

The 17th Annual HERZLIYA CONFERENCE

Israel's Strategic Balance Ahead of the 70th Year of Independence:
Opportunities and Risks

JUNE 20-22, 2017

IDC HERZLIYA CAMPUS, ISRAEL

SIMULATION ON: Israel Faces a Multi-Front Confrontation

Main Findings and Insights of the simulation

The Palestinian arena

1. The Palestinian Authority - an attempt was made to establish a United and legitimate leadership with Hamas. This initiative failed.
2. An attempt was made to maintain the dialogue with Israel, including the continuation of the security cooperation.
3. Close contacts occurred in order to reach a solution for the Israeli Palestinian conflict based on the Arab peace initiative.
4. An Egyptian initiative to promote a widely accepted Palestinian leadership headed by *Mohammed Dahlan*.
5. Hamas is determined to take control over Judea and Samaria while attempting to minimize the damages in the Gaza Strip in the conflict with Israel.
6. In light of the crisis at the Palestinian arena, Jordan offers to send Jordanian military forces that will secure the Islamic holy sites in the Temple Mount.

The Northern front

1. Hezbollah wages war against Israel in two fronts (Lebanon and Syria).
2. Hezbollah views the confrontation with Israel as an opportunity to reduce its involvement in the Syrian civil war and deploy its forces along the Israeli borders with Lebanon and Syria.
3. Iran's interest coincides with ending the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, but it will give support to Hezbollah as long as Israel will not ask for a cease-fire agreement.

4. Assad's supreme interest is maintaining his regime .
5. Assad requests that Russia will prevent Israeli airstrikes against Syria in coordination with the United States.
6. Syria will ask Hezbollah to abstain from a ground offensive against Israel originated in the Syrian Golan Heights.

Russia

1. Russia is a central and dominant actor in shaping the reality across the Middle East and operates only according to its own interests.
2. Russia acts to restrain Hezbollah in cooperation with Iran.
3. Russia sets red lines concerning Israel's activities against Hezbollah in Syria.
4. Russia has deployed warships to the Mediterranean Sea, near the shores of Lebanon.
5. Russia is conducting discussions with the United States in the effort to minimize the violence from all sides.
6. Russia initiates a UN Security Council assembly to stop the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah and thereafter to convene an international conference in which political agreements in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq) will be settled.

United States

1. United States provides Israel with full backing to protect itself, but still calls for restraint (supports Israel with emergency supplies of weapons and funds the antimissile defense systems).
2. United States is conducting discussions with Russia so that the latter will act to restrain Hezbollah.
3. United States promotes for a widely accepted UN Security Council resolution to stop the violence between Israel and Hezbollah & the Palestinians.
4. United States acts to preserve the freedom of sailing in the Red Sea around the Straits of Bab el-Mandeb.

Israel

1. Israel will protect the security of its civilians in any way possible (military and diplomatic).
2. Israel condemns the military actions from Hezbollah and the Palestinian areas, and call upon all the international community to work for their immediate cessation.
3. Israel will continue the security cooperation with the Palestinian forces as long as it will be clear that the Palestinians are operating to control the situation and eliminate the attacks on Israel.
4. Israel will act in the Gaza Strip, at this point, with its air force and the "Iron Dome" antimissile defense system but refrain from a ground offensive.
5. Israel will not be intimidated by any threats, including those of a foreign superpower (Russia) in order to protect the security of its civilians. Israel is grateful for the support given to it by the United States.
6. Israel is calling upon all the Sunni Arab states to work together in the long-lasting battle against the common enemies which are Iran, its proxies and the rest of the Shiite axis.

Main insights

- Abu-Mazen's disappearance from the political stage may lead to chaos in the Palestinian arena and pave the way for a Hamas takeover at Judea and Samaria.
- Israel wishes for the ending of violence from the Palestinian side, but is not interested in controlling all the Palestinian territories in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip.
- In a state of simultaneous confrontation against the Palestinians and Hezbollah, Israel will direct its main efforts and resources to the war against Hezbollah while lowering the importance of the Palestinian issue to a second priority.
- Russia is a central actor responsible for achieving stability in the region and imposing limitations which create difficulties for Israel's freedom of operation, specifically in the Northern arena.
- The state of Israel enjoys political and military backing of the United States.
- A strategic compatibility of interests exists between the state of Israel and the moderate Sunni Arab states in facing the Shiite axis headed by Iran.