



# PERSPECTIVES

THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

## BESA's Top Ten of 2019

BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 1,390, January 2, 2020

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Below are the ten most widely read articles published by the BESA Center in 2019. The selections reflect strong reader interest in Israeli national security, especially the looming possibility of direct confrontation with Iran; rising world antisemitism; and Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors.

1 [What Might an Israel-Iran War Look Like?](#)

**Prof. Hillel Frisch** argues that in the event of an Iranian-Israeli war triggered by Tehran's military entrenchment in Syria, Israel has one advantage Iran doesn't: a public that is firmly behind its democratically elected government.

2 [German Intelligence Issues Taboo-Breaking Report on Muslim Antisemitism](#)

**Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld** applauds the publication of a German intelligence report on Muslim antisemitism in the country—the first official acknowledgement in Europe that Muslim antisemitism is a major problem.

3 [A New Era in Israel-Gulf State Relations?](#)

**Dr. Edy Cohen** highlights the growing realization among the Gulf states that their support for the Palestinians is detrimental to their own interests, not least given the Palestinians' increasingly close alignment with their Iranian nemesis.

4 [What Should Be Learned from the Gaza Disengagement?](#)

**Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacoheh** argues that the debate over the clear and present danger emanating from Gaza in the wake of the 2005 unilateral disengagement holds the key to saving Israel from the dangers attending the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank.

5 [US Nuclear Weapons Deployment in Turkey](#)

According to **Lt. Col. (res.) Dr. Raphael Ofek**, while the American nuclear weapons that remain on Turkish soil are an anachronistic relic of the Cold War, they

nevertheless raise questions, both because of the deterioration in Western-Turkish relations and because of safety risks at the Turkish base where the weapons are stored—close to the Syrian border.

6 [Expect a War Between Russia and China in the 2020s](#)

Pravin Jethwa argues that notwithstanding the seeming friendship between their current leaders and their growing congruence of interests in undermining the US-led international order, relations between Russia and China remain at their core as brittle and prone to mutual suspicion and distrust as they were in the past.

7 [Myth: Israel is the Largest Beneficiary of US Military Aid](#)

Debunking the standard perception of Israel as the largest recipient of US military aid, Prof. Hillel Frisch shows that this direct military aid is meaningless in comparison to the cost of maintaining troops US abroad, let alone the wars waged in defense of US allies. In reality, Israel receives only a small fraction of American military aid, and most of that is spent in the US to the benefit of the American economy: Japan's US military aid package is nine times larger than that of Israel, Germany's is seven times larger, and Italy's is twice as large. Even the Lilliputian Gulf states, Kuwait and Bahrain, whose American bases are home to over 5,000 US military personnel apiece, receive military aid almost equal to what Israel receives.

8 [Russia Will Likely Collapse from the Inside](#)

Emil Avdaliani argues that, given Russia's historical propensity to internal collapse, the best way to deal with Moscow is to keep intervention to a minimum and wait for its internal troubles to bring about its collapse.

9 [Religion in the IDF: The Struggle over Israeli Public Space](#)

According to Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen, opposition to the notable increase in *kippa*-wearers among IDF combat soldiers and commanders is driven by the fear of losing the military's character as a national public space that is secular or at least neutral with regard to religion.

10 [Palestinian Settler-Colonialism](#)

Dr. Alex Joffe argues that the pejorative of "settler-colonialism" should be applied to the Palestinians rather than to Israelis. For while the millenarian Jewish connection to Palestine can be proven with ease, the Muslim conquest of Byzantine Palestine in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE is a textbook example of settler-colonialism. So are subsequent Arab migration waves, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries under the Ottoman and British Empires. The application of the concept to Jews and Zionism by Palestinians is both ironic and unhelpful.