

# Core Synergies in Israel's Strategic Planning

*To best serve Israel, the country's strategic studies community should favor more conceptual or "molecular" assessments of expected security perils. Going forward therefore, it will not suffice for this community to operate in ways that are roughly comparable to the purely reportorial activities of journalists and pundits, that is, of ordinary observers who focus exclusively on current personalities and events. With this timely warning in mind, the following brief essay explains and argues for a specifically enhanced Israeli consideration of enemy "synergies."*

For the most part, the concept of synergy is already familiar to capable scientists and scholars. It signifies, above all, that the usually binding axioms of geometry can sometimes be overridden by various intersecting phenomena. Applied to Israel, this concept suggests that certain identifiable threats to the Jewish State should no longer be considered as wholly separate or discrete, but instead, as more-or-less interpenetrating and mutually-reinforcing.

The most obvious and portentous example of pertinent synergy for Jerusalem is represented by Iranian nuclear weapons and Palestinian statehood.[\[2\]](#) Notwithstanding the declared assumptions of virtually all acknowledged national strategists, Iran and Palestine,[\[4\]](#) do not represent thoroughly separate or unrelated hazards to Israel. To continue to assess each one independently of the other would be a serious conceptual error. It would be to consciously obscure what is potentially most revealing and most ominous.

Israel's main security policies must involve carefully nuanced considerations of active defense, as well as of deterrence, preemption, and war-fighting. The country's multilayered

missile defenses are central to national survival. As long as incoming rocket aggressions from Gaza, West Bank, and/or Lebanon (*Hezbollah*) were to remain “only” conventional, the inevitable leakage could still be tolerable. But once these rockets were fitted with chemical and/or biological materials, such porosity could quickly prove “[5] This means, among other things, that the projected harms of rocket attacks upon Israel would depend not only upon the inherent dangers posed by a particular weapon system, but also upon the ways in which these individual [6]

Once facing Iranian nuclear missiles, Israel’s “Arrow” ballistic missile defense system would require a fully 100% reliability of interception. To achieve any such level of reliability, however, would be impossible. Now, assuming that the prime minister has already abandoned any residual hopes for a cost-effective eleventh-hour preemption against pertinent Iranian nuclear assets , this means that Israeli defense planners must prepare instead, and longer-term, for *stable deterrence*. [8] Because of the expectedly corrosive interactive effects involving Iranian nuclear weapons and Palestinian statehood, for example, Israel will need to update and refine its existing theories of deterrence.

Looking ahead, there are various antecedent issues of theoretical concern. For one, Israel’s leaders will have to accept that certain more-or-less identifiable leaders of prospectively overlapping enemies might not necessarily satisfy the complex criteria of *rational behavior* in world politics. In such partially improbable but still conceivable circumstances, assorted *Jihadist* adversaries in Palestine, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, or elsewhere might sometime refuse to renounce certain still-contemplated aggressions against Israel. posture of “deliberate nuclear ambiguity.” [11] – Israel could best ensure that its relevant enemies will remain sufficiently subject to Israeli nuclear deterrence.

In matters of defense strategy, truth may emerge through

paradox. Israeli planners, it follows, may soon have to acknowledge that the efficacy and credibility of their country's nuclear deterrence posture could sometime vary inversely with enemy perceptions of Israeli nuclear destructiveness. However ironic or counter-intuitive, enemy views of a too-large or too-destructive Israeli nuclear deterrent [force](#) that is not sufficiently invulnerable to first-strike attacks, [\[13\]](#) Palestine, therefore, could represent an indirect but nonetheless markedly serious nuclear threat to Israel. Here, yet again, is an example of the need for Israeli planners to think *synergistically*.

More remains to be done. Israel should continue to strengthen its active defenses, but Jerusalem must also do everything possible to improve each critical and interpenetrating component of its nuanced deterrence posture. In this bewilderingly complex and dialectical [\[15\]](#) *irrational*, or "*mad.*" [postures.](#) [\[1\]](#) There are other still more complex synergies that need to be examined. These concern, especially, the intersecting roles of ISIS and al-Qaeda, including pertinent sub/state-state relationships with Syria, Iran, Libya, Lebanon, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Also worth exploring, in this connection, is the plausible escalation of "Cold War II," a broadly transforming context of world politics that could create a "synergy of synergies." Although all such bewildering hypotheticals may be intimidating or annoying to scholars and policy-makers, there remains no reasonable explanatory alternative to taking them into account.

[\[3\]](#) Once a Palestinian state were created, it would more likely become subject to destruction by assorted Arab forces, than by Israel. Plausibly, in this connection, ISIS forces fighting their way westward across Jordan could quickly arrive at the West Bank (Judea/Samaria), and make fast work of any now indigenous Hamas/PA national "army." In such dire circumstances, the citizens of "Palestine" would assuredly rue the day of their recently-declared "independence."

[\[5\]](#) See, on this issue: Louis René Beres and (Major-General/IDF/Res.) Isaac Ben-Israel, "Think Anticipatory Self-Defense," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 22, 2007; Professor Beres and MG Ben-Israel, "The Limits of Deterrence," *Washington Times*, November 21, 2007; Professor Beres and MG Ben-Israel, "Deterring Iran," *Washington Times*, June 10, 2007; Professor Beres and MG Ben-Israel, "Deterring Iranian Nuclear Attack," *Washington Times*, January 27, 2009; and Professor Beres and MG Ben-Israel, "Defending Israel from Iranian Nuclear Attack," *The Jewish Press*, March 13, 2013. See also: Louis René Beres and (General/USAF/ret.) John T. Chain, "Could Israel Safely Deter a Nuclear Iran?" *The Atlantic*, August 9, 2012; Professor Beres and General Chain, "Living With Iran," BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Israel, May 2014; and Louis René Beres and (Lt.General/USAF/ret.) Thomas McInerney, "Obama's Inconceivable, Undesirable, Nuclear-Free Dream," *U.S. News & World Report*, August 29, 2013.

[\[7\]](#) With particular reference to nuclear deterrence, the primary function of Israel's nuclear forces must always be dissuasion *ex ante*, rather than revenge *ex post*.

[\[9\]](#) See, on this point: Louis René Beres, "Religious Extremism and International Legal Norms: Perfidy, Preemption, and Irrationality," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, Vol. 39, No.3., 2007-2008, pp. 709-730.

[\[11\]](#) On identifying alternative nuclear disclosure options, see: Louis René Beres, "Israel's Strategic Doctrine: Updating Intelligence Community Responsibilities," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Spring, 2015, pp. 89-104.

[\[13\]](#) See: Louis René Beres, "Understanding the Correlation of Forces in the Middle East: Israel's Urgent Strategic Imperative," *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (2010).

[\[15\]](#) Israelis, like Americans, are inclined to project their own dominant sense of rationality upon adversaries. Acknowledging that western philosophy has always oscillated between Plato and Nietzsche, between rationalism and irrationalism, we have all routinely cast our psychological lot with the Greek thinkers and their inheritors. Significantly, however, Israel is now up against a steadily transforming ordering of the geostrategic universe; now, Israel's strategists might sometimes be better advised to read Dostoyevsky and Kafka, than to dwell too fixedly on Platonic rationalism.

[\[17\]](#) On this point, see: Louis René Beres, "Staying Strong: Enhancing Israel's Essential Strategic Options," *Harvard National Security Journal*, Harvard Law School, June 13, 2014.

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