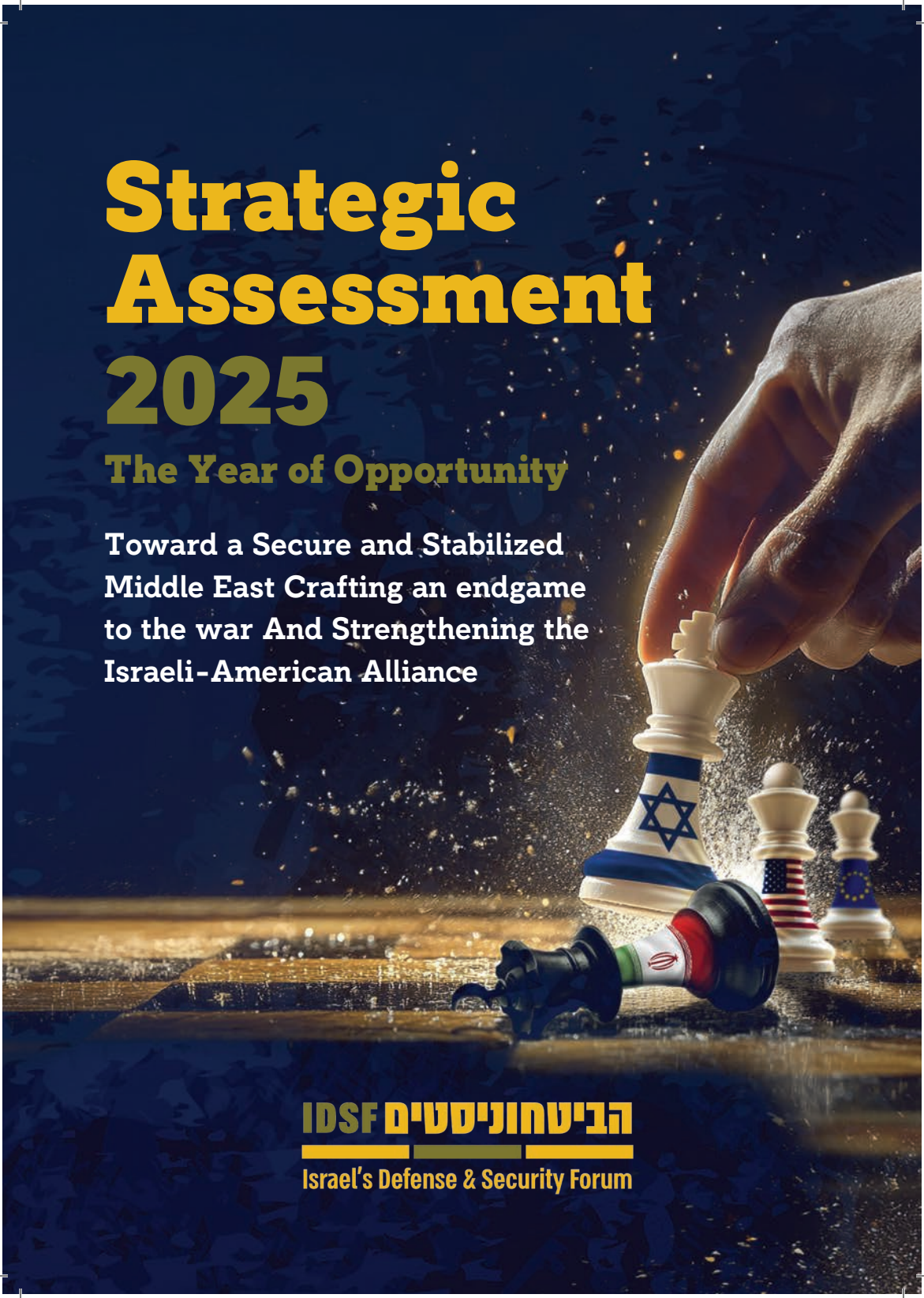
Strategic Assessment 2025

The Year of Opportunity

Toward a Secure and Stabilized Middle East Crafting an endgame to the war And Strengthening the Israeli-American Alliance



IDSF הביטחוניסטים

Israel's Defense & Security Forum

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Executive Summary

- **Come Spring 2025, the United States, Israel, and the region are entering into a new phase in the war in the Middle East by crafting an endgame, tackling destabilizing actors and working on ushering in a new era of peace.** Israel's significant achievements in this war create new opportunities to tackle Iran's terror project head-on, end the war in Gaza, take advantage of the new political reality in Lebanon, and work on fundamentally **changing the alliance map in the Middle East by promoting an interest-based peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia.**

- **American leadership is key to achieving these goals.** Iran – siding with Russia, China, and North Korea – is continuing to strive toward nuclear weapons while reaching record levels of uranium enrichment and missile development. Iran poses a grave threat to the US national security and American homeland, and is the primary destabilizing actor in the Middle East.

- **While still dangerous, Iran is also unprecedentedly weak.** In the aftermath of the October 7 attacks, Iran and its "frontal defense" – the regional proxies of Hamas, Hezbollah, Assad, Houthis, and assorted Iraqi militias, have been significantly undermined by bold Israeli and American action. That also includes Iran's air defenses.

- **This is the time to deny Iran the capability to produce nuclear weapons.** If the extreme Islamist regime refuses to give up this capability as a result of maximum economic pressure there is going to be a need for a **bold, limited, pre-emptive American-Israeli-regional action against Iran's nuclear facilities**, that will **not require "boots on the ground."** Such a swift action can end the current war, without provoking a new one.

- **Peace is the goal in Peace Through Strength: The collapse of the Shi'ite axis ushers in a new chapter in the region – the golden age of the Middle East.** Previous efforts to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia – indeed, the Muslim world as a whole – have been derailed by Iran's attacks and mounting threats. Regional Arab countries have preferred to cautiously side with Iran, fearing reprisals from Iran. Removing the Iranian obstacle can open the floodgates to peace, prosperity, and expanded economic opportunity.

- **It is also vital to further collapse the Shi'ite Axis by taking advantage of the fall of the Assad regime, the weakening of Hezbollah and**

anti-Iranian trends in the region, while minimizing Turkey's Neo-Ottoman negative and growing sphere of influence. In Syria and beyond, the region risks the replacement of the Iran-backed Shi'ite Axis with a Turkish-backed Neo-Ottoman Axis with all of its implications. **Israel should continue building on its special relationship with the Druze community in Syria and encourage relations with Kurds and other minorities in the region to further deepen its strategic depth.**

- **Weakening Iran will also weaken anti-American, anti-Israeli governments across Latin America**, in particular Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro, who allows illegal drug trafficking to enrich Iran's treasury, Hezbollah's narcoterrorism and terror financing activity, criminals syndicates activities and mass migration into the United States.

- **In the Gaza theater, releasing all hostages while creating a new reality in Gaza without Hamas is the key to ending the war and prevent the next war.** President Trump's plan to **encourage willful migration** out of Gaza has already made headways, and it is vital to have the cooperation of Egypt and welcoming countries around the world to make it happen. **Neither the Palestinian Authority nor Hamas are in a position to be part of Gaza's future, given their record and commitment to terrorism.**

- **Any peace plan with the Palestinians must come from a position of strength.** That includes recognizing Israel's fundamental national security needs, putting the Palestinian Authority on notice, and eliminating Hamas. The Arab world may be involved in the Palestinians' future, but must be cognizant of the inherent dangers of bestowing the Palestinians with strategic territory and unchecked access to munition.

- **In this assessment, we lay out our case for the next steps in the war and our recommendations for the Israeli decision-makers, the American administration and policy-makers around the free world.**

2025: The Year of Opportunity

Spring 2025 presents Israel with both formidable challenges and a rare strategic opportunity. The aftermath of the October 7 Hamas attack has unfolded across multiple fronts, testing Israel's resilience as never before. Yet, from this turmoil has emerged a historic moment to advance security and stability – for Israel, the region, and the free world.

This opportunity stems from two main sources:

1. Renewed U.S-Israel Strategic Alignment

The revitalization of the U.S-Israel alliance under President Trump has reinvigorated coordination on key strategic fronts. From the defeat of Hamas and dismantling of Iranian proxies to confronting anti-Semitism and opposing delegitimization of Israel, the two governments are operating with rare clarity and shared purpose. Critically, this alignment does not hinge on untenable political concessions such as a two-state framework, which has lost relevance in today's realities.

This partnership is already yielding benefits:

Palestinian Arena: The U.S. provides legitimacy and backing for Israel's campaign to dismantle Hamas, return hostages, and explore post-war alternatives to the Palestinian Authority. President Trump's plan for voluntary emigration from Gaza will also have a significant impact on the region's security.

Regional Front: Renewed American deterrence has emboldened moderate actors, weakened Iranian proxies, and opened space for strategic gains – chief among them, **halting Iran's nuclear ambitions** and **forging new regional alignments.** The foundation is being laid for expanded normalization, energy and infrastructure cooperation, and joint regional development.

Rogue international actors: The U.S. is taking a proactive role in countering hostile international institutions such as the ICC and biased UN agencies. In parallel, Washington is challenging the Iran-China-Russia axis through strategic engagement and deterrence, aiming to isolate Iran and curtail its influence.

2. Israeli Strength, Society, and National Resolve

The resilience of Israeli society, the IDF's operational performance, and the renewed national ethos have created a second pillar of opportunity. From battlefield courage to home front solidarity, October 7 awakened a powerful spirit of unity and resolve.

To capitalize on this momentum, internal cohesion must be reinforced. Social rifts, mistrust in institutions, and fragmentation threaten to undermine long-term gains. National responsibility must be shared – including broadening participation in military and national service among all sectors, with emphasis on the Haredi community and national or police service in the Arab community. The special relationship with the Druze community must be strengthened as a key national component of unity.

At the same time, settlement policy should be recognized as a strategic asset. Encouraging Jewish settlement – particularly in border and rural areas, such as the north, Gaza envelope, Jordan Valley, and around Area C – serves both security and demographic goals. Strategic development of these regions, including new communities and infrastructure, can strengthen their resilience and the national stance facing security challenges, and reward those on the front lines.

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American Leadership and its Role in Securing and Stabilizing the Middle East.

Come Spring 2025, an exceptionally challenging and rapidly changing security environment. As the war of aggression initiated on October 7, 2023 by Hamas against Israel, with support of Iran and its proxies, is ongoing, the ripple effects of this regional turmoil are strongly felt across the globe. **Russia, China, and North Korea are the direct beneficiaries of Iran's aggression,** circumventing American sanctions by developing an independent petro-economy, sending weapons and manpower to Ukraine, and providing each other with a blank check to continue undermining the West and the American-led global order. However, Israel's strong retaliation turned the tables around, and at this point, Iran and its proxies and allies seem to be on the losing side.

Attacked on multiple fronts, and after having suffered the most atrocious massacre against the Jewish people since the holocaust, **Israel is now gaining momentum Israel is methodically striking the foundations of the Shi'ite axis on its borders.** Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon have suffered heavy blows, Yemen's Houthis keep challenging Israel and endangering maritime trade in the Red Sea and are paying a heavy price, and Iran's air defenses have been significantly undermined. These trembling foundations have contributed significantly to the fall of Syria's Bashar Al Assad regime by rebel groups dominated by HTS' **who are now posturing as moderates. This also ushers in new opportunities with the Druze community, the Kurds and other minorities to further enhance Israel's strategic depth and interests in the region, while strengthening the US' position as well.**

> **It is time to deny Iran the capability to produce nuclear weapons**

The Current Crossroads Presents a Historic Opportunity to Checkmate Iran. This Way, the United States, together with Israel, can Further Collapse the Shi'ite Axis of Evil, Hamper Russia and China's Efforts to change the world order, and Usher in a New Era of Peace and Stability in the Middle East, While Protecting the American Homeland.

American values and interests have always sided with advancing stability and prosperity to create a more secure world. However, the radical axis of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea have been working tirelessly to undermine this American-led global order. As Israel is making methodical progress against Iran and its proxies, Ukraine is still struggling to fend off Russian forces from its territory. Meanwhile, China is directly benefitting from Russian and Iranian oil. China now purchases an estimated 45% of Russian oil and over 90% of Iran's oil.

Iran is the main destabilizing force in the Middle East. Ever since the signing of the JCPOA – the "Iran Nuclear Deal" in 2015 by the Obama administration, Iran has been investing tens of billions of dollars in propagating regional terrorism, supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, the Iraqi Shiite militias and Assad, arming Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, and working around the clock to build the capability to carry out terrorist attacks around the world, including on American and European soil.

The United States, together with Israel, can further collapse the Shi'ite Axis of Evil, hamper Russia and China's efforts to change the world order, and usher in a new era of peace and stability in the Middle East, while protecting the American homeland

Iran is officially designated as a state sponsor of terrorism by the United States' Department of State. Iran has been involved in an assassination attempt against President Trump, and have targeted senior American officials, the Saudi ambassador in Washington, and other American and Europeans who they deem a threat.

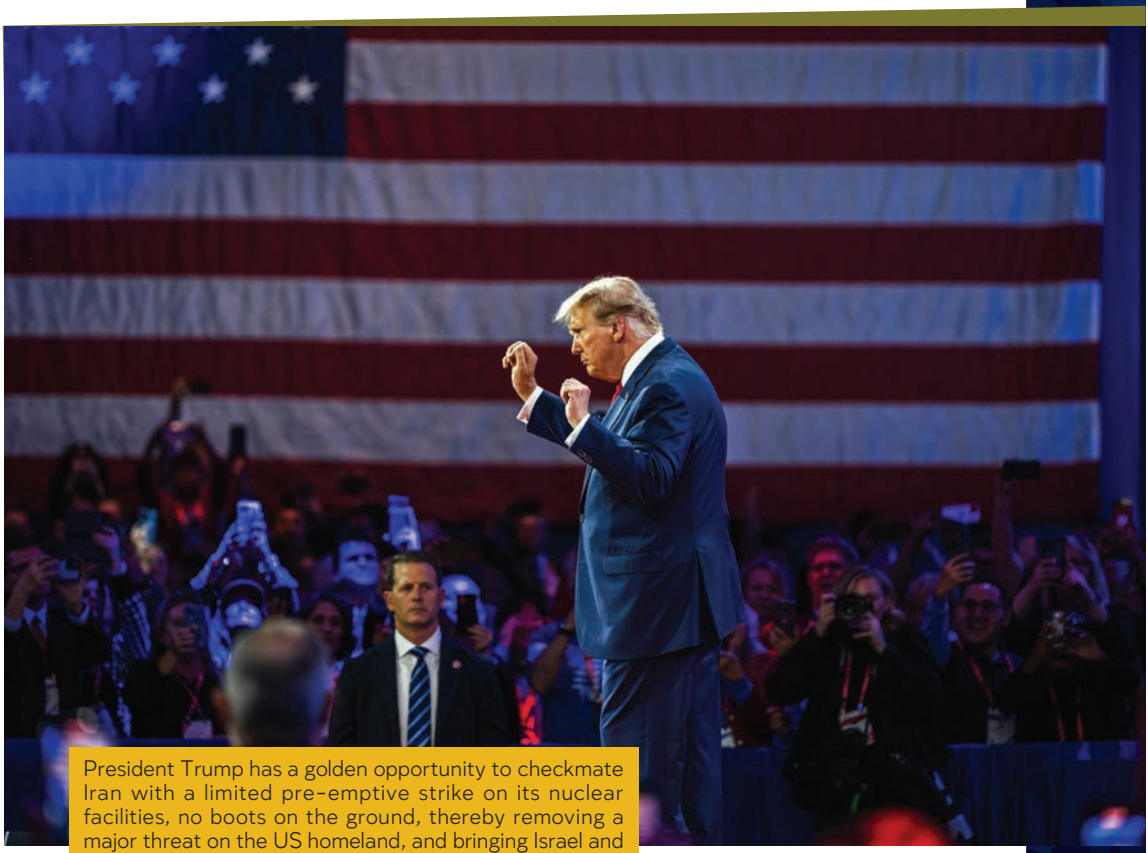
Over the past four years, the Biden administration did underscore that it will not allow

Iran to obtain nuclear weapons, yet the removal of sanctions, the unfreezing of billions of dollars in assets, removal of the Houthis from the list of designated terrorist organizations, and the efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, have **effectively greenlit Iran to enrich uranium and advance further toward nuclear weapons with relative impunity.**

Now, the Trump administration has renewed the maximum pressure campaign (MPC) and is facing a choice on how to tackle the Iranian threat. The President has offered Iran with an opportunity for negotiations, that has so far been rejected by Tehran. The United States and Israel have made it clear that a nuclear Iran is out of the question and is not an acceptable scenario.

The World Cannot Afford to Allow Iran to have the capability to Obtain Nuclear Weapons. This Must Be Stopped At All Cost.

Iran's Supreme Leader, its President, its IRGC commander



President Trump has a golden opportunity to checkmate Iran with a limited pre-emptive strike on its nuclear facilities, no boots on the ground, thereby removing a major threat on the US homeland, and bringing Israel and the Arab world closer together | Credit: Shutterstock

and a host of Iranian senior officials have openly declared their commitment to destroy Israel. Supreme Leader Khamenei said Israel is a "cancerous tumor that needs to be removed", and "the destruction of Israel is essential to bring justice to the region."

Iran has always aspired to instill its radical hegemony around the region, and the world. It cries "death to Israel, death to America".

In parallel, Iran is blackmailing Arab countries into strengthening their ties with Tehran, due to a lack of better options. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, after having cut ties with Iran, have resorted to reopening their embassies in Tehran and reinstated their ambassadors. Not coincidentally, Saudi Arabia and Iran have also signed a deal with Chinese mediation in March of 2023, as the vacuum left by the absence of American leadership indicated that they had little choice but to assuage the regional "bully", the regime in Tehran.

Venezuela's Maduro is directly profiting from Iran's major drug trafficking and criminal activity in Latin America, which also drives mass migration up into the United States' southern border | Source: Iranian media

President Trump's bold decision to exit the nuclear deal and the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign have been proven effective, yet insufficient to completely halt Iran's nuclear aspirations. A document issued by the United States Director of National Intelligence (DNI) on September 26, 2024, showed that "Iran now has enough fissile material to make more than a dozen nuclear weapons." Iran has not yet decided to build a nuclear weapon, yet it has "undertaken activities that better position it to produce one, if it so chooses."

Iran has installed advanced centrifuges in its underground nuclear sites and is currently inches away from developing nuclear weapons | Photo: Iranian media

With the Assad Regime Down, Iran Could Conclude that to Safeguard Its Regime, It Has No Other Choice but to Break Out to a Nuclear Bomb.

As per the International Atomic Energy Agency's report from February 2025, Iran had accumulated at least 274.8kg of 60% enriched uranium, and 606.8kg of 20% enriched uranium. Iran is installing new cascades of advanced centrifuges in its underground nuclear facilities, which allows it to enrich faster than ever before - against any and all international commitment, and despite warnings of the UN. It has now over 11,700 advanced centrifuges in its Natanz and Fordow sites. From the moment it makes the decision, Iran will only need 1-2 weeks to reach the weapon-grade 90% enriched uranium for its first nuclear device. **This means: zero breakout time.**

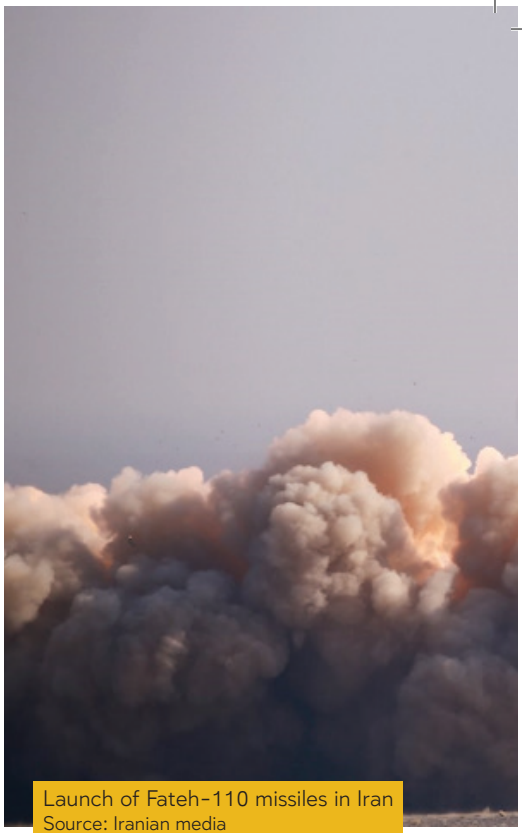
Allowing Iran to have the capability to nuclearize, will eventually throw the region into disarray, provide Iran with a nuclear umbrella to keep wreaking havoc in the Middle East and beyond, threaten Israel

with more attacks, and undermine the stability of Saudi Arabia and other GCC members. Iran will have winds in its sails to carry out more terrorist attacks around the world. Lacking a better choice, the region will be thrown into a nuclear armament race. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other countries in the region could go nuclear as well, to balance out the Iranian nuclear threat on their doorstep.

The Middle East will never be the same again.

Moreover, Russia and China will be the direct beneficiaries of that situation, having an important ally with nuclear weapons that helps promoting their radical vision of challenging the American-led global order. All of the international community will bend to Iran's Aspirations.

> **Iran could well conclude that given the clear dissatisfaction among its people, and the loss of its proxies, it has no choice but to break out to a nuclear bomb as soon as possible, thereby safeguarding its regime**



Launch of Fateh-110 missiles in Iran
Source: Iranian media

With the Assad Regime Down, Iran Could Conclude that to Safeguard Its Regime, It Has No Other Choice but to Break Out to a Nuclear Bomb.

The past few years have taught Iran that its regime is under threat. Inflation is at an all-time high, with the Iranian currency, the Rial, plummeting to a staggering all-time low of almost 900,000 rial to USD. Unemployment is going through the roof, there are shortages of electricity and gas and the new American sanctions have significantly hampered its ability to trade oil - its most valuable source of income - and welcome companies from Europe

and around the world to operate in its territory and do business with Iranian companies.

In parallel, Iran sees through the ill fate of regimes that gave up on nuclear weapons. Syria's Assad had developed a nuclear program, that was eliminated by Israel in 2007. Ukraine had given up on its nuclear program as part of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, only to be completely exposed to Russian aggression and invasion. Iraq's Saddam Hussein had developed nuclear weapons, a project that was eliminated by an Israeli airstrike in 1981. One could only imagine the complexity the United States and its allies would have dealt with in liberating Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War, had Saddam had nuclear capabilities. Libya's Ghadaffi suffered a fatal fate with a violent uprising in its country, after having rescinded his nuclear aspirations.

In contrast, North Korea's regime and others have been relatively stable, having equipped themselves with nuclear weapons, despite their oppressive nature.

Iran could well conclude that given the clear dissatisfaction among its people, and the loss of its proxies, it has no choice but

With its nuclear program and its regional proxies, Iran remains the chief destabilizing force in the Middle East | Credit: Shutterstock

to break out to a nuclear bomb as soon as possible, thereby safeguarding its regime.

The Conditions to Counter Iran Could Not Be More Favorable. Iran is Now More Dangerous Than Ever Before, But Also More Exposed.

First, Iran is now weaker than ever before. Iran's national security was based on a strong military, fostering its proxies around the region as a "frontal defense", and acquiring strong air defenses.

Now, Hamas and Hezbollah, designed to rain down rockets and carry out ground invasions against Israel in case of an Israeli attack on Iran, have been practically decimated. Syria's Assad has fallen. Iran is left with very few friends in the region.

Next, Iran's air defenses were significantly damaged according to reports, following Israel's two strikes on Iranian military facilities this year, as a response to Iran's barrages of missiles against it.

Furthermore, Iran's much-awed missile program has been proven to be of limited efficiency. On two instances, in

April and in October 2024, Iran launched hundreds of projectiles on Israel – cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and attack drones. The Israeli state-of-the-art Arrow air defense systems, and its F-35 pilots, assisted by the US and other partners managed to thwart most of the threats. The rapid response of the well-trained Israeli public that immediately sought shelter saved multiple lives.

The United States led the regional effort to stop Iran's aggression. The MEAD coalition – Middle East Air Defense – allowed regional partners with no diplomatic ties to Israel to share intelligence, and reportedly allowed Israel and the United States to operate in their air spaces to thwart Iran's attacks. US CENTCOM orchestrated the effort. US navy destroyers also launched interceptor missiles that helped eliminate the threat.

This was a direct result of President Trump's Abraham Accords, which in 2020 saw Israel normalizing its relations to four more Arab/Muslim countries, ushering in new opportunities for security and economic cooperation in the region.

Yet, Iran remains a dangerous and destabilizing force in the region, undeterred by Israel's interception efforts and war on its proxies, and by the warnings issued by the United States not to pursue its deadly ambitions.

Iran keeps developing nuclear weapons, funding the Houthi rebels, clutching its grip on the Iraqi government, and propagating terrorism in Europe and in the United States, often under the mask of diplomatic missions. It continues to empower the US adversaries, Russia, China, and North Korea, with funds and arms, including drones and missiles used by the Russians against Ukraine.

In This Reality, the United States' Interest to Prevent Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons is Put to the Test.

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It has consistently been a top American interest to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. All administrations from Bill Clinton through George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden, committed not to allowing Iran to obtain

nuclear weapons. However, the current Trump administration is now facing the gravest threat by Iran that the United States, Israel, and the Middle East, have ever witnessed.

The United States has chosen several ways to deal with the Iranian threat. Withdrawing from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal allowed the US to reinstate crippling sanctions that suffocated the Iranian economy, significantly hampering Iran's next steps. It has also shown regional resilience, empowered its allies, while embarking on a "maximum pressure" campaign, laying down a **credible military option** on the table.

> **Now, the war should be ended by closing the deal on Iran, preventing it from ever launching a new war again**

However, time is running short on the Iranian clock, and there is little certainty that Iran will stick to its current path of stopping short of actually producing nuclear weapons. On the contrary – Iran's advanced enrichment is now putting a gun on the table, threatening to rapidly break out to nuclear weapons at any given time.

For this reason, the United States will be well served to consider removing the Iranian threat on America, Israel, and the region, by forcing Iran to give up its nuclear program either through economic pressure and diplomatic arrangement or, if this option is not accepted, by carrying out a military action that surgically targets its nuclear sites.

The United States' military is by far the finest and most formidable force in history. It spends more on defense than the next 10 countries in the world combined, including Russia and China. The US Air Force is spearheaded by the world's most lethal destroyers, capable of eliminating any threat to the American homeland and its allies in the region.

To clarify: A limited military action will solely rely on air power, with no need for "boots on the ground" nor aspirations to trigger a regime change in Iran. This action will remove a clear and present danger to the regional and global peace and security.

The United States can achieve peace through strength, an effort it has already done

against the ISIS caliphate, the 58 missiles that targeted Assad's chemical weapons program, the elimination of Qassem Soleimani, among others. All of the above boosted America's security and made the region more secure.

Peace Through Strength: Eliminating Iran's Nuclear Program may entail an Iranian retaliation against Israeli, American and Gulf states' targets, but it is considerably less ominous compared to its pre-October 7 might.

An Attack Will Not Open a New War, But Will Bring the Current War To A Close.

Iran's ability to respond to this attack has been severely limited, as Israel and the United States have jointly proven resilient against the vast majority of Iranian missile launching capabilities. In addition, Iran's proxies in the region are no longer capable of being activated the way they used to be.

Four years ago, the prospect of a limited military action in Iran

Peace Through Strength led to a realignment of the Arab world with Israel and the United States in the 2020 Abraham Accords. Iran is currently the only obstacle standing in the way of Israeli-Saudi normalization and a new age of peace in the Middle East | Credit: Shutterstock

presented several key challenges, including a harsh counter-reaction by Iran's proxies in Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria; Palestinians in Judea and Samaria; and global terrorist attacks. Now, **Iran already started a war on October 7** by attacking Israel on multiple fronts, first carrying out the most atrocious and deadly massacre against the Jewish people since the holocaust with Hamas' attack from Gaza; and activating its proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon, alongside other militias.

Now, **the war should be ended by closing the deal on Iran, preventing it from ever launching a new war again.**

This New Chapter in the Middle East Will Present a Historic Opportunity to Normalize Relations Between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Possibly Even Ending the Judeo-Islamic Conflict, and Ushering In a Regional Economic Boom.

This will obtain three key results:

Iranian Leader Ali Khamenei in a military march, threatening to wipe Israel off the map and to attack the United States | Source: Khamenei.ir

1. **Preventing Iran from joining the exclusive club of nuclear states.** This will also prevent the Tehran Ayatollah regime from feeling immune from being attacked while it wreaks havoc around the region and the world in impunity. **Stabilizing the Middle East could also prevent mass waves of migrants from fleeing battle zones in the region into Europe and the United States.**

2. **Preventing nuclear weapons from falling into the wrong hands in case of instability in Iran,** as could have happened during the collapse of the regimes in Iraq and in Syria.

3. **Peace is the goal in 'Peace Through Strength': Ushering in a new era of peace and stability in the Middle East**, with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and other countries feeling more secure to cooperate than under the shadow of an Iranian nuclear threat and under the umbrella of the United States. **The Israeli-Arab Corridor: Ushering in a new era of economic boom in the region, with new trade routes that challenge China's Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's influence in the region.** The Israeli-Arab Corridor will allow goods to flow from India through the Gulf - the UAE and Oman - into Saudi Arabia, through Jordan, to Israel and on to Europe. China's projects in Central Asia and its efforts to take control over regional countries will be significantly challenged. Additionally, the Houthis will struggle to halt 15% of the world's trade navigation routes by terrorizing the Red Sea's Bab El Mandab straits.

US and Israeli Air Force in a joint military drill | Photo: IDF Spokesperson

The triangle region bordering between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, is known to be a center of organized criminal activity for terror financing purposes led by Iran and Hezbollah.

Weakening Iran will also undermine its profit from drug trafficking in South America

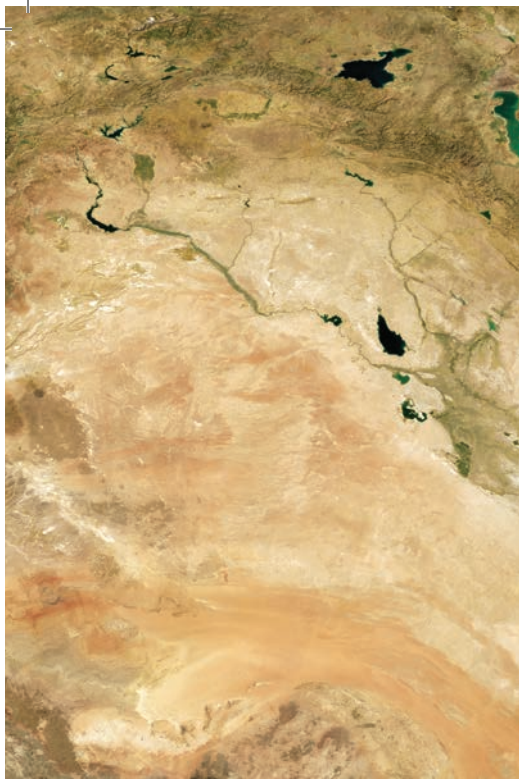
and its global narcoterrorism network, and regimes aligned with Tehran such as Venezuela's Maduro. It will also ease mass migration crises triggered by its destabilizing actions.

It is well documented that Iran, and its proxy Hezbollah, have been operating a wide-ranging narcoterrorism activity and money laundering schemes in South America. US government reports outlined how this criminal activity ranges from South America to West Africa and into Europe, across what is commonly known as "Highway 10" across the 10th parallel. In 2011, the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York filed a lawsuit against the Lebanese Canadian Bank regarding its involvement in these activities; the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) also targeted Hezbollah as part of Operation Titan, involving the

An Israeli victory on all fronts and against Iran is an American victory, and will deliver a textbook example of how peace is achieved through strength

interception of multi-ton cocaine shipments. Hezbollah bonded with local cartels and crime syndicates which gave them access to the smuggling of weapons, drugs, even human beings. The triangle region bordering between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, is known to be a center of organized **criminal activity for terror financing purposes** led by Iran and Hezbollah. **It is not unreasonable to believe that Iranian and Hezbollah drug trafficking operations affected fentanyl smuggling into the United States from the southern border, as revealed in Project Cassandra.**

The October 7 attacks have resurfaced the dynamics



between various Central and South American governments and the Iranian regimes, and the connection between those countries relations with Iran, and anti-American, anti-Israeli actions. Bolivia, Columbia, and Chile cut diplomatic ties with Israel and recalled their ambassadors while strengthening their ties to Iran. Bolivia, Chile, Brazil, Nicaragua, and Columbia joined existing ICC and ICJ lawsuits against Israel, highlighting their sympathies to the regime in South Africa, while receiving praise from Iran.

None, however, is as anti-American, anti-Israeli, and pro-Iranian as Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro.

Israel is proudly standing as America's closest ally in the region, a beacon of democracy, strength and prosperity

The United States considers Maduro an illegitimate president, recently releasing via the State Department condemnation for his attempt to seize power. Maduro is openly cooperative with Iran, and is currently subject to heavy American sanctions. He is also accused, as confirmed by a DoS report, as using anti-Semitic rhetoric against his political opponents. Venezuelan territory is commonly used as a flashpoint for illegal migrants from across the globe to begin the journey north into the United States. It is likely that the cocktail of Iranian spiked organized crime syndicates, contributed significantly to the instability of many Latin American nations which led to millions of residents of those countries to flee and eventually, illegally cross the US border.

However, Argentina, Paraguay, and Guatemala are among the countries with the best pro-Israel and pro-American record this year, recognizing or planning to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital - thereby following the

The signing ceremony of the Abraham Accords in the White House | Credit: Shutterstock

footsteps of President Trump's decision from 2017; and voting alongside Israel and the US at the United Nations. They also consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist group, alongside Honduras – distinguishing them from many other countries in the region.

Weakening Iran will also weaken anti-American and destabilizing forces in Latin America, and will strengthen pro-American, pro-Israeli governments in the Western hemisphere as we march toward a more stable American continent that will see significantly less illegal migration into the US.

Checkmating Iran will deliver on a key American promise to never allow Iran to nuclearize, marking a significant achievement, which is in stark contrast to North Korea's dash to the bomb; neutralizes the most significant threat on Israel and on the Middle East; significantly harms China and Russia's aggression against the American-led global order; and present a golden opportunity for a new era of peace and security.

Israel is proudly standing as America's closest ally in the region, a beacon of democracy, strength and prosperity. An Israeli victory in Gaza means bringing back all of the hostages, crushing Hamas, and ensuring no future Islamist force will ever

pose a threat to Israel. An Israeli victory on all fronts and against Iran is an American victory, and will deliver a textbook example of how peace is achieved through strength.

This awe and shock will also signal to the Palestinians they must make concessions on the way to peace.

So long as Iran and its proxies were supportive of the Palestinians with funds and arms, and the Arab world was united behind them, Israel's leverage on them was extremely limited. Since the 1993 Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority methodically rebuffed generous American and Israeli proposals to end the conflict. Those included significant territorial concessions, territorial swaps, and a pathway to a Palestinian state. The most recent example of this was the 2020 Deal of the Century, proposed by the Trump administration and accepted by Israel as a basis for negotiations.

However, the October 7 attacks by Hamas in Gaza completely reshuffled the cards. If the old paradigm gave Palestinians significant leeway in making demands, these atrocities proved beyond a doubt that **Israel's national security needs must not be undermined.** Previous proposals included a significant and irresponsible potential damage, including concessions on **strategic, elevated mountainous areas, that could serve as a springboard for any future attack.**

The Palestinian Authority, for its part, showed no signs of moderation. It continues to peddle its so-called "Pay for Slay" laws that stipend lavish stipends to terrorists – 7% of its budget, or about $400 million per year; continues its lawfare in international institutions; and its state media, social media, and education system continues to teem with chilling anti-Semitic tropes and incitement to "martyrdom", or violent uprising.

As Palestinians in Judea and Samaria show **increased signs of tribalism and revolt against the Palestinian Authority**, the present-day situation signals how **empowering the Palestinian Authority could backfire, endanger arms to fall into the wrong hands, and arm to the teeth the next potential October 7 massacre.**

Any future peace plan should overlay the rock-solid foundations of Israel's national security, while making clear to the Arab world the advantage of siding with the US and Israel, and the limitations of their political aspirations for the Palestinians.

All future peace deals should include the following elements:

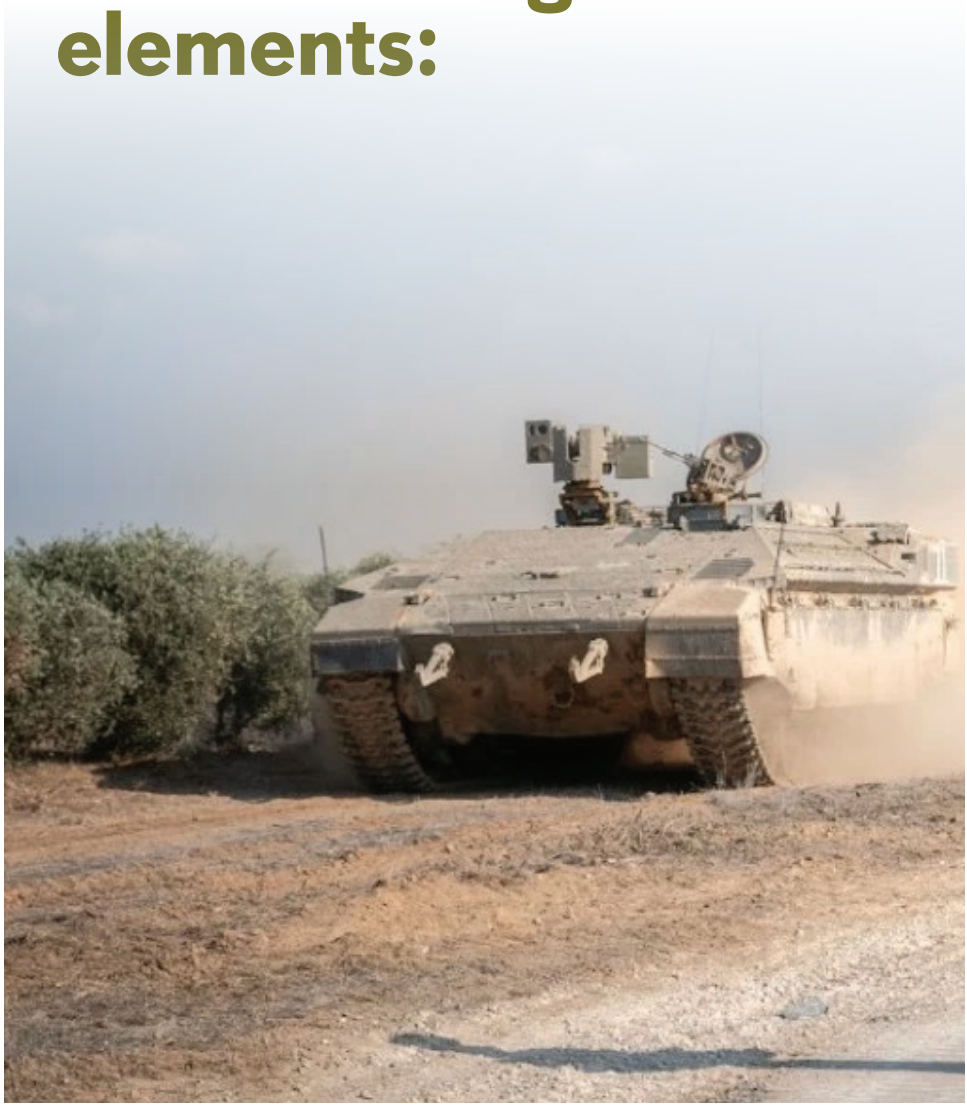


Photo: IDF Spokesperson

- De-radicalization of the neo-nazi, anti-Semitic content of the Palestinian education system;
- Recognition of tribalism and empowerment of local municipal areas (models of city-states, autonomies, emirates etc) while limiting the power of the PA;
- Israeli freedom of operation across the territories for counter-terrorism purposes;
- Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and Area C, critical to block Iranian attempts to smuggle arms close to Israeli population centers; safeguard against Palestinian territorial advantage from elevated territories that dominate Israel's entire territory; prevent a future October 7 massacre; while not undermining the present-day format of the Palestinian population's freedom of movement and civilian control;
- Re-imagining the PA's role in running everyday lives, while conditioning its activity on swiftly walking back the "Pay for Slay" laws that stipulate stipends to terrorists, its international lawfare at the ICC and ICJ, and its methodic incitement against Jews in the state media, social media, and education system.

Our recommendations for the Israeli decision-makers can be summed up as follows, in a per-arena outlook:

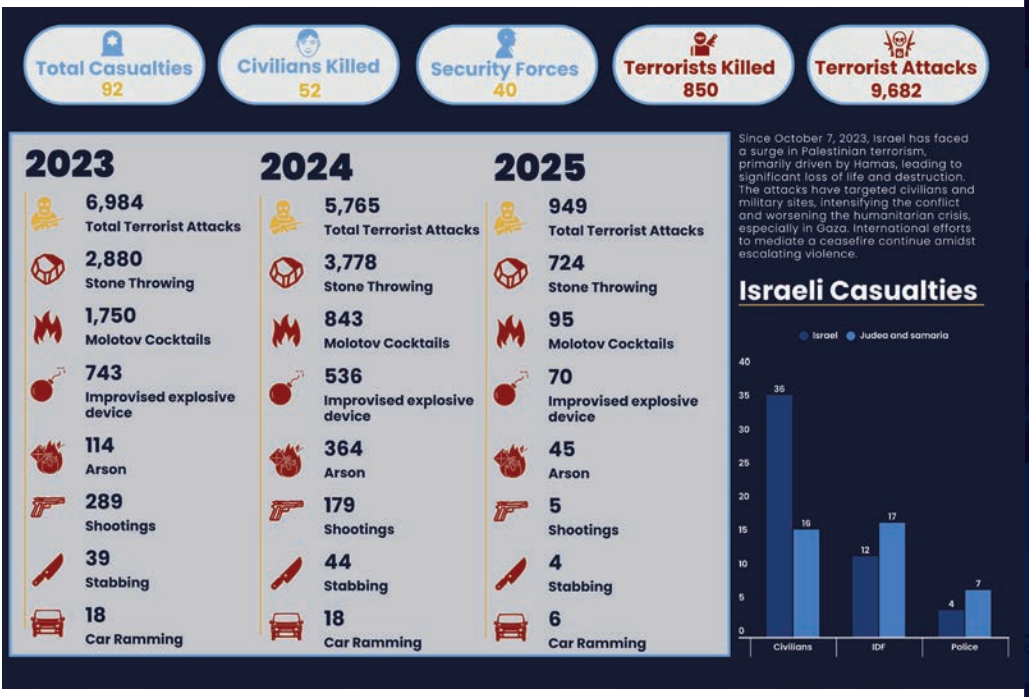
Outstanding Strategic Opportunities

1. **Countering Iran and Dismantling the Shi'ite Axis**
   - The ongoing conflict has created a rare opportunity for a joint Israeli-American military move to impair Iran's nuclear project. Delaying action risks Iran using negotiations to gain time; military intervention may be necessary before diplomacy.
   - Iran is advancing its nuclear program but is also increasingly vulnerable: Hezbollah is degraded, the Assad regime is collapsing, the Houthis are isolated, and Iranian militias are under pressure. Israel has reportedly damaged key Iranian air defenses, while Iran's attempts to retaliate have failed.
2. **Expanding the Abraham Accords**
   - The regional landscape enables a potential breakthrough with Saudi Arabia, serving as a gateway to a broader Arab and Muslim alignment, driven by shared interests in countering Iran and stabilizing the region.
   - The true opportunity lies in forging peace independent of the Palestinian issue and sidelining the "two-state" paradigm.
3. **Domestic Recovery and Strategic Sovereignty**
   - The crisis should be leveraged to restore governance and strengthen security via expanded Jewish settlement, particularly in strategic areas like the Jordan Valley and Area C.

- Defense institutions must be rebuilt, reserves reinforced, and national service expanded across all sectors.
- Reinforce national unity and common purpose as a core strategic asset.
- Arenas of Focus

Iran

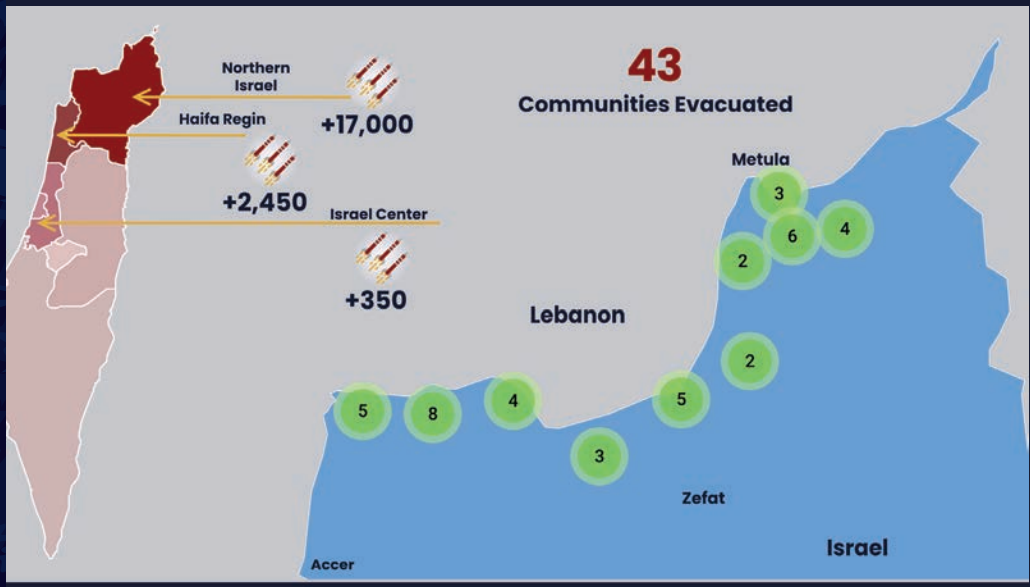
- Iran remains the principal threat – and the main opportunity. The weakening of its regional proxies makes it susceptible to decisive moves. Israel must cultivate a credible military threat to secure irreversible concessions and isolate Iran regionally and globally.
- This includes undermining Iranian influence in South America, Africa, and Asia and reshaping the narrative to present Iran as a global threat.



Lebanon Front

Since October 8th 2023

Sirens heard throughout Israel	Kilometers of burnt land	Israeli's Forced out of their homes	Israeli Casualties	Missile, rockets and drones fired into Israel
+15.129	+190,000	+62,000	133	+19,832



Israeli Achievements

Rocket Supplies Destroyed	Injured	Leadership Killed	Terrorists Hit	Targets Hit
+80%	+16,520	+154	+3,500	+12,500

Gaza:
Defeat Hamas

- The war created an opportunity to reset Gaza's reality. Israel must complete the military campaign, retrieve hostages, dismantle Hamas rule, and neutralize UNRWA's role.
- Long-term plans should enable freedom of Israeli operation in Gaza and promote voluntary emigration. PA involvement must be rejected; proposals leaving Hamas intact (e.g., the Egyptian plan) must be opposed.

Judea and Samaria:
Prepare for the Post-PA Era

- The PA has proven unreliable and hostile. Alternatives – such as emirates or autonomies – should be explored to meet Israel's security needs.
- Israel should present viable pathways to avoid "strategic lack of direction" vis-à-vis its allies or its own public. Strategic planning is needed for both the ongoing counterterrorism campaign and future governance.
- The PA's incitement, lawfare, and glorification of terrorism as well as its ongoing "Pay for Slay" policy of financially rewarding terrorists justify international pressure and sanctions. Voluntary Palestinian emigration should be encouraged per President Trump's plan.

Lebanon

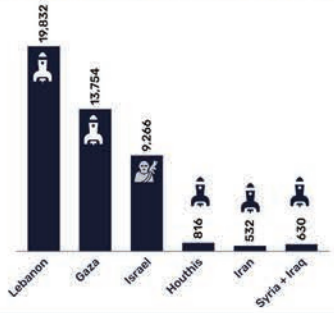
- Israel's operations have seriously degraded Hezbollah. With U.S. backing, this is a chance to prevent Hezbollah's resurgence and shift Lebanon's internal dynamics.
- Goals include weakening Iranian influence (the "de-Iranization of Lebanon"), empowering non-Shi'ite factions, and supporting new leadership through Western aid frameworks.

Other Arenas

- **Syria:** As the Assad regime collapsed and made way to the Jolani-led HTS regime, Israel must consolidate gains in the Golan, eliminate terror infrastructure, and maintain dialogue with Gulf states to block either Iranian or Turkish expansion inside Syria. Deterrence must be established with the new regime in Syria.
- **Turkey:** Erdoğan's Neo-Ottoman agenda threatens regional stability. U.S. leverage should be used to constrain Turkish expansion and reduce its influence in Jerusalem.
- **Egypt:** While being a strategic ally, Egypt's military buildup and anti-Israel rhetoric are troubling. U.S. pressure should encourage cooperation, prepare for contingencies (including regime change), and ensure energy independence.
- **Jordan:** Monitor the Kingdom's domestic stability while preparing for potential upheaval. Secure the border, leverage economic influence, and ensure preparedness for eastern threats should they arise.
- **Qatar:** Qatar wields outsized influence through soft power while harboring Hamas leaders. Its role should be harnessed for hostage negotiations while countering its ideological influence via coordinated U.S.-Israeli efforts.
- **Domestic Security:** Internal threats from Arab sector radicalization and illegal weaponry demand urgent attention. Establish a national guard, integrate Arab citizens into law enforcement, reform the legal system, and promote moderate leadership and education.
- **Delegitimization and Information Warfare:** The erosion of Israel's global image affects operational freedom. A tailored campaign is needed – especially in the U.S. – to reclaim bipartisan support, counteract international lawfare, and expose anti-Semitic propaganda masked as criticism. The battle for narrative is now a national security front.

Sword of Iron Summary

Missiles, Rockets & Drones: 35,563



Casualties: 1,852

Hostages in Gaza: 59

October 7th Massacre

Total Casualties	1,159
Civilians Murdered	828
IDF Soldiers Killed	315
Police & ISA Killed	68
Injured	+4,834
Towns Ravaged	25
Bases Raided	9
Attacking Terrorists	+3K

The State of Iran Proxies

Iran's key proxies—Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Assad regime—have suffered severe setbacks. Israel faces a stark choice: strike now while Iran is vulnerable or risk a stronger adversary armed with nuclear capabilities. This decision will shape the region's future for decades. Will Israel seize the opportunity to shift the strategic balance or falter, leaving its security at risk?

Hezbollah

Current status: Greatly Weakened

- Lost 154 Leadership personnel
- Lost 80% of its missile capabilities
- Lost it's ability to invade into Israel
- Routs for resupplies aren't operational

Hamas

Current status: Powerless

- Lost 23,600 out of 30,000 original fighters
- Lost 99% of its missile capabilities
- Remaining government control of Gaza
- Lost most of it's underground terror network.

Syria

Current status: Overthrown

- Asad fled Syria to Moscow
- Over 90% of the Military equipment was eliminated
- Routs for resupplies have been cut

Houthis

Current status: In Power

- Significant stockpile of weapons remaining
- Leadership still in full capacity
- Routs for resupplies are operational

About the IDSF

IDSF – Israel's Defense and Security Forum, Habithonistim is a movement with more than 35,000 senior officers, commanders and combatants in the reserves and civilians who are former members of all the security forces. It was founded in order to defend the state of Israel's security needs in a way that will enable it to exist and prosper for generations to come.

Our policy is clear: We are committed to Israel's right to safe borders, the borders of the land of Israel; we believe that Israel's security needs head the national priorities; and we believe that Israel does not have the privilege of losing any war. The IDF must act freely in the entire area in order to fulfill its responsibility and to defend Israel.

We clarify that the movement is non-partisan, but puts the values and the vision that define it at the forefront.

Our management

Chairman and Founder: Brigadier General (res.) Amir Avivi

CEO: Lieutenant Colonel (res.) Yaron Buskila
Or Yissachar, Assaf Voll, Jessica Barazani, Ortal Ron, Moshe Davis, Elie Pieprz, Keren Balila, Ronit Farkash, Eva Nagar, Lt Col (res) Tal Nir, Yitshak Lev, Ariel Shafir

Our board of directors

Major General (res.) Gershon Hacohen, Major General (res.) Yitzhak Gerry Gershon, Commissioner (res.) Shlomo Katabi

Executive board

Maj Gen (res.) Gershon Hacohen, Maj Gen (res.) Yitshak Gerry Gershon, Maj Gen (ret.) Aaron Axol, Brg Gen (res.) Haim Ronen

Among our members

Major General (res.) Yossi Bachar, Major General (res.) Kamil Abu Rukun, Major General (res.) Yossi Mishlav, A., a former senior officer in the Mossad, M., a former senior officer in the General Security Services, former Commissioner Shlomo Katabi, Brigadier General (res.) Hasson Hasson, Brigadier General (res.) Harel Knafo, Brigadier General (res.) Avigdor Kahalani, Brigadier General (res.) Yossi Kuperwasser, Colonel (res.) Tal Braun, Prof. Alexander Bleigh

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