

The Shabtai Shavit World Summit on Counter- Terrorism: “Israel in the Eye of the Global Storm”

SEPTEMBER

2025

Summary & Insights

INTRODUCTION



Over the past two years, Israel has encountered a series of strategic developments that have challenged central assumptions of its national security policy. Conditions long considered stable in both the northern and southern arenas proved far more fragile than expected. This realization exposed significant vulnerabilities and led to unexpected developments and notable adjustments in Israel's security policy.

The central event in this process was the unprecedented terrorist attack of October 7, 2023 – a large-scale incursion by thousands of terrorists from the Gaza Strip who carried out a massacre and abducted civilians and soldiers into Gaza. In its aftermath, the “Sword of Iron War” erupted, placing Israel at the center of a new security era. Since then, the conflict has widened, opening additional fronts: Lebanon, in confrontation with Hezbollah; Syria, amid tensions with the new regime and clashes involving the Druze community; Yemen, against the Houthis; and even inside Iran itself, alongside growing friction with other regional states and actors.

The 2025 Shabtai Shavit World Summit on Counter-Terrorism was held amid heightened regional instability. Against this uncertain backdrop, the event convened an exceptional mix of in-person attendees and thousands of virtual participants, including senior leaders from the political, military, intelligence, diplomatic, and academic sectors. Under this year's theme, “Israel in the Eye of the Global Storm,” discussions focused on Israel's central role in a rapidly evolving international security environment. Over four days, participants engaged in a dynamic program featuring keynote addresses from senior officials, expert panel discussions, workshop sessions, and special memorial ceremonies honoring those who have fallen in the fight against terror.

Since the conference was held in September, the regional environment has continued to change rapidly. The return of most of the Israeli hostages, the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, and ongoing tension in Lebanon have significantly altered the strategic landscape. Nevertheless, the assessments offered at the conference remain essential for understanding the core assumptions, analytical frameworks, and anticipated trajectories that shaped thinking at the time.

The following summary presents key insights from the conference, including keynote addresses and panel discussions focused on the theme “Israel's Fronts in the Eye of the Storm.” In addition, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the summit workshops, highlighting the main themes and key insights.

[Conference Program >>](#)

[Watch The Conference >>](#)

"The rift within Israeli society placed us in a terrible situation. It stems from a clash between religious law (Halakha) and the law of the State of Israel. The struggle over the character of the state will be determined to a large extent by the returning soldiers."

Prof. Uriel Reichman, Founding President of Reichman University and Chairperson of the Board of Directors,
Reichman University, Israel



Plenary Session: Israel's Security Doctrine

Israel faces three overlapping threat spheres: low-intensity terrorism, which expanded after October 7 to include large-scale incursions; multi-front conventional warfare between states involving advanced weapons systems; and non-conventional threats – chemical, biological, and nuclear – that require a dedicated strategic doctrine.

Israeli government policy directly shapes the threats it faces, as political or security decisions can quickly escalate risks and affect preparedness. This is compounded by potential unexpected developments, such as a possible Arab-Muslim state axis against Israel, which would further complicate the strategic environment. While Israel is not currently in an existential war, without necessary adjustments, it could eventually face one due to ongoing, prolonged threats.

Current conflicts – the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel's own multi-front war – offer essential insights into future trends. They highlight the expanding role of civilian actors in the battlespace, including activists, security entrepreneurs, and civilian-industrial networks with significant but underutilized capabilities. They also point to the rise of private military companies as influential, non-state-aligned combat actors. Additionally, multinational corporations in fields such as AI, IT, space, and weapons production increasingly pursue independent geopolitical agendas that may diverge from the interests of the states they belong to, challenging traditional models of deterrence and control.

These cumulative changes demand a comprehensive reassessment of Israel's security doctrine. Ben-Gurion's foundational principles retain partial relevance, but the threat environment and Israel's own capabilities have fundamentally evolved. Updating the doctrine requires reforms in force-building, restructuring the security establishment, expanding Israel's strategic presence in space, enhancing remote deterrence and pre-emptive capabilities, and crafting new solutions for protecting Jewish communities abroad.

As part of this doctrinal update, several strategic questions must be addressed. Foremost is correcting the intelligence failures exposed on October 7, which requires rigorous investigation and actionable conclusions. Strengthening key decision-making institutions – including the Cabinet, National Security Council, and other bodies – is essential to ensure professional deliberation, diverse viewpoints, and coherent strategic planning.

A final overarching question concerns war termination: under what conditions should a war end, and what criteria define the right timing? This is a strategic, not tactical, decision and must assume the likelihood of future rounds of conflict. As a result, long-term planning is therefore essential. Without a clear political end-state, even significant military achievements lose strategic impact. Only by integrating political vision with social resilience, economic stability, and international legitimacy can military success be transformed into meaningful and lasting victory.



Quotes From Keynote Speakers

"Even in the midst of this struggle, we must remain faithful to the values of responsibility and humanity - and never lose our human image. This is a day [October 7] forever engraved in the heart of the nation - a day that revealed hatred and barbarity [of Hamas], but also rare courage and the heroism of those [Israelis] who, with devotion, saved others."

Prof. Boaz Ganor, President of Reichman University and Founder & Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT)



"The international community must not allow the law to be distorted... unilaterally recognizing a Palestinian state is not the answer to terror. It will not help the Palestinians, nor free a single hostage. [In contrast,] the Abraham Accords are a roadmap for the future. They are a prime interest for anyone who wants to see peace in our region."

The Honorable Isaac Herzog, President of the State of Israel



"Anti-Semitism is rising across Europe, fueled by extremist ideologies, [however,] Germany will continue to fight these threats decisively... Germany stands with Israel in defending itself against terrorism, and we are ready to provide humanitarian support in Gaza"

Dr. Christian Klos, Director General for Public Security of the Ministry of Interior in Germany



Memorial to Shabtai Shavit (Z"l)



Memorial Ceremony for the Victims of October 7th & Swords of Iron War



Plenary Session: The Northern Front

in Memory of MAJ Eyal Ragonis (Z"l)

The northern front is currently undergoing tectonic shift that are reshaping Israel's balance of power vis-à-vis Lebanon and Syria. In Lebanon, the November 2024 ceasefire agreement led to a dramatic political process involving the election of a new government and an unprecedented decision to dismantle the weapons of armed groups. This step strikes at the core of Hezbollah's power concept and presents Israel with a new reality in which the direct threat from the north is diminishing. Hezbollah's status has weakened, both due to internal economic difficulties and a decline in Iranian support, as Iran currently struggles to transfer funds and rehabilitate the organization. Nevertheless, Hezbollah is expected to seek recovery and to restore its influence within the Lebanese arena.

Simultaneously, the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 opened an unexpected window of regional instability. This shift in Syria triggered a domino effect in Lebanon as well, contributing to the collapse of the "Shiite Crescent" and fundamentally altering the regional alliance map. In this new environment, the traditional concept of a "Northern Front" becomes less relevant, as the situation now reflects a broader struggle between Shiite-aligned factions and Sunni blocs. While Hezbollah and the Iranian-led Shiite axis weaken, a Sunni axis led by Qatar and Turkey is rising, posing a distinct challenge to Israel. However, this shift also creates an opportunity to strengthen ties with the moderate Sunni axis – Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt – and to form a strategic coalition vis-à-vis Iran.

Given this regional reality, Israel must proactively shape the emerging processes in the northern arena, with an emphasis on the continued disarmament of Hezbollah and influencing the evolving political-security system in Syria. Such steps must be taken in close coordination and joint leadership with the United States in order to maximize the strategic potential resulting from these regional changes.



Plenary Session: The Iranian Front

The Iranian front remains at the core of Israel's strategic thinking, both in military terms and in the cognitive-perception domain. Iran is no longer satisfied with merely arming and financing proxy organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas; it is actively working to expand its international influence while advancing nuclear and ballistic capabilities that threaten regional stability. The events of October 7 highlighted Iran's direct involvement and its central role within the broader Middle Eastern threat landscape.

Before October 7, Iran and its proxies had developed new "victory doctrines" premised on the prolonged attrition of Israel, the accumulation of Israeli losses over time, and tactical achievements designed to create strategic effects. This approach envisioned a phased weakening of Israel. The October 7 attack was a concrete manifestation of this doctrine: Yahya Sinwar's faction operated according to a "here and now" logic, assuming that the use of concentrated force within the wider Iranian-led axis would produce strategic gains. However, Israel's military actions against Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran challenged these assumptions and exposed the limitations of a strategy built on militias and proxy forces.

It is also important to highlight the Twelve Days War, during which Israel and the United States targeted Iranian nuclear facilities. Throughout 2025, clear signs pointed to accelerated Iranian nuclear development and missile enhancement, creating a tangible existential threat to Israel. In response, the two states conducted a military operation in June 2025. The key challenge now is to translate this strike into a comprehensive diplomatic process supported by sustained international pressure and long-term negotiations – even though such efforts are expected to unfold over several years.

At present, the Iranian axis faces a fundamental dilemma: whether to revert to a patient, long-term strategic approach or to pursue a faster and more violent path of escalation. The direction it chooses will directly influence regional stability and shape Israel's ability to address emerging threats effectively.



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"In just the first half of this year [2025], we removed more than 12 million pieces of content violating our terrorism policies, 99% of which were detected before they were reported to us... If we dare to imagine it and commit to working together, we can ensure that young people have the knowledge, skills, and support to become architects of peace and progress."

Mr. David Tessler, Director of Dangerous Organizations and Individuals Policy Team at Meta



"The essential difference between states and terrorists is intent: terrorists kill innocents deliberately, whereas a state fights to protect life even under complex and constrained circumstances. Israel's approach has always been to uphold the law while decisively combating terror. This balance is critical to defeating terror while maintaining our moral and ethical standards"

MK Yair Lapid, Leader of the Opposition (Yesh Atid Party) at the Knesset of Israel and Former Prime Minister of Israel



"For the first time since we started tracking these attitudes in the 1960s, the younger generation is more likely to hold anti-Jewish views than their parents or grandparents...that is not some simple demographic shift or trend."

Mr. Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director of Anti-Defamation League (ADL)



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"There's no argument that we need to win [...] the question is what tactical steps need to be taken. Inheriting Gaza would mean not only confronting a terrorist organization, but also [taking responsibility for] rebuilding Gaza. [...] No one in the world has a good solution for Gaza. We must choose the least worst option, because good solutions are unavailable."

One-on-one conversation with Prof. Maj. Gen. (Res.) Amos Gilead, Executive Director of the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS) Chairman of the Herzliya Conference Series, Reichman University and MK Yuli Edelstein, Outgoing Chairman of the Foreign Affairs & Defense Committee



"The moral hazard—releasing a dangerous person to save a hostage—is outweighed by the moral imperative: it is the government's duty to bring its citizens home, no matter how difficult or risky the operation... Leaders must know when to shift from military operations to negotiations, often relying on intuition as much as strategy."

One-on-one conversation with Ambassador Roger Carstens, Former Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA) and Freedom for Political Prisoners Distinguished Senior Fellow at the McCain Institute, and Col. (Res.) Adv. Lior Lotan, Head of Sheleg Chair, Sheleg Chair for Crisis Research, Reichman University; Former Special Envoy on Hostages and Missing Persons, Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Israel

"There is no place – neither in Lebanon, nor in Syria, nor in Gaza – that we cannot reach. Hamas can be struck. That said, it is not always right to use force immediately; we must assess where the enemy is and what the strategic consequences are, and avoid operational hubris that overrides political judgment...The goal must be for Israel to position itself properly in the region, and for Gaza not to return to Hamas rule, not to become a Hezbollah model, and not to resemble anything of the past."

MK Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Benjamin (Benny) Gantz, Leader of the Blue and White Party at the Knesset of Israel and Former Minister of Defense & Chief of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces



Plenary Session: The Southern Front

The campaign against Hamas has been ongoing for an extended period. The organization has preserved its military capabilities and maintained its governing control over the Gaza Strip, thereby projecting resilience; in the eyes of the organization, its supporters, and even segments of the international arena, its ability to endure against a powerful military force is perceived as an achievement.

As a result of the reputational erosion caused by the prolonged fighting, Israel faces a cognitive dilemma: prolonged force, even when within the bounds of international law, is perceived as illegitimate, while prolonged vulnerability is perceived as weakness or victimhood. In an era in which military operations are documented and distributed in real time, such exposure creates a strategic disadvantage for Israel, which is influenced by global public perception. Key questions remain unresolved: what will happen if Hamas is defeated? Who will govern the Gaza Strip in its place? Who will ensure its stability? This uncertainty undermines Israel's ability to define clear objectives and secure international support for its positions.

The Palestinian Authority represents a weak option in the absence of fundamental reforms, yet replacing Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip may be what enables the victory that Israel seeks—conditional upon cessation of hostilities and the return of the hostages. It must be recognized that one of the goals of the October 7 attack was to delay normalization processes and to humiliate Israel; Hamas will not easily relinquish its aspirations or its commitment to the ideology of "resistance." In addition, continued external funding remains a central driver behind the organization's operations. As long as Qatar and other supporters continue providing financial resources and infrastructure, Hamas will be able to function. Therefore, a comprehensive policy is required to dry up the organization's economic ventures through economic, legal, and diplomatic measures targeting its activities in supportive states – including restricting its operational capabilities in countries such as Turkey and additional support hubs.





"I find it very difficult to describe the suffering and the feelings of what it means to be held hostage by Hamas."

Mr. Keith Siegel

Returned Israeli-American hostage



Plenary Session: The Lawfare & Legitimacy Front

Israel is undergoing a prolonged erosion of international legitimacy regarding its actions in the Gaza Strip. Threats against Israel and Jewish communities worldwide are intensifying, driven largely by information campaigns and ideological narratives that have gained strength since October 7. Across U.S. campuses, European cities, and social media platforms, antisemitism is rising sharply. Extreme comparisons portraying Israel as “worse than Nazi Germany” have become powerful tools that legitimize hatred and fuel violence. Digital propaganda—often amplified by extremist groups using Hamas-produced materials circulated through NGOs and international actors—further undermines Israel’s legitimacy and heightens the sense of vulnerability among Jews globally. A new, worrying trend is also emerging: antisemitic incidents are shifting from spontaneous acts to organized and even institutionalized efforts, suggesting that the threat is global, borderless, and self-reinforcing.

These trends translate into real harm: physical attacks, boycotts, professional and academic pressure, reputational damage to scholars and public figures, and political pressure on governments and organizations. Much of the ideological opposition is framed around alleged Israeli violations of international law—claims often rooted in misinformation or manipulation—which help normalize boycotts and delegitimization efforts. This reality goes well beyond hostile rhetoric; it affects the daily security and status of Israel and Jews worldwide.

A coordinated, proactive, and multidimensional response is essential. This includes: strengthening inter-ministerial and international law-enforcement cooperation, with improved intelligence-sharing and rapid action on digital platforms; developing professional global communication strategies to reinforce Israel’s legitimacy and counter false narratives; advancing a multidisciplinary approach that integrates legal, diplomatic, communication, marketing, and academic tools, alongside support for Jewish and academic communities abroad; and clearly distinguishing between legitimate criticism and orchestrated disinformation campaigns, with targeted legal and media responses to those promoting violence or falsehoods. A holistic, well-resourced strategy is needed to protect Jewish communities and restore Israel’s standing in the global information arena.



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"Modern terrorism is no longer only about weapons or physical attacks. It is primarily a battle for hearts and minds, an ideological contest over narratives. Its most powerful tools are social media and mass demonstrations. Our counter-measures must be equally strategic, combining prevention, and legal enforcement."

President Olaf Lindner, President of Federal Police Special Operations Command 11 at the Federal Ministry of the Interior in Germany



"Unfortunately, we can't pick and choose which threats we're going to face, we're facing them all [extreme right, Islamist and jihadi, and Ultra Progressive] right now simultaneously."

Mr. Mitch Silber, Executive Director of Community Security Initiative (CSI) and Former Director of Intelligence Analysis at City of New York City Police Department (NYPD)

"Dozens of Druze villages are under the control of enemy forces and the regime, with residents expelled and entire communities deported... Nearly 200,000 children have been deported to detention centers, schools, and even the streets, without a roof over their heads. This is terror, wearing a mask, pretending to act with legitimacy, while in reality, it is a criminal killer. [...] If international organizations do not act, a humanitarian disaster will strike hundreds of thousands of people. The world knows, the United States knows, Europe knows – yet they remain silent."

Sheikh Muwaffaq Tarif, Spiritual Leader of the Druze Community in Israel



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"The Sheikhs of Hebron sent me a letter of intent: they want to leave the Palestinian Authority and join the Abraham Accords. For the first time, local leaders openly recognized Israel as the state of the Jewish people... It changes the whole equation... The Sheikhs of Hebron want to guarantee peace... Their message is simple – they want safety, prosperity, and to live side by side with Israel, not to erase it."

The Honorable Nir Barkat, Minister of Economy and Industry of Israel



"As I walk in today, the images, the empty seats that are reserved, the testimonies of victims and family members, these are stark reminders of the brutality and the terror of October 7th. There can be no compromise with Antisemitism."

Dr. Scott Lasensky
Senior Bureau Official, Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism in the USA

"While the U.S. and Israel are far from the only nations to suffer an attack at the hands of terrorists, the threat of terrorism remains higher for us than perhaps for any other nation in the world. It is, therefore, only natural that the United States and Israel have formed a powerful and lasting national security partnership."

Mr. Michael Glasheen,
Operations Director, National Security Branch,
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the USA





Evelyn Tamman Douek Cocktail & Networking Event



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Workshop: Counter-Terrorism Financing

in cooperation with Cognyte and CENTEF

The workshop examined how terrorist organizations finance their activities, how these systems are evolving, and what this means for governments, regulators, and the private sector. It framed terror financing as a complex ecosystem of actors, tools, and platforms, and stressed the need to make this field accessible to policymakers and the broader public. The opening discussion reviewed Hezbollah after the war with Israel. Despite significant operational damage, Hezbollah remains financially resilient, relying on Iranian support, money-exchange houses, shadow economies inside Lebanon, and global facilitator networks that also support weapons procurement. Speakers highlighted the agility of these networks, especially in diaspora communities and free trade zones, and called for stronger international coordination and enforcement.

The first panel focused on the shift from traditional finance to fintech and cryptocurrency. While crypto, digital wallets, and online fundraising are growing, the underlying operational model still depends on hawalas (informal money transfer systems), shell companies, and cash. Participants warned that official blockchain statistics underestimate the shadow economy and that current monitoring tools are insufficient. They called for real-time analytics, cross-platform visibility, centralized data, and more use of machine learning, while pointing to new vulnerabilities such as digital donors in weakly regulated jurisdictions and the growing criminal use of stablecoins like USDT. A second fireside chat explored the tight link between terrorism and crime. Speakers highlighted that terrorist organizations rely on criminal activities, both as revenue streams and operational enablers. The infrastructure used by criminals and terrorists is often indistinguishable, involving similar financial mechanisms, intermediaries, and laundering techniques. The discussion emphasized international intelligence sharing, improved supervision of NGOs and money service businesses, and more systematic criminalization of terror financing.

The final panel examined the Iran-Qatar-Turkey financing axis. It showed how Iran continues to move large sums through shadow networks and front companies despite economic pressure, and how open-source intelligence and large data leaks, such as Wikilran, can significantly disrupt these networks when properly analyzed and enforced. Qatar was described as using strategic investments and global assets to build financial and political protection while funding ideological infrastructures abroad that can foster radicalization. Speakers concluded that without cutting financial flows into arenas like Gaza, military action cannot achieve lasting results. In the closing remarks, the workshop stressed three priorities, investing in advanced technologies, enforcing sanctions consistently, and strengthening coordination between states, private sector, and civil society, while keeping terror financing high on the public and policy agenda.

The practical manifestation of this threat is reflected in harm to Jewish lives and their communities: physical violence, boycotts, professional and academic pressure, damage to the status of scholars and public figures, and reputational shock that leads to political pressure on states and institutions. In parallel, some of the ideological opposition is forming around claims of Israel's "violation of international law" – often rooted in misinformation or manipulation of documents and background materials – serving as a basis for the normalization of boycotts against Israel among governments and international organizations. This reality does not end with hostile rhetoric; it translates into daily harm to Israel's standing and to the security of Jews worldwide.



Counter-Terrorism Financing

in cooperation with Cognyte & CENTEF



Workshop: Steven Stern Workshop on Cyber-Terrorism & Online Extremism

The workshop examined how terrorist organizations and extremist groups use AI, social media, gaming platforms, and an inherently insecure digital ecosystem to intensify propaganda, recruitment, and psychological influence, alongside sharp gaps in legal and regulatory response. Concrete examples were presented of AI-generated fake images, videos, and statistics during the Israel-Hamas war, emphasizing that AI is already functioning as an operational tool for terrorism, not just a future threat, creating an urgent need to adapt detection and response mechanisms.

The discussions described a significant rise in cyber activity and influence campaigns by pro-Iranian actors since October 7, focusing on psychological impact rather than damage to critical infrastructure. TikTok was highlighted as a core platform in Iran's disinformation campaign, while a major gaming server was analyzed as a radicalization hub where players carry out missions of attacking soldiers and civilians, stealing police or IDF vehicles, and crossing checkpoints with weapons, with content coordinated via Discord and amplified on TikTok. The integration of gaming, online communities, and short-form video creates an especially effective mechanism for normalizing terrorism among younger audiences.

On the legal side, speakers stressed the distinction between terrorist use of the internet (for propaganda, recruitment, and financing) and cyberterrorism as direct attacks on infrastructure. At the same time, they noted that global regulation remains fragmented and slow, and that key international instruments barely address cyberterrorism. This regulatory lag creates dangerous blind spots, as criminal law and enforcement tools fail to keep pace with how terrorists actually operate in cyberspace. In this context, it was also highlighted that there is a growing gap between the speed and sophistication of online manipulation and the capacity of societies to build resilience and proactive counter-influence.

Looking ahead, participants argued that detection must shift from post-fact prosecution to pre-emptive identification of threats, integrating AI with insights from cognitive neuroscience and systematic tracking of recruitment pathways from open platforms to closed forums and dark-web spaces. They also emphasized the need to incentivize "security-by-design" through financial tools such as tax benefits, grants, and public-private partnerships, and to impose clearer responsibilities and liabilities on AI and platform companies.



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"We must look not only at what is available today, but what will be available in the next 5-10 years. Advances in AI and synthetic biology are accelerating, creating both unprecedented opportunities and unprecedented risks... The democratization of bioengineering and AI means that tools once limited to expensive labs are now widely accessible. This raises the stakes for biosecurity and threat detection."

Prof. Yosi Shacham-Diamond, Director of Scojen Institute of Synthetic Biology at Reichman University in Israel



"Qatar has become a central player in destabilizing international stability... It has penetrated universities, media, and educational institutions – the places that shape the next generation... Its money is not just capital, it is power that undermines Western democracies... The threat is not just military, it is cultural, educational, and financial."

Dr. Udi Levi, former Chief of Economic Warfare & Financial Intelligence Division at Mossad in Israel

"We will not stop applying pressure, nor will we give up the possibility of securing the release of the hostages... We are prepared to pay whatever it takes to bring our people home. The world must clearly understand: the abduction of hundreds of civilians is not a legitimate tool; it is a crime against humanity... I am concerned that this message is not sinking in because international memory is short, very short. The massacre of October 7 and the mass kidnappings into Gaza should have served as a case study for global support of Israel's fight."

Brig. Gen. (Res.) Gal Hirsch, National Coordinator for the Hostages and the Missing at the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel



Workshop: The Sir David Garrard Session on Regional Challenges in Counter-Terrorism Policing

The session highlighted how police forces in different democracies are adapting to the evolving terrorist threat, with a strong emphasis on hate crime, youth radicalization, and international cooperation. In New York, police reported a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents, vandalism, and violence against Jewish residents after October 7, framing the attack as a global event whose shockwaves reached local neighborhoods. They stressed that the safety of Jewish, Muslim, and all New Yorkers is “non-negotiable” and described new partnerships in which the NYPD now sits regularly with faith leaders and educators to stop radicalization before it begins. This marks a shift from a purely enforcement-driven model to one that actively invests in community prevention and resilience. From Paraguay and Italy, senior police officials emphasized that no country can handle today’s threats alone. They described terrorism and organized crime as deeply connected, crossing borders through financial crime, trafficking, and illicit networks. Paraguay presented itself as a regional leader, having formally designated groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the IRGC as terrorist organizations, and framed this stance as both a security necessity and a moral choice. The Italian Guardia di Finanza explained its hybrid role as a financial-police force under the Ministry of Economy and Finance, stressing that tax evasion, fraud, and financial crime are integral to the fight against terrorism and must be tackled through international cooperation, including with Israel. A key insight was that financial and economic policing are now central pillars of counter-terrorism, not peripheral issues.

The Australian experience focused on the domestic threat and youth. Authorities reported that the national terrorism threat level was raised to “Probable” in August 2024 and that in the last year, investigations involved 45 individuals aged 17 or younger. Police described how young people are being radicalized online through propaganda and echo chambers, often attracted to violent extremist content generally rather than to a single clear ideology. They highlighted efforts to prioritize “therapeutic pathways” for at-risk youth alongside enforcement. This reflects a growing recognition that counter-terrorism policing must integrate social services and prevention tools to deal with an increasingly younger and more fluid extremist landscape.

From the Israeli perspective, speakers explained that since 1974 the Israel Police has carried dual responsibilities, fighting crime and safeguarding internal security against terrorism, and that in wartime, responsibility shifts in part to the army, requiring constant recalibration between crime control and counter-terror operations. They noted that Israel’s hard-earned experience in counter-terrorism has made its police a sought-after partner for agencies worldwide, while also underscoring that “crime knows no borders” and that only broad cooperation can meet global threats. Across all contributions, the common message was that effective counter-terrorism policing depends on international partnerships, information-sharing, and a “full picture” approach that links street-level security, financial investigations, and community-based prevention.



The International Arena in Counter-Terrorism & Diplomacy

In cooperation with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)



"No nation can confront terror alone. It requires cooperation."

Dr. Michael Rimmel, Director, KAS, Israel Office

"We need to try and bring a state [Israel] into the western community, and not leave it out if it"

Ambassador Luca Ferrari, Ambassador of Italy to Israel

After the last two years, after what we went through, one of the main objectives of Hamas in the October 7 war was to prevent any historic reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians.

Ambassador Jeremy Issacharoff, Former Ambassador of Israel to Germany

"This is the underlying tone in the Czech Republic... support for Israel."

Ambassador Veronika Kuchyňová Šmigolová, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to Israel

"The relationship between Israel and Cyprus never were stronger than they are now"

Ambassador Kornelios S. Korneliou, Ambassador of Cyprus to Israel

"The response of the British government was to stand in solidarity with Israel... we went to the Kibbutzim, to Sderot... it was a horrifying experience to see what Hamas has done."

Ambassador Simon Walters CMG, His Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

Workshop: The Red, Green, Brown Alliances & The New Antisemitism

in cooperation with ISGAP

The session explored the evolving nature of antisemitism and extremist alliances, focusing on the interplay between far-right, far-left, and Islamist actors, as well as the role of media in amplifying and blending their ideologies. Speakers emphasized that extremist movements no longer fit neatly into traditional categories: symbols, rhetoric, and tactics increasingly cross ideological boundaries. Social media enables extremists to expose content to billions rather than thousands, exponentially increasing the reach and impact of propaganda.

The session stressed the phenomenon of “fused extremism,” where white supremacists adapt jihadist ideologies and vice versa. New media and communication technologies blur ideological boundaries, allowing groups to borrow from each other, escalate radicalization, and form unexpected alliances. This fusion makes traditional analytical categories insufficient for understanding modern extremist networks. Speakers noted that organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood collaborate across ideological lines while presenting a moderate public face. The younger generation increasingly draws from this blended spectrum of extremist beliefs, unconstrained by specific ideologies, making radicalization more diffuse and harder to detect.

International dynamics were also emphasized. Palestinian organizations and their political campaigns were discussed in terms of normalizing or romanticizing terrorism, while some global actors inadvertently provide funding or platforms that support terror-affiliated groups. Failure to address these issues consistently allows antisemitism and extremist ideologies to spread unchecked. Speakers stressed that political hesitation, mischaracterization, or conflation of antisemitism with other forms of discrimination creates blind spots in prevention and policy responses, highlighting the urgent need for proactive recognition and action.

Finally, the session underscored the need for multi-disciplinary, cross-sector cooperation. No single actor-government, academia, or civil society-can tackle these complex extremist networks alone. Joint task forces involving educational institutions, researchers, and policymakers are essential to counter the ideological, cultural, and financial mechanisms that sustain these alliances. Addressing the fusion of extremist ideologies, their accelerationist tactics, and the transnational spread of antisemitism requires coordinated, proactive, and integrated strategies across multiple sectors.





Workshop: Hostage Crises & The Redemption of Captives

The workshop discussed the extraordinary complexity of negotiating with Hamas, especially during an ongoing conflict, emphasizing the inherent tension in responding to hostage situations: the balance between leaving an unneutralized adversary in the field and the danger caused by ongoing captivity. The discussion centered on Israel's historical and contemporary approach to negotiating with Hamas, situating the current conflict in both operational and cultural context. Negotiations require trust, transparency, and careful listening, even when parties hold fundamentally different positions. Hamas' current lack of popular support and limited military capability in Gaza presents a rare window for negotiation, yet previous deals were delayed or collapsed due to military operations, political missteps, or last-minute demands. International mediation and coordinated diplomatic pressure could create conditions for hostage releases.

Participants highlighted that Israel's historical approach to hostages, which prioritizes rescuing citizens at almost any cost, combines deeply rooted cultural, religious, and national values with pragmatic necessity. Military operations alone cannot secure hostages, particularly as Hamas has adapted into a guerrilla organization that limits opportunities for decisive battlefield victories. A clear, strategic framework is necessary to guide negotiation outcomes.

The discussion stressed the importance of integrating short-term negotiation tactics with a long-term strategic vision. Hostage negotiations cannot be isolated from broader strategic vision. Hamas' negotiation strategy has been deliberate and adaptive: initial shock from military operations led to temporary concessions, but over time, demands hardened under the influence of Israeli public pressure and international calls for restraint, highlighting a gap between tactical negotiation and broader policy coherence.

Finally, the workshop underscored that Israel faces a multi-front challenge, with Hamas active in Gaza, the West Bank, and internationally, and shifting regional alliances affecting outcomes. Successfully resolving hostage situations requires transparent, strategically aligned negotiation supported by long-term vision, coordinated domestic policy, and careful management of international mediation, rather than relying solely on military measures or reactive decision-making.



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"The AFP assesses that these incidents [attacks on the Jewish community] have been highly organized and have involved several offenders with individual roles, and involving methods commonly used by gangs and organized crime, we have termed this "crime as a service," which essentially involves outsourcing criminal acts to other criminal groups for payment."

Assistant Commissioner Stephen Nutt, Assistant Commissioner for Counter-Terrorism and Specialist Investigations at the Australian Federal Police



"There were five objectives [of the war]. Three required the use of military force and were fully achieved: dismantling the Hamas organization, eliminating Hamas leadership, and freedom of action to do as we wish in the Gaza Strip. We're left with two objectives: bringing the hostages back home and replacing Hamas rule with an alternative that is not the State of Israel... This is the difference between a military success and victory."

Maj. Gen. (Res.) Yoav Gallant, Former Minister of Defense of the State of Israel, Israeli Ministry of Defense



"The sacrifice this nation [Israel] has gone through, the hostages that are still being held in captivity. Hostage affairs belong to me at the White House; I meet with hostage families almost every week, and I reassure them that our President is doing everything to get every single Israeli, American, and any nationality hostage back from the clutches of Hamas."

Dr. Sebastian Gorka, Deputy Assistant to the President & Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the National Security Council, The White House in the USA



Workshop: Global Terrorism - Trends and Threats

The workshop highlighted the evolution and diversification of contemporary threats, emphasizing that terrorism today is no longer confined to specific ideologies or regions but operates as a transnational phenomenon with decentralized structures. The structural evolution of groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS—from hierarchical organizations to decentralized—has made coordinated large-scale attacks less frequent while simultaneously enhancing survivability and adaptability. This decentralization, combined with technological exploitation, allows terrorist groups to recruit online, inspire lone actors, and maintain operational continuity despite leadership losses. The use of propaganda, encrypted communication channels, and AI-driven content illustrates how radicalization is increasingly personalized and difficult to predict. Extremist groups can flourish without direct hierarchical control, leveraging online networks to inspire acts of violence.

Another trend is the reduced ideological rigidity. The jihadist movement shows more flexibility, borrowing from and overlapping with other extremist ideologies. Far-right extremism has converged with these trends, adopting similar decentralized structures, small autonomous cells, and ideological fluidity. This “fusion of hatreds,” amplifies risk: actors combine racism, antisemitism, conspiracy theories and others, creating complex motivations. Psychological analyses suggest that terrorism is often symptomatic of broader societal stress, with perpetrators exploiting feelings of humiliation or marginalization. Recruitment thus depends not only on ideology but on the promise of belonging, recognition, and psychological compensation, making social and educational countermeasures as crucial as security responses. Technological adaptation is a core feature across all terrorist movements. Online radicalization and recruitment, particularly via social media and hidden networks, allow groups to bypass traditional oversight and reach wider audiences, including women and children. The paradox of Da’wa - preaching intended to educate and reach the masses now become the first step toward radicalization and militant jihad - is a critical example of this adaptation.

The evolving tactics of jihadist and far-right actors, including guerrilla-style attacks and the strategic use of psychological and social networks, underscore the necessity of early, nuanced interventions. Counterterrorism strategies must integrate intelligence, technological monitoring, and a profound understanding of the ideological and social drivers of extremism. Failing to address these root causes, especially in the digital sphere, risks a persistent cycle of violence, radicalization, and stochastic terrorism that is increasingly difficult to prevent or predict. Overall, the workshop emphasized that effective counterterrorism requires a multi-layered approach: combining strategic, operational, psychological, and social measures while acknowledging the fluid and adaptive nature of contemporary extremist threats. The global jihadist landscape, combined with rising far-right extremism, presents challenges that are ideological, technological, and societal, demanding both proactive prevention and reactive mitigation. Understanding these evolving patterns and targeting recruitment pathways early is crucial to reducing the future threat landscape.



Memorial Ceremony for the Victims of 9/11 & Terrorism Worldwide



QUOTES FROM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

"ISIS remains a threat in Syria, and to ensure its enduring defeat, we are focusing on the ISIS detention facilities and displaced persons camps in northeast Syria... The United States, under President Trump's leadership, intends to create space and opportunity for the Syrian government to succeed, including against Iran and ISIS."

Mr. Gregory LoGerfo, Acting Coordinator at the Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State



"[When considering the definition of terrorism] we have to anticipate the new domains: cyber, drones, AI-enabled attacks, that may produce the same strategic effects as traditional terrorism, but in a way we haven't thought about or seen yet."

Col. Sean Morrow, Director of Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at United States Military Academy at West Point

"[Israel] had no choice, not just to fight back, but to end Hamas occupation of Gaza. That to do anything less than that would be as ridiculous and as irrational as it would have been to leave the Nazis in power in Germany after World War II."

The Honorable Michael Huckabee, Ambassador of the United States of America to Israel



Workshop: New Regional Dynamics in the Middle East

The workshop painted a picture of a Middle East that is structurally different, not just tactically turbulent. The regional order has not bounced back to its pre-October 7 configuration, as alliances, threat perceptions, and power centers keep shifting. A key theme was that the region is now genuinely multipolar, with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, Turkey, and emerging Syrian realities all pulling in different directions, while Israel tries to translate military achievements into long-term political gains. A central insight was that Syria has become the main testing ground for this new order.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE were presented as cautious yet transformative actors. Saudi Arabia was described as both a guardian of the status quo and a revisionist power seeking to reshape its economy and regional environment. Its strategic evolution from reliance on the United States to a hedging posture with Russia, China, and Iran reflects a deep crisis of trust in traditional security guarantees and a search for autonomous leverage. The UAE, by contrast, has already invested heavily in the Abraham Accords and long-term projects, yet now fears that an “endless war with no day-after plan” could erode the strategic and economic vision it built with Israel. Both Gulf actors thus underscore that short-term Israeli political moves on annexation, Gaza, and Temple Mount can undermine long-term regional integration that is vital for Israel’s security and economy.

Iran and Turkey were portrayed as reshaped, but not neutralized, regional engines. Iran is experiencing its most serious tests since the Iran-Iraq war, after coordinated strikes on nuclear facilities, weakening of its proxy network, economic crisis, and partial international isolation. The regime’s capacity for internal repression remains, but the combination of external setbacks and internal discontent places Tehran at a strategic crossroads: either re-engage with the international community or double down on confrontation at high cost. Turkey, meanwhile, is pressing an ambitious hegemonic agenda that combines hard power (military bases, drone carrier, defense industry) with soft and ideological tools (Muslim Brotherhood networks, Pan-Turkism). Its activism in Syria, the Red Sea, and even South Asia, and its use of Turkmen factions and Islamist partners, creates a new radical Sunni axis that may partially supplant Iran’s traditional “Axis of Resistance,” while also generating new fault-lines with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt. This highlights a critical regional gap: Iran’s weakening does not necessarily produce stability, but often shifts the locus of competition to new arenas and actors.

Syria emerged as the clearest laboratory of the new regional dynamics. The discussion around Ahmad al-Shara emphasized three competing interpretations: genuine moderation, tactical façade, or an evolving hybrid system. Syria remains structurally fragile, with a fragmented security landscape of different militias, foreign fighters, and limited governance capacity. External players like Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE all test different degrees of engagement, while Syria's economy would need years of high growth just to regain pre-war levels. Against this backdrop, the workshop's central takeaway was that Israel must balance deterrence and readiness with carefully managed diplomatic openings, converting tactical gains into more durable arrangements without assuming regime intentions are fully settled.

Finally, the Palestinian arena, and in particular Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), was used to underline how proxy structures and ideological rigidity remain key features of the regional security landscape. PIJ was presented as smaller but more Iran-dependent and less politically constrained than Hamas, fully integrated into what remains of Iran's Axis of Resistance. This reinforces a broader insight: non-state militant actors continue to shape escalation dynamics and constrain diplomatic options. Overall, the workshop concluded that the Middle East in 2025 is multipolar, fluid, and volatile, and that Israel's core strategic challenge is to preserve the Abraham Accords, limit any Iranian recovery, manage Turkey's rising influence, and shape postwar Syria in ways that reduce long-term costs, rather than merely winning the next round of fighting.



Workshop: The Nexus Between Biology & Defense

in cooperation with the Scojen Institute for Synthetic Biology

Across the workshop, several cross-cutting insights and gaps emerged. First, biology has clearly become a core defense technology, from bacterial landmine sensors to genome-engineered production platforms and AI-designed proteins, yet operational integration and governance are lagging. Turning clever lab ideas into real capabilities demands scale-up, engineering and doctrine, and there is still a gap between scientific proof-of-concept and robust, fielded bio-systems that militaries and regulators can actually manage safely. Second, synthetic biology and biomanufacturing offer enormous upside for materials, fuels, therapeutics and sensing, especially in austere environments, but the same tools that enable secure bio-production can also lower barriers for designing stealthy or augmented biological agents, creating a persistent dual-use tension that policy frameworks have not fully internalized.

The third cluster of insights revolves around detection and AI. Traditional biosecurity relies on recognizing known sequences or agents, yet generative models can already create functionally dangerous proteins and genomes that evade similarity-based screening, leaving a widening detection blind spot. Early work on sequence-agnostic, host-response-based detection is promising but still immature, which means there is a near-term vulnerability window where offensive innovation is outpacing defensive monitoring. Finally, the discussion on "bioterror ChatGPT" underlined that model alignment alone is insufficient as a safeguard; jailbreaks and open models make it unrealistic to rely solely on technical content filters. The workshop therefore points to a strategic need for multi-layered biosecurity: technical safeguards (genetic containment, advanced detection), operational controls (access, KYC, oversight) and institutional cooperation between science, industry and security communities, all moving in step with the accelerating interface between AI and synthetic biology.



Simulation: The New Frontier of Cognitive Warfare

The workshop highlighted how contemporary conflicts are fought not only on the battlefield but also in the realm of perception, legitimacy and emotion. The core shift is that “whose story wins” can be as decisive as whose army wins, as every person with a smartphone becomes a reporter and every image a strategic asset. Conflicts are increasingly asymmetric, with states facing non-state actors that lack tanks or air forces yet gain leverage by mastering the “image war” and exploiting international public opinion. Non-state actors have learned to study Western societies, identify emotional triggers such as compassion for children and weaker parties, and systematically use these cues, whether via real or AI-generated visuals, to reframe themselves as victims and their adversaries as aggressors. Ignoring this war might mean losing in the long run, even after battlefield successes.

Within this environment, influence operations were described as structured, strategic campaigns rather than ad hoc messaging. A key argument was that any serious influence effort must adopt a battle mindset and follow a clear workflow: start with a precise brief and obstacle, develop an insight and “big idea,” then build strategy, and only afterwards execute creatively through leaflets, speeches or digital content. The decisive measure of success is tangible behavioral change, not views or likes; if behavior does not shift, the campaign has failed. Unlike commercial advertising, influence operations in conflict integrate a wider toolbox, combining overt and covert tools such as social media with intelligence operations, diplomatic maneuvers, strategic disruptions and deliberate leaks. Real influence is created not only by words but by orchestrating actions that send their own message. Several case studies demonstrated how this logic works in practice, such as the Ukraine-Russia war and others. The Israeli context was presented as a real-time laboratory of cognitive warfare challenges. Israel faces a structural dilemma: it needs to maintain legitimacy for extensive military operations while every image of civilian casualties constitutes an immediate narrative defeat. The insight offered was that “you can’t win with the picture, but you can win with the framing,” meaning that while the raw imagery may be unfavorable, the surrounding context, sequence and interpretation can still be shaped. The workshop implied that success demands integrating image considerations at the earliest stages of strategy, not as an afterthought. Adopting a disciplined influence workflow, combining creative thinking with intelligence and diplomacy, and planning for the “storyline” of each operation are no longer optional add-ons but essential components of national security in the age of cognitive warfare.



Future of Terrorism



"AI is no longer just a tool for manipulated videos and misinformation – it can autonomously generate, plan and even select targets for real terrorist attacks."

Dr. Lt. Col. (Res.) Uri Ben Yaakov, Chief Operations Officer (COO) and Senior Researcher, ICT, Israel

"To win the war, our enemies know they must win the battle of narrative – not just capture territory or control areas operationally."

Col. (Res.) Guy Itzhaki, Research Fellow, ICT, Reichman University; Former Chief, IDF Influence & Perception Department, IDF, Israel

"AI can act like a relentless strategist – continuously thinking two steps ahead, 24/7, looking for ways to destabilize a country or the Western world."

Mr. Daniel Taube, Senior Defense Official, Israel

"Autonomy and AI agents are everywhere – not only in our offices or labs but accessible to anyone. Terrorists can now reach the technologies they want, many of them AI-based."

Col. (Res.) Merav Davidovits, CTO, Aurelius Capital; AI & Technology Advisor; Defense-Tech Executive, Israel

"Terrorist campaigns, guerrilla war, conventional and military operations – once separable, are now blended into a single spectrum of conflict."

Mr. Brian Jenkins, Senior Advisor to the President, RAND Corporation, USA

Conclusions, Insights & Recommendations

Israel's current campaign extends beyond the military arena. True victory requires not only tactical achievements but also political stability, international legitimacy, and strong social resilience. The fight is simultaneously over morality, public perception, and global awareness – and without progress in these domains, military gains can quickly diminish. In the information age, communication, cyber, and intelligence capabilities are essential, alongside a unified national narrative that can withstand academic, diplomatic, and public scrutiny. Regional opportunities, especially the Abraham Accords, highlight the potential for deeper cooperation with moderate Arab states. Lasting victory will depend on integrating military strength with diplomatic, cognitive, and regional efforts.

Core Insights from the Workshops:

- Modern threats blend finance, technology, media, and social dynamics, requiring integrated responses.
- Extremist groups are decentralized and adaptive, demanding anticipatory strategies.
- AI, synthetic biology, cyber tools, and fintech are advancing faster than regulation and oversight.
- Effective responses require cooperation across governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector.
- Early intervention – in online radicalization, youth engagement, and influence campaigns – is crucial.
- Dual-use technologies create both benefits and risks, requiring strong governance and safeguards.

Recommendations:

Israel must define clear political end-goals for the war in Gaza; without a strategic roadmap, military achievements may evaporate. A formal policy plan will help align international partners and guide future negotiations and reconstruction efforts. Simultaneously, Israel must strengthen its digital-information front through a coordinated communications and cyber-intelligence effort that counters hostile narratives and reinforces internal cohesion.

In the medium and long term, Israel should leverage regional diplomatic opportunities and rebuild internal resilience – strengthening civil defense, supporting affected communities, and restoring public trust. Only a combined diplomatic, communicative, security, and social approach can ensure that victory endures and forms the basis for long-term stability.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Ambassador
Ronald S. Lauder

Gerald Schwartz &
Heather Reisman

Daphna & Gerald
Cramer Z"L

Evelyn Tamman
Douek

Sir David
Garrard Z"L

Steven & Bonnie
Stern

Sir Ehud
Sheleg



Cognyte

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Research of
Terror Financing

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Get To Know ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability, risk assessment, intelligence analysis, national security and defense policy.

ICT also serves as a joint forum for international policymakers and scholars to share information and expertise through research papers, situation reports and academic publications for worldwide distribution. A number of international seminars, workshops and conferences are organized monthly by ICT to discuss and educate on global and regional issues of security, defense, and public policy in order to better facilitate the exchange of perspectives, information and proposals for policy action. Finally, ICT administers the largest public domain research database on the Internet encompassing global terrorist attacks, terrorist organizations and activists in addition to statistical reports.

ICT draws upon a comprehensive and international network of individuals and organizations with unique expertise on terrorism and counter-terrorism research, public policy analysis and education, dispersed all over the world, including the United States, European Union and Israel. An acclaimed management and research staff at ICT spearheads the Institute's efforts to coordinate the struggle against global terrorism and leads a worldwide team of affiliates and academic partners working to encourage cooperation among experts and disseminate innovative ideas for policymakers in the fight against terrorism.

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