Gulf states will not do so pending progress with the Palestinians, and Saudi enmity towards Israel is too fundamental.

Israel will now focus on ensuring Iranian compliance with the deal and gaining US and P5+1 agreement on how to deal with potential violations. It will hopefully also seek to best position itself to prevent Iran from renewing its military nuclear program, when the agreement expires, under the guise of a newly legitimated civil one. On a military level, Israel has already taken most of the steps it can in preparation for a nuclear Iran. It has built a long-range strike capability, which will be greatly augmented over the next few years with the arrival in Israel of the F-35 and new submarines, and a missile defense system, and has taken other important defensive measures. Moreover, its policy of nuclear ambiguity remains an effective deterrent.

The situation in Syria threatens not just to spill over into norther Israel but to lead to a fundamental strategic change for the worse. Syria is today the place in which all of the region's ills and all of the possible actors converge. The nuclear deal did not address the other dangers Iran presents to regional security—a lengthy postponement of the nuclear issue was a sufficient achievement in its own right—and Israel will now have to face them.

Virtually all outcomes in Syria are bad for Israel. An Assad (or just Alawite) controlled rump state will be Iranian-dominated and become a forward basis for greatly expanded Iranian/Hezbollah operations against Israel, now with a far greater Russian presence too. Conversely, an IS victory will place a vicious Sunni

actor on Israel's border, one which does not yet have much to lose and which may thus be undeterrable in the meantime. It will undoubtedly develop such assets and values as it becomes a governing entity, but this will take time. Deterring IS, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran itself, will be the primary focus of Israeli national security policy in the years to come.

# The Iran Deal and the Need for an Alternative Israeli Foreign Policy Paradigm


## *Nimrod Goren*

Founder and Head of Mitvim, The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, and Teaching Fellow in Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel


The reaction of the Israeli opposition to the Iran nuclear negotiations, and later on to the JCPOA agreement which these negotiations resulted in, exemplified the extent to which the Israeli political sphere lacks a genuine alternative to the government's policies on foreign affairs and national security.

Prior to the most recent Israeli elections, held in March 2015, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu played the Iran card as an effective campaign tool, very much as he did in previous election cycles. Only this time there was a stronger sense of urgency, given the approaching deadline for the nuclear deal.

While Netanyahu did not hesitate to jeopardize Israel-US relations by speaking in Congress against the deal that President Obama was pursuing, the Israeli opposition refrained from making the case for an alternative position regarding the Iran deal.

Key Israeli opposition leaders made it clear that they do not differ from Netanyahu on issues of substance regarding Iran, but only on matters of style—i.e., how to confront the negotiations

with Iran without damaging Israel's special relations with the US.

The same line of argumentation was voiced after the signing of the Iran deal, when the opposition generally shared Netanyahu's approach that the deal is not a good one for Israel, and diverged from the Prime Minister mostly on the issue of how to best handle the new situation (again, especially in regards to maintaining good ties with the US).

The Israeli public did not hear its center-left politicians advocating for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian threat, highlighting any security benefits that the Iran deal brings for Israel, or acknowledging the efforts made by two of Israel's strongest allies—the US and Germany—to counter what is considered to be Israel's biggest security threat.

This conduct by Israel's opposition is part of an attempt to position itself as much as possible within the political center, and not the left. This political strategy is also evident on other key issues—such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict/peace process and Israel's international standing—in which the opposition does not really challenge the government, and sometimes even backs it.

However, this strategy of appealing to the center did not bring gains to the Israeli opposition in the March 2015 elections, and also does not seem to be doing so since that time. This leads to a growing conviction within the Israeli progressive community, and among some MKs from center-left parties, that a different path should be taken. For the Israeli opposition to be capable of aspiring for leadership, it needs to raise an alternative voice on

foreign policy and national security issues.

As Israel finds itself in a rift with its Western allies on the Iranian issue, is subject to growing international pressure on the Palestinian issue, and suffers from an increasingly weakened foreign service, the Israeli opposition should present to the Israeli public a clear and coherent alternative foreign policy paradigm.

This alternative vision should stem from a paradigm that is pro-peace and actually promotes the two-state solution; that seeks to increase Israel's regional belonging in the Middle East, Europe, and the Mediterranean; that is more open—and less confrontational—toward the international community; that increases Israel's involvement in promoting global agendas; and that sees value in a more modern and inclusive Israeli foreign policy, that legitimizes and encourages the involvement of Israel's different social sectors—including the Palestinian citizens of Israel—in issues related to foreign policy.

A first attempt to put such a paradigm in practice will present itself in case the international community follows up with its intention to draw lessons from the negotiations with Iran to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The success of the negotiations conducted by the P5+1 with Iran has proved that an international coalition has the capacity to reach diplomatic achievements in the Middle East.

Inspired by this understanding, the international community has been exploring the option of creating a new multi-national mechanism to support the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, or of revitalizing the existing-yet-dormant Middle East Quartet. In either case, key Arab countries are expected to be more involved

than before in efforts to resolve the conflict. While these ideas are faced with skepticism and reluctance by the current Israeli government, they should be looked at favorably by the Israeli opposition and be given a chance to succeed.

The Iran deal has shown the power of diplomacy. At times when Israelis and Palestinian are resorting to increased violence, this is a powerful lesson that should be remembered and acted upon by all sides involved.

# The Nuclear Agreement with Iran: Significance for Israel


## *Ephraim Kam*

Senior Research Associate at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)


The nuclear agreement reached with Iran is having a significant effect on Israel. The struggle to prevent the agreement from being signed has failed, and it is becoming an accomplished fact. Israel will lose a major part of its ability to affect the Iranian nuclear program: the sanctions against Iran will be removed, and the possibility of a military strike against the Iranian nuclear sites will be eliminated, at least as long as Iran fulfills the agreement. On the other hand, the United States and Israel are embarking on a dialogue aimed at strengthening Israel's security against Iran and its allies, and it is reasonable to assume that this dialogue will reduce the tension created in their relations during the period in which the agreement was negotiated.

Despite the criticism in Israel and the United States of the obvious faults in the agreement, it also has advantages because it imposes significant restrictions on the Iranian nuclear program, mainly for 10-15 years. As a result of these restrictions, the time needed for Iran to break out to a nuclear weapon will increase from a few weeks to a year. Despite the restrictions, however, most of the Iranian nuclear capability infrastructure will not be affected. The restrictions are reversible, and leave Iran the option to breakout to the bomb whenever it decides to do so. Iran can make such a breakout in the next few years, mainly by building secret nuclear facilities. The more likely possibility, however, is

that Iran will wait until the restrictions are removed in 10-15 years, when it will be allowed to build a huge and unrestricted uranium enrichment program, and the time it needs to breakout to a nuclear weapon will become much shorter—zero, as President Obama suggested.

The common assumption in Israel, and to a great extent also in the United States, is that despite the agreement, Iran will not forgo its intention of obtaining a nuclear weapon but will be content for the meantime with the status of a recognized nuclear threshold state. Thus, it will postpone the fulfillment of its plan until it discerns an appropriate time for its breakthrough. This assumption means that at least as long as the Iranian regime remains in power, and given its declared wish to destroy Israel, Israel will have to take into account the possibility that the Iranian regime will acquire a nuclear weapon, which Israel regards as an existential threat.

Beyond the risks involved in the scenario of a nuclear Iran, Israel will have to deal with additional risks related to Iran, some of which are a result of the nuclear agreement. First of all, the agreement does not include the Iranian missile program, which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East. This means that Israel will continue to be subject to an increasing threat of missiles and rockets from both Iran and its allies, above all Hezbollah. Furthermore, the removal of the sanctions against Iran will enable it to devote resources to a substantial buildup of its conventional capabilities, which have been neglected over the past two decades, on the basis of its improving relations with Russia. Secondly, the agreement reinforces Iran's regional status. Many countries now regard Iran as an important factor in shaping the situation in Syria and Iraq, and in the struggle

against the Islamic State, and its weight is becoming even greater as a result of its closer relations with Russia and the weakness shown in the region by the United States. Thirdly, Iran is trying to exploit the presence of members of the Revolutionary Guard in Syria and Lebanon to extend its front line against Israel from Southern Lebanon to the Golan Heights. Fourthly, Iranian leaders declare explicitly that they intend to penetrate into the Palestinian theater, and send weapons to the West Bank as well.

Currently, Iran's regional policy must also cope with difficult challenges: the risk that Assad's regime will fall, the rise of the Islamic State, the opposition by some groups in Iraq to Iranian influence there, and Saudi Arabian activity against Iranian influence in Bahrain and Yemen. Iran, however, also poses clear challenges to countries in the region, including Israel: its growing influence within a group of countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and Yemen); anxiety among the Gulf states, headed by Saudi Arabia, about Iran, combined with their disappointment at the weakness of American policy; and the possibility that the obtaining of nuclear weapons by Iran will set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that will aggravate the instability in the region.

Against these risks, given Israel's basic perspective of the nuclear agreement as a bad agreement that does not bar Iran's path to obtaining a nuclear weapon, the dialogue and cooperation with the American administration must be the main channel for Israel in dealing with the Iranian nuclear and regional threat. Such cooperation can include:

- Joint consideration by the United States and Israel of how to prevent Iran from violating the nuclear agreement,

including reaching a mutual understanding on the question of what will be considered a violation of the agreement, and what measures will be taken if the agreement is violated. From Israel's perspective, such consideration should also address the preservation of the military option against Iran in the event that the agreement is violated.

- Upgrading Israel's military capabilities, both against the Iranian threat, and against Hezbollah, including Hezbollah's huge stockpile of rockets.

- Strengthening Israeli deterrence against Iran, particularly against the possibility of a nuclear Iran. Over the years, Israel has developed good deterrent capability against conventional military capabilities, and to a great extent, also against terrorist threats. Deterrence against an enemy's nuclear capability will require additional means. Among these, taking into account the possibility of the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, Israel is liable to ask the American administration to state explicitly and clearly that an Iranian nuclear attack against Israel or other United States allies will be regarded by the administration as a nuclear attack against the United States.

To sum up, where Israel is concerned, if Iran complies with the agreement, the immediacy of the Iranian nuclear threat will be delayed for several years, but the threat will not disappear. It will remain a key factor in the perception of the threat against Israel, at least as long as the current regime remains in Iran, and will require Israel to continue taking measures for dealing with it.

# The Impact of the Nuclear Agreement on Israel's Security


## *Yossi Kuperwasser*

Senior project manager at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs


The security of the West is dangerously compromised by the nuclear deal with Iran, and Israel's security is going to be even further negatively affected in various spheres:

1. **The nuclear threat**—as the US moved from a policy of prevention to a policy of postponement and containment, the road has been paved for Iran to become a threshold nuclear state with the capability to produce in 10-15 years a nuclear weapons arsenal within such a short time that will render any military option practically irrelevant. In the short run, Iran will be able to break out within 6 months to a sufficient quantity of fissile material for a first bomb or to sneak out to a bomb without being properly monitored. The deal may also initiate a nuclear weapons arms race in the region, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey rushing to acquire the same capabilities as Iran. This means that in the future nuclear weapons may fall to the hands of irresponsible regimes.

2. **Regional landscape and terror threat**—the deal does not require Iran to change its desire to annihilate Israel, or to give up its support for terror and insurgency against pragmatic states in its quest for regional hegemony, as a step

on its way to become a world power. It actually provides Iran more resources to carry out these policies. With the strengthening (that is also related to the weakness of the West) of the radical Islamic camp in the region which is committed to Israel's destruction, the deal gives a major boost to the Shia component of this camp. The lesson everybody learned from the deal (except the US administration) is that the administration, out of its weakness and the difficulty to determine what can and should be done, accepts that Iran should play a major role in the region, and expects Tehran to take care of the ultra-radical Sunni groups like ISIS, that at this point are considered in the West as the greatest menace to global security and to the world order. Iran, together with Russia and Hezbollah, took immediate advantage of this attitude, and made it clear through their military intervention in Syria that they are the new regional Sheriff. This has led to growing tendency of Middle Eastern pragmatists to get closer to Russia and Iran, and it may lead in the short term to growing threats to Israel from the north. Future threats may later arise from other directions as well, as the pragmatic states may become targets of Iranian backed insurgency and as the terror groups that are close to Iran get advanced weapons from their patron. In light of the perception that Iran overcame the "Big Satan" and gained a clear path to acquiring more power and eventually a nuclear arsenal, it is quite possible that Iran's proxies will be emboldened and ready to take greater risks vis-à-vis Israel.

3. **The value of the American support to Israel and its nature**—the deal exposed how weak the West is. It lacks willingness to protect its interests and values, and this is why it was ready to have a deal almost at any price, knowing

it will put its allies, and especially Israel, in the crosshairs of what may become an existential threat. President Obama himself admitted publicly that this is the case, when he said that criticism of the deal by Israel and those who have affinity to her is justified. He knew that all along in the negotiations, and that is why he made such a huge effort until 2012 to prevent an Israeli attack and later did not share the full information regarding the negotiations with Israel. Since the US is Israel's closest ally, this weakness is immediately translated into weakening Israel's strategic posture. The deal also exposed the contrast between the optimist and apologetic worldview of American liberals and many Europeans and the realist worldview of Israel.

4. **The Palestinian threat**—to thwart marginalization of their issue, Palestinians may turn to Iran, and they have already become more violent and embarked on a new terror campaign.

To cope with these emerging challenges, Israel will have to continue to show strength and vigilance to preserve its deterrence. It will have to rely upon itself in this context more than ever before and invest more in its intelligence and in developing capabilities to defend itself against threats from near and far, as the West has limited interest in knowing the truth about Iran, let alone in confronting it. Israel will have to make an effort to mend fences with Washington and translate its commitment to Israel's security into larger and more meaningful security assistance and to sanctioning Iran's dangerous policies (the idea that the deal will bring change in Iranian policy is wishful thinking). At the same time Israel will have to turn the common security threats it shares with the pragmatists, such as Egypt, Jordan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, into closer security cooperation in facing Islamic

radicalism of all kinds, including from the Iran-led camp, and to adopt a policy towards Palestinian terror that will make it less beneficial and more costly for its perpetrators and supporters in order to convince them to stop and move towards peace negotiations.

# How the Iran Deal Affects Israeli Politics and Security Thinking


## *Emily B. Landau*

Senior research fellow at Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), head of the Arms Control and Regional Security Program INSS


When thinking about the impact of the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA) on Israeli politics and security, the implications in the short to medium term are likely to be most pronounced in the context of US-Israel relations. The focus in this timeframe will be primarily on questions of how the Iran deal is implemented, and this will lead Israeli decision makers to direct their attention to dialogue with the United States. Because the deal suffers from some major holes and vulnerabilities—the result of ambiguity incorporated into the text regarding key verification provisions—questions will arise as to how the P5+1 nations intend to ensure Iranian compliance.

One important issue is intelligence gathering to uncover possible Iranian violations, and US-Israel cooperation in this realm will be crucial. Moreover, there is a chain of decisions that will have to be taken, from the time that a violation is identified and until action is taken in response, and these steps must be clarified. Nothing can be taken for granted at this point. Critical questions will be raised about whether the political will exists to confront Iran with determination, especially if the perception is that a harsh stance will risk Iran viewing this as a pretext for exiting the deal. Israel and the US should thus forge bilateral

understandings that will clarify and codify some of these issues. Developments over recent months in relation to inspection procedures at Parchin, as well as Iran's testing of a new precision-guided ballistic missile that can carry a nuclear payload, have exposed that Iran is 'testing the waters.' Iran does so in the hope of establishing rules of the game whereby IAEA inspectors will be barred entry into any suspicious military facility and that ballistic missiles will be accepted as a "non-nuclear" matter. P5+1 reactions so far have not been encouraging, and the US administration has been more prone to explain why these Iranian interpretations are not a problem than to confront Iran's actions with determination.

Bilateral discussions between Israel and the United States will also likely include an even more pronounced element of defense cooperation, in light of Iran's ability—financially and otherwise—to assume a strengthened regional presence and role in the post-deal years, continuing to carry out dangerous arms transfers to its proxies throughout the region. Developments in Syria are of major concern, with a much enhanced presence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the ground, working in coordination and cooperation with Russia's air strikes with the aim of ensuring Assad's continued rule.

An additional theater where Israel is likely to be focusing more diplomatic effort is the regional one. While the prospect of new regional threats due to an empowered Iran are clearly apparent, there are corresponding opportunities to work on regional relationships with like-minded states in the region. Israel has a common interest with states like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, and perhaps others, to enhance their collective ability to coordinate policy and action with the aim of minimizing the dangerous implications of the deal in the regional setting.

In the longer time frame, assuming that Israel continues to face the current regime in Iran, Israel's thinking will turn increasingly to the strategic level, including an assessment of its own nuclear policy and strategic deterrence posture. After 10-15 years, when the meaningful restrictions on Iran are lifted, Iran will be able to cross the nuclear threshold at a time of its choosing, after having spent the interim years continuing to build up its vast nuclear infrastructure, including development of more and more advanced generations of centrifuges and ballistic missile capabilities. The extremely dangerous implications of this scenario will move to the forefront.

A final cautionary note: when addressing Israel's concerns and likely reactions, it is important to underscore that Iran's nuclear ambitions are not an Israeli issue per se. Deep skepticism regarding successful implementation of the deal is widespread, and the adverse consequences of Iran actually acquiring a military nuclear capability would point in many directions, both geographically and conceptually. The implications would be dire for the Middle East (short term), and for Europe and the US in the longer term, as well as for nonproliferation efforts, the NPT, and global security more broadly. Therefore, zeroing in on Israel's interests and concerns in the wake of the deal, while no doubt an important component of the overall picture, must be viewed in context. Otherwise—and this is often evident in the public debate—it is easy to slip into thinking that this is somehow only "Israel's problem." Viewing the issue this way can take a particularly negative turn when it is used to support the conclusion that whatever the US does to confront Iran's ambitions and activities—especially if that were at some point to involve military force—is "because of Israel." But that is not the case, and it bears reminding.

# Iran's Inter-Connected Nuclear and Regional Policies: A Challenge and Opportunity for Israel


## *Daniel Radovsky*

Research Fellow, International Security Program / Project on Managing the Atom at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs


Traditionally, Israel has mostly treated each of its "Iranian frontiers" and arenas separately. The Iranian nuclear program, Hezbollah on the north borders, and the worldwide counter-terrorism arena were regarded as different challenges that were treated and addressed independently in a boxed approach. However, the JCPOA agreement, in addition to its directly nuclear-related implications, may increase the inter-connectivity between these frontiers and the thinking on how to analyze and approach them. While it appears as if it creates new constraints for Israel, the situation provides rather new degrees of freedom. A new holistic approach that targets (or exploits) these inter-connections can support pursuing Israel's updated national security interests, withstanding the new challenges and upcoming regional upheavals.

The JCPOA, though limited only to the nuclear realm, adds complexity to Iran's interdependent foreign policy considerations, and might exacerbate problematic aspects of its regional behavior. This in turn would have negative ramifications for their JCPOA compliance. These expanding inter-connections

might develop some non-trivial consequences that Israel has not considered so far. The following are some examples of how Iran's regional policies and its future compliance with the nuclear agreement could be inextricably linked: Iran's strategic balance against Israel, primarily based on support for Hezbollah and mostly sustained from Syrian soil, has significantly eroded since the civil war outbreak. Hezbollah's deep involvement in the war makes it less capable to play its original role as an Iranian proxy against Israel. Furthermore, Iran's loss of its strongholds and the carte blanche it used to enjoy in Syria limits its ability to support Hezbollah. The new Russian presence, not to mention the prospect of some type of international settlement, have a further curbing potential.

In comparison to Russia and the United States, Iran has more to lose and less to gain in future scenarios of international settlement in Syria. The US is interested in an international resolution especially after Russia's involvement abated the rebels' chances of overthrowing the Assad regime. Russia, now a growing regional player, will be certain to preserve its interests under any arrangement, and also as the US pursues a diplomatic resolution. Iran, however, will likely be losing influence and freedom of action. Hence it is possible that Iran would be the player most interested in exhausting "other ways" of prolonging its position in Syria prior to turning seriously to diplomacy. The expected additional economic oxygen for the military support to Assad's regime after the sanctions relief can encourage Iran to sabotage the diplomatic settlement efforts. Furthermore, linking between its Syrian activity, anti-ISIS cooperation, and the JCPOA implementation might provide Iran with a rare multi-directional leverage over the US, as another interested party in these arenas.

If ultimately Iran assesses that its balance against Israel has been incorrigibly damaged, alternative strategies or capabilities would be pursued. While optimists expect the JCPOA to restrain Iran's propensity to engage in more active global terror operations, pessimists may argue that in absence of conventional deterrence alternatives, reviving its nuclear weapons program might be Iran's preferred contingency plan. At present, this scenario still seems far-fetched. However, given the frenetic pace of events on the regional playground, imaginary scenarios can quickly transition to feasible ones, the Russian surprise move in Syria being a case in point.

Iranian incentives to breach the nuclear agreement may also rise out of US-Russia tensions. An escalation between the world powers can be perceived by Iran as an opportunity, inducing a strategic reassessment. Iran could decide the time is ripe for violating the agreement, betting on Russian backing in the face of American pressure. Taking advantage of the wedge in the P5 + 1 it could also initiate a crisis during JCPOA implementation, demand renegotiating elements of the agreement or even "justify" unilateral disengagement.

In addition to carrots and sticks, Iran be can be engaged in the JCPOA by weakening the incentives and political circumstances that would encourage violations. Preventing the Iranian decision-making scenarios presented above would serve this purpose. Israel has additional obvious reasons to thwart such undesirable developments due to their implications for its vital interests.

To that end, Israel has to holistically redefine its regional policy and can no longer assume a non-interference position. This

requires a comprehensive trade-off calculus, potentially resulting in some unprecedented and surprising conclusions of the "keep your enemy closer" type. Practically, two key objectives can be suggested: prolonging the Iranian intervention in Syria and driving a wedge between Russia and Iran.

Originally unwelcome, the Iranian- Hezbollah presence is currently advantageous for Israel, provided they continue to be tied down in the Syrian quagmire without attaining substantial long-term strategic achievements. Keeping Iranian hopes to preserve their strategic balance against Israel, while increasing the chance of ultimate conflict of interests with Russia, may support hindering both the motivation and political backing to pursue the nuclear alternative. This implies that a prolonged if dynamic status quo in Syria is preferable, despite the risks of instability, to most of the negotiated arrangement scenarios.

Israel lacks the power to sustain these delicate balances on its own but has a beneficial wide overlap of interests over Syria and the Iranian nuclear agreement with both Russia and the US. Its unprecedented position, facilitating strategic coordination, may be a unique advantage for both of them. Thus, pursuing some of the ad-hoc bilateral tactical opportunities may add up to an effective trilateral strategic campaign. This intermediary role can also offer some stress-relief capacity, reducing (at least locally) the unfolding US-Russian escalation potential. Suggesting Russia an alternative path for strategic achievements, it might even somewhat wane Russian-Iranian alliance. Complementary, the (undeclared) Western-Iranian cooperation against ISIS can wane Iran from the Russian position as well. To some extent, it can also strengthen the JCPOA, preventing Iran from engaging in violations.

The JCPOA has transformed Israel's strategic environment not only in the nuclear-related aspect but also by catalyzing the feedback loop between Iran's nuclear and regional policies. It's time for Israel, challenged by this inter-connection, to revise its strategic thinking and capitalize on bridging the regional interests of various international players. Israel can effectively form alliances targeting these inter-dependencies, sustaining desirable quasi-static equilibriums, and preserving its best interests in front of the quickly mutating regional challenges.

# Sustaining the Cold War between Israel and Hezbollah after the Iranian Deal


## *Gilad Raik*

Recanti-Kaplan Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University


The nuclear agreement between the P5+1 and Iran is a game-changer for Israeli strategy, which will have enormous effects on the Israeli northern front strategy vis-a-vis Hezbollah and the war in Syria.

The immediate outcome will be to reduce the risk of another war between Israel and Hezbollah as the military option against Iran's nuclear facilities has become highly unlikely in the near future. This is a great relief for both sides as their mutual deterrence forced them to allocate considerable resources to maintain their readiness for war even while being preoccupied in other arenas (Israel in Gaza and Hezbollah in Syria).

Yet, it is important to recognize the major changes that have taken place in the region: the wars in Syria and Yemen, the involvement of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Forces (IRGC-QF) in those wars, and the change in the policy of Russia which has shifted from covert support to overt military involvement in the fighting in Syria.

All of these developments and factors might pose new challenges to Israel's security as the Iranians may try to challenge Israel by initiating terror activity by proxies along its borders with the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and the Syrian Golan Heights. However, recent years have shown gaps emerging in the typically shared common interests of Hezbollah and the IRGC-QF.

While the latter sought to constantly disturb and challenge Israel, Hezbollah's priority has been to secure its status as the leading political and military entity in Lebanon and to safeguard the so-called stability in Lebanon -- either from the Jihadists in Syria or from the risk of an Israeli invasion.

Thus, in the unique "cold war" that has come to characterize the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, both sides have major common interests that can be basically summarised as maintaining the status quo of foiling each other's activities while avoiding a war.

Under these circumstances, it might be the time for both parties to create a better mechanism of communication to help avoid miscalculations on a regular basis. Such mechanisms should also stand ready for a time when it would be needed to bring a quick end to an intensive war or some kind of cycle of military violence that might erupt in the future.

In the current version of the cold war between Israel and Hezbollah, the mutual deterrence that defines their relations is in reality not only reliant on the memory of the Second Lebanon War of 2006 and both parties' subsequent military expansion but also on limited overt channels of communications. These included mainly Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah's

speeches and Israeli security chiefs' interviews in the media as well as even more limited rare covert channels, some of which are direct and some are through third-party channels—all of them outcomes of the long lasting mind-game between the intelligence communities and the leaderships of both sides.

It is quite ironic that much has been written about asymmetric wars but so little attention has been devoted to diplomatic tools and mechanisms to end such cycles of violence. The tools both sides have today are not sustainable and effective enough to prevent or end a military conflict. The international players today will not be faster in their reaction than they were in the Second Lebanon War, which lasted 33 days, or the last war in the Gaza Strip ("Protective Edge"), which lasted 51 days.

It is in Israel's best interest to create mechanisms that will ensure a quick end to an intensive war should it break out. Even if the "third Lebanon war" were to break out, it would still be in Hezbollah's best interest to safeguard Lebanon's sovereignty and to maintain its military capacity in the day after the war. This is why both sides need to seek direct channels, mostly clandestine, and also to establish in advance an effective clandestine international mechanism that would be agreed and trusted by both sides before any military conflict takes place. Such a mechanism would serve both sides' common interests and bridge the big gaps between both parties' propaganda and psychological warfare that is playing a major role in this conflict, as was the case in other cold wars. Who would be these players? Russia with its involvements in Syria and leverage on the Iranians? The US with its close ties to the Lebanese Army? The Quartet or Germany despite the EU resolution designating the military wing of Hezbollah as a terror organization? In order for this strategy to

succeed, the different players must be ripe and agree, even if not publicly, to implement it.

# The Impact of the Iran Nuclear Agreement on Israeli Politics and Security


## *Gerald M. Steinberg*

Professor of Political Science, Bar Ilan University; Founder/President of NGO Monitor


The JCPOA (July 2015) was and will continue to be a source of intense conflict between the Israeli and American governments. Although often portrayed as a clash between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Vienna framework followed more than two decades of diplomatic efforts by successive Israeli leaders, beginning with Rabin in 1992, to work with Washington to stop Iran far short of a nuclear weapon. The agreement marks a major failure (claims of having forced more stringent terms otherwise), and the implications of this conflict are likely to dominate Israeli security and foreign policy agendas for the foreseeable future.

Implementation will be monitored continuously for evidence either consistent with or contrasting with the declared objective to "verifiably prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful going forward." This process is likely to produce sharp conflicts with the US and Europe, particularly with respect to different interpretations of ambiguous data. Shortly after the announcement in Vienna, top Israeli security officials repeated that "all options remain on the table," in the effort to maintain a credible threat of a unilateral Israeli pre-emptive military strike.

In addressing the UN General Assembly in October, Netanyahu again focused on Iran, and reiterated Israel's red lines.

Evidence of Iranian progress towards a weapons capability, or the suggestion that it is taking place, will also increase emphasis on deterrence. This could take the form of an Israeli test detonation, meaning the end of "deliberate ambiguity" that has guided nuclear policy for almost five decades. In parallel, Israel can also be expected to continue to expand its second-strike capability, primarily in the form of a submarine fleet.

Beyond the nuclear dimension, the contrasting views of Iran's regional role are also likely to become sharper. While the Obama administration perceives Iran as a potential source of stability in the highly chaotic Middle East, most Israeli policy-makers view Tehran as the primary engine of that chaos. In Lebanon, Hezbollah is a central proxy, and, following the indecisive 2006 war, threatens Israel with tens of thousands of rockets as well as other forms of mass terror.

In Syria, Iran and Hezbollah are deeply involved in the war to save the Assad regime, while also launching periodic attacks against Israel along the Golan Heights border. In January 2015, a senior Iranian military official and a Hezbollah member were killed in an Israeli strike near the border. They were reportedly heading efforts to create a base for attacks against Israel. The counterattack killed two Israeli soldiers, but there was no escalation. These and other incidents highlight the concerns in Jerusalem, both regarding triumphalist and revisionist Iranian threats, and the passive reactions in Washington.

For most Israelis, including main opposition leaders, the shrill

threats from Iranian leaders to eliminate Israel, coupled with antisemitism and Holocaust denial, should put Teheran beyond the pale for Western leaders, including Obama. Their readiness to "do business" with President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif, and the cordial relationships that have developed, add to Israel's lack of confidence in the credibility of American guarantees.

More broadly, among Israelis, Netanyahu's attacks on the nuclear agreement and the U.S.-Iran relationship are widely shared - there being very little disagreement in terms of the substance. However, the Prime Minister is blamed for exacerbating the conflict with Obama and Kerry, particularly in his March 2015 speech before Congress during the Israeli election campaign, and in appearing to support Republican-led efforts to block the agreement. But this criticism is not enough to alter the Israeli political balance. And even in the event of a change in Israeli leadership, such as a coalition led by the Labor party, this would change the tone but not the content of the disagreement.

At the same time, the shared concerns regarding U.S.-Iran relations, as well as the overall absence of American leadership or strategy for the increasingly violent and anarchic region, has led to expanded strategic cooperation between Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis lead the Sunni regional bloc seeking to counter Iranian and Shia expansion, particularly in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and Israel has parallel interests. And in Egypt, the al-Sisi military government has responded intensely to attacks and threats from the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas (based in Gaza), and the Al-Qaida offshoots in the Sinai. In addition, Israel is working closely with the Kurdish leadership in economic and other dimensions. While it is too early to refer to

these largely hidden relationships as a new security architecture, the foundation is growing.

However, and notwithstanding the uneasy relationship with Washington, Israel's primary emphasis now is on resuming and strengthening strategic ties with the US, including continuing US provision of Israel's long-standing military qualitative edge that acts as an important deterrent. Other primary agenda items include mapping out contingencies in Syria, particularly given Russia's direct military involvement, and for other flashpoints.

# Coping with the JCPOA: Time for a US-Israeli Plan of Action


## *Amos Yadlin*

Director of Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS)


The JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) signed between world powers and Iran on July 14, 2015 does not independently "cut off all of Iran's pathways to develop a nuclear weapon" as President Obama declared, nor does it pave the road for a nuclear Iran, as some Israeli officials warn. The agreement holds significant dangers, sets bad nonproliferation standards, and increases the burden on Israeli security. Nevertheless, if the next 5-8 years are used wisely, the US and Israel, together, will be able to exploit the positive aspects of the nuclear agreement and cope with its threats. To do so, we must understand the strategic implications of the agreement—nuclear and non-nuclear—and prepare an appropriate response.

The JCPOA creates some short-term benefits for Israel as it rolls back key elements in the Iranian nuclear program. However, it does not close any of Iran's nuclear facilities, allowing the Ayatollah regime to maintain the capabilities needed to advance its nuclear program at a later stage, while granting them de-facto recognition. In the long term, the nuclear agreement has dangerous implications. Once the agreement expires—in 10-15 years—Iran will be allowed to expand its nuclear infrastructure without constraints: unlimited numbers of advanced centrifuges and vast amounts of 20 percent enriched uranium. According to President Obama, it will place Iran at "almost zero breakout

distance" from a bomb. The nuclear threat from Iran pushes other regional super-powers in the vicinity to build their own nuclear facilities, threatening to materialize the nightmare of a nuclear Middle East.

The agreement also creates non-nuclear risks. Encouraged by this agreement, Iran will continue to push for a bolder policy in the region, including an expansion of its efforts to harm Israel using proxies, such as Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and Hamas. Iran could leverage the financial boost expected upon the lifting of sanctions and the Russian and Chinese attempts to enhance their influence in the region to extract costs from the US. Moreover, a conventional arms race between Iran and the Gulf states that feel threatened by Tehran's armament is a likely scenario. Altogether, Israel's qualitative advantage in the region is expected to erode. As long as the Iranian leadership continues calling for the destruction of the State of Israel and acts to enhance its power in the region by supporting terror organizations, no Israeli leader could accept the threshold distance to nuclear weapons that the JCPOA will permit Iran in ten years' time, nor will he or she be able to remain passive in the face of the growing non-nuclear threats emanating from Iran.

The next 5-8 years are a vital period, which requires a response to the immediate threats expected from Iran. Similarly, it necessitates planning and preparing appropriate responses to possible future threats. On the nuclear level, the next five years should be used to conduct a broad intelligence campaign aimed to monitor Iranian nuclear behavior in accordance with its obligations in the agreement. Any Iranian violation should be addressed seriously by the means provided for in the JCPOA framework,

as well as other U.S. led measures. This campaign should also address the threat of a further nuclear cascade in the region. Israel, on its part, should maintain an independent military option as a last resort if Iran decides to acquire nuclear weapons. The next five year period should also include the establishment of an effective detection mechanism backed by a swift and decisive response mechanism. One which addresses the contingency of Iran's arrival to a very short breakout time to a bomb. The current mechanism offered by the JCPOA, and the expected time required to enforce against possible Iranian violations of the JCPOA, is currently insufficient to effectively block a sudden breakout if one were to take place in 10-15 years' time. Lastly, as the next years will determine Iran's new status in the region, it is essential to develop a dual policy which seeks to implement the nuclear agreement with Iran while assertively blocking Iran's attempts to enhance its malign regional influence.

This three-level strategy should rely on a US-Israel parallel agreement. The agreement will address three major concerns and should include a mechanism for ongoing assessment of the JCPOA consequences. On the nuclear level, it will prepare responses for immediate breakout scenarios, as well as long-term steps to counter Iran's zero breakout distance after the JCPOA expires in 10-15 years. On the non-nuclear level, Israel and America must coordinate an effort to stymie Iran's malign activities in the region, and especially in Syria where it supports the murderous regime of Assad. On the bilateral level, the agreement must include a new 10-year Memorandum of Understandings between the US and Israel that maintains Israel's qualitative military edge through long-term force structure and intelligence sharing during the sensitive period ahead. As an implementation measure, it is necessary to establish a joint

American-Israeli review forum that will annually examine the status of the threat from Iran, assess the probability of a scenario in which Iran breaks out to the bomb or is sneaking towards it. This forum should review trends and changes in the nature of the Iranian regime, and evaluate the scope of Iranian subversion and terrorist activities in the region. Now that the JCPOA is a done fact, there is no point musing about a "better deal." Moving forward, Israel and the United States must leverage its benefits in order to mitigate its weaknesses, and counter the Ayatollah regime's nefarious activities, both nuclear and non-nuclear.

**Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs**

Harvard Kennedy School

79 JFK Street

Cambridge, MA 02138

Fax: (617) 495-8963

Email: belfer_center@hks.harvard.edu

Website: http://belfercenter.org

Copyright 2015 President and Fellows of Harvard College