

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

# Main Recommendations



The Jerusalem Institute  
for Strategy and Security

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## Main Recommendations



### 1. Nurture National Cohesion

National cohesion is a vital component of Israel's resilience for the tough times that the highly problematic Middle East strategic environment may well engender. Therefore, Israel's government must nurture a spirit of unity and national purpose by building a policy consensus as broad as possible. This is necessary both in preparation for likely combat operations against Iran and its proxies, and in order to respond wisely to the American peace plan and to intelligently manage conflict with the Palestinians.



### 2. Prepare for Several War Scenarios

Israel must prepare simultaneously for a range of war scenarios. This includes development of a credible capacity to strike Iranian nuclear targets; preparation for war on three fronts against an Iranian-led coalition; the ability to "mow the grass" in the two Palestinian arenas; and the ability to withstand an intense missile war. The highest priority is building a ground force capable of swift maneuver and attaining a decisive victory by taking the fight into enemy territory. Reliance on intelligence and accurate firepower (which has been the IDF approach in recent years) is insufficient; this is an important adjunct, not an alternative, to ground combat. The IDF must not be deterred by the prospect of casualties. Casualties can be reduced by swift and forceful forays that rapidly bring about enemy collapse. This will also reduce the time that the home front is exposed to enemy missile fire.



### 3. Counter Iran's Ambitions

With Iran openly defying the international community, seeking to cow Europe into submission and derail American sanctions, Israel must make the necessary preparations for action. At a moment of truth, the IDF must be able to display a credible capability to foil the Iranian nuclear program – if necessary, alone. (Although the preferred option remains action by the US and others). Doing so will also assist in pushing Iran back to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, denying Iran's access to resources and advanced technologies must remain part of the toolbox of responses to Iranian threats. In order to prevent the emergence of an Iranian war machine in Syria and the building of long-range missile infrastructure in Iraq, Israel must demonstrate military determination – including readiness for an overall confrontation. It also must act diplomatically (especially versus Russia) to ensure that Syria and Iraq do not become Iranian bases of attack on Israel.



## 4. Govern Effectively and Fairly in Greater Jerusalem

Israel's national security requires control over Jerusalem and its environs. Strengthening Israel's hold on Jerusalem – a cause which is an Israeli consensus – should be a high priority, with the government acting to bolster the Zionist majority in the city, among other by building in the E-1 quadrant and linking the city to Maaleh Adumim. Arab parts of the city should be governed firmly and fairly, encouraging greater integration of Jerusalemite Arabs through investments in infrastructure and education. Resolute action needs to be taken against radical elements who seek to change the status quo on the Temple Mount, and against foreign elements who undermine Israel's sovereignty in the Jewish People's historic capital.



## 5. Manage the Conflict with the Palestinians

Israel should adhere to a strategy of “conflict management” regarding the Palestinians, designed to reduce the cost of conflict for both sides. This involves careful use of force; economic “carrots”; and adherence to the existing footprint of the settlement enterprise – except in greater Jerusalem, where Israel needs to build and expand significantly. Israel must also govern more effectively in Area C, whether it intends to retain or compromise on this zone in future negotiations. In any case, it would be wrong to succumb to the siren song of unilateral withdrawals – for reasons of national cohesion, as well as for security and diplomatic considerations. Unilateral withdrawal would only feed unrealistic Palestinian expectations and ensure persistence of the conflict, without any diplomatic reward. As for the extension of Israeli law to settlements in Judea and Samaria, no action should be taken until the American peace initiative has been exhausted; and even then, Israeli moves should adhere to the contours of broad national consensus and preserve possibilities for compromise with the Palestinians in the future.



## 6. Respond Positively to the US Peace Plan

When its political component is presented, Israel should welcome the Trump Administration's so-called “Deal of the Century,” and agree to negotiate on its basis. The Trump plan may usefully upend stale “common wisdom” regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and suggest more realistic contours for a settlement. Unfortunately, it seems that the Palestinian leadership is not ripe for a historic compromise with Israel. Therefore, Israel must be ready for a security deterioration if the Palestinian leadership violently rejects the American initiative. Israel must also be ready to prevent a Hamas takeover of the PA in a post-Abbas era, and to preserve cooperation with security forces in the West Bank at the local level, if necessary.



## 7. Deter Hamas in Gaza

Israel should continue with the present policy of seeking to establish temporary deterrence versus Hamas for as long as possible, by identifying painful targets on the other side and maintaining levers of pressure on Hamas, while also offering significant “carrots” to the Gazans; i.e., opportunities for economic advancement. In the absence of long-term peace, the goal should be reduction of the material and psychological harm to Israeli citizens and minimizing the diplomatic costs of violent eruptions. Despite Hamas' annoying provocations, it must be borne in mind that the threats from Gaza are secondary to those posed to Israel on the northern front.



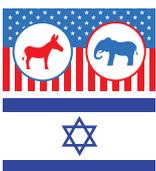
## 8. Prioritize Egypt and Jordan while Seeking New Alliances in the Arab World

Israel's confrontation with Iran and its proxies, and with other radical Islamist forces, has generated a profound and effective commonality of interests between Israel and key players in the Arab world. It is in Israel's interest to make the most of these opportunities, but it is also wise to take note of the nature of the Gulf states and of their limitations. It is therefore important to focus attention and efforts upon Egypt and Jordan, who are Israel's strategic partners and with whom Israel has signed peace treaties. Their stability is of far-reaching importance.



## 9. Exact a Price for Erdogan's Provocations and Bolster Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey's room for maneuver and troublemaking should be curtailed. Led by Erdogan, Turkey is hostile to Israel, supportive of Hamas, and subverting Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem. Links should be further forged with countries in the region who share the same concern. Diplomacy involving the US and Europe should be leveraged to bring about moderation in Turkish policy; and Erdogan is susceptible to pressure. Turkish nuclear ambitions should also be monitored. In addition, it is important to bolster the strategic triangle of Israel, Greece and Cyprus as a counterweight to Erdogan, and expand it into a partnership of all like-minded players in the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Israel should keep in mind that Turkey is an important Muslim country where other voices exist (as the recent elections in Istanbul have shown), and it is useful to maintain Israel-Turkey trade ties and open channels to the Turkish people as much as possible.



## 10. Preserve Bipartisan Support for Israel in the US

Israel has no substitute for US support, especially when facing the Iranian challenge. It is critical to maintain cooperation with the US military and the intelligence community regarding Iran, while taking care not to be seen as pushing the US into war. In the increasingly polarized American political arena, Israeli leadership also needs to maintain close relations with both US political parties, despite Israel's natural appreciation for President Trump's support of Israel. In this context, close coordination and consultation with American Jewry is of greater importance than ever. Avenues must be found to overcome the tensions of recent years relating to Israel's close working relationship with the Trump administration and stemming from conflicts over issues of religion and state in Israel.



## 11. Maintain Dialogue and Deconfliction Channels with Russia

As tensions rise regarding Iran, it is vital to sustain the ongoing dialogue and the channels of communication established with Russia and its forces in Syria (most specifically, deconfliction procedures). As much as possible, Israel should avoid taking stands in international fora that amount to a direct challenge to Russian positions. Thought should be given to incentivizing Moscow for further cooperation with Israel. The recent tripartite summit in Jerusalem involving US, Russian and Israeli national security advisers was a step in the right direction. Israel should continue to broker such important interactions.



## 12. Find Anchors in Europe Against Hostile Attitudes in Brussels

Israel's main goal in Europe should be to assist the Trump Administration in convincing key players not to undermine the renewed sanctions on Iran; to convince key countries to respond harshly to a renewal of Iranian nuclear enrichment activity, not with appeasement; and to enhance European awareness regarding Iranian terror and subversion on European soil as well as Iranian human rights abuses. More nations in Europe should be encouraged to follow Britain's example and designate Hizballah as a terrorist organization, abolishing the absurd distinction between a "military" and a "political" wing; and to bring their policies in line with the US on Palestinian matters, with regard to the Golan Heights and regarding Jerusalem. Israel should pursue the gas pipeline project to Europe; which if economically feasible, could bring Israel and Europe much closer together. Friendship with eastern and southeastern European nations, based on mutual interests as well as common anchors in national identity, is a necessary countermeasure to hostile initiatives in Brussels.



## 13. Tread Carefully Amidst Rising Tensions in Asia

Israel's unique relationship with India should be advanced as a pillar of Israel's relations. Economic relations with China should be managed more carefully, bearing in mind American sensitivities, while at the same time avoiding tensions with Beijing. The challenge will also be to maintain the right balance between cooperative projects with the PRC and the close relationships that Israel enjoys with many countries in Asia that fear China's rise to dominance. Israel should hasten the signing of FTA agreements with Asian countries, where and when trade volume justifies this. Meanwhile, efforts should continue to change the voting patterns of Asian (as well as African and Latin American) countries in international organizations – an achievable goal – given the declining importance of the Palestinian question. Israel should continue to look for breakthroughs with Asian Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Bangladesh.



## 14. Enhance Israel's Diplomatic Toolbox

In addition to the impressive breakthroughs achieved at the highest levels of government, capitalizing on Israel's opportunities in the international arena requires strengthening the professional Israeli foreign service. This should include an active role for a full-time Minister of Foreign Affairs; a return to the MFA of professional units and functions dispersed among other ministries; the allocation of additional budgets for diplomacy; the enhancement of MASHAV (Israel's foreign aid agency) and the integration of Israeli (and Jewish) NGOs in aid projects overseas; and training cadres of professionals who can communicate with an increasingly attentive audience in the Arabic-speaking world. It is equally important to build up the array of Israeli trade representatives abroad. In parallel, the capacities of the Israeli intelligence community must continue to expand; its remarkable achievements should not be taken for granted. Inter-agency consultation should be enhanced, led by the National Security Council, with Jerusalem as the focal point of the policy process.