



Coping with the Russian Challenge in the Middle East:

U.S.-Israeli Perspectives and Opportunities for Cooperation

Joint Study

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IPS





RUSSIA

Black Sea

Caspian Sea

UZBEKISTAN

TURKEY

GEORGIA

KAZAKHSTAN

TURKMENISTAN

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

TURKMANABAT

Konya

Adana

Diyarbakir

Van

Tabriz

Rasht

Mashhad

İçel (Mersin)

Gaziantep

Mosul

Erbil

Kirkuk

Zanjān

Qazvin

Ashgabat

Nicosia

Aleppo

Latakia

Homs

Damascus

Tehran

Mary

Beirut

Damascus

Baghdad

Kermānshāh

Arāk

Esfahān

Herat

Tel Aviv

Jerusalem

West Bank

Amman

An Najariyah

Abadān

Shirāz

Zāhedān

Port Said

Gaza Strip

Dead Sea

Al Basrah

Ahvāz

Bandar Būshehr

Kermān

Suez Canal

Aqabah

Tabūk

Hā'il

Buraydah

Al Jubayl

Ad Dammām

Dhahran

Manama

QATAR

BAHRAN

Asyūt

Luxor

Medina

Riyadh

Bandar 'Abbās

Manama

Doha

Dubai

Abu Dhabi

OMAN

Muscat

Aswān

Yanbu al-Bahr

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Administrative boundary

Halā'ib

Jeddah

Mecca

Strait of Hormuz

Gulf of Oman

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

OMAN

Muscat

Arabian Sea

Gulf of Aden

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA

Addis Ababa

Dirē Dawa

Hargeysa

SOMALIA



Provisional administrative line

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY TAKEAWAY POINTS

At a time of redefinition for the international order, Israel and the United States share a wide range of mutual interests where the Middle East is concerned. This commonality is one aspect of the international order that is not in flux. While acknowledging limits to its military commitments in the region, the United States seeks to retain its position as the dominant security actor in the Middle East.

Among other goals, Washington aims to secure order and stability in Syria, which at a minimum means avoiding great power conflict and the deepening of state failure, but could also entail achieving a political settlement to the Syrian civil war. The United States views Israel's security as a top priority, as well as a core part of a regionwide counterterrorism strategy. Meanwhile, in Syria, Israel has as its paramount goal pushing back Iran's military entrenchment and ideally the full-scale withdrawal of Iranian military assets from Syria. Israel is willing to work with regional actors that will contribute to this outcome. Israel also sees the continuity of American military dominance in the region as crucial to its security and to regional order.

Israel and the United States enjoy a unique relationship, which

rests on a commonality of strategic interests and on shared values. Israel is the United States' vital ally in the Middle East. The two countries conduct intelligence cooperation of the most important and most sensitive nature. The U.S.-Israel alliance is a key pillar of Israeli security, and the United States also benefits from this close cooperation. The two countries share an understanding that Israel must have freedom of action to exercise its legitimate right of self-defense in a region where its national interests and its most basic national security are constantly challenged from multiple directions.

Russia, which is reasserting its historic role as a global power in Europe, the Middle East, and beyond, poses challenges for the United States and Israel. It is an actor capable of frustrating both Washington's and Jerusalem's foreign policy and national security goals, or of doing even worse damage.

Relations between the United States and Russia are at their lowest ebb in decades. Inflection points in this downward trend include Russia's military incursions into Georgia and Ukraine, interference in U.S. and other democracies' politics and elections, the return to great power competition, and a reassertion of Russian influence in the Middle East.

Russian intervention in the Middle East has focused on Syria, but Russia's efforts to increase its footprint are wider, encompassing the entire region. These efforts notwithstanding, Russia has failed to extend its writ substantially beyond the Syrian arena and is no match for the dominant U.S. presence in the region.

Russia's practice of negotiating the divides between rival actors from the position of a power broker is a challenge and an opportunity. Clearly, Russian assertiveness in Syria and its cooperation with Iran could increase following the U.S. decision to withdraw some of its forces from Syria.

Under these circumstances, Israel faces a strategic challenge in Syria. This is because Iran appears determined to establish

a second missile and terror front in the country, while Russia's military presence constrains Israel's freedom of action to combat Iran and its proxies.

Although Russian policy adversely affects both Washington and Jerusalem, the two allied democracies do not necessarily see Russian intentions and interests through the same lens. Washington does not generally prioritize the threat that Russia's involvement in Syria poses to Israel and can be skeptical about Israeli-Russian high-level engagement, despite the Israeli view that such engagement is crucial for securing and maintaining its ability to operate in Syria. American policymakers are concerned about what could be a tightening relationship between Jerusalem and Moscow, which might enable Russia to project power in the Middle East more broadly and possibly to the detriment of U.S. interests.

Yet the U.S.-Israel alliance and the stabilizing effect of the U.S. presence in the region contribute greatly to Israel's national security, and these are sacrosanct interests for Israel. Moreover, Israel is in fact sympathetic to Washington's concerns about Russian global malign activity and restricts the scope of its security contacts with Russia accordingly. Going forward, Jerusalem will need to balance management of the Russian factor in Syria with its long-term interests in supporting and preserving a favorable U.S. position in the region.

Following are the key takeaway points from the Working Group's discussions.

KEY TAKEAWAY POINTS

- **Israel and the United States perceive Russia differently.** For American policymakers, the relationship with Russia is greatly shaped by the ongoing impact of Russian interference in elections and politics in the United States and other democratic countries and Moscow's broader global pattern of malign activity. Israelis, on the

other hand, feel they must engage Russia pragmatically as they contend with the threat that Iran's position in Syria poses to Israel. This drives Israel to engage Russia diplomatically.

- **Differences in perceptions can burden the U.S.-Israeli relationship.** These tensions may undermine Israel's long-term security interests, in light of its view of the United States as its key strategic ally and its real dependence on U.S. support in countless areas. For the United States, this divergence is also potentially troubling, insofar as Israel is an important ally and a democratic outpost in a complex and dangerous but vitally important world region.
- **The United States could benefit from greater awareness of Israel's insights on Russia.** This is especially true at a time when U.S. interactions with Russia are constrained by conflict and escalatory measures on both sides, even as the U.S. public's appetite for involvement in overseas conflicts is waning. As the United States seeks to understand Russia's likely objectives and potential actions, Israel's experiences with Russia could prove valuable for Washington.
- **As Israel consults with Moscow, it bears repeating that Israel has no alternative to its strategic alliance with the United States.** The strategic alliance with the United States is a central pillar of Israel's national security. This is a key message for both Russian and U.S. audiences, however sensitive it may be to deliver in some contexts.
- **The United States and Israel would benefit from adding consultation about Russia to the broad package of U.S.-Israeli joint activities.** Consulting on Russia would help both countries achieve their strategic objectives while minimizing the possibility

of misperceptions. Israel could benefit from additional venues to demonstrate its continued transparency with Washington concerning its relationship with Russia, allowing Washington to determine that Israel's dialogue with Moscow does not undermine American interests (military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and technological).

- **One way to do this would be to incorporate Russia as a regular topic in official dialogue** between the two countries. To the extent this is already occurring in some lanes of U.S.-Israel engagement, the lessons learned could be shared with individuals and agencies engaged in other lanes.
- More broadly, **the United States and Israel would benefit from establishing a policy-oriented, inter-**



President Donald J. Trump, joined by Vice President Mike Pence, participate in an expanded bilateral meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday, March 25, 2019, in the Cabinet Room of the White House.

agency, senior-level working group, similar to the Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) or the Defense Policy Advisory Group (DPAG), to discuss Russian affairs. The goal of this group would be to incorporate a wider consideration of Russian interests, capabilities, influence, and activities beyond the well-established U.S.-Israel coordination on military and security issues. The Woodrow Wilson Center and IDC Herzliya could help organize and provide venues for this forum and could help make key insights from this process available to legislators, media, and the wider public, as appropriate.

- **Israel views the complete removal of Iran from Syria as a vital national security interest.** The United States and Israel share an interest in containing Iran's ambitions to reach the Mediterranean. For Israel, U.S. support is vital to the success of this effort.
- **Israel deals more effectively with Russia when its alliance with the United States is clear and at the forefront, and the United States benefits from the open channel between Israel and Russia.** Indeed, the United States has its own deconfliction channels with Russia.
- **U.S. government officials should consider public appearances in Israel similar to those made in NATO member states** (e.g., the U.S. vice president's recent visit to NATO facilities in Poland), official visits, and photo ops that demonstrate the American security commitment to Israel, with Russia and Iran among the intended audiences.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF COOPERATION MIGHT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Coordinating strategic messaging vis-à-vis Russia,**

including on matters concerning Syria, but also on broader global and regional issues on which Russia plays a role harmful to U.S. and Israeli interests.

- **Jointly structuring incentives for Russia to play a more productive role in settling the Syrian conflict:**

- » **Considering recognizing a special role for Russia in Syria**, including by integrating the Astana and Geneva processes, if Russia is willing to more effectively push Iran to withdraw its proxies from the country and to encourage a viable political settlement in Syria in which the rights of minority groups and veterans of opposition forces are protected.

- » **Leveraging the need for outside funding for Syria's reconstruction.** The cost of rebuilding Syria is estimated to be U.S. \$250 billion. Israel and the United States share an interest in preventing Iran from stepping into the vacuum with its financial resources. Though Russia seeks to play a central role in reconstruction, it will depend on the provision of financial resources, principally from the Gulf countries and Europe, in which the United States can have a significant say.

The Russian leadership acknowledges its strategic inferiority, mainly vis-à-vis the United States and China. Therefore, Russia seeks to facilitate the evolution of a new international system of checks and balances in which its national interests would be respected and stronger world powers restrained.

- **Coordinating engagement with Sunni Arab states in response to Russian aspirations in the region.** Russia

is aiming to position itself as a competing power in the peacemaking process between Israelis and Palestinians. The United States and Israel both have relationships with the Sunni Arabs. Coordinating U.S. and Israeli messages to the Sunni Arab states could help mitigate this problem.

- **Developing a joint strategic approach between Washington and Jerusalem to contend with the political, military, and information dimensions of potential Russian interference** in case of escalation on Israel's northern border.

U.S.-ISRAELI WORKING GROUP ON RUSSIA: BACKGROUND

Russia's entry into the Syrian civil war in 2015 marked a new stage in Russia's increasingly aggressive posturing on the world stage. The United States viewed it as the continuation of an adversarial relationship that worsened after Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2014. In retrospect, Russian intervention was meant to widen the scope of strategic competition vis-à-vis the United States, which has intensified since 2010 to extend beyond the European theater.

Russia's return as an actor able to shape the security environment in the Middle East underscores the need for a new, region-specific understanding of Russia's worldview and strategy. Since 2015, it has become clear that the intervention in Syria was not an isolated event but rather part of Putin's long-term strategy to increase Russian influence throughout the region, from Morocco to Iran, at the expense of U.S. interests.

For Israel, Russia's military emergence on its northern border was considered mostly a threat, tilting the power balance in the region to Jerusalem's detriment. Thus, Israel was compelled to

strengthen its relationship with Russia, initiating close tactical and operational dialogue on Syria. The extensive engagement between Israeli and Russian top leadership since 2015 has raised concerns in Washington.

As the United States sought to gain a better understanding of Russia's new role in the Middle East and the Israeli attitude toward it, the time appeared ripe to convene leading scholars and practitioners from the two countries to discuss their

perspectives and identify each other's concerns, mutual interests, and areas of disagreement. A survey of the field revealed that although the United States regularly consults its strategic allies on Russia, such a dialogue with Israel, the United States' main ally and partner in the Middle East, was not well developed.

With that in mind, the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Institute for Policy and Strategy of the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya, Israel, established a platform for such a dialogue. A group of experts from each side met on a few occasions over the past year: in Herzliya, Israel, in February 2018 and February 2019 and in Washington, D.C., in June 2018. (Biographies of the participants are provided in the Appendix.)

The goal of this Working Group was to assess Russia's role in the Middle East and its ramifications for the U.S.-Israeli relations, and to develop a mechanism for sustained cooperation on this subject. The group formulated recommendations for the U.S. and Israeli governments on common approaches to the Russian challenge in the Middle East. The discussions ranged from Russia's activities in Syria, Iran, and other countries in the region to Russia's disinformation

Russia deplored the Arab Spring upheaval, comparing it to the wave of "color revolutions," and blamed the West for supporting, if not for instigating, both movements. Moscow's stance received support from the autocratic regimes in the region, while the United States was accused of betraying its longtime partners.

campaign, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and Russia's propaganda and disinformation campaigns directed against Western electorates. This report summarizes the main conclusions and recommendations that emerged from those discussions.

THE INTERNATIONAL SETTING: U.S.-RUSSIAN RIVALRY RETURNS TO THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL POLITICS

Relations between the United States and Russia are at their lowest ebb in decades. Points of inflection in this downward trend include Russia's military incursions into sovereign states on its western border, Russian meddling in American politics and electoral campaigns, Cold War-style strategic competition, and the military intervention in Syria.

Although U.S. competition with Russia is most visible in the European theater, Moscow perceives itself as a great power in the international system, rather than a regional power, as the United States has defined it at times. Beyond pragmatic interests, Moscow is driven by the desire for recognition and a geopolitical status lost at the end of the twentieth century. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation surrendered its previously preeminent role in international affairs. Thus, the post-Soviet era was a time of humiliation and retreat as the Russian Federation came to terms with its new status as a diminished power.

The Russian leadership acknowledges its strategic inferiority, mainly vis-à-vis the United States and China. Therefore, Russia seeks to facilitate the evolution of a new international system of checks and balances in which its national interests would be respected and stronger world powers restrained. Russia promotes an alternative vision of a multipolar world based on a rigid definition of sovereignty, led by several great powers having supremacy over "regular" states.

The period of Russian retrenchment from the world stage has definitively ended. Four major events are waypoints in Russia's incrementally expanding military and diplomatic reach.

The first was the Russo-Georgian War in August 2008. That was the first indication that Moscow was willing to use force to contest U.S. foreign policy in Russia's "near abroad" and, more important, that Moscow was unwilling to accept a security framework in Europe that entailed NATO enlargement.

The second pivotal point proved to be the annexation of Crimea and Russia's intervention in Ukraine's Donbas region, a simmering war that Moscow has never officially acknowledged. This was the first territorial annexation in Europe since World War II, challenging the basic tenets of the security architecture established on the continent.

The 2015 intervention in Syria displayed the Russian leadership's desire to remind the world of Russia's great power status, along with its ability and willingness to use force outside the former Soviet Union—a first since the end of the Cold War.

Finally, the 2016 disinformation campaign seeking to influence the U.S. presidential elections was a high point of a long and multifaceted Russian campaign to discredit the legitimacy of Western democratic institutions. From the perspective of Moscow, it seemed adequate retaliation for Western support of democratization processes inside Russia, which it perceived as an effort to destabilize Putin's regime. As a result, Russia became a primary challenger to American power, and any notion of mutual trust between Washington and Moscow began to evaporate. The negative bipartisan attitude in Washington toward Moscow deepened, stimulating legislation

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from Congress and the president to punish and deter Russia. Simultaneously, Russia expanded its disinformation campaign in several key electoral campaigns in Europe.

The bilateral split demonstrates Russia's willingness to block Western aspirations in its "near abroad," challenge the post-Cold War security framework in Europe, veto U.S. foreign policy in a region where it had previously enjoyed a monopoly, and, finally, signal the ability to undermine the United States on U.S. territory.

Continuous proclamations from the Kremlin that it is willing to cooperate with the West on a mutually respectful basis fail to defuse Washington's deep distrust. Looking even a decade ahead and taking into consideration the deep disagreements between Washington and Moscow and the bipartisan consensus that Russia is a major threat to the American way of life and its role in the world, it is difficult to envisage a significant improvement in Russian-American relations.

REEMERGENCE OF RUSSIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Russia's return to the Middle East for the first time since the 1980s was sparked by its global aspirations, by its historical geostrategic focus on the region, and by the consequences of the Arab Spring. The perception of waning American commitment in the region allowed Russia to identify a power vacuum, which it has attempted to fill under the banner of the international fight

against terrorism.

The Middle East is a region where Russia has historically exerted its influence for more than three centuries. Its absence from the region since the disintegration of the USSR was perceived in Moscow as a historical aberration. The Middle East was a natural playground for Russia's strategic struggles against its neighbors, the Ottoman and the Persian Empires, and against other global rivals (mainly Great Britain, France, and the United States).

Russian efforts to influence the Middle East have been aimed at protecting Russia's southern borders and its freedom of navigation through the Black Sea straits. In addition, since the nineteenth century, Russia has viewed Jerusalem as an important center of Orthodox Christianity where it was determined to stake a claim. During the Cold War, the region became an important arena in the confrontation between the United States and the USSR, exacerbating the local conflicts with East-West allegiance struggles. The Soviets took the Arab side in the Arab-Israeli conflict, allowing them to develop strong relationships with several Arab countries and supplying the USSR with regional power bases during the Cold War.

From the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 until 2015, the Middle East had secondary importance for Russia, as the latter was dealing with internal stabilization and securing its "near abroad." Moscow also developed a more balanced and pragmatic approach toward the region, striving for diplomatic relations with all countries in the Middle East while preserving contacts with Soviet-era friends, pariah regimes, and terrorist organizations. The main practical interests of Russia during those years were to cut financial and ideological support for Russian

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Muslim radicals and separatists from the Middle East and to preserve markets for its arms sales.

Russia's permanent veto-holding seat on the UN Security Council remained one of the main attributes of its claim to "great-power" status, and the Council's constant discussions on the Middle East placed the region at the center of the Russian leadership's conception of the world order. The United States disregarded Putin's Security Council objection to toppling Saddam Hussein's regime. Putin leveraged Russia's relationship with Iran as a bargaining chip when the U.S.-Russian "reset" loomed. Putin also viewed Russian abstention on the Libyan no-fly-zone resolution, which led to the collapse of Gadhafi regime, as a fatal mistake and the best proof of Western malintent and duplicity.

Russia deplored the Arab Spring upheaval, comparing it to the wave of "color revolutions," and blamed the West for supporting, if not for instigating, both movements. Moscow's stance received support from the autocratic regimes in the region, while the United States was accused of betraying its longtime partners. The 2013 Russian-American standoff and the subsequent bargain concerning the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal provided an early rehearsal for Putin's attempt to return Russia to its former greatness—and increase its leverage over the United States and Europe—via the Middle East.

From the Russian point of view, the campaign in Syria was necessary to demonstrate the new Russian military-political posture internationally, to place pressure on the United States, and to support its traditional partners against the backdrop of regional upheaval. Since the start of its campaign in Syria in August 2015, Russia has accomplished a number of foreign policy and bureaucratic goals. Having spent little in blood and treasure, the Russian armed forces have intentionally used Syria to gain battlefield experience for the officer corps, establishing a permanent military presence. The Russian military-industrial complex has field-tested new platforms and weapons, showing off its wares to potential customers. Having gained recognition

as a regional actor, Moscow is much better positioned to negotiate oil, gas, arms, and nuclear energy deals across the region, yielding bargaining chips over local actors.

Moscow's approach has been to expand its role, not only by developing ties with each major player but, more important, by negotiating the divides between them as a regional power broker. While engaging regional rivalries, it cooperated with all sides simultaneously. Russian leaders have demonstrated flexibility in their diplomatic approaches to states and groups that are antagonistic to each other by inserting themselves into every rivalry and attempting to play the mediator. In so doing, Russia bolsters its great power image and promotes particular interests, providing regional actors with an alternative to the United States as the external balancing power.

All the same, even in Syria, where Russia holds a strong position at the table, the table is as much a mess as it was before Russia arrived. Despite its growing role in the region and working relations with nearly all the feuding local actors, Russia has failed to claim its aspired position—a veto-bearing, “indispensable middleman” beyond the Syrian arena.

Moreover, while Russian assertiveness in Syria itself is likely to increase following the American decision to withdraw its forces from the country, the United States remains the strongest political, military, and economic power in the region. The United States has an unshakeable alliance with Israel and strategic relations with the Sunni countries; it is the guarantor of security and freedom of navigation in the Gulf and has an extensive military presence across the region. On the other hand, Russia is a minor player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has distanced itself from the war in Yemen, and is an important, though not critical, actor in Iranian and Libyan questions.

Under these circumstances, Russian and American ability to hold a constructive dialogue on anything in the Middle East has gravely declined over the past year, and regional actors could stick to their uncompromising positions.

U.S. STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The United States sees the Middle East as a region of major strategic concern and seeks to retain its position as the region's preeminent military power. The core strategic principle for the Trump administration is stability, of which there are multiple pillars. These include prosecuting counterterrorism, particularly exemplified by the fight against ISIS; reversing the destabilizing influence of Iran, in Syria and elsewhere; ensuring the uninterrupted flow of energy; guaranteeing freedom of navigation; and providing support for strategic allies such as Israel.

In Syria, the United States is pursuing stability and, beyond stability, a political settlement. It sees Iran as a malign actor whose military presence in Syria should be reduced and, if possible, eliminated. In the view of the Trump administration, recent efforts to extirpate ISIS from Syria have been successful: ISIS and similar ventures should never be allowed to return to Syria. In the long term, once the military phase of this conflict is over, Washington believes that a political future for Syria must be realized through diplomatic action so that this country is no longer a battlefield and no longer a source of outward migration but a place where Syrians can live in peace with another and with their neighbors.

As in Europe, the United States does not view Russia as a partner in the Middle East. The Russian incursion into Syria in 2015 has brought neither order nor stability to Syria. To the extent that Russia abets or encourages Iranian influence, Washington sees its role as negative both for Syria and for U.S. allies such as Israel. However, the United States has worked and will continue to work with Russia on deconfliction mechanisms, recognizing that Russia is a military factor on the ground and a diplomatic player in Syria's future. The United States will exert its leverage on Russia—and it will cooperate with Russia—for the sake of achieving its regional priorities.

THE RUSSIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP: SUSPECT-RESPECT

In contradistinction to the mutual animosity that developed during the Soviet era, the Israeli-Russian relationship over the past decade has been stronger than ever. In 2005, President Putin was the first Russian or Soviet president to visit Israel. Putin has since referred to Israel as a “special state,” based on shared interests and a long collaborative history. Three primary factors have shaped this trend:

- The “boxing strategy,” which allows Israel and Russia to set aside disagreements, separate their relationship from other strategic affiliations, and focus on seeking common ground.
- Historical, cultural, and social ties between the nations, as 1.5 million Soviet-born Jews live in Israel, including some politicians and officials dealing with bilateral relations.
- The strong personal relationship between Putin and Netanyahu, despite ongoing tensions.

The two countries have several shared interests. These include avoiding incidents between Russian and Israeli armed forces in Syria; maintaining stability in the Middle East; and managing a similar approach to dealing with radical Islamic groups such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and their affiliates. Like Israel, Russia was dismayed by the fall of the stable, if undemocratic, regimes throughout the Middle East during the Arab Spring and by America’s embrace of emerging Arab leaders. Furthermore, the two countries commemorate the history and consequences of World War II, which have tremendous importance, albeit from different perspectives, for their respective national narratives.

Nevertheless, Israel and Russia have different geopolitical goals in the short and long terms and have serious disagreements on many regional issues. The two have opposite views regarding

the level of desirable American involvement in the Middle East. Russia cooperates with Iran in Syria, supplies it with weapons, and defends the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), whereas Israel views Tehran as a paramount threat and wages a military-political campaign against it. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Moscow and Jerusalem agree to disagree.

Russian-Iranian relations are at their strongest ever, mainly based on common interests in countering U.S. influence in the region and preserving the Assad regime through military cooperation. Even so, deep mutual suspicions endure, and the two stop short of defining each other as a “strategic ally.” Russia does not see positive relations with Israel and Iran as antithetical, as its regional strategy is premised on concurrently fostering beneficial ties with all regional players.

Since Russia’s 2015 intervention in Syria, each side has seen the other as a critical player in the region. From Israel’s perspective, having a permanent Russian military presence and anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities on its northern border put significant constraints on the unfettered freedom of action Israel had enjoyed previously in Syria and increased the potential for Iranian entrenchment in the country under the Russian umbrella. At the same time, Israel hoped Russia could become a possible counterweight for Iranian influence in Syria and was persistent in its policy to drive a wedge between Moscow and Tehran.

In Russian eyes, Israel had the capability to disrupt Moscow’s planned strategic architecture in the Middle East, mainly through military activity and through its influence in Washington. At the same time, Russia considered that Israel could also act as a possible channel of communication with the United States. Furthermore, it appears that Russia, which competes with Iran for influence in Damascus, profited from the numerous Israeli strikes against Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria. The operational demands in Syria have forced Russia and Israel to deconflict their military activities to avoid a direct clash.

In the last four years, Russia has tried to maneuver delicately and cautiously between its commitment to support its allies in Syria and its tacit deconfliction agreement with Israel. Russia wants to avoid choosing a side in the Iran-Israel confrontation. It still relies on Iranian ground forces in the short term and on future potential support for Syria's restoration. The September 2018 incident during which Syrian air-defense shot down a Russian reconnaissance plane (after an Israeli attack in Syria) showed Israel how quickly it could find itself in the midst of a severe crisis with the Kremlin. At the same time, the crisis was carefully managed, exemplifying that Russia does not have any interest in an extended political crisis with Israel.

The reappearance of Russia on Israel's northern border drove its political and military establishment into intensive engagement with their Russian counterparts. For the Israeli leadership, it is crystal-clear that this engagement does not come at the expense of Israel's commitment to the United States, which remains one of the main pillars of Israel's national security.

Yet during the last two years, the United States has misconstrued the tightening relationship between Jerusalem and Moscow



Vladimir Putin visited Khmeimim Air Base in Syria, December 11, 2017

as enabling Russia to project power in the Middle East at the expense of the American posture. Washington did not fully appreciate that engaging Russia was a sheer necessity for Israel if it hoped to preserve and restore its freedom of action in Syria.

Prime Minister Netanyahu led Israeli political efforts to secure and maintain its ability to operate in Syria. Netanyahu came to an agreement with Putin on a safety measure mechanism, right after Russia's advent in Syria. Since then, high-level interaction has been necessary to curb a hostile approach and attempts to restrain Israeli activity in Syria by tactical, operational, and diplomatic Russian working levels.

QUESTIONS FOR AMERICAN AND ISRAELI POLICYMAKERS

Russia has undoubtedly reshaped regional politics, but several large questions for American and Israeli policymakers remain:

1. How will the global U.S.-Russian competition influence the Middle East?

It is safe to assess that Russian-American relations will remain strained for the foreseeable future. In the last two years, their rivalry was increasingly projected into regional politics and resulted in a zero-sum game dynamic. While the American president is willing to share the burden of regional security arrangements with other actors, and Russia aspires to increase its footprint in the area, is there common ground for cooperation between the two? Will Russia succeed in gaining the role of an "indispensable middleman" in additional regional conflicts, or will it refrain from taking upon itself new costly liabilities? Will the United States succeed in distancing itself from militarily involvement in the region?

2. What are Russia's long-term goals beyond the Syrian conflict?

The restoration of Syrian government control in the country's western part with Russian military assistance appears to be imminent. Following the waning of hostilities, Russia seeks to be in charge of postwar reconstruction in Syria, a task beyond its financial capabilities. The United States, along with its regional and other allies, could have influence and leverage over Russia through financial contributions, denial of political legitimacy to Assad and Russian control, and by using military activity on Syrian soil against the remnants of ISIS and Iranian threats. The employment of those levers vis-à-vis Russia, along with the political dynamics of the Syrian conflict, will determine the pace, depth, or even the possibility of Syria returning to some semblance of normalcy that would encourage refugees to return.

3. How will Russia handle the growing tensions and conflict between Iran and Israel?

An additional postwar challenge for Russia is to evaluate and assert its long-term priorities in the region. Questions here include not just how to retain influence over Syria but how to cooperate with, coordinate with, or oppose Iran, its partner in the war effort. Israel's main regional rival is Iran, and the war in Syria has allowed Iranians to be within shelling distance of the border between Israel and Syria in the Golan Heights. This poses an acute threat to Israel and, by extension, its closest ally—the United States. What remains to be seen is whether the United States and Israel will jointly cooperate, coordinate, or oppose Russia to move Iran farther from the border or even out of Syria altogether.

Russia's ad hoc, low-budget diplomacy may not be sustainable. Russia is not the dominant power in the region, and it may not have the capacity to deter both Israel and Iran from direct hostilities. In such a scenario, the consequences would quickly become very serious: Israeli airstrikes against Iranian positions in Syria and against Hezbollah in both Syria and Lebanon and retaliation from Iran and Hezbollah against Israel itself could turn into a much larger regional war. What role would Russia play in such a scenario? Would the U.S.-Russian dynamic help produce better security arrangement or, on the contrary, prolong the hostilities?

4. What is the nature and what is the future trajectory of Russian-Israeli relations?

The entry of Russia into the Syrian civil war reshaped regional politics, and the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu approached the issue pragmatically, to ensure preservation of Israel's freedom of action in Syria.

Yet even where Israel has sought to maintain deconfliction with Russia to avoid direct engagement, friction has occurred. Unintended escalation by Russia and Israel can develop quickly, as in the September 2018 incident of Syrians shooting down a Russian plane with fifteen officers on-board after an Israeli attack. This episode, which led Russia to supply an S-300 air defense system to the Assad regime, pressured Israel to adjust its modus operandi in Syria. However, it has not cast a shadow over the broader relationship between the two countries.

The United States expects Israel (on par with other major U.S. allies) to voice unequivocal condemnation of Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and of Russia's cyber and disinformation campaigns. Such a policy could directly undermine Israel's ability to deconflict with Russia in Syria and might further complicate the challenges it faces on the

ground. Will the Russian-Israeli deconfliction arrangement in Syria succeed in preventing further incidents? Will Israel have to lower the profile of its relations with Russia to calm apprehensions in Washington?

5. How will Iran handle the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and the return to a sanctions regime?

Finally, the question for American and Israeli policymakers is not simply how to deter or eliminate Iranian conventional capabilities from Syria but how to deter or eliminate the Iranian nuclear threat, now that the United States has pulled out of the JCPOA. The United States has reimposed economic sanctions on Iran that have already grievously harmed the Iranian economy. Iranian leaders may then restart the nuclear program, further destabilizing the region, or seek additional assistance from Russia and European partners.

CONCLUSIONS

Israel and the United States perceive Russia differently. For American policymakers, great power competition with Russia (and even more so with China) is a key element of the U.S. national security strategy and defense strategy. Hence, issues such as Ukraine's territorial integrity and the distribution of power in the Middle East are viewed through the lens of great power politics.

Russia has an advantage in the Middle East, lacking either ideological preferences or the constraints that come with established allies. Moscow's prolonged absence has left a relatively blank canvas to work with. The United States, on the other hand, struggles with myriad competing policy imperatives, path dependency in terms of alliances, and a weakened ability to shape regional actors. Domestic considerations in the United

States limit interactions with Russia.

The Israelis broadly understand Washington's strategic concerns and the need to preserve a U.S.-led international order but are forced to engage Russia, an arrangement it views through the lens of the threat Iran poses in Syria. Thwarting Iran's schemes in Syria is an Israeli national interest of the highest order. Although Israel restricts the scope of security contacts with Russia, the United States is uneasy with the perceived ambiguity of the Israeli position.

In the end, Americans may not appreciate the pragmatism that small countries must demonstrate. The reality of Russia's presence in the region poses a far more considerable strategic challenge for Israel than for the United States. Israel must contend strategically and tactically with a new external force on its border in a way inconceivable to Americans, well protected by two oceans and with friendly, stable neighbors. Without a dedicated, regular exchange on Russian affairs between the two allies, misperceptions and misunderstandings might increase. The complexity of international and regional politics, combined with unclear intersections between them, mandates closer and more frequent coordination.

KEY TAKEAWAY POINTS

- **Israel and the United States perceive Russia differently.** For American policymakers, the relationship with Russia is greatly shaped by the ongoing impact of Russian interference in elections and politics in the United States and other democratic countries and Moscow's broader global pattern of malign activity. Israelis, on the other hand, feel they must engage Russia pragmatically as they contend with the threat that Iran's position in Syria poses to Israel. This drives Israel to engage Russia diplomatically.

- **Differences in perceptions can burden the U.S.-Israeli relationship.** These tensions may undermine Israel's long-term security interests, in light of its view of the United States as its key strategic ally and its real dependence on U.S. support in countless areas. For the United States, this divergence is also potentially troubling, insofar as Israel is an important ally and a democratic outpost in a complex and dangerous but vitally important world region.
- **The United States could benefit from greater awareness of Israel's insights on Russia.** This is especially true at a time when U.S. interactions with Russia are constrained by conflict and escalatory measures on both sides, even as the U.S. public's appetite for involvement in overseas conflicts is waning. As the United States seeks to understand Russia's likely objectives and potential actions, Israel's experiences with Russia could prove valuable for Washington.
- **As Israel consults with Moscow, it bears repeating that Israel has no alternative to its strategic alliance with the United States.** The strategic alliance with the United States is a central pillar of Israel's national security. This is a key message for both Russian and U.S. audiences, however sensitive it may be to deliver in some contexts.
- **The United States and Israel would benefit from adding consultation about Russia** to the broad package of U.S.-Israeli joint activities. Such consultations would help both countries achieve their strategic objectives while minimizing the possibility of misperceptions. Israel could benefit from additional venues to demonstrate its continued transparency with Washington concerning its relationship with Russia, allowing Washington to determine that Israel's dialogue

with Moscow does not undermine American interests (military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and technological).

- **One way to do this would be to incorporate Russia as a regular topic in official dialogue** between the two countries. To the extent this is already occurring in some lanes of U.S.-Israel engagement, lessons learned could be shared with individuals and agencies engaged in other lanes.
- More broadly, the **United States and Israel would benefit from establishing a policy-oriented, inter-agency, senior-level working group**, similar to the Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) or the Defense Policy Advisory Group (DPAG), to discuss Russian affairs. The goal of this group would be to incorporate a wider consideration of Russian interests, capabilities, influence, and activities beyond the well-established U.S.-Israel coordination on military and security issues. The Woodrow Wilson Center and IDC Herzliya could help organize and provide venues for this forum and could help make key insights from this process available to legislators, media, and the wider public, as appropriate.
- **Israel views the complete removal of Iran from Syria as a vital national security interest.** The United States and Israel share an interest in containing Iran's ambitions to reach the Mediterranean. For Israel, U.S. support is vital to the success of this effort.
- **Israel deals more effectively with Russia when its alliance with the U.S. is clear and at the forefront, and the U.S. benefits from the open channel between Israel and Russia.** Indeed, the United States has its own deconfliction channels with Russia.

- **U.S. government officials should consider public appearances in Israel similar to those made in NATO member states** (e.g., the U.S. vice president's recent visit to NATO facilities in Poland), official visits, and photo ops that demonstrate the American security commitment to Israel, with Russia and Iran among the intended audiences.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF COOPERATION MIGHT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Coordinating strategic messaging vis-à-vis Russia**, including on matters concerning Syria, but also on broader global and regional issues on which Russia plays a role harmful to U.S. and Israeli interests.
- **Jointly structuring incentives for Russia to play a more productive role in settling the Syrian conflict:**
 - » **Considering recognizing a special role for Russia in Syria**, including by integrating the Astana and Geneva processes, if Russia is willing to more effectively push Iran to withdraw its proxies from the country and to encourage a viable political settlement in Syria in which the rights of minority groups and veterans of opposition forces are protected.
 - » **Leveraging the need for outside funding for Syria's reconstruction.** The cost of rebuilding Syria is estimated to be U.S. \$250 billion. Israel and the United States share an interest in preventing Iran from stepping into the vacuum with its financial resources. While Russia seeks to play a central role in reconstruction, it will depend on the provision of financial resources, principally from the Gulf

countries and Europe, in which the United States can have a significant say.

- **Coordinating engagement with Sunni Arab states in response to Russian aspirations in the region.** Russia is aiming to position itself as a competing power in the peacemaking process between Israelis and Palestinians. The United States and Israel both have relationships with the Sunni Arabs. Coordinating U.S. and Israeli messages to the Sunni Arab states could help mitigate this problem.
- **Developing a joint strategic approach between Washington and Jerusalem to contend with the political, military, and information dimensions of potential Russian interference** in case of escalation on Israel's northern border.

APPENDIX 1: WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS

Note: The report is a summary of discussions. Not all participants in the Working Group agree with every point made in the report. Other individuals not included below have contributed to the Working Group, and the participants are grateful to them for their expertise and insight.



IDC Herzliya Group Leader: Major General (Res.) Amos Gilead, Executive Director, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS); Chairman of the Annual Herzliya Conference; IDC Herzliya

Major General (Res.) Amos Gilead is the Executive Director of the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) at IDC Herzliya and Chairman of the Institute's Annual Herzliya Conference Series.

Concurrently, General Gilead teaches security and intelligence studies at IDC Herzliya's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy.

Prior to assuming his current position in February 2017, General Gilead led a distinguished career for more than three decades in the Israel Defense Forces and the defense establishment, his last position being Director of Policy and Political-Military Affairs with the Ministry of Defense. In that position, which he held for more than thirteen years, General Gilead managed Israel's international strategic and political-military relations and played a key role in developing Israel's defense relations with key Sunni-Arab nations.

General Gilead dedicated most of his military career to the Intelligence Corps. As Chief of the Intelligence Research and Analysis Division, General Gilead was responsible for producing the national intelligence assessment and national strategic (political and military) production and analysis.

Achieving the rank of major general in 2001, General Gilead was appointed Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and directed the coordination of civilian affairs with the Palestinian Authority. General Gilead participated in several rounds of the peace process and negotiations with the Palestinians, including as a senior member of the Israeli delegation to the Israeli-Jordanian/Palestinian peace talks following the Madrid Peace Conference. General Gilead was a special envoy on Israeli MIA soldiers to PLO Chairman Arafat. In 2008, General Gilead headed the Israeli team of the military affairs working group in the negotiations following the Annapolis Peace Conference. Prior to this, General Gilead also served as the Spokesperson for IDF and as the Military Secretary (Aide-de-Camp) to Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin.

Kennan Institute Group Leader: Matthew Rojansky, Director, Kennan Institute



Matthew Rojansky is the Director of the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute. As a leading expert on U.S. relations with the states of the former Soviet Union, especially Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, Mr. Rojansky has advised governments, intergovernmental organizations, and major private actors on conflict resolution and efforts to enhance shared security throughout the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. He has extensive experience in running track 1.5/track 2 initiatives. He is a highly sought-after speaker and commentator on U.S.-Russian relations.



**Working Group Coordinator for
the Kennan Institute:
Izabella Tabarovsky, Senior Program
Associate, Kennan Institute**

Izabella Tabarovsky is a Senior Program Associate with the Kennan Institute at the Wilson Center. Her research focuses on Cold War history; Holocaust and antisemitism in the Soviet Union; and the politics of historical memory in the post-communist space, including the growing practice of weaponizing historical discourse for geopolitical purposes. From 2012 to 2014, she worked for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where she led the implementation of the Euro-Atlantic Security—Next Generation initiative (EASI Next Generation) and managed a track 2 Transnistria conflict resolution task force. She previously worked for a private communications consultancy; Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government; and Cambridge Energy Research Associates, where she published numerous papers on geopolitics of Eurasian energy. She holds an M.A. degree in Russian history from Harvard University. Her writings have appeared in *Newsweek*, *The National Interest*, *Wilson Quarterly*, *Tablet Magazine*, *Jewish Daily Forward*, and others.



**Working Group Coordinator for the Institute for
Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya:
Ehud Evental, Col. (Res.), Senior Research Fellow,
Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya**

Col. Ehud (Udi) Evental was previously Head of the Strategic Planning Unit, Political-Military and Policy Bureau, Israel's Ministry of Defense, and Assistant to the Military Secretary of the Prime Minister (PM Office), Intel Attaché in Washington, D.C. He has held various positions with the Intelligence and Planning directorates of the IDF and has extensive experience in the

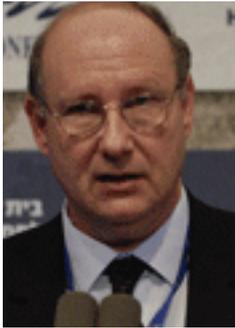
fields of intelligence analysis, strategy and policy planning, and military diplomacy. Colonel Evental holds a B.A. in the history of the Middle East and French literature from Bar-Ilan University and an M.A. in the history of the Middle East and Islamic culture from the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations, Paris.

PARTICIPANTS IN WORKING GROUP MEETINGS IN 2018–2019 HAVE INCLUDED:



Prof. Dmitry Adamsky, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, IDC Herzliya, Israel

Prof. Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky is a Head of the BA Honors Track in Strategy and Decision Making at the School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the IDC Herzliya, Israel. His research interests include international security, cultural approach to IR, modern military thought, and American, Russian and Israeli national security policy. He has published on these topics in *Foreign Affairs*, *Security Studies*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Intelligence and National Security*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, and *Journal of Cold War History*. His books *Operation Kavkaz* and *The Culture of Military Innovation* (Stanford UP) earned the annual (2006 and 2012) prizes for the best academic works on Israeli security. His recent book *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy* (Stanford UP, 2019) is about religion, politics and strategy in Russia.



Dr. Oded Brosh, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Dr. Oded Brosh is a political scientist with IDC Herzliya who specializes in security studies, specifically nuclear politics, strategy, deterrence, proliferation, and related WMD issues. A Senior Research Fellow with the IDC Herzliya's Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), he is the author of "IAEA 26 February 2016 Iran Inspection Report Summary" (IPS Publications, 2016) and *Iran in 2025: Four Scenarios* (IPS Publications, 2015).



Jeffrey Edmonds, CNA, Arlington, Virginia

Jeffrey Edmonds is an expert on Russia and Eurasia. His research focuses on the Russian military, foreign policy, Russian threat perceptions, and Russian information and cyber operations. Most recently, Edmonds served as the Director for Russia on the National Security Council (NSC) and acting Senior Director for Russia during the 2017 presidential transition. While on the NSC, Mr. Edmonds advised the president and his senior staff on Russia-related national security topics, including the Ukraine and Syria crises, the Russian military, foreign policy, threat perceptions, and information operations. Edmonds was also the lead director during a review of the U.S. policy toward Russia, which culminated in a presidentially approved strategy that had global impact. Prior to work with the NSC, he served as a military analyst with the Central Intelligence Agency, covering Eurasian militaries. He has served in the U.S. Army on both active duty and in the reserves for twenty-two years, with tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr. Edmonds holds an M.P.A. from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, an M.A. from Boston University in religious studies, and a B.S. from the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has a working knowledge of Russian.



Yair Freymovich, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Yair Freymovich (Col. (Res.)) is a former Israel Defense Forces Regional Command J2 with more than three decades of experience in military intelligence, including strategic analysis and production, counterterrorism operations, combat intelligence, intelligence training and instruction, and inter-agency relationships. Colonel

Freymovich is the founder and CEO of I2C Ltd., which gained proven experience in designing and implementing strategic scale security projects and intelligence training in complex environments in some of the challenging countries in the world.

Colonel Freymovich holds an M.A. in security and strategic studies and a B.A. in the history of the Middle East and Africa, both from Tel Aviv University



Dr. Ofer Israeli, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Dr. Ofer Israeli, an international security policy and Middle East expert, is a research fellow at the National Security Studies Center (NSSC), University of Haifa. Additionally, he is a lecturer on international relations theory and foreign policy decision-making at IDC Herzliya, the

University of Haifa, Ben-Gurion University, Tel Aviv University, and the Israel Defense Forces Academy.

In 2009–2011 Dr. Israeli was a Visiting Researcher at the Center for Peace and Security Studies of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. His postdoctoral research is in the field of complexity of international relations. He completed a Ph.D.

dissertation on realist theory of international outcomes as part of the University of Haifa's President Ph.D. program for honor students. His M.A. thesis in international relations was on the relation between military results and political outcomes and was prepared for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Dr. Israeli has written extensively on international security. His many articles have appeared in such academic journals as *Israel Affairs*, *Middle East Policy*, and *Middle Eastern Studies* and in popular academic magazines, including *American Diplomacy*. He is the author of the forthcoming book, *Strange Effects of International Relations: Intended and Unintended Consequences of Intentional Human Actions* (Routledge), and of *Theory of International Outcomes* (in Hebrew) (Resling, Tel Aviv, 2016). He has also contributed many op-ed pieces to daily newspapers and news outlets such as *Haaretz*, the *Jerusalem Post*, *Israel Hayom*, *Maariv*, *Walla News*, *Y-net News*, *Yated Neeman*, *Hapeles*, *Funder*, and the TPS News Agency.



Meir Javedanfar, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Mr. Meir Javedanfar is the owner and editor of the *Iran-Israel Observer*. He is a lecturer with the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at IDC Herzliya, where he teaches contemporary Iranian politics. He has been a guest lecturer in five languages (Persian, Hebrew, English, Spanish, and Portuguese) at events and universities in more than twenty countries. He has briefed officials and academics from more than thirty countries on Iran. Mr. Javedanfar is the co-author of the first biography of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and author of the chapter "The Islamic Republic of Iran: The Ministry of Information and

Security (VAVAK)” in the *PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence: National Approaches*. Mr. Javendar serves as an expert to the UN Alliance of Civilizations—Global Experts Resource Project. He is also a member of and contributor to the Gulf 2000 Middle East Project at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. Mr. Javedanfar holds a master’s degree in international relations and strategic studies from Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. He runs the Middle East Economic and Political Analysis Company (MEEPAS) from its offices in Tel Aviv.



Natalia Kantovich, Legal Expert, London

Natalia Kantovich is a practicing Russian lawyer with twenty-five years’ experience. She served as a leading legal expert at Yukos Oil Company, specializing in contracts and tax law. For the past ten years she has lived in the United Kingdom, where she has continued to practice Russian law as part of international litigations against Russia or Russian state companies and to assist Russian individuals in obtaining refugee status. Her research interests include Russian foreign policy and Russia’s involvement in the Middle East; conflict resolution and transitional justice as part of peacemaking and peacebuilding processes; the development of Russia and its integration into the international community post-Putin; and strategic communications, ethics, and politics. She has authored a report on the European practice of lustration and the way it may be used in post-Putin Russia. She has contributed to the book *Fake News. The Roadmap*, jointly published by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence and the King’s Centre for Strategic Communications in January 2018. She holds an LLM in international business and tax law from the Law School of BPP University, London, and is finishing an M.A. degree in international peace and security with the War Department of King’s College, London.



Dr. Ely Karmon, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), IDC Herzliya, Israel

Dr. Ely Karmon is a Senior Research Scholar at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, Israel. He lectures on international terrorism and CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear) terrorism in the M.A. counterterrorism studies program at IDC.

Dr. Karmon holds a B.A. in English and French culture from Hebrew University, Jerusalem, a Licence in International Relations from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques, and a Licence in Bantu languages from the Ecole de Langues Orientales, Paris. He earned M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in political science from Haifa University.



Michael Kimmage, Catholic University of America

Michael Kimmage is a professor of history at the Catholic University of America. From 2014 to 2016 he served on the Secretary's Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State, where he covered issues relating to Russia and Ukraine. He is the author of two books: *The Conservative Turn: Lionel Trilling, Whittaker Chambers and the Lessons of Anti-Communism* (Harvard, 2009) and *In History's Grip: Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy* (Stanford, 2012). His next book, *The Decline of the West: An American Story*, is forthcoming with Basic Books.



Michael Kofman, CNA, Arlington, Virginia

Michael Kofman is one of the leading U.S. military and security analysts focusing on Russia. Mr. Kofman is a Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), a federally-funded research and development center serving the U.S. government, where he oversees the Russia Studies Program. Mr. Kofman is also a Fellow with the Kennan Institute of the Wilson Center and with the Modern War Institute, West Point. He has published articles on security issues in Eurasia focusing on Russia and Ukraine, along with numerous analyses for the U.S. government. He has also appeared in major television, online, and print media as a commentator and subject matter expert.



Uri Kogan, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Uri Kogan is a twenty-five-year veteran of the Israeli security and intelligence community and a graduate of the National Executive Intelligence Training Program, with an academic background in behavioral sciences, criminology, and counterterrorism. Throughout his years of public service, Mr. Kogan held a range of field, command, staff positions with the Israel National Police and the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel. Certified as a crisis negotiator by the Israel National Police and the FBI, he possesses hands-on experience in conducting crisis and hostage negotiations in both criminal and terrorism incidents.

Mr. Kogan holds a bachelor's degree in behavioral sciences from the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and an M.A. degree in criminology from Bar-Ilan University. He recently completed the master's degree program in counterterrorism with a cluster in cyber-terrorism at IDC, and won the National Consulting Competition as a member of the IDC Consulting Club.



Daniel Rakov, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya

Daniel Rakov's expertise is focused on Russian Strategy in the Middle East, Great Power competition and Iranian strategy and international relations. Daniel Rakov has recently retired from the Israeli Defense Forces.



Working Group Coordinator Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya (2017 – October 2018) , Dr Shaul Shay, Col. (Res.), Former director of research, Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), IDC Herzliya.

Dr. Colonel (Res) Shaul Shay served 27 years in the IDF as a paratrooper officer and in the Military Intelligence. Shaul Shay dedicated most of his military career to the intelligence corps. Among his positions: the intelligence officer of an armored brigade during the first Lebanon war, the intelligence officer of an Armored division, the head of counter terror branch and the intelligence officer of the Southern Command. In the years 2007-2009 he was the deputy head of the National Security Council (NSC) of Israel.

Shaul Shay holds M.A and Phd degrees from the Bar Ilan University and he is a lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzeliya (IDC).

Shaul Shay was the director of research of the Institute for Policy and Strategy (2013 – 2018) and a senior research fellow of the International Policy Institute for counter Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzeliya (IDC), Israel.

Dr Shay is the author and the editor of 19 books, 11 of them were published in the USA and U.K. His last books are:

Israel and Islamic terror abductions (1986 – 2016), Sussex Academic Publishers, Brighton, U.K.2016.

Somalia in transition since 2006, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2014.

The global jihad and the tactic of terror abductions, Sussex Academic Publishers, Brighton, U.K .2013.



Yuval Weber, Inaugural DMGS-Kennan Institute Fellow, Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security

Yuval Weber, Ph.D., is a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the inaugural Kennan Institute Fellow at the Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security, where he is on leave from the faculty of World Economy and

International Affairs, National Research University–Higher School of Economics, Moscow. He is a Center Associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University and previously served as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department on Government at Harvard University. Dr. Weber is working on a project on the sources of liberal and antiliberal dissatisfaction with powers in the international system and the strategies powerful nations employ to stake their claims for revising the international order. The first manuscript under contract (Agenda/Columbia University Press) evaluates the tension between the demands of economic modernization and the security state in the Russian political economy and will be completed while he is residence at the Woodrow Wilson Center. His work has appeared in *Problems of Post-Communism*, *International Studies Review*, *Survival*, *Cold War Studies*, *Orbis*, and *the Washington Post*.



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