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# Israeli-Iranian relations: past friendship, current hostility

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## ABSTRACT

With decades of multilayered close cooperation transformed into outright hostility, Iran and Israel have been trying to strengthen their strategic posture vis-à-vis each other: Israel by attacking Iranian-related targets in Syria and befriending Arab countries; Iran by supporting armed militias and terror organisations and pursuing a nuclear weapons programme. While neither state seems interested in military confrontation, miscalculations can never be fully excluded.

**KEYWORDS** Israel; Iran; bilateral relations; Middle East; United States

In the complex game of wars, peace agreements, and secret diplomacy characterising the Middle East over the past century it is particularly instructive to explore the dynamics between Israel and Iran. Over the past years, a series of developments have inflamed tensions between the Jewish state and the Islamic Republic: Iran's unprecedented expansion across the region in general and its military entrenchment in Syria, in particular; the uncertainties, fears, and debates attending Tehran's nuclear weapons program; the ascent of President Donald Trump to the White House and his fiercely anti-Iranian rhetoric and foreign policy that was welcomed and encouraged by the Israeli government; and the 2020 peace agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

However, relations between Jerusalem and Tehran have not always followed this antagonistic course: there was a time when the two states were engaged in multifaceted political, economic, and security cooperation, among other fields. Yet this alliance, which sought to advance Israeli-Iranian interests in the face of an implacably hostile Arab world, was ended in one fell swoop in 1979 after the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic with its outright articulation of Israel's destruction. In what follows, this article reviews the history of Israeli-Iranian relations, analyzes their current status, and attempts to assess their likely progress in the immediate future.

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## From collaboration to implacable enmity

From the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's arrival in Tehran from his French exile in February 1979, relations between Israel and Iran was characterised by multi-faceted cooperation (albeit mostly covert and often denied), viewed by the two states as highly conducive to their national interests.

As far as Israel was concerned, its attitude was primarily rooted in David Ben-Gurion's 'periphery doctrine', which sought to leapfrog the Arab world's unwavering commitment to the Jewish State's destruction by establishing close cooperation with non-Arab and/or non-Muslim factors (e.g. Turkey, Kurds, Berbers, Ethiopia, Christians) in the Middle East and its vicinity. Among these potential allies, Mohammed Reza Shah's Iran occupied pride of place given its many overlapping geopolitical interests with Israel. These ranged from being on the receiving end of militant pan-Arabism, spear-headed from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, to mutual fear of Moscow, which used its vast military and economic support to the militant Arab regimes as a vehicle for spreading Soviet power and influence across the Middle East. As Ben-Gurion told the Knesset in October 1960: 'This friendship [between Israel and Iran] exists and is stable, because it is based on the mutual advantages which both countries enjoy from their cooperation'.<sup>1</sup>

These geopolitical considerations were augmented by Israel's dire need for energy sources on the one hand, and Iran's desire to expand its oil exports, on the other. Bereft of oil resources and subjected to an all-Arab economic boycott, Israel had to find alternative energy sources that would meet the demands of its rapidly growing population, with non-Arab Iran becoming its best option as oil supplier. Relations in this field were established in the 1950s, reaching their zenith in the wake of the June 1967 Six-Day War when Israel convinced Iran to jointly establish the Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, which would not only facilitate Iranian oil exports to Israel but would give Tehran access to European oil markets. As a result, Iran's oil sales to both Israel and Europe grew dramatically and with them the country's revenues.<sup>2</sup>

There were other specific benefits for both sides in several other fields. In the aftermath of the 1948 war, for example, Iran enabled the use of its territory as a safe passage to Israel for the ancient Jewish community that was expelled from Iraq at the time. In the 1960s and early 1970s Tehran enabled Israel to use its territory for extending invaluable military support to the Kurdish rebellion in northern Iraq, a move that served the Shah's goal of weakening Baghdad and asserting Iranian dominance throughout the Persian Gulf.<sup>3</sup> The Shah also viewed cooperation with Israel as conducive to Tehran's standing in Washington, on the one hand, and as a springboard

for the transformation of Iran into a modern, technologically advanced, and developed country, on the other. Hence he encouraged the establishment of a substantial presence in Iran of Israeli advisors, instructors and contractors in numerous spheres – from military and security affairs, to engineering and construction projects, to agricultural support, to exploitation of water resources. During the 1960s and 1970s, a Hebrew-language school was opened in Tehran for children of Israeli personnel stationed in Iran and regular flights connected Tel Aviv and Tehran.<sup>4</sup>

This multifaceted collaboration came to an abrupt end with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic headed by Khomeini and inspired by his doctrine of *velayat e-faqih* (governance of the jurist). With the regime change in Iran, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism became an integral part of the country's political ideology. These concepts – which are mostly undifferentiated in Iran – continue to be widely articulated to these days, to the point that the Islamist regime is widely recognised as the most anti-Semitic worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

Already in the 1960s, Khomeini had used the Shah's relations with Israel and the United States as a trump card to discredit the monarch and undermine his legitimacy, accusing him of allowing Israel to fully penetrate Iran's economic, military and political affairs.<sup>6</sup> According to Khomeini, the Shah's relations with Israel and the US violated the principles of Islam and threatened Iran's independence, values and integrity. In his view, the US was the 'Great Satan' because it constituted the primary threat to Iran's Islamic character and independence while Israel was the 'Little Satan' as an illegal occupier of Islamic lands, oppressor of the Muslims of Palestine and influencer of US decision-making on the Middle East.<sup>7</sup>

Within weeks of the Islamic Revolution, Tehran severed all formal links with Israel, inaugurating a new era in Israeli-Iranian relations characterised by virulent hostility to the Jewish State and open calls for its destruction that have persisted to this very day. This, to be sure, didn't prevent short-term pragmatic interactions between the two countries. When Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran (in September 1980) seemed to endanger the survival of the Islamist regime and the attendant transformation of Iraq into the pre-eminent regional power, Israel proved ready to extend covert military support to Tehran through American mediation, and the Islamist regime was prepared to receive this support from the 'Little Satan' in what came to be known as the 'Iran-Contras Affair': supply of US-made missiles to Iran via Israel in exchange for money that was used to provide arms to the anti-Sandinista Contra rebels in Nicaragua.<sup>8</sup> Yet this episode didn't reduce Tehran's enmity to Israel, let alone produce any rapprochement. Quite the contrary, its readiness to accept indirect Israeli military support in its fight for survival against the Iraqi enemy did not prevent the Islamist regime in Tehran from embarking on an armed confrontation with Israel via its Shiite proxies in Lebanon.

While the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the destruction of the PLO's military infrastructure in the country, which for years had been used for terror attacks in Israel, was warmly welcomed by the Shiite population, especially in south Lebanon where the PLO had established 'a state within a state', this attitude began to change as Israel's military presence in south Lebanon continued for years with no clear idea of its ultimate goals and with the Israeli public deeply divided about its usefulness. This state of affairs enabled Iran to gain control of the Lebanese Shiites through the creation of the Hezbollah (Party of God) armed militia, which quickly established itself at the forefront of the struggle to end Israel's military presence in south Lebanon. This culminated in Israel's hurried withdrawal from its self-declared security zone in May 2000, after which Hezbollah shifted its operations to occasional terror attacks in northern Israel. When this led to an all-out war in the summer of 2006 (known as the Second Lebanon War), Hezbollah subjected Israeli towns and villages to weeks of sustained missile and rocket attacks, using the war's inconclusive ending to claim victory despite the massive damage wrought on Lebanon's civilian infrastructure. In subsequent decades Hezbollah substantially enhanced its military capabilities through the build-up of a vast rockets/missiles arsenal that can hit most strategic, economic, and infrastructure targets in Israel. At the same time, it has gradually gained control of Lebanon's political and economic systems with massive Iranian financial and political support, becoming the country's effective master.<sup>9</sup>

By this time the Islamist regime in Tehran had not only recuperated from its eight-year war with Iraq but was the beneficiary of two momentous developments that removed key obstacles to its imperialist ambitions: the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its attendant support for the radical Arab regimes, on the one hand, and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime (2003) after twelve years of sustained international pressure on Iraq following its humiliating expulsion from Kuwait (1991), on the other. As a result, the Iranian regime renewed its hegemonic regional drive through subversive activities in Arab Sunni states and support for terror organisations across the region, notably Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Above all, decision-makers in Jerusalem were greatly alarmed by Tehran's dogged quest of nuclear weapons in the decades attending the Iran-Iraq War, which in their view poses an existential threat to Israel.<sup>10</sup> While the Islamist regime seemed initially uninterested in sustaining the nuclear program established by the Shah in the 1950s with US support (through the nuclear cooperation agreement known as Atoms for Peace Program), the ongoing war with Iraq produced a sea change on the issue and by the mid-1980s Tehran had resumed its nuclear efforts in strength. These efforts gained considerable momentum in the decades attending the war even as Iraq's nonconventional weapons programmes (chemical, biological, and nuclear)

were systematically dismantled by the international community during the 1990s and early 2000s, indicating the offensive nature of Tehran's nuclear program – as a foremost instrument for spreading its imperialist ambitions.

As the extent of Iran's nuclear weapons program was increasingly exposed, alarm bells began ringing throughout the world and by the end of 2011 US President Barack Obama, who from his first days in the White House had been vying to placate the Islamist regime, was grudgingly forced to authorise harsh sanctions against Tehran under heavy congressional pressure and with the Damocles sword of a preventive Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities hovering over his head. With the EU following suit, on 24 November 2013 an agreement known as the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) was signed between Iran and the great powers – France, Germany, Britain, Russia, China, and the United States (or P5 + 1 as they are commonly known) – whereby Tehran agreed to curb some of its nuclear activities for a period of six months in return for \$7 billion in sanctions relief.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting the substantial watering-down of the P + 1's overriding goal vis-à-vis Iran – from dismantling its nuclear weapons program to lengthening its breakout time from several months to a year while leaving its nuclear infrastructure largely intact – this agreement was followed after nearly two more years of discussions by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 14 July 2015. And while Obama proudly applauded the new agreement as severing every pathway to Iranian nuclear weapons, the JCPOA contained a string of glaring loopholes enabling Tehran to attain nuclear weapons after ten to fifteen years at the latest.<sup>12</sup>

Having failed to prevent the signing of the JCPOA, including through a dramatic address by PM Benjamin Netanyahu to a joint session of the US Congress (on 3 March 2015), the Israeli government intensified its covert efforts to undermine the Iranian nuclear weapons program while seeking to persuade the great powers to revise the agreement. These efforts came to fruition on 8 May 2018 when President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the JCPOA and reimposed some of the sanctions that had been lifted by the Obama administration. And while it is difficult to ascertain to the extent of Israeli influence on this move given Trump's longstanding objection to the JCPOA and the growing international disillusionment with the agreement, Netanyahu's persuasion efforts seemed to have carried weight with the US president, notably the PM's televised appearance on April 30 in which he revealed the contents of the Iranian nuclear archive that had been smuggled into Israel in early 2018 by the Mossad.<sup>13</sup>

## **The campaign between wars**

Though posing the foremost threat to Israel, Tehran's nuclear weapons program was by no means the only source of confrontation between the two states, as the internecine strife in Syria and Iraq during the 2010s allowed the Islamist

regime to strongly reinvigorate its imperialist drive. Not only did Tehran use its support for the Assad and Maliki regimes in Damascus and Baghdad as a springboard for increased political influence and military entrenchment in the two countries, through both its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and proxy Shiite militias (notably Hezbollah and the Iraqi al-Hashd al-Shaabi), but it used Syrian and Iraqi (as well as Lebanese) territory to establish a land corridor from the Iranian border to the Mediterranean Sea, in an attempt to impose Iranian hegemony across the Levant.<sup>14</sup>

This development was viewed with the utmost alarm in Jerusalem. Not only had the threat posed by Iran's proxies in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip grown substantially over the past decade – with Hezbollah and Hamas coming to possess over 200,000 rockets and missiles covering Israel's entire territory – but Tehran had now opened a new direct front along the Syrian-Israeli border comprising IRGC and proxy Shiite militias. This was totally unacceptable to Israel, which launched a sustained campaign to prevent Tehran's military entrenchment in Syria and its use of Syrian territory for transferring advanced weapons systems to Hezbollah. Dubbed the Campaign Between Wars (CBW), this years-long effort consisted of (mostly undeclared) air raids against Iranian and Iran-related targets in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon (e.g. in 2019 Israel reportedly hit Hashd al-Shaabi weapons depots in Iraq and a Hezbollah factory for precision-guided missiles in Beirut).<sup>15</sup> With over a hundred airstrikes against convoys delivering arms to Hezbollah in 2012–17 alone (especially precision-guided missiles), the CBW has sought to contain Iranian expansionism by boosting Israel's deterrence, demonstrating its highly effective intelligence and strike capabilities, and degrading the capabilities of the Iranians and their local proxies so as to convince the Islamist regime in Tehran to desist from its efforts to transform Syria (and Lebanon) into a base for direct confrontation with Israel. In the words of Mossad Director Yossi Cohen: 'I believe that Iran will reach the conclusion that it is just not worth it'.<sup>16</sup> Were these attacks to trigger a major escalation (e.g. in September 2019 the IRGC's elite Quds Force fired rockets towards Israel from the outskirts of Damascus in response to a major Israeli airstrike), or were an Iranian-Israeli war to ensue due to broader developments (e.g. an American and/or Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities), the CBW also seeks to create better conditions for Israel to win.<sup>17</sup>

The Iranian-Israeli 'shadow war' has become more complex and nuanced since Russia's military intervention in Syria from 2015 onward. Though Moscow and Tehran found themselves on the same side of the Syrian civil war – saving the Assad regime – Israeli policymakers hoped that the Russian presence in the country would help to contain Iran as the alliance between the two powers was circumstantial, not natural, with both allies having fundamentally different, if not diametrically opposed goals. While Moscow viewed the survival of the Assad regime as a means to restoring the previous

status quo in Syria and to reasserting Russian regional power and influence, Tehran sought to convert the Syrian regime into an effective protégé so as to facilitate the projection of Iranian hegemony in the Levant in general, and the military/strategic encirclement of Israel in particular.

Yet while Iranian-Russian disagreements and Moscow's interest in maintaining good relations with Jerusalem resulted in a delicate balancing act whereby the Russians fought alongside the Iranians to shore up the Assad regime while tolerating Israel's aerial attacks against their comrade-in-arms, Israeli hopes for a long-term containment of Iran proved highly unrealistic.<sup>18</sup> For one thing, while Moscow pressured Tehran to stay away from the Israeli border, its influence is not nearly as significant as Israel seems to have thought, not least since Russia needs Iranian forces in Syria to conduct the fight on the ground. For another thing, Russia and Iran continue to share some fundamental regional interests, notably opposition to US influence in the Middle East and radical Sunni Islamism, and Tehran has been keen to preserve the Russian cooperation and goodwill in Syria through occasional gestures and positive statements. Finally, Moscow views the Iranian presence in Syria as legitimate, at least from a legal perspective, as it was done in response to an official invitation by the Assad regime. Indeed, during a June 2019 trilateral meeting in Jerusalem between the Israeli, Russian, and American national security advisers, the Russian national security voiced support for Iran's presence in Syria. 'Iran has been and will be an ally and partner of ours, with which we have [been] gradually developing ties for quite some time, both bilaterally and multilaterally', he said during the conference. 'Any attempts to make Tehran look like the main threat to global security, to put it in the same basket as ISIS or any other terror group, are unacceptable. Iran has been contributing a lot to the fight against terrorism in Syria, helping to stabilize the situation. We call upon our partners to exercise restraint and to take efforts to alleviate the concerns and tensions. Efforts should be made to decrease tensions between Israel and Iran'.<sup>19</sup>

Nor have relations between Russia and Israel been free of tensions, both because of Moscow's support for the attainment and preservation of the JCPOA and because of occasional frictions attending Israel's CBW campaign. Thus, for example, when in September 2018 Syrian air defence units mistakenly shot down a Russian intelligence-gathering aircraft during an Israeli air raid, causing the death of all crew on board, Moscow blamed Israel for the Syrian mishap and delivered four S-300 surface-to-air missile batteries to Damascus. Stepping up its criticism of Israel's CBW strategy, Moscow reportedly rebuffed several Israeli attempts to patch up relations with Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman unable to re-establish a communications channel with his Russian counterpart who harshly criticised Israel in the wake of the incident.<sup>20</sup>



## Recent escalation

As noted above, President Trump withdrew the US from the JCPOA and re-imposed heavy sanctions on Tehran as part of what came to known as the ‘maximum pressure policy’ that sought to force the Islamist regime to desist from its nuclear efforts, perhaps even lead to its collapse through domestic restiveness.<sup>21</sup> Designating the IRGC – the Islamist regime’s foremost security and economic mainstay – as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) on account of its massive support for terrorist groups, Washington subjected the organisation and associated businesses and people to heavy sanctions. No less significantly, in early January 2020 an American airstrike killed Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC’s Quds Force and a close confidant of Iran’s Supreme leader Ali Khamenei, together with al-Hashd al-Shaabi’s deputy commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.<sup>22</sup>

Tehran responded to the administration’s ‘maximum pressure policy’ with a campaign of ‘maximum resistance’ comprising a sustained effort to subvert pro-Western Arab regimes and to infiltrate and consolidate its presence in states with partial or failed sovereignty, such as Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. It also launched occasional attacks on US positions in Iraq and on Gulf oil facilities, most notably the spectacular 14 September 2019 attack by unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) on two major Saudi oil installations. Yet Tehran took great care to avoid an escalation, misrepresenting the attacks as the product of local militias over which it allegedly had no control (e.g. the Iranian-backed Houthi regime in Sanaa assumed full responsibility for the Saudi attack though all evidence indicated that it was carried out by the IRGC’s airforce and originated from Iranian territory). Even when the regime felt obliged to respond directly to Soleimani’s killing in what it dubbed ‘Operation Shahid Soleimani’, its response was highly constrained and limited to firing some two dozen missiles at two US bases in Iraq, striking one and missing the other. No American lives were lost in the attacks, allowing President Trump to avoid retribution and further escalation.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to these restricted activities, Tehran’s response to Washington’s withdrawal from the JCPOA was highly defiant. On 8 May 2019 a week after the restoration of US sanctions, the regime announced the ‘cessation of implementation of some of its obligations under the nuclear agreement’ and threatened to renew uranium enrichment to 20% as well as to complete construction of the IR-40 heavy water reactor. The attendant intensification of American sanctions didn’t deter the Islamist regime from announcing on 5 January 2020 that it was no longer bound by the JCPOA restrictions. By the time of the inauguration of the Biden administration in January 2021 Iran had renewed uranium enrichment to 20%, and as of mid-February 2021 had accumulated 17.6 kg of enriched

uranium to 20%. In April 2021 Tehran began to enrich uranium to 60%, as well as to produce metallic uranium – clear indications that its goal is to produce nuclear weapons that increased the Biden administration’s anxiety to return to the the JCPOA.<sup>24</sup>

Overtly satisfied with the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and encouraged by the weakening of the Islamist regime by the crippling sanctions (evidenced inter alia by mass anti-regime protests throughout Iran over a prolonged period of time), the Israeli government intensified its covert war against Tehran’s nuclear weapons program. In late June 2020 a huge explosion rocked the Parchin military complex, which had been involved in experiments related to the development and production of nuclear weapons; it was followed a couple of weeks later with a fire and explosion at the main uranium enrichment plant in Natanz – the flagship of the Iranian nuclear program. In April 2021 Natanz was hit yet again by a stronger explosion that reportedly destroyed the plant’s centrifuge power supply system, causing months-long disruption to Iran’s ability to resume uranium production at the site. And in June 2021 the factory of TESA, Iran’s main centrifuge company near the city of Karaj, was attacked by a drone that took off from nearby. And as if to add insult to injury, after a hiatus of nearly nine years in assassination of Iranians associated with their country’s nuclear weapons program, on 27 November 2020 Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, known as ‘the father of Iran’s nuclear program’, was killed by remote-controlled gunfire while riding his car with his bodiguards in Tehran.<sup>25</sup>

Alongside the efforts to subvert Tehran’s nuclear weapons program Israel intensified the air campaign against the Iranian military entrenchment in Syria and accelerated its covert security collaboration with the Sunni Arab states. This culminated in September 2020 in milestone peace agreements with the UAE and Bahrain (dubbed the Abraham Accords), followed a few months later by normalisation agreement with Sudan and Morocco, with Saudi Arabia reportedly intensifying its covert cooperation with Jerusalem (though avoiding open normalisation for the time being). And by way of consolidating the nascent agreements into a regional strategic alliance, in January 2021 the Pentagon relocated Israel from the US Military’s European Command’s (EUCOM) area of responsibility (AOR), to which it had belonged since its creation in 1952, to the Central Command (CENTCOM) AOR – a landmark move that reflects the growing need for military coordination among Israel, the US, and the Gulf monarchies in the face of the Iranian threat.<sup>26</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the normalisation agreements have generated great discomfort and profound concerns in Tehran. For one thing, the Abraham Accords kindled fears that an alliance comprising Israel, the Gulf States, and other countries, supported by Washington and Riyadh, would constitute a formidable barrier to Iran’s dogged drive for regional hegemony. For

another, having inculcated their hapless subjects for decades with the notion that peace with the illegitimate ‘Zionist entity’ meant unacceptable betrayal of Islam (and the Palestinian people), the ayatollahs were at pains to explain why Muslim states not only failed to view Israel as an enemy that must be destroyed but considered it a potential partner for mutual prosperity and security. This in turn increased the regime’s difficulty to convince the Iranian people that its imperialist foreign policy works to their benefit.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, while responding to the Abraham Accords with the customary bluster and anti-Israel vitriol, the Tehran regime sought to weaken the nascent alliance by mending the fences with the Gulf monarchies, as evidenced inter alia by the growing number of high level exchanges with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Over the past seventy-four years, the relationship between Israel and Iran has been one of the most complex and dynamic in the region, transformed from close multilayered cooperation into outright advocacy of the Jewish State’s destruction. With the Islamist regime’s hegemonic ambitions rekindled in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, gaining a major impetus after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime, and shooting to unprecedented heights due to the Arab upheavals of the 2010s, Tehran has developed a ‘ring of fire strategy’ that seeks to surround Israel with massive missile and UAV bases – not only from Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and Syria but also from faraway Iraq and Yemen.

This has created an uneasy ‘balance of terror’ whereby Iran is deterred by Israel’s strategic prowess – its formidable air force, multilayered anti-missile air defence system, and reported nuclear-armed submarines, among other factors – while Israel is painfully aware of the huge human and material cost attending Tehran’s missile array, especially from Hezbollah’s estimated 150,000 rocket/missile arsenal. And while this balance of terror has thus far prevented an all-out direct conflagration between the two states, this eventuality cannot be wholly ruled out should Tehran come within reach of attaining nuclear weapons.

## Notes

1. Alpher, *Periphery: Israel’s search for Middle East Allies*, 3–9.
2. Bialer, “Fuel Bridge across the Middle East”; Parsi, “Israel and the Origin of Iran’s Arab Option.”
3. Karsh, “The Iran-Iraq War,” 5–11.
4. Menashri, “Iran, Israel and the Middle East Conflict”; Kaye et al., *Israel and Iran*, 11; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 23–4; Green, “From Friends to Foes.”

5. Küntzel, “Iranian Anti-Semitism”; Litvak, “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust.”
6. Amirpur, “Iran’s Policies Towards Jewish Iranians”; Green, “From Friends to Foes.”
7. Litvak, “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust,” 207–9; Aarabi, “The Fundamentals of Iran’s Islamic Revolution.”
8. Alpher, *Periphery*, 80–1; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 90.
9. Zisser, “The Maronites, Lebanon and the State of Israel”; Kifner, “Southern Lebanon”; Berti, “The Ongoing Battle for Beirut”; Karsh & Hacoheh, “Israel’s Flight from South Lebanon.”
10. Brom & Schweitzer, “Israel and the Salafi Jihadist Threat,” 61–6.
11. Karsh, “Obama’s Middle East Delusions.”
12. Landau, “Obama’s Legacy, a Nuclear Iran?”; Malus, “From ‘Atoms for Peace’ to JCPOA.”
13. Ofek, “Iran Nuclear Program: Where Is It Going?,” 44–8.
14. Kam, “Iranian Stakes in Syria”; Dekel & Valensi, “Russia and Iran”; Furlan, “Israeli-Saudi Relations.”
15. Perlov & Dekel, “Israel in Iraq”; Schweitzer & Mizrahi, “The Complexity Behind Hezbollah’s Response”; Rubin & Bergman, “Israeli Airstrike Hits Weapons Depot in Iraq”; Yadlin & Orion, “The Campaign Between Wars.”
16. Lappin, “Israel’s Strategic Goal in Syria.”
17. Ibid.; Lappin, “Israel’s Daily Battle to Block Iranian Aggression”; Orion, “The Response to the Iranian Proxy War”; Eisenkot & Siboni, “The Campaign Between Wars”; Harel, “Israel Struck Syrian and Hezbollah Arms Convoys.”
18. Duclos, “Russia and Iran in Syria”; Rumer, “Russia in the Middle East”; Behravesch & Cafiero, “Can Russian-Iranian alignment in Syria last?”; Harrington & Bermudez, “Dangerous Liaisons.”
19. See note 16 above.
20. Ibid.
21. Goldberg, “Trump Has an Iran Strategy”; Borger & Wintour, “Trump administration unveils full extent.”
22. Wong & Schmitt, “Trump Designates Iran’s Revolutionary Guard”; Crowley, Hassan & Schmitt, “U.S. Strike in Iraq Kills Qassem Soleimani.”
23. Rubin, “Iran’s Missiles and its Evolving ‘Ring of Fire’”; Rubin, “Operation ‘Shahid Soleimani’: Iran’s Revenge.”
24. Ofek, “Iran’s Nuclear Program,” 47–55.
25. Ibid., 63–6.
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27. Itzchakov, “Iran and the Israel-UAE Deal”; Azodi, “Why Is Iran Concerned?”
28. “Iran’s military chief: we met with Saudi, UAE officials,” *Tehran Times*, December 13, 2021; “The shadows hanging over the Middle East,” *Financial Times*, January 10, 2022.

## Disclosure statement

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## Notes on contributor

*Marta Furlan* holds a PhD from the University of St Andrews.

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