

# Israel and Iran's Role in the Middle East

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Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, distinguished members of the committee and staff, thank you for the opportunity and the honor of testifying today. It is a special pleasure to testify alongside such distinguished scholars.

Few regimes evoke such strong concern, among so many different countries, as does the Islamic Republic of Iran. Israel is, of course, among the most concerned, and its government views dealing with Iran's nuclear program as its most important national security issue, bar none.

The open animosity and covert hostilities between the two countries are relatively new. Unlike Israel's longstanding disputes with several of its Arab neighbors, Iran and Israel had a close relationship before the Iranian Revolution. Between Israel and Iran lie two other countries and vast swaths of desert, and in many respects their fundamental interests are complimentary. Indeed, before the revolution, Iran was viewed by Israeli national security thinkers as part of a "periphery doctrine" in which Israel allied itself with non-Arab actors in the Middle East, to counterbalance its dramatic inferiority in numbers and, then, in wealth, compared to the Arab countries that surrounded it.

Today, too, one can often hear among Israelis an appreciation for the Iranian people and a genuine desire for better relations between the peoples of the two countries. The scars of the long Arab-Israeli conflict do not, by and large, apply to Iran directly; despite politics, there is considerable goodwill in Israel toward Iranians as people.

But the Islamic Republic, the regime that governs Iran, is viewed very differently by Israelis of all walks of life, and with good reason. Virulently anti-Israeli, the Islamic Republic's leaders have frequently referred to Israel as the "Little Satan" accompanying the "Great Satan," the United States. Iranian leaders have made Israel a feature of their public statements.

In part, this anti-Israeli posture helps remedy the Iranian regime's inherent public relations problem, as a Shi'a theocracy, in the largely Sunni Muslim world. By rhetorically confronting the perceived enemy of many Muslims, Iran can gain a place of honor among them. Such was the case, in the past, with the Lebanese Hizballah, Iran's protégé, which by fighting Israel gained legitimacy among many who would otherwise oppose it as a sectarian and theocratic Shi'a movement in multi-ethnic Lebanon. More importantly, the Iranian regime has backed its rhetoric with a long track record of stoking violence against Israel and even against Jewish targets worldwide, often through proxies such as Hizballah.

As a result, virtually no one in Israel, including those who strive in earnest for peace with Israel's Arab neighbors, expects a true rapprochement between the Islamic Republic, as currently constituted, and Israel in the near or medium-term future.

Nonetheless, important—though limited—variation does exist among Israeli policymakers on the challenges posed by the Iranian regime and on what Israel might do to counter them. In the remainder of my testimony, I will touch on two different aspects of Iran's role in the Middle East and on mainstream Israeli views with regard to them: the narrow but meaningful spectrum of opinions within the Israeli national security elite about Iran's nuclear program; and Iran's involvement in terrorism and conventional conflicts against Israel and around the world. I will conclude with some remarks on the limited, but real, potential for an alliance of convenience between Israel and another major adversary of Iran's current regime, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Iran's Nuclear Program

There are meaningful differences among mainstream Israeli thinkers about how to deal with Iran's nuclear program, as I will discuss, but it is important to note first that far more unites Israelis on this issue than divides them. Diversity of opinion, in other words, exists, but the spectrum is narrow and the variation small. Let me begin by describing the main points about which Israelis are largely unanimous, before describing the important differences that remain.

First, virtually no one in Israel's national security elite, nor, for that matter, in the U.S. government or among the P5+1 countries, doubts Iran's intention to reach threshold nuclear capabilities. The simultaneous pursuit of extensive uranium enrichment capabilities, far beyond anything needed for civilian purposes, a separate plutonium track, efforts at developing weaponization technology and delivery systems, all coupled with repeated Iranian efforts at subterfuge and concealment of its nuclear program, leave no doubt among Israelis about Iran's intention to develop nuclear weapons capabilities.

Israeli experts, and indeed the Israeli government, do not contend that Iran has already decided to build a nuclear weapon, but hardly any among them doubt that Iran intends to have the capability to do so if it so chooses in the future.

Second, almost all in the Israeli national security community view the possibility of a nuclear-threshold Iran as a very negative development. A nuclear threshold Iran could act as a catalyst for nuclear proliferation in the highly volatile Middle East. Nuclear threshold capabilities might also embolden Iran in other, conventional involvements in the region. While not all Israelis agree on the severity of this threat, as I will discuss, virtually no one dismisses it offhand.

Third, clearly most Israeli policymakers support the need for keeping "all options on the table" and for projecting a credible threat to stop Iran's nuclear program by use of Israeli conventional force, if necessary. As I will discuss, there are considerable differences among Israelis in their views of when and how force might be used and how readily Israel should use it unilaterally, but nearly all view an Israeli ability to act as an important complement to the diplomatic track led by the United States and other major world powers.

And yet, there are meaningful differences among mainstream Israeli thinkers and even among recent heads of security agencies. First, while all Israelis view the Iranian nuclear program with deep concern, not all view the threat with equal severity. The often used term "existential threat", in particular, is not used by all to describe the Iranian program. Even if Iran were to decide to "break out" of a threshold posture and acquire a weapon, some argue, Israel would be strong enough to deter it effectively.<sup>1</sup>

Though, undoubtedly, a nuclear power, with effective delivery systems, could devastate Israel, a very small country, the threat is mitigated by the second strike capabilities that most believe Israel possesses. Most importantly, the Iranian regime itself believes Israel is a nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Ari Shavit, "Former Mossad Chief: An Attack on Iran Likely to Foment a Generations-long War," *Ha'aretz*, September 1, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/former-mossad-chief-an-attack-on-iran-likely-to-foment-a-generations-long-war-1.461760>; as well as: "Report: Barak Says Iran is Not Existential Threat to Israel," *Ha'aretz*, September 17, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/report-barak-says-iran-is-not-existential-threat-to-israel-1.7710>

power with such second strike capabilities. A reality in which Iran has acquired nuclear weapons would then entail a grim but perhaps stable, cold-war logic of mutual assured destruction (MAD), which might deter Iran from ever using a weapon.

This debate rests on a related debate, that of Iran's rationality.<sup>2</sup> While the Islamic Republic's goals are clearly different than what would seem reasonable to most Americans or Israelis, their rationality in *pursuing* these goals is another matter. Clearly sophisticated and calculated, Iranian leaders would know the potential ramifications of an overt—and ascribable—nuclear attack on Israel. Given that the regime likely views its own survival as a primary concern, the likelihood of such an overt attack is diminished.

There exists, of course, the possibility of a less overt attack, should Iran acquire nuclear weapons. With several terrorist organizations working closely with Iran, it is at least possible that nuclear weapons could be transferred and used by an individual or group other than the Islamic Republic itself. Though possible, and very worrisome given the stakes, this remains a long-shot in most views.

Several Israelis have also pointed to the unnecessary demoralizing aspect of depicting Iran as an existential threat.<sup>3</sup> Describing a nuclear Iran in this way would present ordinary Israelis with a seemingly impossible dilemma. It would give Israelis the false perception that if all fails and Iran were to acquire nuclear capabilities, their country is doomed. Many in the Israeli elite, and among its diplomats, therefore prefer to avoid this term.

Second, there is important variation among senior Israeli security thinkers on what might constitute an acceptable deal, from Israel's perspective, between the P5+1 countries and Iran. All agree on the importance of dealing with Iran's plutonium track as well as the importance of the weaponization aspects of Iran's program, but there are nuances on the levels of residual Uranium enrichment Iran might be permitted. While the Israeli government has made clear its position that no enrichment capabilities in Iran would be acceptable, some important voices in Israel have suggested that very low levels of enrichment, coupled with stringent inspection, might leave the international community, and Israel, enough time to react to a breach of an agreement.<sup>4</sup> The key, as always, is in the details: how long the remaining "break out" time would be; how stringent the inspections would be over time; and what advancement in Iranian enrichment technology would be possible in the meantime.

Third, and perhaps most dramatically, there are different views in Israel on the wisdom of a unilateral Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, and on the timing of such a strike, should it be ordered. Multiple reports, and my own interviews, suggest that between 2010 and 2012 the Israeli cabinet was strongly divided on the issue, with several ministers and chiefs of intelligence

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<sup>2</sup> "'Irrational' Iran Can't Get Nuclear Arms: Netanyahu," *Reuters*, July 11, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/07/11/us-nuclear-iran-netanyahu-idUSTRE66A1F120100711>; Chemi Shalev, "Netanyahu: 'I won't wait until it's too late' to decide on Israeli Attack on Iran," *Ha'aretz*, July 14, 2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.535724#!>.

<sup>3</sup> Barak Ravid, "Mossad Chief: Nuclear Iran Not Necessarily Existential Threat to Israel," *Ha'aretz*, December 29, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/mossad-chief-nuclear-iran-not-necessarily-existential-threat-to-israel-1.404227>.

<sup>4</sup> Amos Yadlin and Avner Golov, "The United States, Israel, and the Possibility of Formulating an Outline for a Final Agreement with Iran," *INSS Insight*, No. 543, (April 30, 2014), <http://d26e8pvoto2x3r.cloudfront.net/uploadImages/systemFiles/No.%20543%20-%20Amos%20and%20Avner%20for%20web043254200.pdf>.

and the military advising caution and restraint, while the prime minister and minister of defense held more hawkish views on the matter. Since then, former security officials involved in the debates have criticized the prime minister openly on this issue.<sup>5</sup>

Public opinion polling suggests that the Israeli public, too, is divided on the issue of a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.<sup>6</sup> Like many Israeli policymakers, the public seems especially attune to whether a strike would be led by the United States—in which case the public, though apprehensive, might well support Israeli involvement—or whether Israel would act on its own—in which case the public is far more skeptical of the merits of a strike. While the Israeli leadership has devoted a great deal of effort and resources to secure an Israeli capability to act alone—and the United States, and the U.S. Congress in particular, have done a great deal to help in this effort—there are those in Israel who believe a unilateral strike might not be worth the considerable risks.

Note that there is a considerable difference and tension between the need to project readiness to strike if all else fails—something which nearly all Israelis support—and actual support for a unilateral strike, on which opinions diverge. While the credible *threat* of a strike could help the diplomatic track, and might even be essential to successful diplomacy, its credibility can be undermined when these differences emerge publicly.

Fourth, there is some debate in Israel on the strong and vocal focus on the Iranian nuclear threat exhibited by the current government of Israel. Even the current chief of the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service—who answers directly to the prime minister and who is heavily tasked with the Iranian file—recently noted that the unresolved conflict with the Palestinians, rather than Iran, poses a graver long-term threat to Israel.<sup>7</sup> Others frequently argue in private that the public focus on Iran has given the damaging impression of a purely Israeli-Iranian confrontation over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program rather than, more appropriately, an issue between the international community and Iran.

However, others contend, and with reason, that the Israeli diplomatic focus on Iran's nuclear program has created the sufficient urgency in the international community to deal with the issue seriously, from an extensive sanctions regime to robust diplomacy. Ehud Barak, the former Israeli minister of defense, when deflecting criticism of his and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's approach, noted the success of Israel's effort to place Iran's nuclear program at the top of the international agenda. He lamented the damage done to Israel's international effort by the internal discord on the matter.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, on the threat of the Iranian nuclear program, far more unites Israelis than divides them. But some differences exist among Israelis on the extreme severity of the threat, the nuances of the remedies that might be acceptable in a diplomatic agreement on the program, on

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<sup>5</sup> Natan Sachs, "Israel's Spy Revolt," *Foreign Policy*, May 10, 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/10/israels\\_spy\\_revolt](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/10/israels_spy_revolt).

<sup>6</sup> See Shibley Telhami, "The February 2012 Israeli Public Opinion Survey," The Brookings Institution, February 29, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/02/29-israel-poll-telhami>.

<sup>7</sup> Barak Ravid, "Mossad Chief: Palestinian Conflict Top Threat to Israel's Security, Not Iran," *Ha'aretz*, July 5, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.603249#!>.

<sup>8</sup> Shlomo Cesana and Matti Tuchfeld (in Hebrew) "Barak: "Havurat Olmert Poga'at BeMa'amad Yisrael"" (Barak: The Olmert Gang Damages Israel's Standing) *Yisrael Hayom*, May 3, 2012 [http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter\\_article.php?id=16698&hp=1&newsletter=03.05.2012](http://www.israelhayom.co.il/site/newsletter_article.php?id=16698&hp=1&newsletter=03.05.2012).

the wisdom of a unilateral Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, and on the seemingly singular and vocal diplomatic focus on the Iranian nuclear issue.

## **Iranian Involvement in Conflicts Abroad**

Where there is particularly little debate among Israeli policymakers and analysts is on the involvement of the Islamic Republic in conflicts abroad. From Israel's perspective, Iran's influence can be felt most strongly in Lebanon, through its proxy, the Lebanese Hizballah, in terrorism abroad against Israeli and even non-Israeli Jewish targets, and in assistance to militant Palestinian groups, most notably to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), to smaller splinter Islamist groups and, to a lesser degree, to Hamas.<sup>9</sup>

### *Hizballah*

The strongest and most significant of the Iran-sponsored groups is Hizballah, the "Party of God," established in 1982. As a Shi'a militia, Hizballah focused both on a fight against Israel, which was embroiled in a lengthy war in Lebanon starting in June 1982, and against other factions in the intricate Lebanese political scene. Hizballah, it should be remembered, has not only been involved in fighting and in terrorist attacks against Israel; The Shi'a Lebanese organization was also directly involved in the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983.

In the past, there was some debate in Israel over the degree of control of Iran over Hizballah. Some argued that Hizballah was, first and foremost, a Lebanese organization that would not sacrifice its position in Lebanon for Iran's needs. As I've heard from senior Israeli officials, the civil war in Syria has ended that debate in Israeli circles. At Tehran's behest, Hizballah has become involved heavily in the sectarian Syrian civil war on the side of the Assad regime, sustaining significant casualties and greatly diminishing its standing among ordinary—and usually Sunni—Arabs, as well as among most of the Lebanese people. This sacrifice by Hizballah provides strong evidence of its deference toward Tehran.

Hizballah's involvement in Syria has left it exposed in Lebanon, and therefore perhaps less inclined to stoke conflict with Israel at the moment. But in the longer term, the Hizballah and Iranian involvement in Syria has helped prop up the Assad regime and secure the Syrian conduit of materiel from Iran to Hizballah. Although Israel and Hizballah have maintained a strained quiet since 2006, born of deterrence wrought in the Israeli "Second Lebanon War" against Hizballah, the organization remains a major concern for Israeli policymakers. Israel views Hizballah as a persistent threat both on its own, and in any possible future confrontation between Israel and Iran.

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<sup>9</sup> See Fares Akram, "In Gaza, Iran Finds An Ally More Agreeable Than Hamas," *The New York Times*, July 31, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/01/world/middleeast/in-gaza-iran-finds-a-closer-ally-than-hamas.html>; Jonathan Schanzer and Grant Rumley, "Iran Spawns New Jihadist Group in Gaza," *The Long War Journal*, June 28, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/by\\_jonathan\\_schanzer.php?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=iran-spawns-new-jihadist-group-in-gaza#](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/by_jonathan_schanzer.php?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=iran-spawns-new-jihadist-group-in-gaza#).

## *International Terrorism*

Of further concern to Israel is the robust and long standing involvement of Iran, and especially of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and of Hizballah, with Iranian support, in international terrorism against Israeli targets abroad.

Some of these attacks, including in Delhi, Tbilisi and Bangkok, should be viewed in the context of a long covert war between Israel and Iran, mostly surrounding Iran's nuclear program.<sup>10</sup> In Iranian eyes, perhaps, attacks on Israeli diplomats are retribution for the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists, for which Iran blames Israel. Other attacks however, have little to do with this ongoing covert war.

Most horrifically, Iranian sponsored terrorism has hit overtly civilian targets abroad, including non-Israeli Jewish targets. These include, famously, the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires (AMIA) twenty years ago this week, which killed 85 people. Israeli intelligence has long contended that Iran was complicit in the terrorist attack; last year the Argentinean special prosecutor for the case released a lengthy report to similar effect.<sup>11</sup>

## *Support for Palestinian Militants*

Of special concern to Israel is also Iran's involvement with militant Palestinian groups, which have inflicted misery on both Israelis and Palestinians, and have consistently undermined the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. PIJ, in particular, has served as an Iranian subsidiary, carrying out deadly terrorist attacks at Iran's command, including suicide attacks. In 1995 in Beit Lid, in Israel, a PIJ operative blew himself up among Israeli soldiers. A second suicide terrorist waited for rescue teams to arrive before detonating his own device and killing both survivors of the first blast and rescuers who rushed to their aid. PIJ operations contributed significantly to undermining the Oslo Process in its early years and weakening support among Israelis for the Rabin government's efforts at peacemaking. In subsequent years, PIJ has continued this deadly pattern against Israeli civilians on numerous occasions.

Hamas's relationship with Iran is more complex. Unlike PIJ, Hamas is a large political party as well as a militia involved in terrorism. Hamas is also an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Islamist organization. As such, there are limits to the alignment between Shi'a Islamist Iran and Sunni Islamist Hamas in the recent context of the sectarian conflict engulfing the Middle East. Hamas's political leadership has had to leave Damascus, in light of the Syrian civil war and the widespread animosity between Sunni Islamists across the Middle East and the Iranian-backed Syrian regime; Relations with Tehran, once robust, have soured accordingly.

Nonetheless, the shared animosity toward Israel allows for strange alliances. Iran and Syria have been important suppliers of weapons for militants in the Gaza Strip, including Hamas.

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<sup>10</sup> Ethan Bronner "Israel Says Iran Is Behind Bombs", *The New York Times*, February 13, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/14/world/middleeast/israeli-embassy-officials-attacked-in-india-and-georgia.html?pagewanted=all>;

Thomas Fuller "Israeli Envoy Links Bangkok Bombs to Attacks in India and Georgia", *The New York Times*, February 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/16/world/asia/bombs-in-bangkok-linked-to-india-and-georgia-attacks-israeli-envoy-says.html>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/world/americas/prosecutor-in-argentina-says-iran-plotted-with-hezbollah-in-latin-america.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/30/world/americas/prosecutor-in-argentina-says-iran-plotted-with-hezbollah-in-latin-america.html?_r=0)

Syrian-produced M-302 rockets, for example, have been used against Israeli civilians in the current round of fighting. The same type of rockets were found on the KLOS C arms ship, which the Israeli navy intercepted before it could reach Gaza. The KLOS C originated in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.<sup>12</sup>

Following the Egyptian military's recent action against most of the tunnels that connected northern Sinai and the Gaza Strip, the opportunity for weapons smuggling has diminished significantly. This offers some hope that the supply of weapons, Iranian and other, will be more difficult after the conclusion of this round of fighting, "Operation Protective Edge" in the Israeli terminology.

Nonetheless, the long and bloody track record of the IRGC, Hizballah, PIJ, and Hamas, suggest that Iranian involvement in fomenting anti-Israeli terrorism in Israel, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and abroad, are likely to continue in a variety of forms.

### **An Alignment of Interests between Israel and Saudi Arabia**

The Islamic Republic has acquired an array of adversaries, in part due to its robust and widespread efforts at fomenting instability outside its borders. This, in and of itself, suggests an opportunity for its adversaries to align.

The regional context is important in this regard. With a broad sectarian conflict sweeping the Middle East, Sunni and Shi'a powers find themselves at odds. This confrontation exacerbates the longstanding rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, in particular.

The events of the past three years have also created a rift between, on the one hand, traditional Arab powers such as Saudi Arabia and, now, Egypt, and on the other hand, those perceived to be more closely aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Qatar and Turkey.

The result is that Israel and some of the traditional Arab powers now have aligned interests, with shared conflicts with both the Islamic Republic of Iran and its allies, and with Muslim Brotherhood organizations such as Hamas. Indeed, on Iran's nuclear program in particular, Israel and Saudi Arabia share many views.

This alignment has even had a public aspect to it, with a public meeting of former intelligence chiefs from Israel and Saudi Arabia, Amos Yadlin and Turki bin Faisal Al Saud, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Both former officials remain influential in their countries and their meeting was likely coordinated with the current authorities.

And yet, a few words of caution are in order. First, the origins of the rivalry between Israel and Iran are very different than those between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and Iran each view themselves as the rightful leaders of Sunni and Shi'a Islam, respectively; they both straddle the Persian (or "Arabian") Gulf; Saudi Arabia has a sizeable Shi'a minority in the

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<sup>12</sup> Lazar Berman and AFP, "40 Missiles, 181 Mortars, 400K Bullets Found on Arms Ship," *The Times of Israel*, March 9, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/40-missiles-181-mortars-400k-bullets-found-on-arms-ship/>; Yaakov Lappin, "Syrian-made M302 Rocket Fired by Hamas at Hadera," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Syrian-made-M302-rocket-fired-by-Hamas-at-Hadera-362008>.

<sup>13</sup> See "Israel and the Middle East: Seeking Common Ground, A Conversation with HRH Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud and General Amos Yadlin," The German Marshall Fund, May 26, 2014, <http://www.gmfus.org/israel-and-the-middle-east-seeking-common-ground/>.

eastern part of the country, where much of its oil is found; and the two countries have long vied for prominence in their immediate vicinity. Added to this is the horrific civil war in Syria, which has Sunni militias of a variety of stripes, some of whom have Saudi support, fighting against the Iran-backed Assad regime.

In short, the Saudi-Iran confrontation is deeply rooted not only in the Islamic Republic's behavior, but in the geopolitical positions and aspirations of the two countries. It is not merely Iran's policies that worry Saudi Arabia, in other words, but Iranian power itself.

Israel, on the other hand, has little issue with Iran as such. The grave Israeli concerns over Iran relate directly to the policies of the Islamic Republic. Israel, like Saudi Arabia is gravely concerned with Iran's nuclear program and with Iran's activity outside its borders; but unlike Saudi Arabia, Israel has little interest in the Sunni-Shi'a divide that defines much of the fighting in the Middle East today. In practical terms, this means that Israel has deliberately avoided siding with either of the warring factions in Syria, focusing instead only on preventing the transfer of advanced weaponry to Hizballah. In other words, Israel's interests, unlike Saudi interests, dictate focusing on particular aspects of Iran's activity in the region, even while avoiding others.

All this suggests that while there is room for cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Israel, this alignment of interests is necessarily shallow and contingent on interests that may change over time or context.

Moreover, the public meeting of the former officials of the two countries was striking precisely because the optics of this relationship are highly sensitive. Arab public opinion remains deeply hostile to Israel and acutely sensitive to the Palestinian cause. The persistent Palestinian-Israeli conflict, currently at an especially low point, hinders the ability of Saudi Arabia and Israel to pursue an alliance fully.

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This week will see the planned deadline for negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran on the Iranian nuclear program. Whether or not a deal is reached—now or after an extension—the issue of Iran's nuclear program will not disappear.

A key concern of Israeli policymakers is that, should a deal be reached, there will be some in the international community who will view the issue as closed. In reality, the success of any deal will depend completely on the monitoring and verification embedded in it. Israelis are therefore likely to continue to focus on this issue. Their concerns will be amplified by Iran's continued destabilizing role in several countries in the Middle East and among Palestinian militant groups, as well its extensive involvement in terrorism abroad.

These grave concerns over the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies, though not without debate in Israel, are, as a rule, shared across the Israeli national security community. U.S. interests, which are aligned with—though not identical to—those of Israel, would be well served if the United States too maintained a vigilant, pragmatic but realistic watch over Iran's policies in the future.