

US Strategic Cooperation with Israel and Jordan

David Schenker
Senior Fellow

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Overview

- The US has longstanding, extensive ties to Israel to cooperate on “hard security” issues
 - Intelligence sharing
 - Missile defense
 - Counterterrorism
 - Research & Development
- “Soft security” cooperation is also an emerging field of cooperation between the two countries
 - Public health
 - Climate resiliency
 - Cybersecurity



Source: Debbie Hill/Pool via Reuters

Background

- The U.S. developed strategic ties to Israel during the Cold War, when the country was seen as a regional bulwark against communism.
 - Israel bolstered this image by defeating Soviet allies in 4 wars from 1967-1982
- The rationale behind the strategic relationship persisted after the fall of the USSR.
 - Israel and the US have a shared interest in addressing radical Islamic terrorism, managing regional instability, and reducing the risk of inter-state conflict
 - Israel and the US have shared values in Democracy, women's rights, "liberalism," etc.
- While differences persist, over time, the value of the relationship, once questioned by the establishment in Washington, has become widely accepted.



Intelligence sharing

- The Israeli government is a key source of intelligence on the activities of ISIS, Al Qaida, Hezbollah, and other terror groups
- Israeli-US intel cooperation goes back decades
 - Israeli intel exposed Saddam's post-1981 attempts to rebuild his nuclear program
 - Uncovered Russian support for Iranian missile programs in the 1990s
 - Discovered Syrian Nuclear Facility in 2000s
 - Obtained Iranian nuclear archive in 2018
- As the US looks to "pivot to Asia," Israel's ability to fill knowledge and resource gaps for the US is increasingly important.
- In the region, US-Israel intelligence sharing is comparable to that of the "Five Eyes."



Missile defense and military cooperation

- The US has given over \$7 billion to support Israeli missile defense programs since the 1990s
 - US provides Israel with \$3.8b per year in military funding
 - These programs, in turn, are used to test and fine-tune US missile defense platforms and strategies
- Israel has also pioneered counterterrorism tactics later used by the US, and both countries' counterterrorism units regularly train together
- IED detection tech transfer, as well



Defense industrial cooperation and R&D

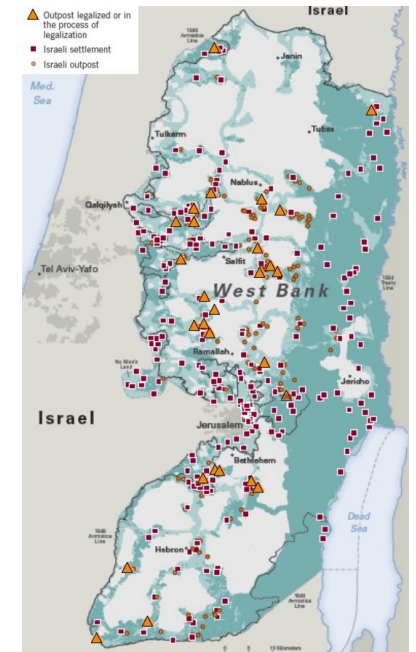
- Israel is a major source of defense sales to the US, including unmanned aircraft, counter-UAS systems, ISR systems, and other equipment
 - Sales to the US reached nearly \$1.5 billion in 2019
- Israeli firms are also integrated into supply chains to produce US weapons systems
 - +6K US Pilots wear the joint helmet mounted cuing system produced by Collins/Elbit
- The US and Israeli governments have jointly funded R&D for homeland security technology since 2015
 - Projects include advanced first-responder technologies, technologies for securing critical infrastructure and public facilities, and countering UAS

“Soft security”: An emerging area of cooperation

- In addition to direct military cooperation, Israel and the US cooperate on a range of economic issues with strategic implications
 - Israel has a dynamic and innovative economy, and hosts R&D centers for over 300 US companies, including Google, Apple, and Microsoft
 - Israel is a world-leader in water management, sustainable agriculture, and other technology that fosters climate resilience
 - Israel and the US also have strong economic cooperation on AI, cybersecurity, and other issues with strategic importance
 - Israel is AI/ML leader, pioneer in technologies that will redefine future of warfare. #1 globally, per capita in AI start-ups, #3 overall.

Major challenges: Diverging strategic goals and political polarization

- Political Polarization in Washington: Israel is no-longer a bi-partisan consensus issue
 - Israel is a right-of-center country, with policies, particularly concerning the Palestinians, that are controversial in the United States.
- Washington and Jerusalem have significant differences regarding the JCPOA.
- Biggest potential irritant to the bilateral strategic relationship is China: Israel hasn't yet internalized that the US sees China as the biggest strategic challenge.
 - Phalcon, Harpy, Haifa Port, R&D centers
 - Amos Yaron 2006
 - Israel does not have CIFIUS-like mechanism
 - Yossi Cohen 2021 at Bar-Ilan



Background

- Moderate pro-western Monarchy
 - Proponent of “moderate” Islam and regional co-existence
- Peace partner with Israel
- Shared regional threat perception
- Eager to work with the US, including to deploy abroad with US Forces
- Long history of cooperation between GID and CIA



Desert Storm

- Hussein maintains neutrality
 - Popular support for Iraq in the Kingdom
 - Jordan's economy dependent on Iraq
 - Economy built to support Iraq during Iran-Iraq war
 - Oil for Food captive market



1994 Wadi Araba Peace Treaty

- Full peace treaty between Jordan and Israel
- Opened the floodgates for US assistance
 - From 1993 \$35 million in economic support to 2014 \$700 million
 - \$1.5b 2020, including \$425m FMF
- On signing the deal, Jordan received squadron of US F-16s
- Issue of Palestine still resonates with population
- 2016 Gas deal with Israel
 - \$10b over 15 years
 - 40% of Jordan's total requirement



King Abdullah

- Takes throne in 1999 after Hussein Dies
- Strategic cooperation with U.S.
 - Modernization of military based on U.S. model.
 - Increases of ESF/FMF post 9/11.
 - Excellent support for GWOT (Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, KASOTC).
 - Jordan provides 1,776 military experts, policemen, and troops to UN peacekeeping missions
- Reform takes backseat to security
 - Jordan downgraded by Freedom House from “partially free” to “not free.”
- Expands already burgeoning intelligence relationship with Israel to encompass mil-to-mil
- Amenable to increased US troop deployments



Desert Storm

- King Abdullah advocated publicly against the war
- Nonetheless provided military support to US effort
- Jordanian (Abu-Musab Zarqawi) established AQI
- Jordanian deployments to Iraq
- Est 400,000 IZI refugees come to Jordan
- US aid Package



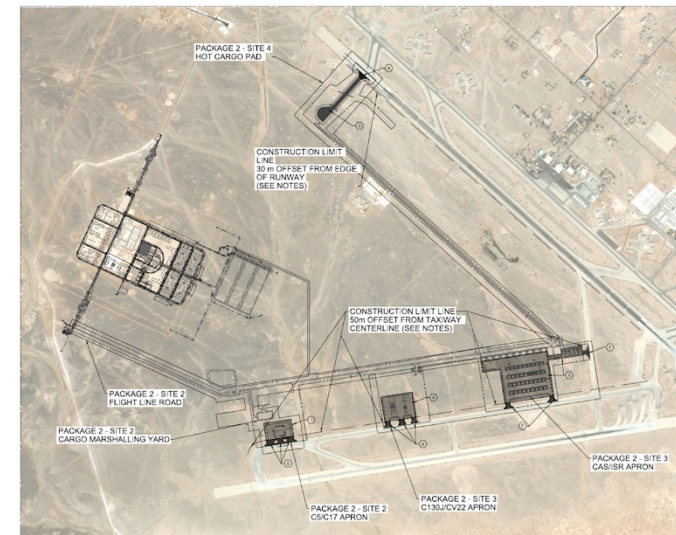
US Military Cooperation with Jordan

- In 2018, the US and Jordan signed an MOU, committing the US to provide \$1.275 billion per year in foreign assistance for 5 years.
 - \$911m in ESF, \$350m FMF
 - Jordan is 2nd largest recipient of US assistance per capita
- US sells advanced military equipment to the kingdom, including F-16s
 - Focus on interoperability
- In 2006, US funded KASOTC. The Center, which opened in 2009, is a world class C/T training facility utilized by US SOF.
 - Hosts Annual Warrior Competition/SOFEX
 - Served as CENTCOM Forward (CF-J) war on ISIS coordination.
- Operated US-funded JIPTC, established 2003 to train Iraqi Police forces, and later trained Palestinian police.
- US funds border security equipment for Jordan.
- Participates in biannual bilateral and multilateral Eager Lion Exercises.



Western Basing Initiative: Over the Horizon

- Rethinking of US military posture in the Gulf:
 - NDS prioritization of China and Russia
 - Concerns about proximity to Iranian missiles post 2020 missile attacks
- Redeployments away from the Gulf (al Dhafra, al Udeid, PSAB) further west.
- Jordan will be increasingly important
 - Muwafiq al Salti AB



Major challenges

- Local Subversion/Corruption
 - 87,000 rounds stolen from British Army camp in Jordan during exercise in July 2016
 - Jordan intel officials sold millions of \$ of weapons meant for CIA train and equip program
 - Gun used by 2015 JIPTC attacker was American; attack killed 6 incl. 2 US contractors
- Popular sentiment is not pro-US
 - Tribal Letter threatening US soldiers on Jordanian soil 2014
 - 2015 JIPTC attack
 - Al-Jafr Air Base Shooting November 2016
 - Opposition to 2021 DCA basing agreement
- Terrorism
 - Foley Assassination 2002
 - USS Kearsarge 2005
 - Rukban Attack June 2016
- Governance Issues/Human Rights

