

The Israeli Way of War: How Israel Would Wage a ‘War for Existence’ against a Peer Competitor

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The study demonstrates the difference between contemporary Israeli military and national security operations under the ‘Campaign between Wars’ framework and the way Israel would wage a ‘war for existence’. The paper first outlines Israeli military strategy and theory regarding an existential war, while aiming to show how Israel would use its military capabilities. The paper explains the most plausible scenario of a war between Israel and a peer competitor, namely Iran and its proxy network, and the question of using nuclear weapons. Finally, the study presents the potential effects of such war on Israel, its enemies and the region. The paper argues that the most important aspect of Israeli conventional and nuclear warfighting capabilities is that they provide such a robust deterrent that they make war extremely unlikely. However, Israeli deterrence is based on the firm belief that the preparation for the war for existence is the most significant national goal, thereby establishing Israel as a linchpin to the regional balance of power, as a regional great military power itself is incapable of becoming a regional hegemon while assertively balancing against any such contender.

Keywords: Israel, military strategy, Middle East, Iran, balance of power

Introduction

The Middle East has emerged in the post-Cold War order as one of the most unstable regions, plagued with various security challenges. While terrorism, proxy conflicts and civil wars are constant factors, albeit to various degrees in all Middle Eastern states, conventional wars between regional states have not erupted since 1990, when Iraq attempted to integrate Kuwait through forceful annexation. Israel is one of the countries that is characterised by persistent security challenges, first and foremost terrorism, while it is also an active participant of an asymmetric conflict against Iran and its regional allies. The current situation of Israel cannot be directly compared to the historic examples of conventional warfighting against various coalitions of the surrounding Arab states. Israel, which is a regional military great power, has not waged a conventional war

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since 1973.² The paradox lies in the Israeli narrative of assuming a constant existential danger for which the state is planning and preparing, and the reality of the ongoing low intensity conflict fought against Iran and its proxy network, the so-called Campaign between Wars (CBW).

This paper aims at analysing the hypothetical Israeli ‘war for existence’, the ways in which Israel would use its weapon systems, conventional and non-conventional military capabilities against a peer-competitor, an emerging regional hegemon. This we will distinguish from CBW and describe as “the Israeli way of war”, as it stands in 2023. What we can claim for certain is that the contemporary Israeli way of waging war against a peer competitor would be very different from the last such event in 1973, and it would be also different from the current military operations under the framework of the CBW. We must underline that the possibility of a war does not mean that it is inevitable. On the contrary, the lingering threat of Israeli warfighting capabilities create such deterrent power that, as we will demonstrate in this paper, no hostile party can rationally believe that there would be net benefits from directly challenging Israel’s existence. However, the eruption of war is not always rational, miscalculations can occur on both sides, which can lead to Israel engaging in a military conflict perceived as a war for its existence. At that point, fighting an all-out war with Israel might be seen by the enemy a less costly endeavour than unilaterally backing down. That is why analysing the Israeli way of war is a vital research question to understand the balance of power and regional security dynamics in the Middle East. The paper does not directly analyse the Israel– Hamas War which has erupted as a result of the mass terrorist attack committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023, as Hamas is not itself a peer-competitor to Israel. While Israel has declared a state of war, it has done so mostly in a preventive manner and Israel is not fighting a war for existence as of 1 January 2024. Regardless, a short analysis will be provided in the section on war scenarios arguing why the 2023 war does not negate the reasoning of this paper.

The paper will first detail the relevant Israeli military and national security strategy on how Israel might wage a war for existence. It will briefly demonstrate that Israeli threat perception has a key role in its regional security role and deterrent power. The study identifies the main factors where aggravating threats might be perceived to tip over to endanger Israel’s fundamental security, triggering war. The paper will list the most relevant weapon systems and abilities which would be utilised in a war for existence, both conventional and non-conventional. It will then outline the Israeli threat environment, focusing on the Iran-led “Axis of Resistance”. Thirdly, the paper will present the likely scenario of Israel mobilising for an existential war against Iran and its proxies on multiple fronts, while also pondering the question of at what point Israel would consider using its nuclear armaments. Finally, the paper will analyse the potential effects of a war erupting between Israel and Iran, using it as a hypothetical case study for any war between Israel and a potential regional hegemon. It will also demonstrate that the effects would hinder any potential enemy in the Middle Eastern power competition to such a degree it makes

² The paper has been written before 7 October 2023 and revised on 1 January 2024. I will briefly argue that what we call the Israel– Hamas War is a significant armed conflict, but it is well short of a conventional war or a war for existence which is the topic of this paper.

the eruption of an all-out war a case of fatal miscalculation. The paper concludes with the point that the Israeli way of war is itself a key anchor of the regional balance of power, that of regional stability, which, however, due to its nature as a systemic and all-out threat of armed force, can get out of hand and lead to grave destabilisation and damage to the Middle East and all surrounding regions.

The Israeli war for existence: Doctrine, capabilities and weapon systems

In order to understand how Israel would be engaged in conventional warfare, we must first analyse the relevant indications in its national security strategy. Doctrinal considerations are also indicative of the type of military operations that Israel would employ against a peer competitor, which can be an individual state, or more probably a coalition of states and/or non-state actors, including terrorist organisations. The most important distinction in the Israeli national security strategy is the triad of routine security situation, emergency and fundamental security.³ Routine security encompasses a state of relative calm, while emergency means a situation in which the IDF needs to operate above routine levels, but short of a war, without the need for war mobilisation. These stages encompass all military and national security operations which aim at reducing disturbances between wars, while the level of fundamental security is triggered by a direct military challenge against the existence of the state, and, according to the IDF Strategy, it remains the “guiding compass” of IDF preparation.⁴ A state of war can erupt through the initiation of a conventional war, mass ballistic missile strikes, or a nuclear strike. Israel would not wage war when it believes that the level of security challenges stays at the routine security level. If it, however, perceived that its fundamental security might be challenged, it would create a tipping point where Israel would unleash its warfighting capabilities under the concept of the ‘war for existence’. It is important to highlight the vital role that the notion of fighting for existence plays in the Israeli society, as well as political and military thinking. Israeli decision makers operate under the assumption that Israel is a constantly threatened state, informed by the tragedies of the millennia of Jewish history and the threats that modern Israel has had to face since its independence.⁵ This unique threat perception means that, once fundamental security considerations are triggered, the Israeli military stance and their guiding political considerations would focus on the sole requirement of cancelling the existential threat.

Israeli military strategy is based on three plus one pillars; that is, early warning, deterrence, decisive victory and defence.⁶ The logic behind this is that Israel, as a small state, intends to delay war through deterrence, while constantly monitoring the threat environment to receive as early indication as possible of an upcoming armed aggression.

³ IDF Strategy 2018: 12–13.

⁴ IDF Strategy 2018: 13.

⁵ BARAK–SHEFFER 2013: 1.

⁶ EIZENKOT–SIBONI 2019: 33–38.

Once this indication arrives, Israel aims at pre-emptive strikes to disable the enemy and move the fighting to enemy territory,⁷ to safeguard its home front. Israel cannot wage conventional war for a long time without exhausting its resources. Rapid decisive victory is pursued to conclude the fighting on terms favourable to Israel. This entails taking away the enemy's ability and the will to threaten Israel, and return to a relative calm, back to the routine security stage. Defence, as a fourth pillar, has been enshrined in Israel military doctrine as a response to the growing threat of ballistic missiles and recently unmanned aerial vehicles striking the home front. Unlike the conventional wars of Israel's early decades, the enemy can indeed circumvent the Israeli armed forces without breakthrough or achieving air superiority. In addition, it can wage direct attacks on the Israeli population to a greater degree than before. These four basic considerations will be re-examined in detail during the war scenario analysis of this paper. Here, it is sufficient to underline that the traditional military doctrine of Israel is a defensive strategy built on offensive execution.

After signing a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979, conventional methods of achieving decisive victory by the Israeli armed forces against their remaining enemies have become an elusive option. The age of mass armoured pushes into enemy territory, surrounding their forces and using occupied territory to negotiate armistice, or even peace, fell out of favour as non-state entities and hybrid terrorist organisations (Hamas and Hezbollah) became the main threats to Israel. In the emerging age of asymmetric conflicts, the Israeli armed forces became wary of capturing territory on the scale that it did in the Arab–Israeli wars, and it was instead utilising precision fire to destroy enemy forces and equipment in order to negate their ability to present a threat.⁸ This shift has been highly criticised by many in the Israeli security sector, and finding a new balance has been an issue at least since the nineties. This, however, has been hypothetical, as there was no state in the Middle East that had the will and the capability to present a fundamental security challenge to Israel against which ground manoeuvre warfare was needed. This is gradually changing with Iran's ongoing nuclear programme. Israel fears that Teheran will eventually possess nuclear weapons, and in combination with its proxy network and substantial state capabilities it can emerge as a regional hegemon. The threat was already identified by the Meridor Commission that aimed to revise Israeli national security strategy in 2008, calling for a new balance between captioning territory through manoeuvre warfare and achieving decisive victory, precision fire and defensive capabilities.⁹

While new military capabilities were under development guided by the 2018 IDF Strategy and the various army development programs, Israel has been engaged in delaying the rise of Iran and its proxies through waging the Campaign between Wars (CBW).¹⁰ CBW involves, on the one hand kinetic, precision strikes against Iranian, Syrian and Hezbollah assets. These include launch sites, missile depots, and other weapon systems and bases. It also involves targeted killings and cyberattacks mainly against the Iranian

⁷ IDF Strategy 2018: 20.

⁸ EILAM 2023: 1.

⁹ MERIDOR–ELDADI 2019: 52.

¹⁰ FREILICH 2018: 225.

nuclear program. The goal of CBW is not to defeat Iran but to delay any threat to Israel's fundamental security, deter its enemies and to create more favourable conditions for any eventual armed conflict. CBW is a gradual, methodical way of a series of strikes and it presents certain aspects of where Israeli warfighting capabilities are currently at; however, it does not provide an accurate picture of how Israel would fight a war for existence. Most importantly the CBW does not have any intention of achieving decisive victory, the fundamental aspect of overall Israeli military strategy. It does directly contribute to early warning through monitoring enemy assets and buildup and it also supports deterrence and defence through the kinetic strikes and cyberattacks. We must therefore look for the Israeli way of war where CBW does not extend, namely the intention of achieving decisive victory and the role of manoeuvre warfare, capturing territory, the role of mass application of precise firepower and nuclear weapons.

Table 1: Roads to war: Israeli security stance and types of threats

Israel security stance	Triggering action
Fundamental security threatened – ‘War for existence’	Mass missile barrage / mass and incursion / nuclear strike/threat against Israel
Emergency situation – ‘Rounds of conflict’	Limited missile barrage / limited incursion against Israel
Routine security situation – ‘Relative calm’	Baseline situation in the conflict countered by Israel through the Campaign between Wars (CBW) and counterterror operations

Source: Compiled by the author.

Before turning to these issues, we will shortly detail the assets Israel can rely on in an eventual war for existence. Again, some weapon systems are already employed regularly during the CBW, but as we pointed out, contemporary military operations are just the tip of the iceberg of Israeli military capabilities. In case of a war, Israel can rely on substantial conventional forces in all domains and nuclear armaments as well. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is built on a three-tier structure, a strong, but relatively small professional core, the male and female conscripts serving on duty, and a large group of reservist forces. A theoretical fourth tier can also be imagined in case of a total war, as the former conscripts already exempt from reservist service. The standing Israeli peacetime army of 169,000 soldiers can be supplemented by 465,000 reservists and another hundreds of thousands to defend the home front in case the regular army would be defeated and breached. Due to the asymmetry in the available manpower of Israel and its enemies, the Israeli leadership has traditionally viewed its fight as a “war of the few against the many” and aimed to counter this asymmetry with an advantage in quality, including training, strategy, weaponry and advanced technology.¹¹ Without going into details regarding all military equipment of the IDF, just to demonstrate its conventional capabilities, it is worthwhile to note that it possesses 400 Merkava IV main battle tanks, with an additional 900 Merkava III and IV in storage, also approximately 7,500 armoured personnel carriers

¹¹ FINKEL–FRIEDMAN 2021: 47.

are available to the land forces.¹² These enable mechanised warfare on a grand scale, especially compared to the relatively limited ground territory the war would be waged upon which we will detail in the chapter regarding the war scenarios. Alongside the land forces, the war would be greatly supported by aerial, naval and ballistic missile forces, relying on the more than 300 advanced fighters and fighter-bombers, including a F-35I fleet working in a networked tandem with the F-15 and F-16 fleet, and the German-made navy assets of frigates and submarines, enabling control of the Mediterranean (unless that enemy would be Turkey) and denying access to the Red Sea by its enemies.

Here we have only listed capabilities possessed and, in many cases, indigenously built by Israel, we will mention potential involvement of partner nations and non-state actors during the scenarios part. The reason for this is that while other actors might aid Israel in a war for existence, Israel will plan with the possibility of fighting for its survival alone.¹³ The upper tier of escalation in the case of Israel is based on the understanding of the international community that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, and it is able to deliver them through surface-to-surface, air-to-surface missiles and also from its modified Dolphin submarines.¹⁴ This nuclear triad and Israel's estimated 80 nuclear warheads enable it to launch a first strike in case of a conventional military defeat and in effect destroy any state apart from the U.S., Russia, China and India. The submarine fleet believed to be capable to launch nuclear strikes on an enemy state also means that Israel possesses the limited means to deliver a second strike after the country is destroyed in a hypothetical nuclear strike by an enemy. All the above means that Israel possesses the capabilities on the one hand to wage mechanised warfare on its enemies, has multiple advanced methods of employing precise firepower both close and far from its borders, while maintaining the threat of using nuclear weapons if these conventional capabilities would prove insufficient in a war for existence.

Threat landscape of Israel

While contemplating an Israeli war for existence against a peer competitor might seem like a hypothetical exercise, it is undoubtable that the first twenty-five years of the history of modern Israel was full of such challenges. From the Israeli War of Independence through the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, all had the potential to end the Israeli state, not to speak of all the potential wars Israeli (and U.S.) deterrence has preempted. During the Arab–Israeli wars, with the leadership of Egypt, various coalitions of neighbouring states aimed at ejecting the young Jewish state from the heart of the Middle East. These conventional wars were supplemented by asymmetric challenges, exemplified by the Palestinian fedayeen militias and Egypt's War on Attrition against Israeli forces occupying the Sinai. However, the age of Arab coalitions against Israel came to an end with the peace treaty with Egypt in 1979 and nor Iraq nor Syria was able and/or willing

¹² The International Institute for Strategic Studies 2022: 347.

¹³ AMIDROR 2021: 25.

¹⁴ SIPRI 2020: 375–377.

to take over the mantle of leading the fight against Israel, at least not in conventional terms. After 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former Arab Socialist regimes lacked the necessary support to pose a credible existential threat to Israel.¹⁵ The threat of terrorism and asymmetric conflict became the focus of Israeli national security strategy as it seemed that mechanised warfare against coalition of states is if not impossible, but surely implausible in the near and mid-term.

The significant change in the Middle Eastern balance of power (or rather the undoing of it) came with the U.S. invasions on Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), which promised a new, democratic, more secure region. The Iranian regime however first feared that it would be the target of the West's regime change aspirations, in line with neoconservative stream of U.S. foreign policy. Instead of a democratic Middle East both nation building projects turned out to be transformative in a different sense, as they indeed transformed the U.S. will to engage in such an undertaking in the future and contributed to its (relative) disengagement from the Middle East. Iran gained both a motivating reason and a way to extend its influence westwards to the Mediterranean after Saddam Hussein's Iraq was not an obstacle anymore.¹⁶ Teheran could rely on Shia forces in Iraq, the Assad regime in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon. This "Axis of Resistance" was supplemented in the south with the Houthis in Yemen, creating a revisionist camp of state and non-state forces, against the status quo states partnering with the U.S.¹⁷ In 2010, another upheaval further complicated Middle Eastern fault lines by elevating political Islam to leadership position in various countries, and initiating civil wars in other, leading to power vacuum and instability. The civil wars in Yemen, Syria and Libya also enabled greater regional competition between the great powers, both regional and global and the emergence of a radical violent form of Jihadism, the Islamic State. While after more than a decade of upheaval, the regional players achieved a degree of détente by 2023, the Middle East is still a highly fractured and contested environment, with an Iran-led revisionist bloc competing against status quo powers, including Israel, and a conservative Sunni camp fighting off the challenge of various versions of political Islam, ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood aligned groups to the extremes of Jihadism.

All these changes had significant consequences on the Israeli security environment raising the possibility of the need to fight a war for existence. Israel is a steady member of the status quo camp of countries, in strong partnership with the U.S., which as an offshore balancer utilises Israeli abilities and deterrence to contribute to the balance of power in the Middle East. Israel is one of the "four plus one" great powers in the region, alongside Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt as a slumbering giant.¹⁸ However, Israel is the only great power which is not a potential regional hegemon, due to its relatively small territory and population and most importantly its dominant Jewish ethnoreligious character setting it apart from the predominantly Muslim neighbours. This dual nature, however, does not give it a pass on the regional competition, as it is the prime object of

¹⁵ IDF Strategy 2018: 6.

¹⁶ HARRISON 2018: 10.

¹⁷ STEINBERG 2021: 5–6.

¹⁸ KRASNA–MELADZE 2021: 6.

revisionist ambitions both from the Iranian camp and the Sunni Jihadist groups. There are four main, interlinked reasons for this. The first is that Israel exemplifies the grievances of those groups which aim at disbanding the U.S.-led Middle Eastern order and its regional allies. Secondly, Israel is also the sole non-Muslim majority state in the Middle East, and its Jewish character makes it a natural enemy to radical Islam. Thirdly the Israeli–Palestinian conflict creates both a real grievance for many and a useful propaganda tool for revisionist powers to mask their hegemonic aspirations. Fourthly, Israel as a military great power can deter its enemies from conventional attacks and defend itself, enforce the balance of power its enemies so much detest, which adds insult to injury, making it one of the keys of unlocking the current status quo.

According to the Israeli political and military leadership and the security sector, the main and currently only potential threat to Israel’s existence is presented by Iran and the members of its axis.¹⁹ This threat is unlike the former, conventional threat of Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi mechanised brigades storming through Israel’s borders and destroying the country, killing and expulsing its population. Iran possesses a set of symmetric and mostly asymmetric capabilities, either by itself or through its regional allies, which in combination provide it a near-peer set of power to Israel.²⁰ We must also note that Israel and Iran themselves are also similar in terms of defence expenditure.²¹ Iran can rely on three main categories of sources of military power. The first is its own armed forces, its army which is focusing on the defence of Iranian territory and the Islamic Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) with a much larger set of responsibilities, which include ballistic missile development, expeditionary forces and the Iranian nuclear program.²² Iran’s proxies include the Assad regime, which, although much weakened by more than a decade of the Syrian Civil War, still possesses the capabilities of a regular armed state. Down in the hierarchy Iran can rely on the Hezbollah, which is the strongest in presenting a threat of missiles on Israel and possesses significant irregular warfare capabilities.²³ We must note, however, that a large percentage of Hezbollah’s forces are bogged down in the Syrian Civil War. Iran also has Shia militias operating in Iraq and Syria, based on the Hezbollah model; however, these organisations are in much earlier stages in their development, and serve local roles in maintaining Iranian influence across the Shia Arch. Finally, there are several terrorist organisations which received support from Teheran and are expected to coordinate with it in case of an armed conflict against Israel, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and Hamas, which is of doubtful usefulness to Iran. As with Hamas, apart from the Iranian army and the IRGC, Teheran cannot be sure that its proxies would join it in case of Israel waging a war for existence as these organisations have several options across a spectrum in case war erupts.

The Israeli security sector is also monitoring other challenges which might emerge in the future as a threat to Israel’s existence; however, only Iran has the necessary combination of capabilities and the will to mount an attack on Israel. Countries such as

¹⁹ IDF Strategy 2018: 16.

²⁰ McKENZIE 2023: 2.

²¹ ROME 2023: 10.

²² ORION 2021: 4.

²³ LAPPIN 2021a: 2.

Turkey have the capability theoretically but have not manifested any such intentions to present an existential risk, other lesser parties might have the intention but do not have the resources to challenge Israel. It is worthwhile to point out that it is often debated how credible are on the one hand Iranian threats to Israel and on the other what would Iranian capabilities amount to during a war. These are important factors to consider; however, the basic argument is not affected by these, the Israeli security sector will take any threats from a near-peer competitor on face value, and it will operate under the assumption that Iran can efficiently employ the maximum amount of armed force, symmetric and asymmetric in a hypothetical war situation with Israel. The key here is that Israeli threat perception and realities of the Middle East do not permit any naïve assumptions. Therefore, Israel is operating under the assumption that a war for existence might be forthcoming regardless of any delaying military operations under the CBW and it must be ready for it.

Scenarios for warfighting

To analyse the hypothetical war between Israel and a peer power, we are going to use the most plausible scenario which is a war erupting between Israel and Iran with all or some of its proxies. It is implausible that Iran could wage any significant kind of armed conflict against Israel without the support and integrated action of its proxies as the two countries are separated by more than 900 kilometres. Furthermore, in case for some reason Iran could not rely on the backing of its proxies through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, that would mean that its western security buffer area has collapsed, and it would have much graver security concerns than waging a war against Israel and aiming at regional hegemony. Therefore we (and the Israeli high command) must assume that Iran and its proxy network are going to wage a coordinated war against Israel. We will analyse this war in three stages, the conditions of its possible eruption, the main factors in its conduct on both sides and finally the potential outcomes in the political and security spheres.

As we have seen in the previous conflicts Israel has participated in, the escalation can happen very rapidly, in mere hours, but the situation can also fluctuate through days. However, as we have only witnessed rounds of conflict, reaching the level of an ‘emergency situation’ involving Israel and Hezbollah or Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad we do not have evidence of the ‘final step’ of engaging in a war with a peer power, this aspect we will need to theorise. The baseline security situation is not peace, but a sporadic cycle of violence, with terrorist, mortar and rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli counterterrorist operations, targeted killings and missile strikes as part of the CBW on targets mostly in Syria.²⁴ Therefore, the shift to a war would occur when a ‘usual’ military operation on any side would trigger such a response on the other side which would trigger a rapid escalation and the stepping in of more actors on the Iranian side. The eruption of a war can occur through four paths, which are 1. a significant land based aggression; 2. mass missile attack against Israel; 3. Israeli pre-emptive attack on Iranian nuclear installations; 4. a hypothetical nuclear exchange. Apart from the last one, neither would immediately

²⁴ KADURI 2023.

lead to Israel shifting to a war for existence stance, the question would be the scope of the initial aggression and how the other types of military operations and actors would step into the escalation cycle. As a massive land-based attack on Israel seems highly improbable, the two most plausible triggers would be either a multifront missile barrage on Israel or Israel pre-emptively launching a war based on assuming such a barrage most probably in parallel of a strike against Iranian nuclear installations. It is unlikely that Israel would react to a series of missile attacks immediately with launching a nuclear attack on its enemies, unless it is attacked by nuclear weapons, or such an attack is imminent.

An Israeli war for existence would therefore most probably start with a massive missile attack from multiple directions, including Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Syria, and potentially Iran and Iraq as well.²⁵ Israel would need first cope with the first hours of hundreds if not thousands of different types of rockets, missiles and artillery strikes, and it would not have a chance to destroy them completely before impact on its territory.²⁶ The attack can be supplemented by limited incursion into Israeli territory, again from multiple directions. These enemy troops would have very different capabilities, on a spectrum from Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad guerrillas through Hezbollah and other Shia militia forces to potentially Syrian regular army and Iranian Islamic Republican Guard Corps expeditionary forces. I argue that similarly to the eruption causes, land-based warfare against Israel would not be the focus of the enemy's efforts. It would need to defeat the well-equipped and trained Israeli ground forces on its fortified home territory with all the backing of Israeli armour and artillery. Land-based incursion would have the utility, however, to draw away Israeli forces from destroying missile launch sites in the neighbouring states, which would decide the outcome of the war.

While the 2023 Israel–Hamas War will need extensive analysis once the war is over, based on the initial outcomes, the above logic has been proven on and after 7 October 2023. On the one hand, the Hamas attack has been traumatic to the Israeli public, political and security leadership, and it can be argued that the existing Israeli security doctrine has collapsed.²⁷ However, the attack on the ground has not extended to more than an incursion-type terrorist attack on a massive scale, which in the end did not manage to threaten Israeli population centers like Beer-Sheva or Ashkelon. This means that it has fallen well short of an existential threat on its own and most of the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad troops were deployed not to attack Israel but in preparation for the eventual Israeli counterattack and invasion of the Gaza Strip. Israel also did not need to shift to a war for existence strategy because of a coordinated mass assault by the Axis of Resistance on multiple fronts. Hezbollah and its other enemies in the north did not launch a mass barrage of projectiles and missiles on Israel in coordination with Hamas keeping their involvement in the conflict well short of the war threshold.²⁸ Israel, however, calculated with a possible coordinated onslaught from the other members of the Axis of Resistance after the initial Hamas attack and did keep a large amount of its forces on standby for

²⁵ SHELAH et al. 2023: 77.

²⁶ BICOM 2019: 11.

²⁷ SHABTAI 2023: 1.

²⁸ MIZRAHI 2023.

focusing on the theoretical main, northern theatre of its war for existence, Lebanon and Syria. The members of the Axis of Resistance are maintaining a sporadic fire on Israel and U.S. troops in the region, thereby raising the cost of the war for Israel and its patron great power, but they have opted not to risk and commit the bulk of their military assets. This kind of pressure strategy is highly disrupting, and it can draw away Israeli forces and present the threat of a war for existence limiting Israeli freedom to wage its conflict against Gaza as it wishes. Therefore, while Israel did need to mobilise its reserves and maintain troops ready for a war erupting in the north as well, alongside its counterinvasion of Gaza, Israel is not fighting a war for existence as of 1 January 2024.

Continuing with the main line of my theoretical argument of Israel waging a hypothetical war for its existence on multiple fronts, we would see two very different strategies implemented by the hostile sides. Israel would aim to strike fast on a massive scale and finish the war, by achieving decision in the shortest time possible with minimum casualties. On the other side Iran and its proxies would be interested to drag out the war until Israel is exhausted and its assets and population concentrated on a small strip of land are devastated. Israel would have no chance to destroy Iran as a state, it could only aim at ending the war on favourable terms, destroy most of the Iranian military assets and capabilities and potentially decimate some of its proxies and create such hostility in Iran to facilitate regime change. Israel on the other hand can be destroyed which is the reason of the war for existence. Paradoxically, the two very distinct strategies would culminate in similar tactics in the first hours and days of the war to have very intensive strikes on the other side, but with different intentions. The Iranian side would aim at weakening Israel until most of the Iranian and its proxies' missile launch capabilities are intact and Israeli mobilisation is still ongoing to have the capacity and relative advantage to then drag the war out for a long time until Israel is exhausted. Israel would in return aim at mass strikes on Iran and its proxies' missile launch capabilities to deny the capability to strike Israel, secure its home front and thereby create freedom of action for its fully mobilised armed forces to focus on setting back the enemy to such degree that another similar attack would be incomprehensible for many years.²⁹ However, as the Israelis say, there is no 'Berlin moment' for Israel where it could sign a comprehensive peace treaty with its enemies after a military victory, it can only hope to win the war, defeat its enemies, continue to deter them more effectively and prepare to fight its next war for existence.³⁰

Therefore, the war would have three distinct phases, the initial massive operations, where each side would aim at rapidly suppressing the other's offensive and defensive capabilities, a middle section if Israel cannot rapidly gain an advantageous position, and a final stage in which one side gets the upper hand and works to settle the war on advantageous terms for itself. The main issue of the Iranian side would be the number of proxies which would join the war effort and on what level of participation. Would they be only giving lip service, contribute with a certain amount of missile attacks but retaining the main force to deter Israel or would they completely unleash their assets. Here, we will assume, as Israel is, that there is a possibility that Iranian proxies would commit

²⁹ IDF Strategy 2018: 20–22.

³⁰ AMIDROR 2021: 23.

completely to the war, but they would not engage in irrational attacks, such as facing head on Israeli armour with their ground troops and not send all their trained soldiers to attack Israel and let their domestic enemies take their abandoned positions. Regardless, Israel would be faced with a difficult decision regarding those proxies which would not seem like committing completely to the war effort and aim at standing aside completely or wait for an opportune moment to step in. Israel would be interested in a first strike against their offensive missile capabilities too, not to lose the window of opportunity, but also signal that it is not interested in further escalation and all parties' interest would be best served if they would stay out of the conflict.

In the initial phase of the conflict, we will see the unfolding of the new Israeli way of war, which will by all indication be much more than a scaleup of the Campaign between Wars. The main aim of the Israeli war effort will be destroying the enemy's air defences and missile launch capabilities and other core assets deep in enemy territory, instead of focusing on the friction with enemy forces at the borders.³¹ This would be achieved first and foremost by precision firepower, missile attacks launched from the Israeli multirole combat aircraft fleet of F-35 and F-15/F-16 planes, UAVs, ballistic missiles and the Israeli Navy's frigates, mainly to suppress Hezbollah assets. We only have estimates of the firepower Israel could bring in these initial hours of the war, but unlike the CBW, the main goal will be to go through valid targets in its databases and rapidly detect launchers and strike them through as many sorties its air force can manage for which it is optimised. Those enemy assets which are in relative proximity to Israel's borders would be attacked by artillery strikes. This mass application of precision fire would be supplemented by special forces capturing those high-value assets deep in enemy territory which for some reason would not be possible to destroy by missile strike. Israeli weapon systems would operate in a networked manner to strike as many targets as possible in the first few hours, to provide freedom of action to the IDF for the later stages of the war. The Israeli Navy would likely participate in striking enemy missile launch sites and serve as advanced combat intelligence platforms, but its main goal would be to secure Israeli maritime assets, including the gas fields, prevent any incursion from the seas and keep naval supply lines open so that Israel can be reinforced by sea as well during the war.³² Alongside kinetic operations both sides would aim at striking the other in the cyber domain and digitally crippling it as much as possible. This is an area in which Israeli allies, first and foremost the U.S. could immediately come to aid Israel in its war effort.

The issue of ground manoeuvre warfare is also an important one, would Israel be interested to immediately capture enemy territory, or it would focus on defending its core during the first phase against enemy incursion? Here we argue that Israeli ground troops would conduct limited incursions themselves in the first hours of the war and rely on airpower and missile strikes.³³ They would only do this to position their artillery to more favourable firing positions and defensible borders. This is because the need to cover a ground manoeuvre would draw away assets needed for the massive application of

³¹ MERIDOR–ELDADI 2019: 36.

³² LAPPIN 2021b.

³³ EILAM 2023: 2.

precision fire to take out enemy firing positions which are the existential threat to Israel. One might argue that an immediate ground push towards the Litani River might be a cost effective method to capture Hezbollah and Palestinian armed factions' launch positions, especially those mortar teams which can proliferate Northern Israel with their firing but taking them out one by one would hinder the air force in focusing on more destructive enemy missile systems. Based on timely intelligence, the Israeli high command might decide to follow the orthodox Israeli military strategy and order its northern troops to start an immediate push northward in case of a war, if it can assume that Hezbollah can be rapidly caught off balance and ejected from the conflict. Israel would be fighting a multifront war and while it would initially focus on destroying the missile launch sites, it would also start working on achieving decision and start defeating enemy actors in parallel by shifting its main thrust between the battlefields.³⁴ Due to these complex needs a mass ground manoeuvre hundreds of kilometres into enemy territory in one direction is therefore highly unlikely as even though mobilisation is quite rapid in Israel, it would still take many hours for the reservists to be notified, transported to the borders, armed, and take their positions on the front to support a ground manoeuvre into enemy territory. The first phase of the war would be mostly over by that time.

In the first phase, either Israel wins that round by effectively taking out enemy air defence capabilities and most of the missile launch capabilities with its home front largely intact and then it would have the freedom to immediately jump to the concluding phase. With the freedom to achieve decisive victory it would do as much damage to the enemy as it considers beneficial for its long-term deterrence and regional balance of power. If for some reason the war drags on, with Iran and its proxies keeping their strike capabilities, a second, middle phase would start. Israel would need to employ ground manoeuvre warfare with the aim of rapidly capturing launch positions and subjugating Iranian proxies not only close to its borders but far away also, with the home front under constant attack. In case a war of attrition emerges, with Israel needing to use ground manoeuvre warfare to counter the existential threat, that is a highly unfavourable position. Israel always needed to push the war to the enemy's territory, it is still a main part of military doctrine, but it is difficult to imagine an Israeli armoured push past Damascus to take out missile positions north of the metropolis, with Syrian army, Iranian expeditionary forces and other proxy troops resisting and with time on the enemy's side. Israel has no chance to occupy swaths of enemy territory in Syria and Lebanon, like it did fifty years ago in the sparsely populated Sinai Peninsula. Parallel to the ground forces needing to operate far from Israeli borders to eliminate the enemy missile positions, a war of attrition would provide enough time for popular resistance to emerge in the West Bank and potentially also on sovereign Israeli territories, creating a "double multifront war" with external and internal enemies operating alongside each other, potentially overburdening, and stretching Israeli security forces.

The outcome of the first phase would largely decide the outcome of the war. Israeli successes would swiftly lead to a final phase in which Israel would operate under air superiority with relative invulnerability of the home front to carry out offensive ground operations and continue to eliminate enemy assets of secondary importance. Again, Israel

³⁴ AMIDROR 2021: 30.

would not have a “Berlin moment” to sit down with the defeated adversary to sign a peace treaty, it could only punish the enemy to such a degree that both it and all other parties would be deterred and/or incapable to even contemplate truly challenging Israel on the security front. Even in this advantageous case Israel would most probably need resupply from the United States, to continue waging aerial and missile warfare on its enemies. U.S. support, coordination and aid during the war would be greatly enabled as Israel was moved in January 2021 under the auspices of the U.S. Central Command and it being a Major Non-NATO Ally.³⁵ While outside support would be highly appreciated in a war for existence it would also provide a leverage to Washington if it wanted to at a certain point leash Israel in order not to tip the balance of power in the Middle East too far.³⁶ Although Israel is in constant discussion with the U.S. on all security issues, the only instance it would act against U.S. wishes would be if it perceived a direct challenge to its existence.³⁷ The important factor in this stage is that whatever Israel does and regardless how big of a damage it causes to its enemies or land it occupies in the process, due to its distinct Jewish nature, it cannot emerge as a regional hegemon even after successfully and efficiently defeating a peer or near-peer competitor. Other regional powers opposing Iran would also be reluctant to hold back Israel from cementing its victory over the aggressor. At this stage the main issue would be the degree Israel would be interested to conduct land warfare and take territory of its enemies, with the short-term goal of eliminating residual resistance and military assets of its enemies. Occupying the enemy’s territory could serve three possible mid- to long-term goals of 1. holding it as a bargaining chip for peace or normalisation negotiations; 2. setting up its own proxy forces (like Christian forces in Lebanon or Druze in Southern Syria, maybe handing over Gaza to Fatah in some form); or 3. occupy itself to create a defensive buffer zone. It is sure that there is no great appetite in Israel to hold enemy territory and deal with resistance there, the historical example of Southern Lebanon showed Israel that even with the Phalangist support, maintaining a security buffer might not be a cost effective or politically worthwhile solution, both in domestic and international terms.

The outcome of the war would be very different if at any point Israel would perceive that it is losing or have lost the war against its enemies. After a certain degree of defeat, which might manifest in a conventional breakthrough through the Israeli borders towards population centres, mass casualties in Israeli cities due to missile strikes, exhaustion of Israeli strike capabilities or an imminent nuclear threat, Israel would decide to conduct nuclear strikes on its enemies, the so-called ‘Samson Option’.³⁸ The reason for this need and that a mere nuclear threat would be insufficient is that after a visible defeat Israel must establish deterrence through achieving decisive victory by unconventional means, create realities on the ground and regain its lost position. It needs to set back the aggressor, but also deter any other power witnessing the potentially insufficient capabilities of the IDF, who might be tempted to further challenge Israel. Without effective defence against an

³⁵ LEVY 2023: 3.

³⁶ HECHT–SHAMIR 2023: 303.

³⁷ FREILICH 2018: 309.

³⁸ BERES 2023: 9.

Israeli nuclear strike, which we do not believe Iran currently possesses, nor a comparable nuclear deterrent on the enemy's side, a war against Israel cannot be won. Either Israel outright wins or both sides lose. The only way out of this logic if a peer competitor emerges which possesses a nuclear deterrent power which would force Israel to continue waging a conventional war, beyond the logic it would currently employ in terms of launching nuclear strikes in a war for existence. Again, in this situation Israel would not go down without delivering at least some nuclear strikes against its enemy, but a sufficiently capable country with a combination of missile defence over its population centres, great territory and its own nuclear strike capability might challenge Israel to a war for its existence in the coming years. This is however not the currently plausible scenario, but it leads us to the final issue of an Israeli war for existence, which is a pre-emptive strike against Iranian nuclear assets. Israel can endure the current situation in which it has enough deterrent power that no other state wishes to force it to unleash the above described first war phase, but based on its security perception it cannot forfeit its nuclear advantage. Would Iran back down after such an Israeli attack against its nuclear installations or would it start its own escalation cycle and try to appear strong in the tense Middle Eastern power struggle? It is also probable that Israel would accompany such an attack on Iranian nuclear capabilities with parallel strikes on its assets threatening Israel to deny even the possibility of gaining advantage in the early stage of the war for existence. We conclude this section that while all rational calculation would advise Israel's enemies against challenging Israel and forcing it into a corner where it would perceive that it is fighting a war for its existence, but wars are not always based on pure rational calculations, therefore, the above detailed scenario must be calculated with.

The regional effects of Israel waging a war for existence

In this section we will analyse four main long-term questions, connected to the outcome of an Israel–Iran war in the near-future. The first is the effects of an Israeli victory, the second is the outcome of an Israeli defeat and nuclear strike on Iran, thirdly we discuss a few factors which can create different outcome in the above scenario and finally we detail the most important effect of the above thought exercise, which is Israeli deterrent power and its effects on the Middle East balance of power system. Israel coming out victorious from a war against Iran and its proxies would reassure its stance as a great power in the Middle East, eliminating the sole potential existential threat it currently faces. A military victory might embolden Israel to create new facts on the ground, such as it did with establishing a security zone in South Lebanon after its southern flank was secured by the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty or embark on a new political process with the Palestinians not necessarily towards a two-state solution. Israeli security perception and deep sense of insecurity, however, would not permit a situation in which the national psyche would lack a potential existential threat, it would just be pushed back from the imminent nature of the threat of a nuclear Iran to some more fluid image of a future aggressor.

On the Iranian side a defeat would be much graver because what use is an 'Axis of Resistance' if it cannot even resist Israel? While Israel might be emboldened to some

degree to venture into foreign intervention, it lacks the resources and the will to occupy any significant territory apart from South Lebanon and Southwest Syria up until Damascus. The real danger to Iran and its proxies would come from Sunni forces, Arab, Druze, Kurdish, Turkish/Azeri and potentially Christians in Lebanon which would aim at utilising the power vacuum and chaos on the Iranian side with the backing of the Gulf States and Turkey. The balance of power system in the Middle East has complex balancing dynamics as power is distributed between various regional and extra-regional actors.³⁹ This means that as the U.S. intervention against Iraq and the 'Arab Spring' had unexpected outcomes and results, the weakening of Iran would threaten with a similar or even greater shakeup of the current balance of power system. As the power competition in the Middle East is often perceived as a zero-sum game, it would be logical for any power not to let potentially hostile forces pick up the pieces after an Iranian retreat and fill the gaps before a group such as the Islamic State moves on to use the instability and power vacuum for expansion. Naturally the issue of regime change would be high on the agenda in Tehran, as the cyclical protest waves would get a new fuel, namely why were Iranian funds spent on building the 'Axis of Resistance' towards the Mediterranean if it can be defeated easily. Let us not forget, that based on the hypnotised way Israel would wage its war, if it is successful, defeat would come with dramatic speed, with Israeli and allied media giving it additional spin to create a shock and awe effect in public relations sense as well and establish Israeli deterrence for the coming era.

In case Israel would counter a military defeat with a nuclear strike on Iran, the question is how large destruction Israeli military leaders would deem necessary to firstly, stop the war, secondly create deterrence. It is highly unlikely that a strike in an unpopulated area would be considered sufficient. A middle ground would be striking military bases, research facilities and critical infrastructure in Iran with nuclear weapons, which were not destroyed during the initial phase of the war. Thirdly, Israel might consider an even stronger deterrent and strike Iranian population centres, creating mass casualties in the tens of thousands and upwards. Israel would re-establish a kind of deterrence, but it would be the country which used nuclear weapons after the Second World War and become a pariah nation to some degree. The change would be similarly grave in Israel and such a war would contribute to the radicalisation and further militarisation of the state as the ultimate fear was realised, and its existence was indeed challenged and only the most extreme military means were sufficient to guarantee the continued existence of the Jewish state. Depending on the devastation of the war up to the launch of the nuclear strike, Israel would be weakened, meaning that it would need further nuclear assets to ensure continued deterrence and guarantee its survival. Regional states and non-state actors would be at that point even more motivated to acquire nuclear weapons, as it would be proven that no power is safe from Israeli nuclear retaliation once the initial barriers are broken. Iran would not cease to exist, but it could also radicalise after enduring nuclear strikes.

Before turning to the most likely outcome, we must note four factors which might change the calculations regarding the war between Israel and a peer competitor, not necessarily Iran in its current form. The first is a massive development in missile defence

³⁹ SELJÁN 2023: 14.

systems on any of the sides. If Israel would successfully develop its laser-based air defence system called Iron Beam, and create a scaled up integrated missile defence system, it could be able to alter the above calculation and not necessarily consider a mass missile barrage an existential threat. This would give Israel a similar freedom of manoeuvre to take a more gradual approach in escalating the conflict to a war for existence. But paradoxically also give more room for its enemies to test Israeli resolve with missile strikes, similarly to how terrorist groups in Gaza fire indiscriminately rockets on Israel with the knowledge that the damage will most likely be minimal and not trigger an asymmetric Israeli response. If Iran and its proxies would find some novel method to effectively keep most of their missile launch capabilities beyond the initial hours of the war, with air defence systems or some other method including enhanced mobility and physical or digital camouflage, this would bring the above mentioned “middle phase” of an existential warfare much closer. Israel would have to decide to utilise mass ground manoeuvre warfare or decide to cut the war short with a nuclear strike and bear the costs of its decision at a later stage.

An interesting option would be if a peer competitor would develop effective ground capabilities, comparable to the former Egyptian and Syrian armoured and mechanised infantry battalions but on a 21st century developmental level. This is no easy task as such a force would not have to meet the level of the current Israeli ground forces but the one which is in development, with many unmanned weapon platforms accompanying manned vehicles. The direction of the development is well exemplified by the Merkava V main battle tank under development, which unlike its predecessors, which are the quintessential main battle tanks with massive passive and active defences and a turret providing great firepower, the Israeli systems under development are more like network nodes directing fleets of drones, much lighter and more mobile, gaining new abilities without compromising on total firepower and defensive capabilities.⁴⁰ This development will happen in the coming years in air, land and maritime warfare as well, making the opponents’ regular forces even more obsolete. Aside from this consideration, if a peer competitor would emerge with comparable ground forces to the IDF, that would mean that Israel would need to cope both with missile attacks and support its ground forces in mechanised warfare on its borders and not just defend against limited incursions before going on the offensive to capture some enemy territory. This would again raise the importance of using nuclear strikes to turn the tide of the war.

Finally, a factor which is important to consider is a ‘divided and broken Israel’ especially after years of domestic political strife, protest movement peaking in 2023. Regardless of what the outside world thinks, Israelis are as much afraid of becoming vulnerable because of an internal split than the threat of a nuclear Iran or other peer competitor.⁴¹ Again, Israel’s enemies might be interested in the weakening of Israel, but only to a certain degree and under certain conditions, as the IDF and Israeli politicians might be more inclined to shift to a war for existence mentality if their state is already undergoing internal strife, may that be a domestic conflict within the Jewish majority based on their political preferences or an internal clash between Jewish and Arab Israelis or between Israelis and Palestinians

⁴⁰ GAT 2023: 8.

⁴¹ COHEN 2023.

or a combination of the three. A weaker Israel would probably be an even more militarily aggressive Israel which would not provide any leeway to its enemies under a security challenge.

Considering the above, the most likely outcome of the Israeli potential to wage war under the current conditions and the fact that in case of a defeat Israel could still exact the ultimate price from the aggressor through a series of nuclear strikes is that Israel has created a high degree of deterrent potential by preparing for a 'war for existence'. Israel is constantly signalling its resolve and lack of tolerance for any security challenge which it deems as an existential threat. The two pillars of deterrence complement each other, the 'Israeli Way of War' of mass precision strikes and the capability to carry out grand manoeuvre warfare provide the first tier of deterrence as no aggressor can be sure that its assets would survive the first hours and days of the war in a sufficient number to drag out the war until Israel would be exhausted. But even under such conditions Israel's policy of nuclear ambiguity and the international consensus that Israel has advanced nuclear strike capabilities means that even the enemy's victory would end in a relative defeat for it. Regardless of what would happen with Israel after its war for existence, the enemy would be weakened to such a degree that it would lag behind other regional competitors who would stand ready to use the gaps created by Israel to gain advantage in the regional competition. Similarly, non-state entities otherwise interested in the destruction of Israel would be highly reluctant to participate in such a war as first, their own assets would be destroyed, secondly, they would find themselves after the war on the side of a country which would be gravely weakened by the war, either through the Israeli victory or the retaliatory (nuclear) strikes. Under the cover of this dual deterrence of conventional warfare based on mass precision fire and the emerging new networked and unmanned capabilities reinvigorating ground manoeuvre warfare and the nuclear deterrent, Israel can employ the campaign between wars to continue deterring immediate enemy military activities and weapon buildup short of a war. Without the assets prepared for a 'war for existence', Israel's enemies would be tempted to react to limited Israeli military operations with escalatory steps, but knowing that Israel has a hypersensitive threat perception, they need to reign in their reactions. It is not a coincidence that seemingly U.S. forces receive the backlash for Israeli actions, as Iran and its proxies know that the U.S. would never see such strikes as threats to their security and existence.⁴²

Israel became the linchpin of the Middle Eastern balance of power, through its deterrent power, as no rational actor can be interested in pushing it into a corner, triggering it to wage a war for existence. Israel is a status quo power as itself cannot become a regional hegemon, so its interest is to stop any other power to become a hegemon and thereby becoming so powerful that it could absorb Israeli retaliation and would not have to fear the other regional powers after even a Pyrrhic victory over Israel. Israel will be always interested to work in tandem with the offshore balancer in this regard, as currently the U.S. is also interested in a Middle Eastern balance of power and stopping the rise of one hegemonic power. Israel is a useful partner to any other status quo powers in the region in balancing the rising power. This Israeli role is based however on a paradox, it is rationally

⁴² KADURI 2023: 7–9.

incomprehensible to initiate a war against Israel, but only because Israel is convinced that it might be attacked at any moment, and it must be ready to utilise overwhelmingly more powerful destructive power compared to its enemies. At any point when Israel would feel subjectively secure, it would lose its objective security as a result. This however will not happen, and we can take Israeli security perception as a constant factor and the resulting new 'Israeli way of war' based on mass precision firepower aiming at demolishing the enemy assets in a matter of hours. The question remains how Israel will update and utilise its manoeuvre warfare capabilities in the future, whether it can serve a more robust role even in the initial phases of the war and will Israel be more willing to use networked ground forces and UAVs in short and midrange to free up the air force and ballistic missile forces for long range strikes. This is very plausible, however, these developments will most likely manifest only in the 2030s.

Conclusions

This paper argued that Israel is a linchpin of Middle Eastern balance of power, due to it being a military great power but not a potential hegemon, which is therefore always interested in balancing a rising power. Its unique security perception furthermore means that it is constantly occupied with a potential war for its existence, for which it has developed overbearing conventional and nuclear warfighting capabilities. We have outlined the possible scenarios of a war between Israel and the current hostile emerging regional hegemon, Iran and its proxies and we concluded that a war would be irrational as it would lead to a great setback on the Iranian side or hypothetically any other challenger. Israel is therefore a guarantor of Middle Eastern balance of power both through deterrence, and through defeating its enemy directly or indirectly if a war would erupt due to a miscalculation. This Israeli role is useful for regional status quo powers and to outside powers wary of a Middle Eastern regional hegemon, including the U.S. and the EU. On the other hand, Israeli sensitivities must be understood, and its threat perception eased to a degree that it does not initiate a war for its existence but also does not lose its subjective insecurity which underpins its deterrent efforts. Israel is a key for regional balance of power and stability, but all keys can be broken, and a broken Israel would bring as much turbulence by waging a war for existence as the stability it brings through the deterrent power of the 'Israeli way of war'.

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