



MITVIM
The Israeli Institute for
Regional Foreign Policies

Mitvim Experts' Commentary on the second Israel-Iran War

March 2026

On February 28, against the backdrop of rounds of talks about a renewed nuclear agreement, Israel and the United States launched a surprise war against Iran. Iran responded with attacks against Israel, U.S. forces, and countries in the region. Hezbollah also joined the campaign and attacked Israel, which in turn responded with airstrikes and the entry of additional ground forces into the south of the country. The events are currently unfolding and developing before our eyes. It is still far too early to discuss the implications of these events for Israel, the region, or even the global arena. Events are still developing, and the way they evolve will profoundly shape the reality that will emerge once the war ends. However, although it is still too early for conclusions, especially amid the smoke of battle and ongoing fighting, it is already important to draw attention to several key points. Engaging with these points will aid in monitoring and understanding the different developments and may also support the adoption of more informed and precise policies. The following are responses from Mitvim Institute experts regarding the second Israel–Iran War after its first week:

War Objectives

Dr. Gil Murciano, CEO of the Mitvim Institute: There are two different approaches to defining the objective of the war in Iran, both in Israel and in the United States. One focuses on the practical goal of “undermining the regime,” while the other goes further into the more ambiguous territory of “toppling the regime.” Undermining the regime seeks to achieve a clear objective: striking Iran’s strategic leadership in order to disrupt its ability to manage the campaign and to “decapitate” hawkish figures in the Iranian leadership who obstruct Iranian agreement to compromise. The aim is not to change the nature of the Iranian regime but rather to compel Iran to accept Israeli-American conditions—agreeing to zero uranium enrichment, removing highly enriched uranium, accepting restrictions on the production and development of surface-to-surface missiles, and limiting its support for its regional proxies. This approach seeks to turn Iran de facto into a state incapable of threatening its neighbors and Israel. If the objective is indeed undermining the regime, then to a large extent that goal was already achieved on the first day of fighting with the assassination of the Supreme Leader and his circle of advisors. His elimination opens the way for the rise of a new governing elite from within the regime, one that may be capable of accepting compromises. **A sober look at the campaign makes it clear that if the goal is undermining the regime, there is not really much more to gain from continuing the campaign.** More ministers can be eliminated, more ships sunk, more launchers destroyed - but these no longer carry unique strategic value. Israel and the United States are gradually entering a world of diminishing marginal returns with each passing day. By contrast, toppling the regime is a vague objective, more of a wish or general idea than an operational plan. The chances of regime change overnight, in the style of the collapse of Assad’s regime in Syria, do not appear realistic in the immediate timeframe. Pursuing the goal of toppling the regime is

dangerous for two reasons. First, it removes control over ending the campaign from the hands of the United States and Israel and transfers it to the Iranian public. It sets a complex and unclear condition for ending the campaign and creates the conditions for stagnation and entanglement. Second, it locks the United States and Israel into a zero-sum game with Iran's new leadership. Any chance of a public or secret compromise is likely to fail if the new Iranian elite is pushed into a situation of existential survival: being or ceasing to be.

Regional Perspectives

Dr. Aziz Al-Ghashian: From one nightmare to another, everything that is unfolding currently in the region is exactly what the Saudi ruling elite wanted to avoid. The Saudis, as well as the entire GCC (including Abraham accord signatory like the UAE) were embarking on a rapprochement process with Iran. This was not out of a change of heart, but a genuine rapprochement process that was motivated to achieve more security through prosperity. They believed that the best way to address their security concerns was through dialogue, and a meticulous process signalling an unthreatening posture. They have invested a great deal of effort to avoid opening the pandora's box of chaos than an Iran war will unleash. The Saudi concerns are not only about of the Iranian retaliation against its critical and civilian and infrastructure - which is damming to Saudis' future projects. Also, the certain chaos lingering ramifications that will ensue from this war. **This is why the Saudi regional outlook views both regimes of Iran, and the current regime off Netanyahu, as spoilers – as orchestrators of chaos effecting Saudi security.** The Saudis will have to re-posture itself diplomatically after the war. It will have a more robust, albeit calculated, posture towards Iran. At the same time, it will distance itself from Israel even more. As the occupation increases alongside the rhetoric out of the Israeli government about a greater Israel – prospects of normalization are certainly dead for the foreseeable future – and no outcome out of the Iran war will change that.

Former MK Ksenia Svetlova, CEO of ROPES and a Policy Fellow at Mitvim: The U.S.–Israeli attack on Iran exposed the depth of coordination between the two countries and the American commitment to Israel's security. At the same time, Russia - the main supporter of Iran - has been revealed as a power that fears confrontation and is in no hurry to defend its ally, not in Damascus, not in Caracas, and not in Tehran. Other countries in the Middle East and around the world are also observing this and drawing their own conclusions. **Tehran's reckless attack on its Arab neighbors, in an attempt to turn the regional conflict into an international one, is pushing at least some of these countries to move even closer to the United States, which is increasingly perceived as the only power actively operating in the region to advance its objectives.** If a U.S.–Israeli military operation has clear goals and the two countries manage to achieve them with determination and persistence, a regional alliance for collective security in the Middle East could take on an entirely different meaning. To become an integral part of this bloc, Israel will need to change its policies toward the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and transform itself from a state that currently appears in the region as an agent of chaos into a calculated, pragmatic, and reliable actor.

Farah Bdour, Independent political analyst and conflict-resolution specialist, Jordan: Iran's expansion of its missile and drone campaign to include Gulf states, Jordan, and Syria, striking civilian infrastructure and sovereign territory, reflects a consequential misreading of

the post October 7 regional order. Tehran appears to have assumed that widening the theater to the Gulf, the global center of gravity for energy markets, would amplify economic risk, internationalize the costs of the conflict, and weaken regional alignment with the ongoing U.S.-Israeli campaign. Instead, public condemnation across the Arab world signals consolidation rather than fragmentation of threat perception. By directly targeting Arab territory, Iran has collapsed the compartmentalization that once allowed simultaneous engagement with Tehran and quiet coordination with Israel. The result is accelerated alignment, not strategic distancing. This shift unfolds amid mounting uncertainty regarding Iran's internal trajectory. A post-Khamenei transition, whether marked by hardline consolidation or elite fragmentation, heightens volatility. While several of Iran's proxies have been degraded, they retain disruptive asymmetric capacity capable of generating instability, and their ability to impose localized costs remains significant. Prior coordinated interceptions under CENTCOM demonstrated that integrated air and missile defense is operationally indispensable. The question now is whether this crisis institutionalizes durable regional security cooperation, or whether political divergences, particularly between Arab states and Israel's current government, prevent consolidation of this emerging alignment.

Prof. Eli Podeh, Member of the Mitvim Board, Department of Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: The Gulf's policy of "hedging" has failed its test. Over the past decade, relations between Iran and the Gulf states have experienced ups and downs. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia renewed diplomatic relations with Iran after several years of rupture, out of a desire to reduce the threat posed by Iran and the Houthis in Yemen. This step was also connected to the cooling of relations between U.S. President Joe Biden and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The UAE was the main driver of the détente policy, serving as a base and port for the transfer of goods to and from Iran as part of a mechanism designed to circumvent Western sanctions on Iran. However, the war has reshuffled the deck and demonstrated that the hedging policy has failed. The failure is particularly significant in the case of Oman, which mistakenly believed that its status as a mediator guaranteed its security. If there had indeed been a prior quiet understanding between Iran and the Gulf states, trust between the parties has now been severely damaged. Since there is no real alternative - Russia and China cannot offer a security umbrella to the Gulf states - the inevitable conclusion in the Gulf is the need to strengthen reliance on the United States, including the signing of defense alliances with states that currently lack such arrangements. Moreover, **the war is pushing toward stronger solidarity among the Gulf states and may lead to enhanced cooperation between them, including military cooperation, even if limited in scope.** The Iron Swords war and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and especially Israel's strike in Doha, have strained relations between the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Israel. Israel's image as an aggressor seeking expansion in the Middle East has strengthened. The Israeli-American initiative to attack Iran may further reinforce the perception of Israel as a regional bully that does not hesitate to use its military power to achieve expansionist objectives. On the other hand, the success of the attack on Iran could restore Israel's positive image that prevailed during the period of the Abraham Accord - as a military power worth cooperating with against shared threats other than Iran, and as a state with advanced technological capabilities. Israel's ability to restore its lost standing will depend on its position in another arena, one that is currently out of sight - the Palestinian arena.

The Lebanese Angle

Ambassador (ret.) Michael Harari, Research and Policy Fellow: Hezbollah's decision to join the war and respond to the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader may ultimately prove to have been a major mistake. The surprise did not come from Israel, but from within Lebanon's own government. The latter tried with all its might to prevent being dragged into the war. Hezbollah's missile fire toward Israel prompted a firm and highly significant statement from the Lebanese government. **The government's unequivocal remarks prohibiting Hezbollah's activity, defining it as illegal, and relying on broad public support could open the door to diplomatic dialogue between the two countries that might lead to a new reality.** Hezbollah's historical point of weakness, alongside the Lebanese government's growing sense of confidence, could generate positive and constructive diplomatic momentum between the two states. At present, it is unclear how the war with Iran will end; it is already taking on a broader regional character. However, even amid the ongoing campaign, it may create an opportunity for a diplomatic breakthrough with Lebanon. This, combined with Syria's non-involvement and Iran's evident weakness - regardless of the war's outcome - requires Israel to view the Lebanese arena through a diplomatic-strategic lens that holds considerable potential. Another round of fighting, which Israel may have been waiting for as an opportunity to further damage the organization, is understandable, but it is not a strategic objective in itself. Israel should take advantage of the "pit Hezbollah has dug for itself" in order to strengthen the Lebanese state and reach, as far as possible, diplomatic agreements that it will be able to uphold.

Eitan Yishai, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Mitvim: Hezbollah's entry into the war appears to have been made under duress and heavy pressure from Tehran. Yet while preparing for a military blow from Israel, the Shiite organization was caught off guard from a (nearly) unexpected direction. The Lebanese government quickly issued a historic decision banning Hezbollah's military activity and restricting it to the political sphere alone. This represents an unprecedented step in the Lebanese state's struggle to disarm Hezbollah and to concentrate the authority to decide on war and peace in its own hands. No less striking than the decision itself is the apparent widening rift within the Shiite sect. Nabih Berri, the Speaker of Parliament and leader of the Shiite Amal movement - Hezbollah's political ally - was described as being stunned when he heard about Hezbollah's action. Clear evidence of a possible split can also be seen in the extraordinary fact that Amal ministers did not oppose the government's decision. It appears that Hezbollah is more isolated than ever. Not only might it lose the critical support of Iran and provide Israel with justification to strike it, but its actions have also united its opponents within Lebanon and risk alienating the Shiite support base that is essential to its survival. **Israel and the Lebanese state—its government and civil society—share a common interest in eliminating Hezbollah's military power. In light of recent developments, maintaining the distinction between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state is therefore a clear and critical strategic interest.** A sweeping attack on state infrastructure would weaken the government that opposes Hezbollah and would only strengthen the organization's narrative. Strengthening this distinction—both rhetorically and through diplomatic action—could deepen opposition to Hezbollah within Lebanon, strengthen its opponents, and thus achieve a more significant strategic outcome than any military operation or targeted killing. Circumstances have created an unprecedented situation in which Israel is able to conduct a campaign against a sworn enemy while the Lebanese state aligns with it, mediated and coordinated with regional and international partners. For example, in the immediate term,

the Israeli–Lebanese–American coordination mechanism that has been operating since November 2024 should be leveraged into tactical activity on the ground, with the Lebanese Armed Forces taking an active role in preventing the spread of weapons and the launching of rockets. Israel can bomb Hezbollah sites from the air, but the Lebanese army taking control of those sites would carry far greater significance. A rare momentum has emerged in Lebanon, and this opportunity must not be missed—the time has come to deliver a diplomatic blow to Hezbollah.

The Palestinian Angle

Dr. Omer Zanany, Director of the Program for Advancing Israeli–Palestinian Peace: The situation in the Palestinian arena is deteriorating against the backdrop of the war with Iran, while Netanyahu's declarations about peace are empty of substance—no regional arrangement will advance without a change in policy toward the Palestinian arena. Netanyahu declared in English (Fox News, March 3, 2026) that peace with Saudi Arabia is “very close.” He “forgets” that a stable regional order cannot be based solely on dismantling the Iranian regime, but rather on creating an improved reality in the Middle East and establishing a stable order in Iran. More importantly, **the path to peace with Saudi Arabia no longer runs through Iran, but through Gaza and the West Bank. No arrangement will move forward as long as Israel's far-right government refuses to advance the vision of two states.** Meanwhile, under the cover of the war with Iran, the situation in the Palestinian arena is worsening. In the West Bank, alongside the acceleration of illegal annexation, terrorist settlers are intensifying ethnic cleansing, killing innocent Palestinians with live fire, and are not being stopped by the security system. At a time when Palestinian terrorism has temporarily subsided, Jewish terrorism is ensuring that the region will be dragged into further security escalation while the IDF is occupied with Iran and the northern front. In the Gaza Strip, the war with Iran is diverting attention from implementing Trump's 20-point plan, and there has been no progress in implementing Phase II. Netanyahu's policy of “standing still” allows Hamas to remain the sole ruler in the Strip; the work of the Palestinian technocratic government (NCGA) has yet to begin; and the deployment of international stabilization forces (ISF) appears further away than ever. Two and a half years after the October 7 massacre, Israel has returned to the disastrous policy of “conflict management” in Gaza.

Liel Maghen, Senior Policy Fellow, Mitvim: The impact of the war in Iran on the Gaza reconstruction efforts may be complex and even paradoxical. On the one hand, regional escalation diverts international attention and diplomatic resources away from the Gaza arena to other fronts in the Middle East. On the other hand, recent developments may also create a certain window of opportunity. Damage to Iran's regional capabilities also affects Hamas and may increase pressure on it to behave more pragmatically toward international reconstruction initiatives. Another significant development is the reopening of the Kerem Shalom crossing for the entry of humanitarian aid, following direct pressure from the United States. **The American intervention and Israel's response demonstrate how, within the broader regional campaign, a sphere of coordination is also developing between Washington and Jerusalem around Gaza's civilian administration.** The reopening of Kerem Shalom—even if only partially and under complex security conditions—is an example of how broader regional considerations can influence Israeli policy toward the Strip. Finally, the current regional reality also creates potential for building a broader coalition that will engage with Gaza's reconstruction in the future. Cooperation currently being developed

between countries such as Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—alongside Egyptian and Jordanian involvement—could create a regional platform that integrates economic resources, governance capabilities, and political coordination in the Palestinian arena as well. For some of these states, participation in reconstruction efforts may also be a way to reshape the regional landscape after the war and reduce the influence of radical actors. Within this changing regional context, Gaza may become an arena where economic reconstruction, political arrangements, and regional cooperation intersect.

The European Angle

Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, Director of the Israel–Europe Relations Program: Europe is currently being pushed into defensive military involvement in a war it did not want—whether around Cyprus due to commitments to solidarity mechanisms such as Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, or through alliance obligations surrounding Turkey, which is a member of NATO. **There is little political identification in Europe with the war or with Israel (with the exception of German Chancellor Merz), which is perceived as the neighborhood bully that pushed Trump into attacking Iran. From the perspective of Israel–Europe relations, a split has emerged.** In Germany, Chancellor Merz sees Israel and the United States as essential security partners that weaken the Iran–Russia axis, whereas in France, Britain, and other Western countries this perception is much weaker, partly due to public opinion that holds very negative views of Israel. European publics are focused on the war between Ukraine and Russia and struggle to understand the necessity of the war against Iran, especially after Israel and the United States struck Iran's nuclear project in June 2025. Europe has adopted a defensive posture while trying to avoid sliding into a spiral of escalation that it does not control. At the same time, Iran's missile fire toward Cyprus has created an opportunity for Europe: to use the crisis to strengthen and exercise its mechanisms of solidarity and collective defense. Until Europe regains its footing in an attempt to establish itself as a more serious security actor—not only a normative power—it is facing criticism from Trump. In Israel, however, it is largely ignored. With the outbreak of the war, Foreign Minister Saar conducted a series of calls to mobilize support among European governments for the move. Aside from Germany, the effort did not achieve much success. The two most important messages that the Israeli government could currently convey to Europe are, first, that Netanyahu did not push Trump into the move, and second—to the extent that such a plan exists—to share the political strategy regarding Iran's regime that will accompany or follow the military campaign. Without such a diplomatic move, Israel will continue to be perceived as the neighborhood bully—militarily impressive, with capabilities that Europe should study and adopt, yet strikingly weak in the diplomatic arena. That is precisely where Israel could benefit from being more attentive to Europe's strengths.

Rina Bassist, Research and Policy Fellow at Mitvim: The attack on Iran has once again placed Britain and France at odds with Israel and the United States. Trump and Netanyahu's decision to launch a large-scale military operation without prior discussion in the UN Security Council led President Macron to open a diplomatic front against them and declare the move contrary to international law. Although the secrecy surrounding the operation likely required limiting the number of decision-makers, Washington and Jerusalem could have consulted London and Paris after the strike on Ali Khamenei. Such consultation would not have eliminated their demand for an international mandate but might have encouraged greater flexibility, especially given assessments in both countries that parts of the Iranian public support the attack. The American–Israeli decision to continue the operation without consulting France and Britain—both permanent members of

the Security Council—has already created, and is likely to continue creating, tensions. One example is the American request to use the joint U.S.–British base on Diego Garcia to shorten flight times for air strikes. **For Israel, excluding France and Britain from the operation risks increasing its international isolation. Public opinion in both countries questions the sincerity of Netanyahu's and Trump's intentions.** Many Britons and French believe that the two leaders' calls for Iranians to take to the streets and overthrow the regime stem from narrow personal and political interests rather than a genuine commitment to democratic values and freedom of expression. The American–Israeli insistence on launching what appears almost like a private war against Iran, rather than building an international coalition against the Islamic Republic, is widening the rift that has developed over the past three years between Washington and Jerusalem on one side and Brussels, Paris, London, Berlin, and Rome on the other. The consequences of this rift were clearly heard in Macron's speech and in his decision to assist the Gulf states in defending themselves—but not to assist Israel in defending itself. When Iran attacked Israel in October 2024, France helped intercept missiles and rockets fired at Israel from its base in Jordan, while Britain assisted interception efforts from its warships in the Red Sea. These scenes are unlikely to repeat themselves in the current round. Iran's attacks on the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain—important commercial and strategic partners of Britain and France—give President Macron and Prime Minister Starmer an opportunity to act against Tehran's dictatorship without abandoning their principled position regarding the necessity of a UN Security Council mandate when going to war. This allows Macron and Starmer to continue arguing that Netanyahu and Trump are ultimately two bullies who unilaterally determine the rules of the international game according to what suits them, without considering supposedly “minor” matters such as the basic principles of the United Nations

Israel–U.S. Relations

Nadav Tamir, Member of Mitvim's Board and Director of J Street Israel: Unlike in Israel, the war is highly unpopular in the United States. It faces opposition both from Democrats—who are challenging Trump's decision to go to war without congressional authorization, which they argue violates the Constitution—and from parts of the MAGA camp, who claim Trump is betraying the “America First” doctrine because the war does not serve U.S. interests and will burden the economy and relations with partners that favored a diplomatic agreement. **The perception that Israel is dragging the United States into war is very damaging to Israel's standing in the U.S., which is already at an unprecedented historic low.** If the effort to topple the Iranian regime succeeds—as I also hope—and a pro-Western and democratic leadership emerges, this perception might change. However, I do not see such a positive scenario as highly likely. Ultimately, it may turn out to be a fiasco similar to other attempts to change regimes through military means—in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Lebanon, and most recently in Gaza.

The Mediterranean Angle

Dr. Nimrod Goren, President and Founder of the Mitvim Institute; Co-founder and Board Member of Diplomeds: The war in Iran is rapidly spilling over into the Eastern Mediterranean. Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinian Authority are all directly affected—though in different ways—by the U.S.–Israeli attack in a theater geographically distant from them. During the war in Gaza, Eastern Mediterranean countries repeatedly warned about the risk of the conflict spilling into their region. For nearly

two years they took preventive steps, with considerable success. Yet after only four days of fighting in Iran—and without significant preparation—they now find themselves deeply entangled in someone else's conflict. These countries are responding cautiously. They are not eager to be drawn into fighting and prefer de-escalation over widening the conflict. At the same time, they emphasize the importance of their sovereignty in the face of internal and external challenges, and some have even sought defensive military assistance from European states. **This emerging trend in the Mediterranean could threaten a regional political architecture important to Israel, which has withstood many challenges since October 7, 2023. At the same time, it could also strengthen moderates and bring rivals closer together in the face of a shared adversary or concern.** The evolving reality creates an important space for Israeli diplomacy. Israel's attention is currently focused eastward, naturally centered on military developments. However, that alone is not enough. Diplomatic efforts in the Mediterranean must be intensified. In the period leading up to the war in Iran and in its early days, leaders and foreign ministers from Mediterranean countries held numerous conversations and meetings to coordinate responses. Israel, however, was not part of these discussions. The prime minister and foreign minister did not hold public contacts with their regional counterparts. This must change quickly in order to influence the emerging diplomatic trends in the Mediterranean and help shape a more favorable regional reality for Israel in the post-war period.

Gabriel Mitchel, Policy Fellow, Mitvim: Similar to the destabilizing effects that accompanied the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria, a significant weakening of the Islamic Republic in Iran could deepen the divide between Israel and Turkey — two regional powers that increasingly view one another as rivals in a rapidly evolving regional order. Turkey, which shares a roughly 550-kilometer border with Iran, is particularly concerned about the prospect of large refugee flows and the broader security implications of a prolonged conflict or civil war, especially if Kurdish forces exploit the upheaval to intensify their activities against the Iranian regime — an outcome likely to heighten Ankara's security concerns. At the same time, both Ankara and Jerusalem are likely to compete for influence over the emerging regional landscape, further fueling mutual suspicion. This negative trajectory is reversible. Credible third-party mediation — specifically by the United States — and renewed diplomatic dialogue between Israel and Turkey could reduce tensions, prevent rivalry from escalating during a period of historic regional upheaval, and potentially create opportunities for constructive cooperation.

The Political Debate

Reef Itzhaki, Director of Impact at Mitvim: The war with Iran has created a unified political front in Israel, in which the coalition and most of the opposition support the military operation and back the decisions of the political leadership. Much of the Israeli media has also joined this consensus, providing strong support for the security moves. As a result, only a few voices in the public sphere raise warning signs about the nature of the campaign and the real ability to achieve its objectives—chief among them regime change in Iran. **The call for “rally-around-the-flag” creates an atmosphere of automatic support that suppresses critical thinking precisely in moments of crisis.** One example is the sidelining of the Iranian “decisive victory paradox”: the striking gap between the declarations of June 2025 about a “historic achievement” that had “set Iran's nuclear project back by years,” and the reality of March 2026, which forces Israel to strike the very same targets again. This contradiction demonstrates that the “victory” presented to the public was merely a limited operational success without strategic value. By avoiding critical questions in real time, a temporary delay was presented as a decisive outcome, preventing the public from

demanding answers about the inability of military force to produce lasting change. Breaking through the current “rally-around-the-flag” atmosphere is therefore both a strategic and democratic necessity. The public must demand answers: Is regime change a political objective backed by a concrete plan, or merely a wish supported only by military power? What governing authority would prevent Iran from becoming another Iraq or Libya in the Middle East? And in the long term, does this campaign strengthen Israel’s strategic standing in the world and the region, or does it create diplomatic damage that outweighs the operational gains? Such a critical examination requires a courageous opposition and media. Without strong democratic oversight, the “next victory” may simply be the prelude to the strategic failure that follows.

Dr. Roe Kibrik, Research Director: The war with Iran once again reveals that Israel has lost its diplomatic capacity and political strategic thinking. Israel has adopted conflict management and prolonged warfare as a new normal. The Israeli strategy avoids long-term planning and the presentation of a vision and plan for the day after the war. Presenting such a vision is essential for the success of the war—if the goal is truly to end it and achieve security. It is necessary for rational planning before and during the war, and for designing an effective exit strategy. In a developed democratic state, citizens have established mechanisms to ensure sound decision-making for their security: a political–security cabinet, policy planning officials in the Foreign Ministry and the National Security Council, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and legislation regulating the decision to go to war. Over the course of Netanyahu’s rule, these mechanisms have been weakened and hollowed out, with authority concentrated in his hands. **As a result, citizens’ fate has been entrusted to an incomplete and unreliable decision-making process that, for political reasons, refuses to present a vision for the day after the war and instead prioritizes the continuation of the war, which helps sustain his rule.** This is true in the Palestinian arena—where, after two and a half years of intense fighting, Hamas still controls Gaza—and it is also true in the Iranian arena. Only a few months ago, the prime minister declared that Iran’s nuclear project and ballistic missile program had been destroyed and that the Middle East had reached a historic turning point. Yet another round of war is now underway, and Netanyahu will no doubt promise that this one too will be historic and highly successful. However, after years of Netanyahu’s leadership, Israel lacks the diplomatic capacity needed to translate military actions into lasting security. The resulting uncertainty about the present and the future continues to fuel fear—and, in turn, sustain his rule.