



הערכה אסטרטגית לישראל
STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT for ISRAEL
— 2021 —

Strategic Challenges Facing Israel, and Policy Recommendations Special Update for the President

⌆ Changes in the Situation

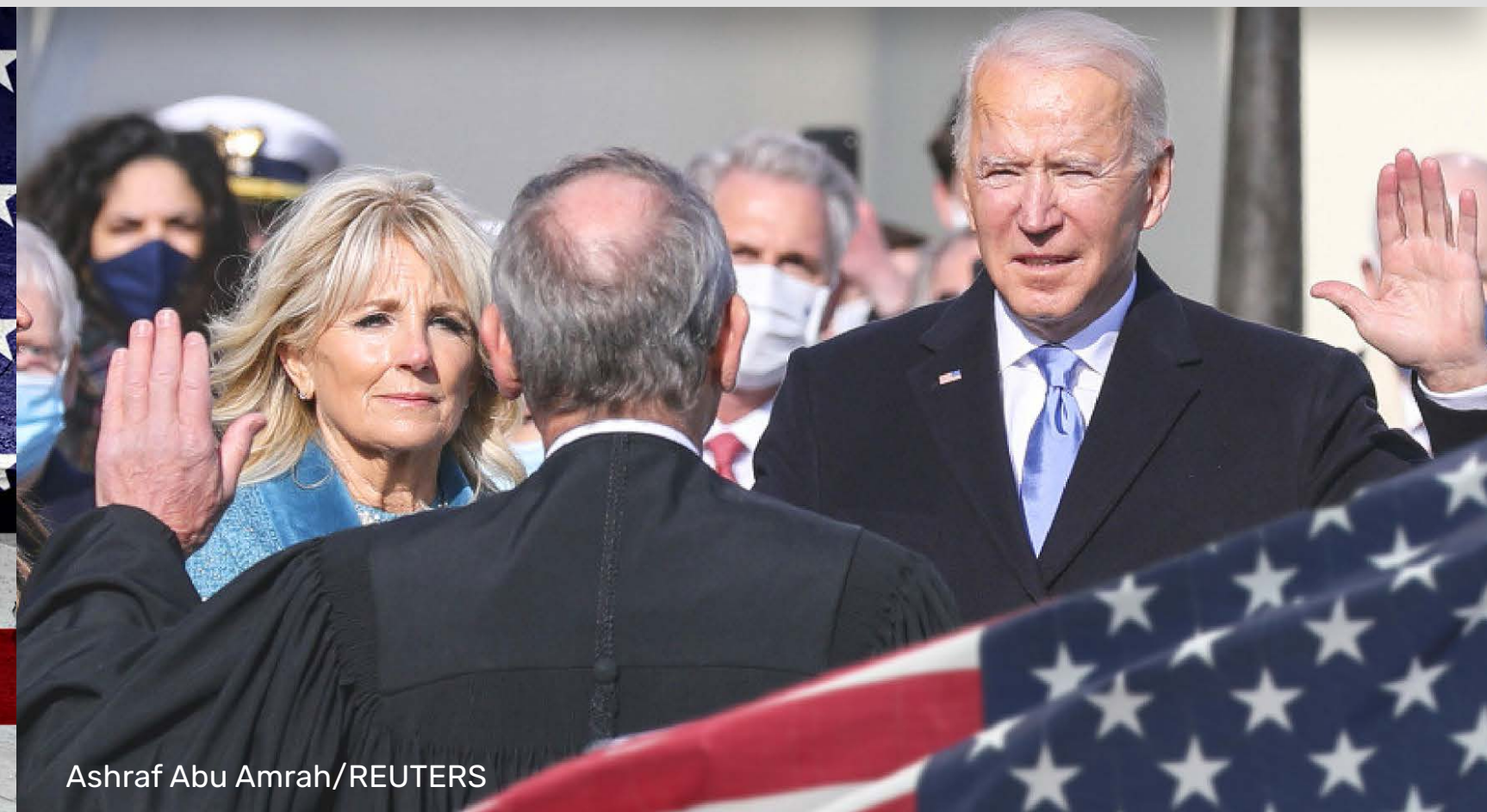


Guardian of the Walls



Shutterstock

US-China



Ashraf Abu Amrah/REUTERS

Biden administration



Avi Ohayon / Government Press Office

Israel's 36th government



Reuters

Collapse of Lebanon?



Iranian Presidency Office/WANA/Handout via REUTERS

Iranian nuclear deal

Iran

Uncertainty demands preparation for several scenarios

Iran is acquiring the knowledge and experience required for nuclear weapons – progressing in high level uranium enrichment and in the operation of advanced centrifuges, and starting to produce metallic uranium.

In the nuclear talks, it is not yet clear whether Tehran wants to return to the deal or is playing for time with the “blame game” – need to deal with all possible scenarios.

In the regional arena, Iran continues to consolidate its political, military, and economic influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen | “Open account” with Israel.



Iranian Presidency Office/WANA/Handout via REUTERS



Iran

Uncertainty demands preparation for several scenarios

| Prepare for the following scenarios, in close collaboration with the United States:

| In the event of a return to the deal, strive for substantive influence on a “longer and stronger” follow-up deal, retaining Israel’s freedom of action.

| In tandem, ensure a credible Israeli military option against Iran and prepare for the scenarios of not reaching an agreement, reaching a “near threshold” situation, and even a nuclear breakout.

| Continue dealing with Iran’s regional activity as part of the Campaign between Wars (CBW).



Policy Recommendations



EU Delegation in Vienna/Handout via REUTERS

The Northern Arena

Policy updates are required for a range of threats



Lebanon's economy and government are collapsing, due to power struggles | Strict conditions for international and regional assistance | Hezbollah – restrained, but a dynamic of escalation is possible.

Syria is divided, mired in a deep crisis and far from reconstruction | On the Golan Heights – presence of Hezbollah and Iranian proxy militias | In the south – struggles over control.

Iranian entrenchment in Syria continues | Russia – the dominant element in Syria, but unable to promote political reform and reconstruction | Russia and Iran in competition for influence.



SANA



REUTERS

The Northern Arena

Policy updates are required for a range of threats

- Promote an international and regional effort to prevent Lebanon's decline into extreme scenarios of anarchy, civil war, or Hezbollah control.
- Prepare for escalation, including clashes with Hezbollah | Initiate a political and security effort to prevent conflict | Define the "how and when" to deal with the precision missiles project.
- While continuing the CBW, design a proactive policy to drive Iran and its proxies out of Syria, by means of international and regional collaboration and support for possible allies in Syria.

Policy Recommendations



The Palestinian System

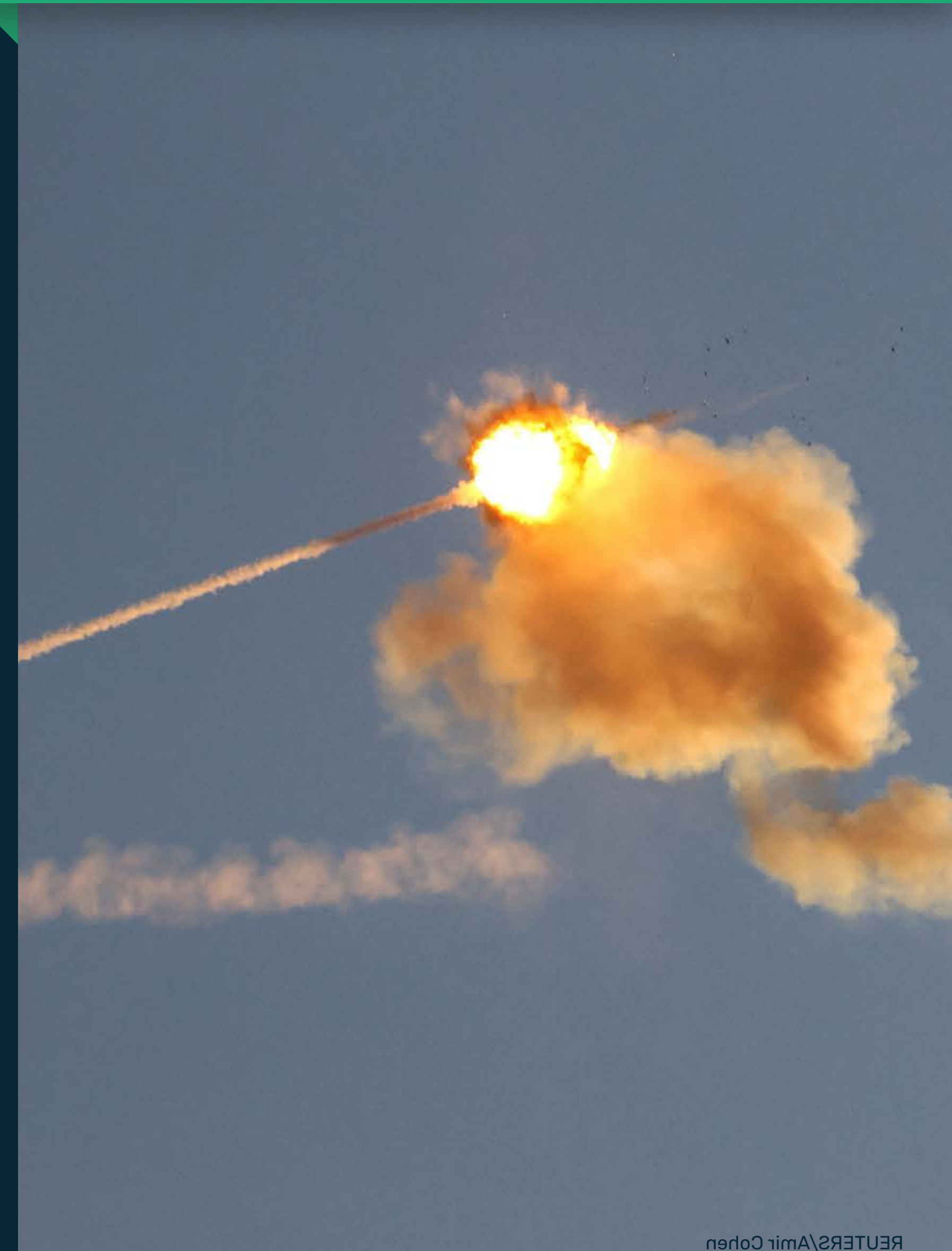
Strengthen the PA and reach an arrangement on Gaza



Events in the Israeli-Palestinian arena in the first months of the year were once again the focus of regional and international interest.

Operation Guardian of the Walls highlighted the link between clashes in Gaza and what happens in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel, particularly in cities with Jewish and Arab populations.

"The day after Abu Mazen" is approaching, and PA legitimacy is steadily eroding | Hamas is gaining broad support among the Palestinian public | At the same time – the younger generation is a rising force.



The Palestinian System

Strengthen the PA and reach an arrangement on Gaza

Strengthen the PA in order to achieve stability in the West Bank, and retain the PA as a partner in a future settlement, with high level political dialogue and greater security coordination.

Prepare for the end of the Abu Mazen era, particularly in view of the increasing strength of Hamas.

Promote a long term arrangement in Gaza, brokered by Egypt and with international assistance, including reconstruction and economic development, while setting up an effective mechanism to prevent force buildup.

Improve readiness for a military campaign in the Strip, including ground maneuvers to inflict heavy damage on the Hamas military wing.



The Regional System

Normalization Opportunity 2.0



There is an ongoing struggle for the shape of the Middle East between four hostile camps – the camp led by Iran, the camp led by Turkey, the jihadists, and the moderate states.

Within the states – instability: intensification of fundamental economic, social, and political problems.

Operation Guardian of the Walls: the normalization agreements survived the escalation | International and regional recognition of Egypt's role | Military cooperation with the "axis of resistance."



The Regional System Normalization Opportunity 2.0

- | Deepen normalization and the efforts to expand it, without sidelining the Palestinian issue.
- | Foster links with the “axis of moderate countries” (including Egypt and Jordan) and promote economic initiatives with them – green energy, water, and infrastructures.
- | Rebuild and nurture relations with Jordan, recognizing its special status in the Holy Sites and helping to resolve the water crisis in the Kingdom.
- | Reduce friction with Turkey, showing cautious openness to signals from Ankara.

Policy Recommendations



The International System

Adapt policy to global trends



- | Superpower competition continues to be the main element shaping the international system.
- | The Biden presidency has introduced changes in agenda, values, and style – efforts to restore the liberal order and transatlantic coordination.
- | The gradual global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a focus on internal challenges, while widening the gap between strong and weak countries.
- | Increasing anti-Israel and antisemitic attitudes affect the security of Jews in the diaspora and the status of Israel.



The International System

Adapt policy to global trends

- | Strengthen close relations with the US president, the administration, the Democratic Party, and American Jewry, while maintaining close relations with the Republican Party.
- | Adapt policy to the age of superpower competition and changes in the global economy.
- | Renew dialogue with the European Union and integrate in multilateral international moves.
- | Prepare for struggles on the legal front.
- | Strengthen contacts with Jewish communities and support for them.

Policy Recommendations



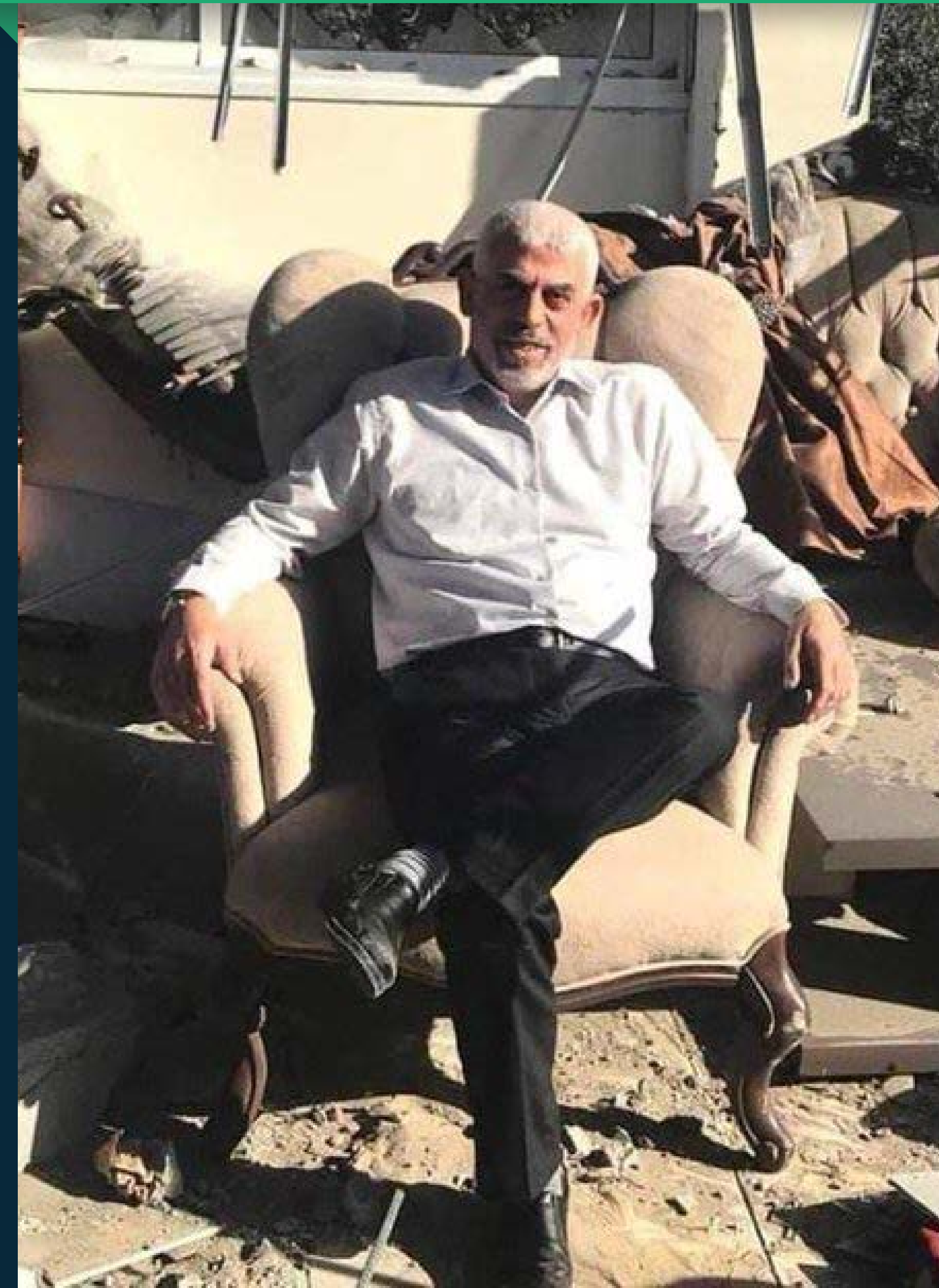
The IDF and the Operational Environment Guardian of the Walls as a wake-up call



Israel's enemies are not interested in escalation, but a broad conflict is possible – largely due to the dynamics of escalation.

In such a conflict, the IDF will use its lethal capabilities and inflict heavy damage on the enemy; but Israel will also have to deal with massive fire on the civilian front, penetration by enemy forces into its territory, and cyber and cognitive attacks.

“Decision” and “victory”: Guardian of the Walls illustrated the advantages and the limitations of standoff fire and the gap between operational achievements, and political and cognitive achievements.



The IDF and the Operational Environment Guardian of the Walls as a wake-up call

Policy Recommendations

Formulate an updated national security strategy as the conceptual basis for IDF activity, with updates of operational plans and approval of a multi-year force buildup plan, including the required budget.

Prepare for the possibility of a multi-front war as the main reference threat, and close gaps in public awareness and perception regarding the war's features and possible outcomes.

Ensure the continued existence of Israel's ability to maneuver and deal with changes in warfare, how the enemy operates, and Israeli society.

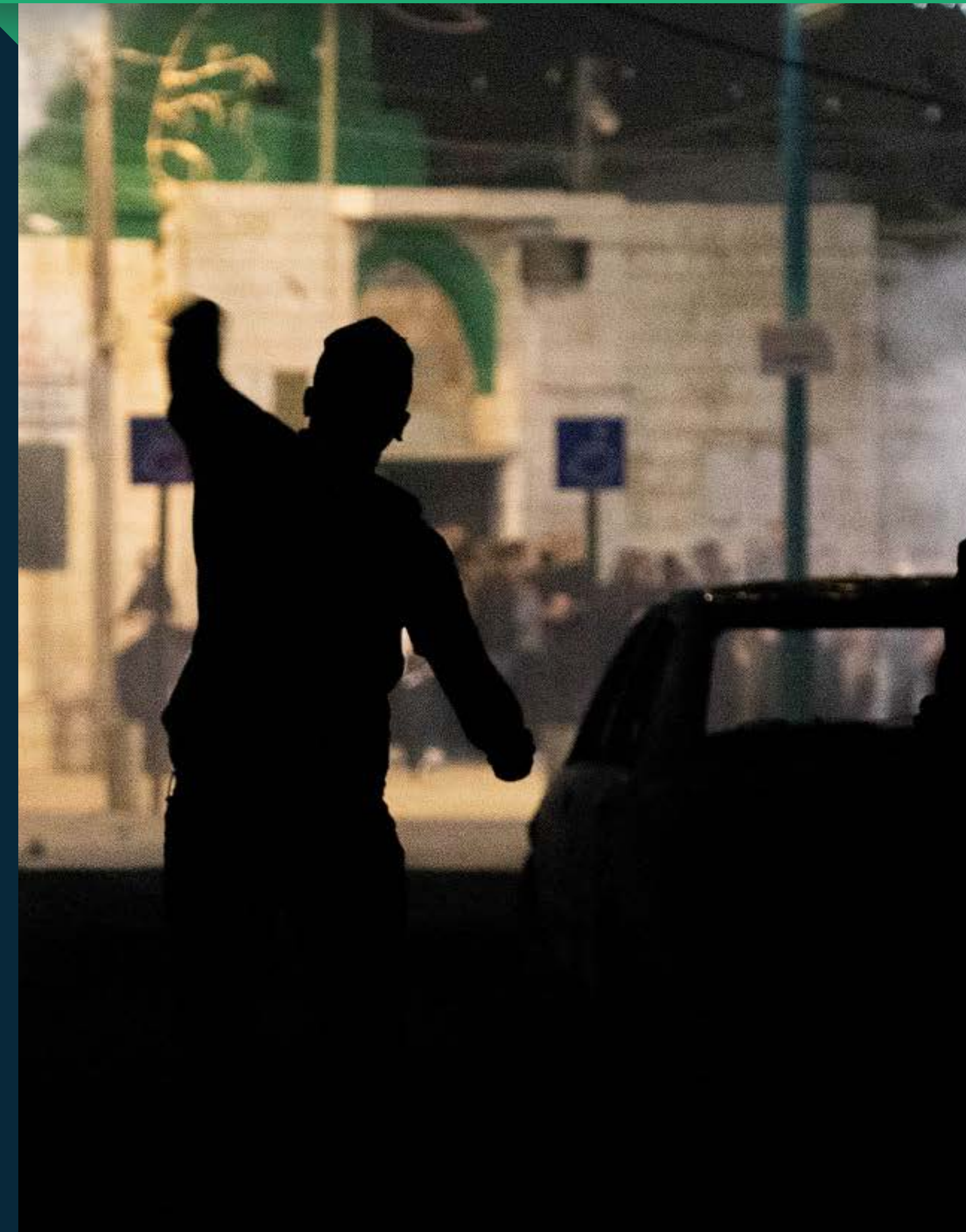


REUTERS/Amir Cohen

The Israeli System

The way out of the multi-dimensional crisis

- | Israel's rapid recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic could be a lever for growth, although it does not apply equally to the whole population.
- | Operation Guardian of the Walls also exposed weaknesses that are relevant to the northern front.
- | Clashes between Jews and Arabs (particularly in cities with mixed populations) revealed, in some sectors, deep layers of hatred and fear, extreme nationalism, and governance difficulties.
- | The political crisis is not yet over, and could threaten prospects for economic and social recovery.



The Israeli System

The way out of the multi-dimensional crisis

Policy Recommendations

The state budget should outline policy on central issues (housing, infrastructure, healthcare, and education) and strive to reduce the debt to product ratio.

A policy for “living in the presence of Covid” is required in view of the variants and lowered vaccine protection.

Work to improve relations between Jews and Arabs – draw up a plan to combat crime and violence in Arab society and promote educational, employment, and construction programs.

Restore faith in democratic processes and institutions, with the emphasis on strengthening the legal system and enforcing the law (governance in “enclaves”) | Promote mechanisms of dialogue in Israeli society.



What worries you the most?



Following the events of the past year, should issues related to the economy, society, and law and order be prioritized over the security budget?

14%

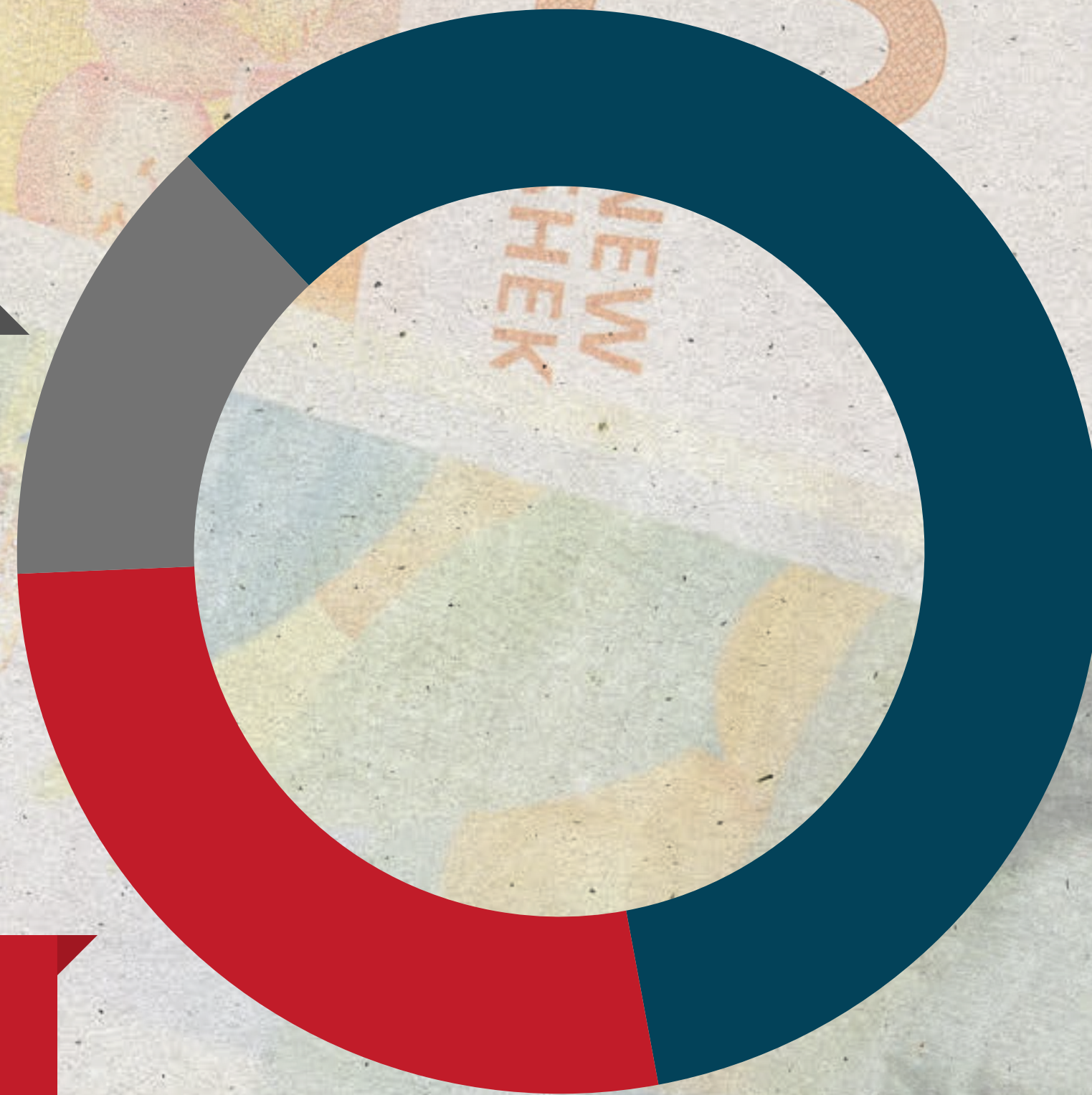
Don't know

27%

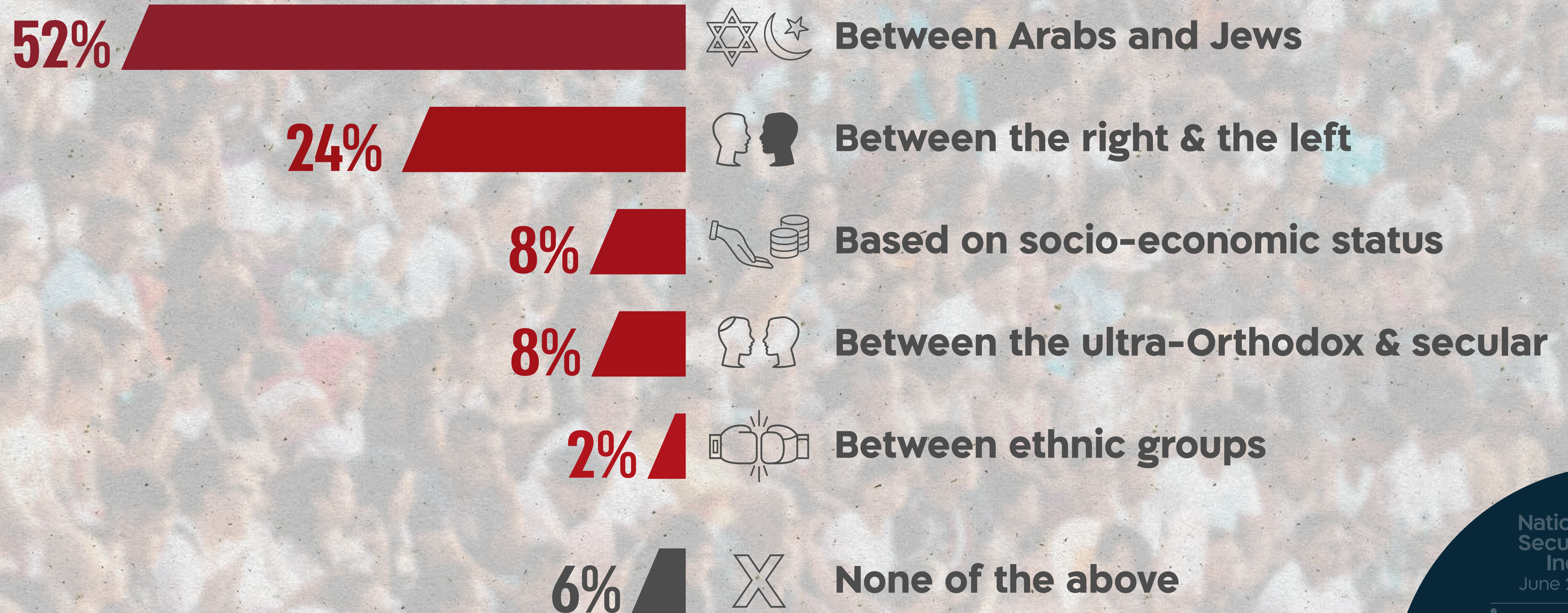
No

59%

Yes



Which of the following internal tensions worries you the most?



Which of the following statements most closely reflects your view?

The Government should invest the same in Israel's Arab citizens as it invests in its Jewish citizens.



The Government should invest whatever is needed in Israel's Arab citizens to quickly close the gaps between Jews and Arabs.



The Government should not invest in Israel's Arab citizens at all



The Government should invest less in Israel's Arab citizens than it invests in its Jewish citizens.



Don't know

