



# HABITHONISTIM

## ISRAEL'S DEFENSE & SECURITY FORUM

**How to Navigate the New Middle East**  
Recommendations to the Biden Administration



## Policy Paper

# How to Navigate the New Middle East

Recommendations to the  
Biden Administration

- 1. The Israeli-Sunni Axis:** a U.S.-Led Regional Coalition
- 2. Iran:** Countering the Regime's Hegemonic Aspirations
- 3. The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict:** Devising a Responsible Arrangement

**January 2021**

## Who We Are

**HaBithonistim, Israel's Defense and Security Forum**, is a movement comprised of 1,700 high ranking reserved officers, commanders, and operators from all branches of the Israeli security establishment. It aims to promote the national security of the State of Israel to ensure its existence and prosperity for generations to come. Our organization does not opine on political issues and/or support particular politicians or parties beyond the scope of advocating and educating on the Israeli national security needs and Middle East policies.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition into the Biden administration in Washington brings forth the necessity to develop a comprehensive, relevant, and updated policy regarding the Middle East and the major opportunities and challenges it introduces as we begin 2021.

To that end, “Habithonistim” – Israel’s Defense and Security Forum has put together **“How to Navigate the New Middle East”**, a set of policy recommendations vis-à-vis the changing regional reality. It is based on our vast field, professional and academic experience in the Israeli defense establishment, representing thousands of accumulated years of experience in dealing with Middle East challenges.

**We view these recommendations as drawing upon the common security interests shared by the United States and the State of Israel to ensure a secure and stable Middle East by adopting a sustainable and adaptable strategy.** It is based on our strong conviction that the strategic bond between the United States and Israel is a major pillar of security and stability, and that its reinforcement serves both parties’ interests and values.

Over the past few years, and considerably during 2020, we have witnessed the reshaping of the Middle East’s traditional axes of power into four new distinct coalitions: 1. The Israeli – Moderate Sunni Coalition, an unprecedented overt strategic cooperation recently reaffirmed by the Abraham Accords, 2. The Shi’ite Iranian Coalition that includes Iran and its militias all across the region, including in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, 3. The Radical Realistic Sunni Coalition led by Turkey, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood, and 4. The Ultra-Radical Sunni Organizations, the most prominent of which are ISIS and Al Qaeda.

The Moderate Sunni Arab World is now facing two existential security threats: the Iranian regime’s aggression, most notably its military nuclear program and military interventions around the region; and a growing menace posed by radical Sunni elements.

The historic détente between Israel and a large number of moderate Sunni countries, as well as the reconciliation between the Gulf States and Qatar, has been significantly stimulated by these two security threats, in addition to other common challenges such as the covid-19 pandemic and the strive for economic prosperity. Formed around an unprecedented convergence of interests, it underscores the imminence of the danger a nuclear Iran poses to the region and the international community.

In our view, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its prompt lifting of economic and military pressure have proven that appeasement and containment are counter-productive in mitigating the Iranian regime's aggression and malign activities. The limited and partial verification mechanism, the ambiguous wording, and the lack of reference to the ballistic missiles program have all led regional countries, already excluded from the negotiation process, to suspect world powers are taking the wrong path in meaningfully and sustainably encountering the Iranian threat. We underline the centrality of an efficient maximum pressure strategy in order to signal the Iranian regime that all options are on the table, including risking its domestic legitimacy, thereby obtaining *peace through strength*.

The Abraham Accords have also highlighted the irrelevance of past paradigms with respect to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, preconditioning any Arab-Israeli normalization by forcing Israel into far-reaching and unsustainable security and land concessions. By circumventing this precondition and deprioritizing the Palestinian issue, moderate Sunni countries, previously instrumentalizing the Palestinian cause to put military, economic and diplomatic pressure on Israel, are now striving to leverage relations with Israel in order to strengthen their national sovereignty and security.

This proves the validity of our paradigm as per the desirable path to proceed with the Palestinian-Israeli issue:

1. The premise that the Land of Israel, including Judea and Samaria ("the West Bank") and the Holy Sites, is the historic and eternal homeland of the Jewish people, a place that is inseparable from Jewish identity as a religion and as a nationality.
2. The recognition of the necessity to strive for a sensible arrangement vis-à-vis the Palestinians, which is a continuation of the path already concluded, set, and executed in the framework of the Oslo Accords and still valid today, signed by the Israeli Rabin Government and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. That agreement gave the Palestinians full civil control over their population centers, setting forth a vision of a demilitarized Palestinian entity alongside the Jewish and Democratic State of Israel, with Jerusalem being its undivided capital.
3. The assertion, adopted by both Rabin's government and the present-day Israeli government, that Israel has the right to defend itself by itself, along a defensible eastern border, retain control of the Jordan Valley in the broadest sense, and keep full security and military control over Judea and Samaria, based among other things on the massive civil presence of Jewish Israeli communities in the territory.

**In this new Middle East, the U.S. has an important role** in further promoting and consolidating the Israeli – Moderate Sunni Coalition while taking firm actions vis-à-vis Iran and the other radical forces who seek to destabilize the region and build a global network of terrorism. Now energy-independent, the U.S. has a greater margin for maneuver to lead a like-minded, interest-based coalition of regional allies to obtain sustainable peace and prosperity in the region.

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. The Israeli-Sunni Axis: a U.S.-Led Regional Coalition

1. We recommend to further promote and consolidate the Israeli – Sunni Coalition and to focus on reaching more agreements, such as the Abraham Accords with the UAE and Bahrain, as well as the normalization with Sudan and peace treaty with Morocco. These “ice breakers” will lead Israel toward full normalization with the Moderate Sunni World, significantly contributing to its national security and consolidating peace and prosperity in the region.
2. The main interests that drive pragmatic regional leaders are stability, security, and a more prosperous economy. The normalization with Israel, alongside security aid and enhanced economic ties with the U.S., are increasingly regarded by these leaders as significant elements in the service of these interests.
3. The pragmatic Sunni countries as well as Israel need reassurance that the U.S. is their ally regardless of the incumbent President in the White House. To that end, we recommend setting in motion a clear policy to isolate both the radical Sunni elements and the Iranian regime on the one hand and reaffirming the strategic partnership with the Israeli-Sunni Coalition on the other.
4. Turkey and Qatar, leading the Realistic Radical Sunni current in the Middle East, are showing signs of change, such as the recent agreement between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. We recommend embracing this change in order to bring this axis closer to the Israeli-Moderate Sunni axis.

## **2. Iran: Countering the Regime's Hegemonic Aspirations**

Iran, being the central destabilizing and menacing element in the Middle East, is the most pressing issue on the agenda. In our assessment, preventing Iran from obtaining deliverable nuclear weapons while addressing other key malign activities by the Iranian regime is possible and of the essence. This requires the following policy:

1. Negotiating a new agreement with Iran should take place while the pressure is on. Full return of Iran and the U.S. to their commitments under the JCPOA is not desirable if it means lifting of sanctions before reaching a new agreement.
2. The time frame of the agreement: Any new deal should set a much longer and more binding timeframe than the one under the provisions of the JCPOA. It is best to avoid any "sunset" clauses concerning limitations on Iran's nuclear capabilities.
3. The verification mechanism: The verifications as set in the JCPOA only refer to specific sites declared by Iran. Considering the Iranian regime's past record in repeatedly violating written commitments, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Statute, as well as the JCPOA, a new agreement should introduce a much more comprehensive verification and supervision mechanism, including the ability to conduct inspections anywhere and anytime, as well as monitoring and questioning scientists related to the Iranian nuclear program.
4. The ballistic missiles program: Limitations over Iranian development of surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, designed to curb their operational range, should be clearer and more stringent as to their ability to carry nuclear warheads. There should be no such ballistic missiles allowed.
5. The Snapback: The U.S. should keep its right to use the Snapback mechanism that will allow it to reimpose sanctions on Iran after a new agreement is reached.
6. The Arms Embargo: Timely, comprehensive, and long-term steps should be taken regarding the UN arms embargo that expired last October. The extension of the embargo has to be a prerequisite for any relief in the sanctions.



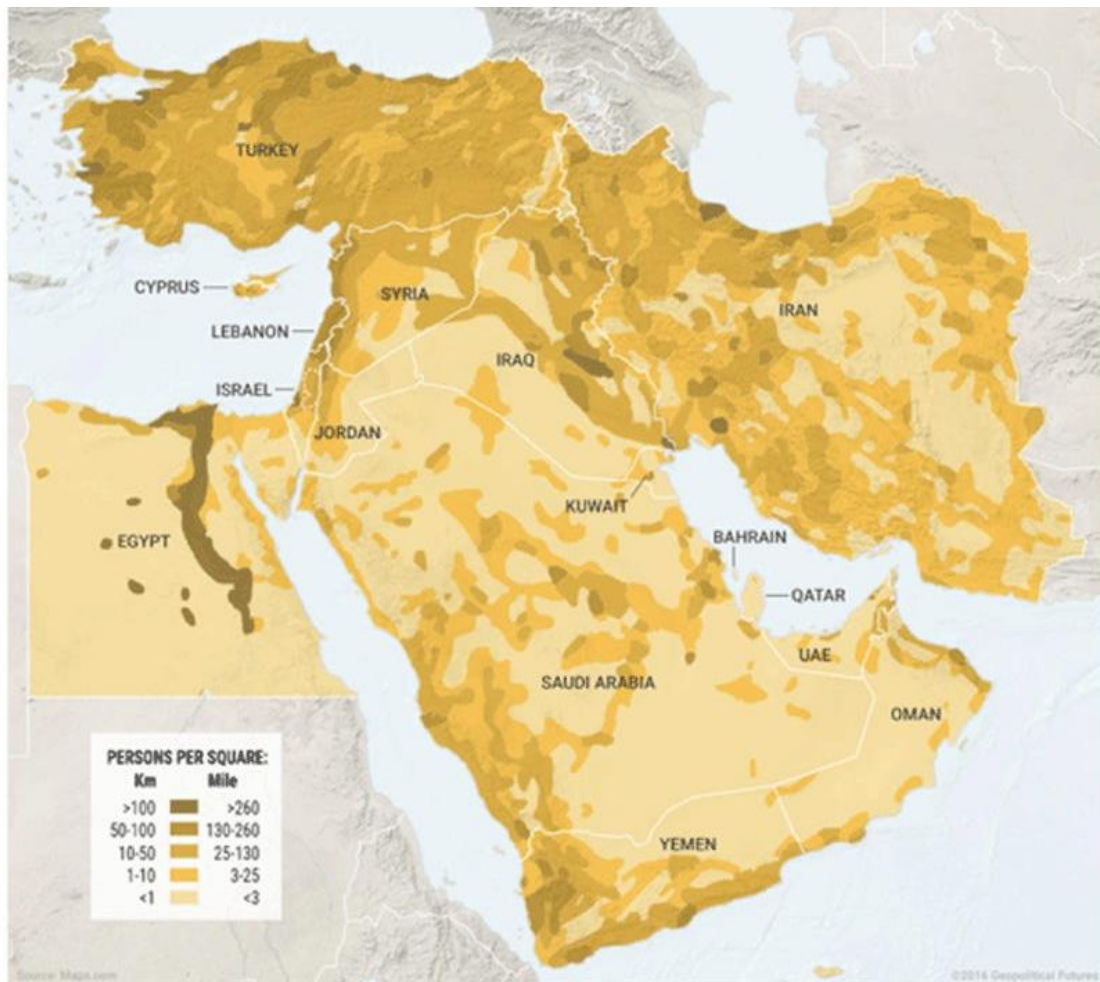
7. Preservation of specific sanctions: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Quds Force, the Iranian defense industries and its nuclear-related industries must remain under severe sanctions.

### **3. The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: Devising a Responsible Arrangement**

1. The significant shift in the moderate Sunni countries' priorities, namely, setting aside the Palestinian issue in favor of furthering their ties with Israel, reasserts our paradigm that any arrangement with the Palestinians will not be a precondition to further consolidating the Israeli-Sunni Coalition. In recent years, we see how the situation has fundamentally changed, with Arab countries prioritizing their pressing sovereign interests over putting pressure on Israel to make far-reaching concessions. That came following their realization that the lack of progress in the peace process is caused by the Palestinian Authority's rejection of multiple such concessions already proposed by Israel, refusing to nuance their intransigent narrative.
2. This Israeli-Sunni normalization has also put the brakes on the most significant leverage the Palestinians have had over Israel. This renewed Israeli-Sunni leverage presents an opportunity to demand from the Palestinians to abide by the following basic requirements for peace:
  - a. Recognize the right of Israel to exist as the nation state of the Jewish people.
  - b. Stop the terror-encouraging "Pay for Slay" policy of paying stipends to terrorists and their families, and abide by the Taylor Force Act.
  - c. Dismantle all terror organizations, starting with Hamas in Gaza.
  - d. Stop the anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic indoctrination and incitement to violence, *inter alia* in the Palestinian education system.
3. We recommend accepting the basic Israeli national security needs which include full Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the Jewish towns and full security responsibility over Judea and Samaria ("the West Bank"), thus embracing the original vision set forth in the Oslo Agreements by the Rabin Government of a demilitarized Palestinian entity, with Jerusalem being the undivided capital of Israel.

# HOW TO NAVIGATE THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

The IDSF's Vision for a  
Sustainable Regional Policy



# The Israeli-Sunni Axis | a U.S.-Led Regional Coalition

## Overview

The geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East of 2021 is significantly different than what we have witnessed just a few short years ago. The accumulation of critical security threats, most notably the Iranian regime's aggression and malign activities as well as the rise of radical terrorist groups, have managed to convulse traditional axes of power and to realign the region into four new coalitions: 1. The Israeli – Moderate Sunni Coalition, an unprecedented overt strategic cooperation recently reaffirmed by the Abraham Accords, 2. The Shi'ite Iranian Coalition that includes Iran and its militias all across the region, including in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, 3. The Radical Realistic Sunni Coalition led by Turkey, Qatar, and the Muslim Brotherhood, and 4. The Ultra-Radical Sunni Organizations, the most prominent of which are ISIS and Al Qaeda.

**This irreversible change behooves a change in policy.** Indeed, over the past several years, the U.S. foreign policy efforts have yielded impressive results, chief among them the realignment of Israel and the United States' key Arab allies to form a like-minded, interest-based U.S.-led coalition. This convergence has been very effective in consolidating a *resilience group* beneficial to all participating parties facing common threats and challenges.

For the first time, under-the-radar Israeli-Arab efforts have been surfaced by the overt U.S.-led united front against the Iranian regime's policies during the 2019 Warsaw Conference, also hosting European and other world partners. American-Arab security and economic cooperation vis-à-vis the rise of regional terrorism has been bearing fruit in an anti-ISIS military campaign, a common effort to tackle terrorism financing, and the designation of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. This change has also enabled overt Israeli-Arab economic ties, such as investments worth billions, tourism, security cooperation and a joint medical and financial effort facing critical challenges such as the covid-19 pandemic.

We recognize that the change of administration in the U.S. is accompanied by a great deal of political differences, and the inclination to introduce radically distinct policies; however, in terms of foreign policy and common geopolitical interests and values, we praise the U.S. for having always considered U.S.-Israel ties to be not only bipartisan, but

also reflective of the major pillar of stability, peace, and prosperity this relationship represents, preserved and promoted by all U.S. administrations and Israeli governments. Leveraging these separate U.S.-Israeli and U.S-Arab ties to form a consolidated American-led coalition has been one of the key successes we have seen in the region over the past generation, and we hereby call to further promote this coalition to jointly tackle common challenges in the service of our common interests.

**It is also a suitable time for reassessing the efficiency and productivity of past attempts to tackle the following major issues pertaining to the Middle East and that concern both the U.S. and Israel: the Iranian regime's aggression, the Arab-Israeli normalization, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.**

**With respect to Iran,** past attempts for rapprochement to the Iranian regime by taking the sole path of diplomacy while ruling out the path of military pressure, which culminated in the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have proven to be ineffective facing the regime's nuclear weapons program and aggressive behavior. As discussed elaborately in the next segment, not only did Iran violate the agreement from the outset and certainly prior to the United States' withdrawal in May 2018, as it had done with respect to a series of written commitments in the past; but additionally, the limited extent of the agreement's jurisdiction, such as the prompt lifting of economic, military, and political pressure, its short expiration date, and its disregard to other issues such as the regime's ballistic missiles program, have all effectively allowed Iran to continue to pursue its original strategic objective to "export the Islamic revolution" under different conditions. Intelligence reports as well as the IAEA have raised serious doubt as to the hope this détente would ultimately lead the Iranian regime to halt its military nuclear program, as well as pave the way for an integration of Iran in the peaceful community of nations as a responsible regional actor. All signs indicate that Iran not only pursues its original objective, but has intensified its efforts to fuel regional mayhem while clandestinely enriching uranium and developing ballistic missiles alongside the technology to mount a nuclear warhead on them.

Indeed, this rapprochement, brought about without the consultation with or involvement of the countries of the region, has managed to alienate the United States' traditional allies, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States. Feeling the growing pressure by the military, security and even existential threat by the Iranian regime, the countries of the region have felt that this path, taken by the U.S. at the time, has been

extremely counter-productive to mitigate the Iranian danger. Rather than maximum pressure, and military deterrence as a way to send a strong signal to the regime that its malign activities and dishonest commitments cannot be tolerated, the very partial JCPOA and the lifting of the pressure that followed has obtained the opposite result. The countries of the region could not avoid the impression that by so doing, world powers have chosen to appease the regime and contain its nuclear program, thereby bringing war closer than ever, rather than helping to avert one.

**At present, the new irreversible changes in reality include the following:**

- The withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA and the imposition of “maximum pressure” sanctions on Iran that has put the Iranian economy and the Iranian regime in a dire situation;
- The revelations regarding the military dimension of the Iranian nuclear project that were exposed by the Iranian “Nuclear Archive” and by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), clarifying that Iran has been deceitful toward the international community before and after the JCPOA was concluded;
- Iran’s breaches of its commitments under the JCPOA as well as the NPT;
- The progress in Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missiles programs, including the accumulation of enough uranium enriched to 4.5% for the production of sufficient fissile material for more than 2 nuclear devices within 5 months, the installation of advanced centrifuges in the underground uranium enrichment facility in Natanz, and the use of the Fordow deep underground enrichment facility for enriching uranium in a blunt violation of the JCPOA;
- The lifting of the arms embargo on Iran in October 2020 by the UN Security Council;
- The tensions in Lebanon and Iraq, where major parts of the population challenge the control of Iranian proxies over them;
- The ongoing Israeli attacks against Iranian targets in Syria in an attempt to hamper its efforts to base its military infrastructure there and to transfer advanced weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon;
- And finally, the aftermath of the targeted killing of IRGC General Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. in January 2020 and of General Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the mastermind of the military nuclear project, in November 2020.

Against this unfavorable backdrop, on top of the dire toll of the covid-19 pandemic on the Iranian economy, health system and political and social stability, Iran is now approaching its presidential election this coming June. This may lead to a more rejectionist attitude on its behalf regarding the disputed issues, first among them the nuclear domain, despite its urgent need to ease the American and international pressure on its economy and military activities.

**From a regional standpoint, the most important development is the Abraham Accords** between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain, followed by Sudan and Morocco and supported by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, and other regional countries. More countries from the pragmatic camp are expected to join. This, together with the U.S. sanctions on Iran and planned arms sales to Israel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia strengthen the pragmatic camp in the region in its confrontation with Iran and the Sunni radicals. So does the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

**In the Palestinian context,** things could not be more different in terms of the novel reality the new administration is inheriting: it is a whole new ballgame. The peace accords between Israel and pragmatic Arab countries have set a new rule, according to which normalization is not conditioned by dangerous concessions that risk Israel's vital security needs, but by interest-based collaboration facing common challenges, while keeping Israel strong and prosperous.

Mainly for domestic reasons, pragmatists would have liked to see an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, but it is far from being on the top of their agenda. Moreover, the U.S. has recognized Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel and moved its embassy there, accepting the principle embedded in UNSC Resolution 242 that Israel does not have to withdraw from all the territories it took control over during the 1967 Six Days War. In this context, the U.S. has recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights as well as the legitimacy of the Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria ("the West Bank"). **These new rules of the game are tolerated by the Arab pragmatists who focus on strengthening their ties with Israel, which they consider necessary in order to promote their own interests.**

The change in the Palestinian policy is especially worth noting in this context. Contrary to some of the "apocalyptic" forecasts, wrongly predicting a regional chaos

following decisions such as the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the Palestinian Authority has decided to renew its security and civilian coordination with Israel and to accept the tax funds collected for it by Israel, after having refused to do so for 6 months and to freeze its efforts of reconciliation with Hamas. Instead, it is trying to repair its relationship with the pragmatic Arab countries and expresses its readiness to resume talks with Israel, though under unacceptable conditions for Israel.

**In other arenas as well, much has changed over the past four years.** The civil wars in Syria and Yemen persist, although the Assad regime regained control over most of the territory it had lost while being assisted by Russia and Iran, and the U.S.-led coalition together with the Syrian Kurdish forces and the Iraqi Armed Forces forced the Islamic State out of vast territories it had previously captured. In Yemen, the Iranian regime has supplied the Houthis with medium-range precise weapons that constitute a viable threat for Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the entire region. In September 2019, they even used cruise missiles and advanced Unmanned Air Vehicles to attack Saudi oil facilities, causing severe damage, in what was regarded as a failed attempt to lead the U.S. into an attrition war.

**All in all, the Middle East of today is very different from the one faced by the Obama-Biden administration until 2016.** President Biden has already alluded to that, stating that his term will not be an extension of the Obama presidency. Indeed, not only has there been multiple developments, but a monumental change in the rules of the game.

## **Key Recommendations**

1. We recommend to further promote and consolidate the Israeli – Sunni Coalition and to focus on reaching more agreements, such as the Abraham Accords with the UAE and Bahrain, the normalization with Sudan and the peace treaty with Morocco. These “ice breakers” will lead Israel toward full normalization with the Moderate Sunni World, significantly contributing to its national security and consolidating peace and prosperity in the region.
2. The main interests that drive pragmatic regional leaders are stability, security, and a more prosperous economy. The normalization with Israel, alongside security aid and enhanced economic ties with the U.S., are increasingly regarded by these leaders as significant elements in the service of these interests.



3. The pragmatic Sunni countries as well as Israel need reassurance that the U.S. is their ally regardless of who is the sitting President in the White House. To that end, we recommend setting in motion a clear policy to isolate both the radical Sunni elements and the Iranian regime on the one hand and reaffirming the strategic partnership with the Israeli-Sunni Coalition on the other.
4. Turkey and Qatar, leading the Realistic Radical Sunni current in the Middle East, are showing signs of change, such as the recent agreement between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. We recommend embracing this change in order to bring this axis closer to the Israeli-Moderate Sunni axis.



# Iran | Countering the Regime's Hegemonic Aspirations

## Preface

**Preventing Iran from realizing its military nuclear program has been a chief American, regional, and international strategic priority over the past decade.** The risks involved in having a nuclearized Iranian regime, already a leading state sponsor of terrorism and the primary source for instability in the Middle East, threaten to alter the regional balance of power in Iran's favor and thereby pose an inadmissible security threat to its neighbors, to Israel and the international community.

This understanding has also led to unprecedented close cooperation between Israel and large parts of the Arab World, forming a new counter-Iranian regional axis under the auspices of the United States. Aware of the Iranian regime's main strategic objective to "export its Islamic revolution" and witnessing first-hand its resulting aggressive military campaigns in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere, the countries of the region have been warning the international community against containing the Iranian threat or suggesting temporary and lacking arrangements in its encounter.

While being promoted as the most efficient means to prevent Iran from developing deliverable nuclear weapons, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has failed to propose a viable path to verify that objective. A variety of intelligence sources confirmed the regime has never respected the terms of the agreement, even prior to the United States' unilateral withdrawal from it in May 2018, as it has done traditionally with respect to written commitments such as the NPT, the IAEA Statute, the IAEA Safeguards Agreement and the UN Charter.<sup>1</sup> Even if followed to the letter, the agreement itself has effectively vetted Iran to pursue its nuclear activity in sites outside of its jurisdiction, had a short expiration date and "sunset clauses", and its wording was often ambiguous as per

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<sup>1</sup> See more on The Congressional Research Service, *Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations*, updated November 20, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R40094.pdf>

critical commitments, such as “significant non-performance” or issues relating to Iran’s ballistic missiles program – loopholes that were later used by the regime to justify its violations.

**We strongly reject the notion that incomplete diplomatic solutions constitute the most far-reaching possible means to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclearized state, nor are they sufficient alone to meet this objective.** Given the current state of the regime’s nuclear program – 3 months away from acquiring enough high enriched uranium for a nuclear device – and the advanced stage of its ballistic missiles program, we believe the following are indispensable principles to addressing the Iranian issue:

- Since the Iranian regime will take any step necessary to preserve itself, presenting it with the choice between self-preservation and the nuclear program is the most efficient way to affect its calculations.
- Negotiations with Iran should be conducted from a position of strength, based on maximum pressure by the United States and its allies. This includes imposing economic sanctions that threaten the survival of the regime; arming U.S. allies in the region against the Iranian threat; and above all, presenting a viable and credible military option to neutralize Iran’s nuclear program.
- This mounting pressure on the Iranian regime is a vital complement to diplomacy and should be backed by an unambiguous message to Iran, that the United States and its allies will not allow it to pursue its nuclear and ballistic missiles programs.

In our view, the maximum pressure strategy the U.S. has adopted since 2018 has yet to realize its full potential – a new and improved agreement between Iran and the world powers. However, **it has laid the foundation for an extremely effective and improved leverage for the incoming administration in order to reach such an agreement with Iran.**

Israel and the Gulf States have already made clear they cannot accept a scenario of a nuclear Iran, and that they will not be deterred to act alone, if necessary, to prevent that from happening. Facing the Iranian regime’s aggression around the Middle East, alongside its terror activities in the U.S., in Europe and around the world, we believe maximum

pressure backed by the resolve to prevent a nuclear Iran will not only help averting another war in the region, but also secure international peace and prosperity.

## Understanding the Iranian Interests

**The Iranian regime's nuclear weapons program and militarization efforts are a direct result of its chief strategic goal to "export the Islamic Revolution".**

To get to the bottom of the rationale behind the Iranian regime's activities, it is essential to consider the ideology of the Islamic Revolution and its founding Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Upon the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Khomeini formulated a new idea according to which the Islamic regime itself is superior to the Sharia, and that the Leader is the highest authority of the Islamic law (*Velâyat-e Faqih*). The political differences in Iran between "reformists" and "conservatives" are therefore limited, merely reflective of different approaches to fulfilling the same doctrine.

The attempt to make Iran a regional, even global superpower that carries the gospel of their extremist version of Shia Islam is reflected in the policies that characterize the regime. Developing power from within and expanding the outer circles of influence and control over foreign countries have consistently been two complementary lines in the regime's activity. Put together, these two vectors form a guiding principle to "export the Islamic Revolution", which is at the heart of the Iranian regime's strategic objectives.

**The Iranian regime operates terror networks, initiates military interventions, boosts its long-range ballistic missiles program and above all, develops nuclear weapons in order to deter its adversaries from halting its expansion.**

**To that end, the Iranian regime has been dedicating massive funding to support the spreading of its ideology around the region.** Between 2012-2018, for example, the regime has spent over 16 billion USD to support Syria's Assad regime (at least 4.6 billion USD), Lebanon's Hezbollah terrorist group (about 700 million USD a year), Palestinian terror organizations such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad (about 100 million USD a year), the

Houthis in Yemen, and Shi'ite militants in Iraq, among others.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, among its repeated attempted terrorist attacks around the world in recent years are the one in 2018 against a Mujahedeen Khalq conference in Paris and the planned assassination of Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States in Washington D.C. in 2011. The regime also hosts radical Islamists from different factions – the reported assassination of Al Qaeda's second-in-command Abu Muhammad al-Masri in Tehran being another proof of the close ties between the regime and terrorist groups.

**On top of that, the regime's long-range ballistic missiles program is designated to serve as a potent tool to thicken its circle of influence** by posing a viable threat to regional countries, the U.S. and partner military forces in the region, and most recently to Europe as well. Iran possesses the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East, with thousands of ballistic and cruise missiles, including the 1,300km-range Shahab-3, covering the entire State of Israel, and the 2,000-km range Sejil, reaching Southeastern Europe. For the past decade, Iran has invested significantly in improving these weapons' precision and lethality, including the honing of longer-range missile technologies under the auspices of its space-launch program, able to reach as far as the United States.<sup>3</sup>

**Above all, the "diamond in the rough" of the program to back the regime's aspirations with military capabilities, is its nuclear program.** Openly calling to annihilate Israel (dubbed "the Little Satan"), encouraging the chanting of "Death to America" ("the Great Satan"), inciting anti-Semitism, and deepening its military grasp over large parts of the Middle East – the Iranian regime has made clear that acquiring nuclear weapons is its overarching strategic objective to enhance its prestige and regional influence. **Adding nuclear weapons on top of all the abovesaid would significantly increase Iran's ability to destabilize its neighboring countries and threaten their very existence while shielding itself against military retaliation with this very efficient deterrence device.**

Possessing deliverable nuclear weapons would introduce Iran in a limited and prestigious club of global powers. Given its destructive guiding principles, an Iranian regime equipped with deliverable nuclear weapons can therefore pose a viable threat to the entire Middle East and beyond, and fundamentally alter the regional, even global balance of power.

It must be stressed that every step Iran takes is part of its advancement toward its broader vision. Therefore, finding a technical compromise on the nuclear issue under

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<sup>2</sup> See more on U.S. Department of State, *Outlaw Regime: A Chronicle of Iran's Destructive Activities*, December 2018, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Iran-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See more on CSIS, *Missile Threat – Missiles of Iran*, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/iran/>

favorable conditions to Iran will not deter the regime from fulfilling its *raison d'être*, but rather be viewed as a green light to pursue its nuclear ambitions away from the spotlight, and in parallel, continue to pursue its ballistic missiles program and other militarization efforts. We believe it is possible to brake and eventually uproot the “export of the Islamic revolution”; however, in the meantime, in order to mitigate the risk, the most efficient device is maximum pressure that would make the choice between the regime’s survival and giving up the intention to obtain nuclear weapons an extremely clear one for the Iranian regime.

**The JCPOA has only been made possible by compromising its objective. Namely, even in the case that Iran would have fully complied with the JCPOA, it does not follow that Iran would have dismantled its nuclear weapons program.**

For the countries of the region who follow Iran’s malign activities up close and increasingly feel their effect first-hand, the conclusion of the JCPOA was an ultimate proof that without compromising the objective, it is impossible to reach a written commitment with Iran. Indeed, rather than proving the success of diplomacy as a stand-alone device without military pressure, the JCPOA has strengthened the belief of Israel and the Gulf States that the Iranian regime has no intention to set aside its nuclear weapons program.

**Even by fulfilling the JCPOA to the letter, Iran would have received a formal go-ahead to pursue its nuclear ambitions, away from the spotlight.** This includes but is not limited to the following examples to loopholes in the agreement, later used by Tehran to justify its violations even before the United States’ withdrawal in May 2018:

- The verification mechanism put in place to confirm Iran’s abidance by the JCPOA regardless of its trustworthiness was extremely limited, far from what it was claimed to be – “cutting off all of Iran’s pathways to a bomb”. First, the agreement limits the access of IAEA inspectors to military sites where nuclear activity can continue uninterruptedly. Second, it is inconclusive as to facilitating easy and timely inspections: Section Q mentions “good faith” as basis for inspection requests, and as to undeclared sites, Iran can deny access or “propose alternative means of resolving the IAEA’s concerns” rather than inspections, and delay them for 14 days, enough time to clean up its activity. Moreover, there is no access to the scientists who deal with nuclear matters.
- The agreement was based on the erroneous commitment by Iran that its nuclear project was designed for peaceful purposes from the beginning. It specifies Iran

should fully implement the “Roadmap for Clarification of Past and Present Outstanding Issues”, that is, fully disclose all past nuclear activity (Article 14), giving it an opportunity to come clean as per present and past clandestine nuclear-related activity. However, based on the findings in the Nuclear Archive, uncovered by Israel in February 2018, the JCPOA is based on a falsehood, since Iran has never disclosed its secret nuclear weapons program, Project Amad headed by Mohsen Fakhrizadeh that ran at least until 2003 – which evidence indicate has not stopped there. In fact, Iran denied the existence of the Amad project in its December 2015 disclosure to the IAEA as part of the aforementioned Roadmap. Importantly, the very storage of this vast amount of scientific know-how in an Archive is an indication of Iran’s refusal to neglect a future or a current plan to develop nuclear weapons, their willingness to preserve the knowledge for future use, and a violation of the core premise of the agreement.

- Indeed, Iran has left multiple sites undeclared to the IAEA, a violation of its commitment under this Roadmap and other international commitments. For example, the one in Abadeh, Iran, publicly disclosed by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, which Iran later covered up without providing explanations. Furthermore, while the IAEA confirmed Iran’s compliance with the terms of agreement in January 2016 – limiting the uranium stockpile it is allowed to keep to 300kg in total (Section A, Article 7) and compels it to concentrate all of this uranium in one reported place (Section O, Article 68) – Israeli Intelligence disclosed an unreported warehouse in Tehran, containing at least 15 ship containers storing as much as 300 tons of nuclear-related equipment and material. These claims, as well as evidence for clean-up, were confirmed by independent research groups. The IAEA confirmed traces of uranium around that site, to which Iran has yet to supply explanations.
- The summoning of the Joint Commission to demand clarifications from Iran on violations, was limited to instances in which either party deems it a “significant non-performance”. With no adequate definition, the P5 has chosen to ignore possible clandestine violations although partially confirmed by the IAEA, intelligence services and independent intelligence groups, preferring to rely on partial and limited IAEA reports to justify taking no action.
- The “sunset” clauses concerning uranium enrichment by Iran as set in the JCPOA expire within several short years, and the full agreement is set to expire in 2030. This short window of time effectively vests Iran to soon be able to move forward to a big arsenal of nuclear weapons.

- Iran made 141 attempts to procure illicit proliferation equipment and technology that can be used for its nuclear and missile weapons programs in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia in 2015, and 32 attempts in 2016. A year into the implementation of the JCOPA, this information only represents what was declassified.
- The ambiguous wording concerning the ban on ballistic missiles tests in UN Security Council Resolution 2231, the official international “stamp” to the JCPOA, was later used by Iran as a justification for a wide-range testing of such missiles. It states, “Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles *designed to be capable* of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology” (Annex B Article 3). However, committing numerous ballistic missile tests ever since, Iran justified this by claiming the missiles, merely *capable* of carrying a nuclear warhead, were not *designed to be capable* of it. These included a test of the 1,050-miles range Emad missiles with the Hebrew words, “Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth”, covering the entire State of Israel, the 1,243-miles range Qadr-F, and the 1,056-miles range Qadr-H. This has also led the U.S., the UK, France and Germany to write to the UN Secretary General in March 2016, that those ballistic missile tests were “inconsistent with” and “in defiance of” Security Council Resolution 2231.

**The steps Iran has taken over the past two years to accelerate its nuclear program have considerably shortened its “threshold period” that separates it from acquiring enough fissile material for 1-2 nuclear devices to less than 3 months.**

Iran’s announcement in January 2020 that its nuclear program would no longer be “subject to any restrictions in the operational sphere” has confirmed what Israeli and other intelligence services have been warning against. The IAEA, entrusted with overseeing Iran’s nuclear program, has recently pegged Iran’s total enriched uranium stockpile at 2,442.9kg (5,385.6lb), 12 times more than JCPOA restrictions allow.<sup>4</sup>

**Far from having the authority to verify the true state of Iran’s nuclear program, IAEA reporting says its findings are based on activity in locations declared by Iran and on**

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<sup>4</sup> See more on IAEA, *Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)*, November 11, 2020, <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/20/11/gov2020-51.pdf>



**information provided by the Iranian regime.** The Agency has also urged Iran to fully cooperate with its inspection duties back in November 2019.<sup>5</sup>

Compared with a year-long threshold period allegedly guaranteed by the JCPOA and about 2 months beforehand, the threshold is still there and keeps Iran from taking risky steps. Iran was forced to go back to the pre-JCPOA dynamics in which developing nuclear weapons was a very risky step for the regime, given the red lines drawn by Israel and the U.S. as well as the economic difficulties it had to contend with. In that sense, the JCPOA has solved all these problems for Iran. It guaranteed a safe path to a big arsenal of nuclear weapons with no threshold and no economic difficulties, and the ability to finance its regional expansionist policy. **It is no wonder that Iran prefers going back to the JCPOA than continuing the current efforts to shorten the threshold period.**

On top of the loopholes in the agreement, its limitations and the lack of interest by the P5 to demand meaningful explanations by Iran for violations, we have seen above all an increased confidence by the Iranian regime to assert its regional dominance since the signing of the JCPOA. Reassured and reinvigorated by this international recognition of its nuclear capabilities, Iran's regional aggression has also seen a sharp rise after the signing of the JCPOA and prior to the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions. **Far from obtaining its overarching goal to welcome Iran into the peaceful community of nations, the JCPOA's wrongful assumptions and weak verification mechanisms have effectively given Iran a green light to pursue its destructive ambitions.**

**The ultimate objective of the "maximum pressure" campaign by the U.S. vis-à-vis Iran since 2018 was to present it with a choice: the regime or the nuclear program.**

This strategy was based on two basic concepts. First, as the economic and social situation in Iran deteriorates, the pressure on the regime will increase. At this point, if Iran does not give up its nuclear ambitions, domestic pressure will overwhelm the regime. Given this paradigm, **the regime will be willing under negotiations to make much more significant compromises than what it would under no such pressure.**

The second and more practical rationale behind it, is that widespread sanctions on the Iranian economy will hamper and disrupt the proper functioning of problematic

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<sup>5</sup> See more on IAEA, Acting Director General Urges Iran to Fully Cooperate with IAEA, November 21, 2019, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/acting-director-general-urges-iran-to-fully-cooperate-with-iaea>



projects run by Iran, and will be detrimental to the funding of terrorist organizations that Iran supports.

In our view, despite not being long enough in place to fully achieve the goals it has set to meet, this “maximum pressure” strategy has been very effective to the extent that it has reached significant achievements over the past two years:

- The economic situation in Iran has worsened considerably: The regime suffers from lack of financial resources and the citizens of Iran have no real investment channels (except for real estate, partially). Foreign exchange trading is extremely limited, the rial has lost its value and the price of gold is soaring. Today, as the Iranian stock market is collapsing, Iranian citizens stand helplessly against the soaring inflation. This comes on top of the covid-19 crisis, furthering the pressure on the Iranian economy and health system. **The Iranian regime has reached a point where it urgently seeks a viable response to the socio-economic crisis in the country<sup>6</sup>.**
- The uprisings against the regime: Intense protests against the regime have erupted, overshadowing past uprisings. These protests have proven that the fear barrier of Iranian citizens has been eroded, challenging the regime and bringing to escalation point its violent suppression of anti-regime demonstrations, including live rounds on protesters by law enforcement forces and mass arrests.<sup>7</sup>
- The funding of Iran's proxy forces: The Quds Force has been struggling to maintain its funding to Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the militias in Iraq given the harsh sanctions imposed by the United States. While constantly looking for alternative ways to provide funding to these terrorist organizations under the radar, the Quds Force has had so far limited success in those efforts.<sup>8</sup>
- Cutting off the “Head of the Snake”: The targeted killing of Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani was a severe blow to the Iranian regime’s regional establishment project. Soleimani was the brain behind Quds Force

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<sup>6</sup> See more on The World Bank, *Islamic Republic of Iran*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/iran/overview> ; The Wall Street Journal, *Iran's Economy Is in Crisis; Its Stock Market Is on a Tear*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/irans-economy-is-in-crisis-its-stock-market-is-on-a-tear-11590675832> ; Al-Monitor, *Tehran Stock Exchange: The end of an illusion*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/09/iran-tehran-stock-exchange-end-illusion-finance-markets.html>

<sup>7</sup> See more on United States Institute of Peace, *The Iran Primer – Protests: Overview and Timeline*, updated December 18, 2019, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2019/nov/18/protests-overview>

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: The Washington Institute, *U.S. Sanctions Are Hurting Hezbollah*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/us-sanctions-are-hurting-hezbollah> ; Foundation for Defense of Democracies, *Treasury Sanctions Quds Force Fronts in Iraq*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/03/30/treasury%C2%A0sanctions-quds%C2%A0force-fronts-in-iraq%C2%A0/>

operations all around the Middle East, and its successor, Esmail Qaani, has considerable difficulties in stepping into his predecessor's shoes.

- Restoring deterrence: Soleimani's killing made it clear to the Iranians that their provocative actions against American forces and in Israel are risky for them, yet no significant retaliatory attack has been carried out.

**In our view, although the maximum pressure campaign has yet to realize its full potential – a new and improved agreement between Iran and the world powers – it has laid the foundation for an extremely effective and improved leverage for the incoming administration in order to reach such an agreement.** It puts Iran in a position of weakness and under the pressure that would allow the U.S. and the other members of P5 to make significant progress in negotiations, thus forcing Iran to change its behavior in different aspects: from real restrictions on its nuclear activities to missile development and terror funding. So long as sanctions continue to stifle the Iranian economy, Iran will have to make the above-mentioned choice between the nuclear program and the regime itself.

**Fearful of the maximum pressure strategy, the Iranian regime has embarked on a campaign against it. The multiple measures and actions it brought about were designed to create the impression that the continuation of this strategy may lead to dangerous escalation.**

This campaign is mainly an ongoing influence campaign, aiming at spreading panic among liberal democracies' leadership and public opinion. The sequence of steps taken in the nuclear realm are part of this psychological warfare campaign as were the Iranian defiant activity against tankers in the Straits of Hormuz, alongside the rockets launched toward the green zone in Baghdad. While Iran is well-equipped for a long low-intensity attrition war, the Iranian regime is under-prepared for a high-intensity conflict that can risk its nuclear project facilities and its critical infrastructure. Even though it had no intention of entering a regional conflict, the regime has thereby led some to believe that things were deteriorating in the direction of another war in the Middle East.

The paradigm that the Iranian regime wants to create by this narrative is that Iran will return only to the existing JCPOA and only provided the sanctions are lifted. Recently, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to the Iran's Supreme Leader, even conditioned going back to the JCPOA by removing the Sanctions Snapback mechanism. Under pressure that another conflict in the Middle East may erupt in the event that Iran's demands are not

met, world powers are assumed to be inclined to give the Iranian regime this critical lifeline.

**However, this narrative, that Iran can withstand the current pressure and continue its steps toward a nuclear bomb, is a false one.** Given the enormous pressure on the regime, it is now in a position where it needs “resuscitation” from world powers much more than what the world needs from Iran. Admittedly, the regime is taking defiant measures in the nuclear field, but even these are yet another pressure device, as no U.S. administration will allow them to hold nuclear weapons, even if far-reaching steps are required. **Its current goal is thus not to reach nuclear weapons soon as much as it is to alleviate the pressure on the regime.**

**The use of pressure levers obtained by the maximum pressure strategy can therefore lead to an improved agreement with Iran.**

## **Key Recommendations: Toward an Improved Agreement**

**Iran, being the central destabilizing and menacing element in the Middle East, is the most pressing issue on the agenda. In our assessment, preventing Iran from obtaining deliverable nuclear weapons while addressing other key malign activities by the Iranian regime is possible and of the essence.** This requires the following policy:

1. Negotiating a new agreement with Iran should take place while the pressure is on. Full return of Iran and the U.S. to their commitments under the JCPOA is not desirable if it means lifting of sanctions before reaching a new agreement.
2. The time frame of the agreement: Any new deal should set a much longer and more binding timeframe than the one under the provisions of the JCPOA. It is best to avoid any “sunset” clauses concerning limitations on Iran’s nuclear capabilities.
3. The verification mechanism: The verifications as set in the JCPOA only refer to specific sites declared by Iran. Considering the Iranian regime’s past record in repeatedly violating written commitments, such as the NPT, the IAEA Statute, as well as the JCPOA, a new agreement should introduce a much more comprehensive verification and supervision mechanism, including the ability to conduct inspections anywhere and anytime, as well as monitoring and questioning scientists related to the Iranian nuclear program.

4. The ballistic missiles program: Limitations over Iranian development of surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, designed to curb their operational range, should be clearer and more stringent as to their ability to carry nuclear warheads. There should be no such ballistic missiles allowed.
5. The Snapback: The U.S. should keep its right to use the Snapback mechanism that will allow it to reimpose sanctions on Iran after a new agreement is reached.
6. The Arms Embargo: Timely, comprehensive, and long-term steps should be taken regarding the UN arms embargo that expired last October. The extension of the embargo has to be a prerequisite for any relief in the sanctions.
7. Preservation of specific sanctions: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Quds Force, the Iranian defense industries and its nuclear-related industries must remain under severe sanctions.

## Conclusion

The Biden administration will be in a favorable position toward Iran from the very beginning of its term, possessing leverage to obtain a new and improved agreement that can prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and developing long-range ballistic missiles. Iran, as well as the international community, do not view it as adamantly hostile to Iran or to the JCPOA, but as a pragmatic administration interested in stability. President Biden also stands a good chance of being able to form an international coalition in this context, with its European partners and with the U.S. allies in the Middle East.

In conclusion, we see the current situation as an opportunity to increase stability and peace in the Middle East and stop Iranian malign activities. Despite the pressure by the Iranian regime designed to reach a more favorable outcome for Iran, it is now in a weaker position thanks to the “maximum pressure” strategy. This strategy is an extremely efficient bargaining chip, and may we also add, requires some patience, as the Iranian regime increasingly senses how time works against it rather than for it.

Therefore, a comprehensive agreement can potentially constitute a historic achievement. However, a partial and perforated agreement can reach the opposite from its desired objective, leading the region again to instability, a nuclear arms race and proliferation, and eventually – war.

# **The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict | Devising a Responsible Arrangement**

## **Preface**

2020 was a year in which the Palestinian authorities and organizations have come to the understanding that their struggle against the Zionist enterprise encountered a sharp turning point. After over 100 years of reliance on uncompromising Arab backbone of support, tectonic regional shifts have led the Arab national interests to override the commitment to the Palestinian cause. Not only does this indicate a new order of priority, but also a new conception regarding the centrality of the Palestinian cause in the decisions – and alliances – being made in the Middle East.

The problem with the Abraham Accords, from the Palestinian point of view, is that unlike previous Arab-Israeli peace agreements (Jordan and Egypt) which led to cold, practical peace for geopolitical reasons, the new agreements brought warm peace that has already created a new closeness between Israel and its new allies. They symbolize, more than anything else, the departure from the basic paradigm the Palestinians had relied upon until today, and the irrelevancy of past attempts to impose far-reaching concessions on Israel on behalf of inaccurate premises or inaccurately-interpreted international statutes.

The regional changes have been accompanied by dramatic and significant steps taken by the U.S. administration regarding Israel, that indicate a change in the American approach to the conflict: the Peace Plan, endorsed by several prominent Arab countries, that sets forth new principles to an eventual arrangement; the recognition of Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel and the relocation of the U.S. embassy there; the closing of the PLO offices in Washington; the Bahrain Peace to Prosperity Conference for economic peace; and all derivatives of the Plan, such as recognizing the legitimacy of Israeli communities in the Jordan Valley and Judea and Samaria, and recognizing products from these areas as Israeli goods.





*(The highlands of Judea and Samaria have a strategic advantage as they overview the entire Israeli shoreline and all major Israeli population centers, as well as critical infrastructure such as the Reading, Rutenberg, and Hadera Power Plants and the Ben Gurion International Airport)*

*Credit: Based on - FrankRamspott*

Against this backdrop, several important elements are to be taken into account:

- The Palestinians suffer from deep internal controversy. The unity and reconciliation initiative between Fatah and Hamas – which was motivated by the fear of Israel declaring sovereignty over parts of Judea and Samaria – has failed. Tensions are high even amongst the Fatah supporters, as all are preparing for the day after 85-year-old Mahmoud Abbas leaves the scene.
- Having said that, **the Palestinians hold their hopes high that the transition to a new administration in Washington indicates going back to the old paradigm; however, reversing the wheel on the radically different and irreversible Middle East reality of today is extremely unlikely.** Given that the Abraham Accords will not be canceled, the American recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital remains, and the Arab World has made far-reaching strides toward a novel paradigm for regional co-existence, the options now facing the Palestinians are extremely limited, although they include attempting to escalate their delegitimization campaign against Israel.
- While waiting for the change of administration in Washington, the Palestinian leadership is demonstrating determination to adhere to its basic narrative and positions – those that constitute the main cause of incapability to make any progress toward peace in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades: they continue to deny the right of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland and to recognize Israel's right to exist as its democratic nation-state; demonize and delegitimize Israel in international forums and in political propaganda campaigns; consider all sorts of struggle against Zionism, including terrorism, as legitimate; and eternalize their victimhood by turning down generous and pragmatic offers for statehood designed to turn the page and establish a Palestinian state over parts of the Territories.

Following their adherence to this narrative, they insist on keeping their “Pay-for-Slay” policy of paying generous stipends to terrorists and their families (approximately 7% of the PA's 2018 budget, for example, or around USD 360 million, was allocated to two institutions that assist terrorists imprisoned in Israel, released terrorists, and families of so-called martyrs)<sup>9</sup>; they persist with

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<sup>9</sup> See more on The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, *Terror funding by the Palestinian Authority*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/terror-funding-palestinian-authority-mahmoud-abbas-recently-approved-budget-2018-7-devoted-assisting-prisoners-released-terrorists-families-shahids>

the incitement policy in the education system;<sup>10</sup> and with their political and legal assault against Israel in international forums and institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as with their campaign against normalization and in favor of boycotting Israel.

- Under these circumstances, the option of promoting an arrangement which demands Israel to withdraw to the 1967 lines with some minor modifications and land swaps is a remote one and goes against Israel's most basic national security needs. Moving forward without the Palestinians adhering to the most basic demands such as formally recognizing the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish State will lead to the same deadlock and fruitless processes we have seen in the past. We assume that the new U.S. administration accepts this reality and regards its main objective as improving the status-quo and preserving the conditions that may enable promoting a two-state solution in the future without compromising Israel's future and security.

## Key Recommendations

1. Given Israel's national security needs for generations to come and the unchanging Palestinian narrative and future possible threats, Israel cannot and should not take unnecessary and uncalculated security risks. Therefore, it must continue to hold the Jordan Valley in the broadest sense, retain full military control over Judea and Samaria, and remain the only military force between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean.
2. The main objective we should strive toward is pressuring the Palestinians into abandoning the narrative of the negation of the Jewish people's right for its nation state in Israel.
3. The pressure exerted on the Palestinians has not brought them to introspection, *inter alia* because the previous administration was viewed by them as hostile and as a temporary challenge. The Biden administration is perceived by them as a much more friendly one, therefore it has an opportunity to drive the Palestinians to reassessment point. If the Palestinians refuse to uproot their principles of negation and incitement – the U.S. administration should make it clear that there is a price to be paid, and not cooperate with any problematic positions.

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<sup>10</sup> See more on The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Dr. Arnon Groiss, *Palestinian Authority textbooks and teachers' guides dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (based on books published in 2019)*, September 9, 2020, [https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2020/09/E\\_221\\_20.pdf](https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2020/09/E_221_20.pdf)



4. This includes American refusal to give financial aid to the PA, in accordance with the Taylor Force Act, as long as terrorists and their families continue receiving monthly salaries, and zero tolerance on the American side for any form of violence, terror and incitement.
5. We recommend demanding from the Palestinians to disarm the terror organizations and insist on ceasing all terror activities, including firing rockets toward Israel from the Gaza Strip and inciting violent riots along the fence, hatching hundreds of foiled attempts to execute terror attacks against Israeli citizens and soldiers, and budgeting these efforts generously. This is a basic precondition without which there is no prospect for moving forward with a peace plan.
6. This also includes an American commitment to negate anti-Israel activity in the international sphere, such as the BDS movement as well as the outrageously biased treatment by the United Nations and other international organizations (for example, 86% of the country-specific resolutions in the United Nation's General Assembly between 2012-2018 targeted Israel, as well as 17 out of its total 23 such resolutions in 2020) – including the idea of persecuting Israel and the U.S. at the International Criminal Court.
7. Progress on the Palestinian side can be rewarded by investment in the Palestinian economy and in projects such as the ones offered during the 2019 Manama Conference that promote mutual understanding and recognition, including Palestinian recognition of Israel as the democratic nation state of the Jewish people.