

Report on the Results of the Expert Survey

Türkiye and Israel's Security

February 2026

Executive Summary

Context

The survey was conducted in February 2026. Fourteen experts — ranging from left-liberal to right-religious — independently answered five questions concerning Israel's security in light of Türkiye's role, Russia's role, and Israel's internal challenges.

- On February 9, 2026, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated in an interview with CNN Türk that Türkiye would "inevitably be forced to enter the nuclear race."
- The United States is completing a full military withdrawal from Syria: the al-Tanf base was evacuated on February 11, al-Shaddadi was transferred to the Syrian government on February 15, and the full withdrawal of approximately 1,000 personnel is to be completed within two months.
- The Assad regime has fallen; the new authorities in Damascus are the reformed wing of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham under al-Sharaa, operating under Turkish external patronage.
- Kurdish autonomy in northeastern Syria has been dismantled; SDF fighters are being integrated into the new Syrian army.
- Israel recognized the independence of Somaliland on December 26, 2025, triggering a sharp increase in Turkish military activity in Somalia and across the Horn of Africa.

Expert Panel

The survey included 14 experts representing different disciplines and political positions — from left-liberal to right-religious. The composition of the panel allows for a multidimensional analysis: each question is examined through the lens of Turkish nuclear rhetoric, the range of threats to Israel's security, and Russia's role.

No.	Specialization	Political Position	Religious Profile
1	Political scientist	Left	Secular
2	Political scientist	Right-conservative	Traditional
3	Historian	Centrist	Secular
4	International relations expert	Right-conservative	Religious
5	International economist	Centrist-pragmatic	Secular
6	National security expert	Right-conservative	Religious
7	National security expert	Centrist	Secular
8	Sociologist	Left	Secular
9	Lawyer	Left	Secular
10	Journalist	Center-right	Traditional
11	Human rights advocate	Left-liberal	Secular
12	Civic activist	Center-left	Secular
13	Scholar of religion	Centrist	Moderately religious
14	Rabbi	Right	Chabad (strictly observant)

Survey Structure

The experts were asked five questions — four open-ended, one closed-ended:

- Assessment of Fidan's statement on a nuclear race
- The Russia–Türkiye axis: threat and opportunity for Israel

- Russia's potential role as a counterweight in Israel–Türkiye relations
- Russia's role in the Middle East and its implications for Israel's security
- Ranking five threats to Israel's security (1 = highest, 5 = lowest)

Question 1. Assessment of Fidan's Statement on a Nuclear Race

Expert Views

Expert No. 1, political scientist: "When the foreign minister of a NATO member state publicly talks about nuclear weapons, the problem is not Türkiye. The problem is that we have collectively eroded the taboo and failed to build anything in its place."

Expert No. 2, political scientist: "This is the strategic positioning of a power systematically expanding its ambitions. It is not improvisation — it is a program."

Expert No. 3, historian: "Cascade proliferation is not a theory — it is a historical pattern. The South Asian cascade of the 1960s through the 1990s showed that when one major player moves toward the bomb, its neighbors follow. Türkiye → Saudi Arabia → Egypt → the UAE is an entirely plausible sequence."

Expert No. 4, international relations expert: "Fidan tied his remarks to the Iranian context — 'if nuclear weapons appear in the region.' But that formulation is doubly dangerous for us, because it implicitly includes Israel as well. Ankara is building a discursive framework in which a Turkish bomb is a response to 'regional nuclear injustice.' This language will resonate across the Islamic world, and stopping a Turkish nuclear program will be immeasurably harder than stopping an Iranian one — because Türkiye is embedded in Western structures and cannot be isolated by sanctions the way Iran can."

Expert No. 5, economist: "This is not just a security issue — it is a repricing of the investment map. When a state controlling the transit of 50 to 60 billion cubic meters of gas per year publicly talks about nuclear weapons, the consequences go beyond diplomacy: the probability of sanctions rises, insurance premiums rise, and major players begin reassessing their exposure to Turkish transit. This creates an opening for Israel — Eastern Mediterranean gas and the IMEC project."

Expert No. 6, national security expert: "Turkish missiles would come from a different azimuth and with a shorter flight time — six to eight minutes rather than twelve to fifteen for Iranian missiles. Arrow-3 was designed primarily for the Iranian threat axis; the Turkish vector would require reconfiguration. A multipolar nuclear environment is qualitatively different from a binary one and creates a structural problem for missile-defense systems built around a single axis."

Expert No. 7, national security expert: "This is what the filling of a normative vacuum looks like. When the nonproliferation regime weakens and regional powers expand their ambitions, statements of this kind become self-fulfilling prophecies."

Expert No. 9, lawyer: "We cannot invoke a nonproliferation regime from which we have exempted ourselves. Israel blocks a WMD-free zone, remains outside the NPT, and then expresses surprise when others follow suit."

Expert No. 10, journalist: "The international media reaction was disproportionately muted. When Iran announces another centrifuge breakthrough, it becomes a top story — maps, arrows, retired generals in the studio. When Türkiye — a NATO member, the alliance's second-largest military, a \$900 billion economy — talks about a nuclear race, it gets treated as a background item six minutes into the broadcast. Fidan did what in our profession is called narrative normalization: he introduced the issue into public discourse not as a sensation but as an acceptable option. In three years, 'Türkiye and the nuclear option' will sound not like a shock but like a fact of life."

Expert No. 11, human rights advocate: "Nuclear weapons in the hands of a regime already responsible for grave human rights violations are not 'strategic balance.' They represent a fundamentally different level of threat to every person in the region who has no army and no missiles."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "There are already around 50 U.S. tactical B61 nuclear bombs at Incirlik Air Base under NATO nuclear sharing. Türkiye is not a non-nuclear state fantasizing about the bomb — it is a country with nuclear weapons on its territory that wants its own. What worries me is how our society processes this signal. We are a society capable of putting 200,000 people in the streets over judicial reform, but unable to mobilize attention to the fact that a neighboring state is publicly talking about nuclear weapons."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "Fidan is acting within a consistent ideological program I would call Sunni nuclear sovereignty. The logic runs as follows: Israel — the Jewish state — has the bomb. Iran — the Shiite state — is moving toward the bomb. Pakistan is Sunni but distant and ultimately serves itself. Türkiye, as leader of the Sunni world, cannot remain non-nuclear. There is an ideology behind the rhetoric, and ideologies are not rolled back by sanctions."

Expert No. 14, rabbi: "Fidan did not misspeak — he articulated a program. Erdoğan is a man who has publicly invoked the restoration of the Ottoman legacy, turned Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, and built the most powerful defense industry in the Islamic world. Such a man will not stop at the nuclear threshold. Even if Iran never gets the bomb, Türkiye will move toward one — the driver is not the Iranian threat but a claim to leadership of the Islamic world."

Findings on Question 1

All 14 experts were unanimous: Fidan's statement was neither a bluff nor improvisation, but part of a coherent program. The consensus covers three points: the threat of cascade proliferation is real (Türkiye → Saudi Arabia → Egypt → UAE); Turkish nuclear ambitions are tied to a neo-Ottoman project, not merely to the Iranian factor; and Israeli society critically underestimates the threat (only 3.7 percent named Türkiye as the leading threat of 2026).

The main line of division concerns responsibility. The right sees this as an expression of Turkish imperial ambition requiring a hard response. The left argues that Israel is itself a co-author of the erosion of the nonproliferation regime.

Question 2. The Russia–Türkiye Axis: Threat and Opportunity for Israel

Expert Views

Expert No. 1, political scientist: "The very framing of the question — 'threat or opportunity' — leads us into a trap. It is neither. It is a symptom: two authoritarian regimes filling the vacuum left by a retreating West. What concerns me is not the Moscow–Ankara coordination as such — it is fragile. What concerns me is that the rules determining the fate of millions in Syria are being set by two actors, neither of which is constrained by human rights norms or accountability to its own civil society."

Expert No. 2, political scientist: "Syria is only the northern flank. There is also the southern one, and the picture there is no better. After Israel recognized Somaliland, Türkiye sharply stepped up its activity in the Horn of Africa — not simply as an economic partner but as a direct competitor to Israel. That means Ben-Gurion's 'periphery doctrine' — an alliance with non-Arab states on the edges of the Arab world — is definitively dead."

Expert No. 3, historian: "Türkiye is deliberately building an influence infrastructure in the Horn of Africa that simultaneously serves economic interests (ports, contracts), military interests (bases, arms deliveries, joint operations), and anti-Israel objectives. Chinese investment leads in Ethiopia. The Gulf states provide money and security tools. Türkiye supplies drones and military cooperation. China remains indispensable as a source of infrastructure investment and loans. Israel is absent from this equation."

Expert No. 4, international relations expert: "If the principal threat scenario used to be the 'Shiite crescent' (Iran–Iraq–Syria–Hezbollah), a second one is now taking shape — a Sunni crescent, with Türkiye as its implicit leader. On our northern border, a new kind of Sunni crescent is forming — from Ankara through the new Syria to Sunni radical movements in Lebanon and the

Palestinian territories. In this configuration, Russia is not a counterweight to Türkiye but its co-tenant: both profit from Syrian space, though under different headings."

Expert No. 6, national security expert: "Türkiye is building a southern arc — from Somalia through the Red Sea to Suez — that could eventually connect with the northern one (Syria–Mediterranean). If that happens, Israel will face operational encirclement involving Türkiye on two of its three strategic axes."

Expert No. 7, national security expert: "The beginnings of an alternative system exist: the C-SIPA initiative, minilateral arrangements with Greece and Cyprus, elements of air-defense coordination with the UAE, the Negev Forum. But all of that is fragments, not a system — and fragments lose to closed clubs every time. Nor will we be able to build an alternative security system so long as we continue the occupation and refuse a political resolution of the Palestinian issue. That is a strategic argument, not merely a moral one."

Expert No. 9, lawyer: "If Russia and Türkiye are an 'anti-normative axis,' then Israel and the United States constitute a second anti-normative axis, operating in parallel and mirror image. Russia annexes Crimea and invokes 'the will of the people.' Israel annexes East Jerusalem and invokes 'historical right.' Türkiye sends troops into Afrin without a mandate. Israel sends troops into southern Lebanon without a mandate. In a world without norms, the side with more divisions wins. Israel has a population of 10 million. Türkiye has 85 million. Russia has 145 million. The arithmetic is obvious. To resist that model, Israel must stop being its co-author."

Expert No. 10, journalist: "Israel is not sitting at the table — it is on the menu. The Astana format, in which the fate of our northern front was determined by Russia, Türkiye, and Iran without our participation, is a structural vulnerability."

Expert No. 11, human rights advocate: "Responsibility must be differentiated. Türkiye is a direct accomplice in the violence in Syria: SNA formations took part in the March killings of Alawites. The United States bears co-responsibility: it is legitimizing al-Sharaa and abandoned the Kurds. Russia is not in the same category — Russians provided refuge to Alawites on their military bases."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "The Turkish factor is a direct threat: arms to Syrian formations, a fleet pressing claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, rhetoric on Jerusalem. Russia is an indirect threat. One aspect gets too little attention: Russia does, to some extent, restrain Turkish influence in Syria. That works in our favor — but it is a side effect of Russian interests, not a gift. There is another problem: 'Russia–Türkiye' is a category understood by perhaps 500 experts in this country. For the average Israeli, it is simply 'Erdoğan and Putin, both bad.' Without public understanding of the nuances, no democratic debate on strategy is possible."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "I do not believe the Russia–Türkiye axis is a durable strategic structure. Russia and Türkiye are historical enemies with twelve wars behind them — their rapprochement is transactional, not a values-based partnership. Compare that to the Türkiye–Qatar–Muslim Brotherhood axis, where there is a shared Sunni identity and a shared vision of political Islam. Or the Iran–Hezbollah–Houthi axis — Shiite solidarism. Between Moscow and Ankara there is only pragmatism. When their interests clashed in Idlib in 2020, pragmatism ended and the shooting began."

Expert No. 14, rabbi: "This is not an alliance — it is situational cooperation between two predators temporarily hunting in the same forest. But as long as their interests overlap — and they do on the main point: both want to weaken the Western order — this linkage is dangerous for us. After the Iranian regime is neutralized, Türkiye will become Israel's main enemy. Not one among several — the main one. In that scenario, Russia is not Türkiye's ally."

Findings on Question 2

Twelve of the 14 experts assess Russian-Turkish cooperation primarily as a threat. Two of them — scholar of religion No. 13 and rabbi No. 14 — dispute the category of an "axis" itself, pointing to civilizational incompatibility and historical antagonism. The key threat is not the alliance as

such, but Turkish expansionism — a process that Russian presence does not prevent and in some cases facilitates.

The experts also emphasized that Türkiye and Russia are not the only actors dismantling the old normative order. The United States and Israel are active participants in the same erosion of international norms.

The experts further note the loss of all three pillars of Ben-Gurion's "periphery doctrine" (Türkiye, Iran, Ethiopia), while the Abraham Accords remain an incomplete replacement.

Question 3. Russia's Potential Role as a Counterweight in Israel–Türkiye Relations

Expert Views

Expert No. 2, political scientist: "When Moscow is forced to choose, the question is not 'whose side is it on' but 'what serves its interests.' The answer is predictable: Türkiye is a major economic partner, a neighbor, a country of 85 million, and the controller of the Straits. Israel is a useful but non-essential contact. The Russian channel serves as a conduit for back-channel signaling."

Expert No. 3, historian: "A de facto buffer, because escalation is not in Russia's interest. The Israel–Türkiye dimension is complex. Russia lacks the leverage to restrain Türkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean or on the Palestinian question. Russian influence over Türkiye is economic — gas, energy, tourism — not military. Once conflict moves into the military-political domain, those levers are insufficient."

Expert No. 5, economist: "The 'shadow fleet,' settlements in yuan and dirhams, circumvention through third countries (Türkiye, UAE, Kazakhstan) — all of this constitutes a parallel financial infrastructure. Israel occupies a dual position: some of its trading partners (UAE, India, Türkiye) actively participate in circumvention schemes, while Israel itself remains tied to the Western financial system — the dollar, SWIFT, U.S. banks."

Expert No. 7, national security expert: "Not a counterweight — a power broker invested in its own indispensability. Deconfliction in Syria is not a 'gift.' It is a service for which Russia charges a price: Israeli silence on Ukraine, the absence of arms deliveries to Kyiv, and neutrality in Western sanctions regimes. When people ask why Israel did not condemn the invasion of Ukraine, the answer is simple: because we were paying Moscow for the right to strike Iranians in Syria. That is not strategy — it is tactical dependence dressed up as pragmatism."

Expert No. 8, sociologist: "6.4 percent believe Russia can neutralize the Turkish threat. 55 percent rely on the United States. There is a discernible gap between how secular and religious respondents assess Russia's role. Religious respondents think in a paradigm of 'strength respects strength' and are more open to pragmatic deals with any actor if they produce security."

Expert No. 10, journalist: "Moscow's interest is that no one achieves a decisive victory — so that all sides keep coming back for its permission, and every escalation raises the price of its mediation. The narrative of the 'indispensable mediator' is what Moscow feeds to our media. A journalist who presents Russian 'mediation' without that caveat is spreading disinformation, even if unintentionally."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "In general, yes — but the capacity is fragile and not decisive. After Assad's fall, Türkiye is ascendant and Russia is holding its ground. This is not a balance of equals but an asymmetry in which the balancing power is weaker than the actor it is meant to balance. And above all, relying on a counterweight means relying on back-channel diplomacy that is opaque to citizens. For a democracy, that is poison."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "Russia can and does want to play the counterweight role. Its track record is uneven, but the function is real. Moscow is the only outside actor simultaneously in contact with Jerusalem, Ankara, Damascus, and Tehran. That combination of channels is unique. At a time when the new Syria is moving toward Sunni homogeneity, the Russian presence is one of the few factors restraining the complete marginalization of Christians."

Expert No. 14, rabbi: "Russia can and will play the counterweight role — but not because it wants to help us. It will do so because it is in its interest that no side become too strong. Israel is neither Russia's ally nor a country of much importance to it. Bilateral trade is under \$3 billion — ten times less than with Türkiye. We are the ally of Moscow's principal geopolitical opponent. Forty million Muslims inside Russia make the Islamic world a Kremlin priority. Building security on someone else's pragmatism is dangerous."

Findings on Question 3

The picture is more complex than a binary yes or no.

Six experts (Nos. 1, 3, 4, 12, 13, 14) effectively describe Russia as an escalation limiter: it restrains when escalation runs against its own interests. Five (Nos. 2, 6, 7, 10, 11) describe a power broker — an actor trading influence with all sides. Only two (economist No. 5 and lawyer No. 9) deny any balancing function at all, viewing Russia as a source of instability rather than a constraint upon it.

The dispute is not over whether Russia balances, but over what kind of balancing this is and whether it can be relied upon.

Question 4. Russia's Role in the Middle East and Its Implications for Israel's Security

Expert Views

Expert No. 1, political scientist: "Russia did not build its Middle Eastern presence from scratch. It entered Syria because the international community failed to stop the civil war. It trades in influence because there is something to trade — unresolved conflicts. As long as Syria remains unstable, as long as there is no resolution of the Palestinian question, and as long as the Lebanese border hangs by a thread, there will always be space for Russian mediation."

Expert No. 3, historian: "The American withdrawal from Syria formally strengthens Russia's position, but in practice gives Moscow a bigger headache: now it, not CENTCOM, is responsible for stability in northeastern Syria. Russia is strong enough to create problems — blocking resolutions, supplying weapons, providing diplomatic cover for Iran — but not strong enough to solve them."

Expert No. 4, international relations expert: "Assad's fall changed everything. Russia is no longer the patron of the regime — it is a tenant on bases belonging to a government that owes part of its rise to power to Türkiye. For Israel, this cuts both ways: the weakening of Russia's position in Syria reduces one risk (a Russian umbrella for Iranian proxies) but increases another — space opens for Turkish influence and jihadist networks."

Expert No. 5, economist: "There are three economic effects: the reconfiguration of oil and gas flows, the expansion of gray zones in trade, and the rising cost of instability. Every percentage-point increase in regional instability means lost investment, delayed projects, and forgone contracts. In a world of secondary sanctions and ESG ratings, 'pragmatic contact' with Moscow carries a price tag that Israel must recalculate each time. Tech companies listed on NASDAQ cannot afford a reputational liability — and for them, Israel is their operating environment."

Expert No. 7, national security expert: "Russia has an interest in a 'mosaic order' — overlapping networks of bases, bilateral agreements, and proxy relations — because in such an order it is indispensable. It will resist an 'institutional order' — multilateral formats with transparent rules and verification — because transparent rules nullify its brokerage role."

Expert No. 10, journalist: "Russia simultaneously provides corridors, arms Iran, blocks resolutions, and maintains a channel to Netanyahu. How do you cover that in a single story? You cannot. The reader never gets the full picture."

"We covered the U.S. withdrawal from Syria wrong. We framed it as 'Trump is pulling out a thousand troops.' It should have been framed differently: 'America abandoned the Kurds — the very people who fought for it — and now every U.S. ally in the Middle East is recalculating what America's word is worth.' No one asked that question in prime time. That, too, was a failure."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "Israeli society has effectively bracketed Russia out — it neither debates it, nor worries about it, nor demands accountability. And when a foreign policy direction is not publicly debated, it becomes the preserve of a narrow policymaking circle. The quieter the issue, the weaker the accountability."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "Russia has influence in Jordan — and that can have a stabilizing effect. It has contacts with the Palestinian Authority — with Fatah, though not Hamas. Gaza is a zone of Turkish-Qatari influence, not Russian. Lebanon: practically none — Hezbollah is an Iranian project. Russian influence is significant but not decisive. Moscow is not the architect of Middle Eastern security but one intermediary among many in a system where the main tectonic forces are Sunni-Shiite rivalry, the American presence, and Arab-Israeli dynamics."

Expert No. 14, rabbi: "Russia does not play a systemic role in Israel's security. It can play an episodic role — when interests align. The Kremlin's priorities are OPEC+, arms sales, the Islamic factor in domestic stability — 40 million Muslims — and balancing against America. Israel is not on that list."

Findings on Question 4

All experts recognize the active nature of Russia's regional presence. Russia maintains working relationships with Türkiye, the Palestinian Authority, OPEC+, Iran, the Gulf monarchies, and Syria, and is active in Africa. These established links, together with its network of military bases, make Russia a significant player in the Middle East.

The critical shift of February 2026 is this: the U.S. withdrawal from Syria simplifies the equation — three external players have become two. All 14 experts view this as a deterioration from Israel's standpoint.

Question 5. Ranking the Threats

Expert Voices

On the weakening of U.S. support (*ranked first by 8 of 14*)

Expert No. 5, economist: "This is not only \$3.8 billion a year in military aid. It is access to American technology, capital markets, SWIFT, and intelligence sharing. The entire Israeli high-tech sector is embedded in the American ecosystem. Erosion of the political alliance will inevitably affect those ties."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "The alliance with America is the only foreign-policy framework that carries democratic legitimacy inside Israel. The withdrawal from Syria is not simply the loss of a thousand troops. It is a signal that undermines confidence in the very idea of alliance."

Expert No. 14, rabbi: "America is the only power whose alliance with Israel has both a strategic and a moral foundation. It abandoned the Kurds. It can abandon us as well."

On the internal Israeli crisis (*ranked first by 3 of 14*)

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "This is not a political crisis — it is an identity crisis. A 53-point gap between religious and secular Israelis means two different understandings of what Israel is: a messianic project or a liberal democracy. In Jewish tradition, *sinat hinam* — baseless hatred — destroyed the Second Temple."

Expert No. 14, rabbi (*ranks it fifth — a direct counterpoint*): "The Jewish people have lived through worse schisms and survived them. The conflict between Hasidim and Mitnagdim threatened a split. At the Altalena, Jews were shooting at one another. On October 7, within twelve hours, 300,000 reservists showed up at their bases without being summoned. That is *ahavat Yisrael* — the love of one Jew for another — stronger than any dispute. The internal crisis is serious. But it is not existential."

Expert No. 12, civic activist: "A society focused on internal conflict loses its peripheral vision. And in the periphery there are rockets, drones, and nuclear ambitions. I was at Kaplan when

150,000 people came out to protest a week before October 7. Seven days later Hamas crossed the border. The connection is not direct — but neither is it random."

On Türkiye's nuclear ambitions (*spread from 1 to 5 — the highest degree of polarization*)

Expert No. 3, historian (*ranks it first*): "Irreversibility. Once a state crosses the nuclear threshold, there is no way back. Every other threat is reversible."

Expert No. 14, rabbi (*ranks it first*): "A long-term strategic threat. Nuclear weapons in the hands of a neo-Ottoman regime are a nightmare scenario that must be prevented now, not after it becomes reality."

Expert No. 12, civic activist (*ranks it fourth*): "Türkiye is at least five to ten years away from a bomb. For now this is rhetoric, not a program. But society does not know how to respond to slow-moving threats. We mobilize when rockets fly. We do not mobilize when a neighbor builds a reactor. Iran's nuclear program also started with 'peaceful atom' rhetoric — we slept through it and are still paying the price."

On a Palestinian state (*ranked fifth by 12 of 14, though for different reasons*)

Expert No. 7, national security expert: "A Palestinian state is not fifth. It is zero — it lies at the foundation of all the other threats."

Expert No. 14, rabbi (*the only respondent to rank it third*): "Any transfer of territory in Eretz Israel to hostile forces is a threat to *pikuach nefesh*. Demilitarization on paper does not mean demilitarization in practice. Gaza was 'demilitarized' — and became a missile base."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "The Palestinian question is the deepest religious conflict in the region and has no purely political solution. Jerusalem, Hebron, the Temple Mount — these are not territories to be traded. They are places that define the identity of millions. The 'Trump Plan' is an attempt to resolve a religious conflict through business logic."

Expert No. 8, sociologist: "In February 2026, Israeli society is not one society but at least three, living in different realities. Religious Israelis evaluate foreign policy with a net positive balance of +49.1 points. Secular Israelis with a balance of -4.2. The gap is 53 percentage points. The personal security index is 2.65 among secular respondents and 3.45 among religious respondents. A religious Israeli feels secure; a secular Israeli does not — while living in the same state. To speak of a national security consensus in this context is self-deception."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion: "The alliance with America is not just a strategic linkage. For religious Zionists, American support is part of the divine plan: America as Koresh — Cyrus the Great — enabling the Jewish state to flourish. For secular Israelis, it is a guarantee of the state's democratic character. The withdrawal from Syria is read through both lenses. Religious: 'If America is leaving, then God wants us to manage on our own' — a reinforcement of messianic self-consciousness. Secular: 'If America is leaving, alternative frameworks must be found.' The divergence in reactions is another symptom of the split."

Expert No. 2, political scientist: "The trend is not toward a stronger American presence but toward a shrinking American perimeter. First Obama declined to enforce 'red lines' on Assad; then the first Trump administration tried to leave Syria; then Biden withdrew from Afghanistan; now the second Trump administration is completing the withdrawal from Syria. The trend matters more than any single episode."

Expert No. 6, national security expert: "Kurdish autonomy meant an intelligence partner, a buffer against ISIS and Turkish expansion, and a potential ally in any escalation on the northern front. Its loss is not abstract — it is a concrete narrowing of operational space."

Expert No. 1, political scientist: "The Abraham Accords are the only positive development in the Middle East over the past twenty years. The only one. Everything else has been wars, intifadas, coups, failures. Their collapse would send a message across the region: peace is impossible,

normalization is an illusion, force is the only language. That message feeds Hamas, Hezbollah, Turkish neo-Ottomanism, and Iranian proxies — all at once."

Expert No. 13, scholar of religion — on the uniqueness of the Abraham Accords: "This is the first framework in history in which Sunni Arab states recognized the legitimacy of a Jewish state not despite their religious identity, but alongside it. Losing that would mean a return to the formula of 'Islam versus Judaism.'"

Expert No. 6, national security expert — on the military dimension of the Abraham Accords: "The Abraham Accords are not only diplomacy. They are concrete military assets: air corridors through Saudi Arabia (used for the strike on Iran in 2025), elements of joint air defense and early warning with the UAE, intelligence sharing, and maritime presence in the Red Sea through partnerships with Bahrain."

Expert No. 3, historian — on the 'Trump Plan' as a managed transition: "The historical experience of decolonization shows that a managed transition with hard security parameters — the Singapore model — works better than an unmanaged one — the Congo model. The 'Trump Plan' is closer to the former than the latter. That does not eliminate the risks, but it makes them manageable."

Expert No. 10, journalist — on the 'plan' as a media failure: "97 percent have heard of the plan. 9 percent know its contents. That is a perfect indicator of media noise without informational substance: everyone knows the name, nobody knows the substance. The Palestinian issue is an iceberg. What is visible above the water — plan, negotiations, maps — is a small part. Beneath the surface are 57 years of unresolved conflict and the sense that this is not 'a question that can be solved,' but a condition in which we live."

Findings on Question 5

The weakening of U.S. support ranks as the most serious threat (8 of 14 ranked it first; 13 of 14 placed it in the top two). It is the most stable ranking outcome, uniting left and right.

A Palestinian state ranks as the least significant of the five proposed threats (12 of 14 ranked it fifth), though for diametrically opposed reasons: the right considers the parameters manageable; the left considers statehood not a threat but a solution. The rabbi (No. 14) was the only respondent to rank it third.

Cross-Cutting Themes

The loss of the "periphery doctrine." Ben-Gurion's doctrine has lost all three pillars: Türkiye has become an adversary, Iran an existential threat, and Ethiopia is being pulled away by Türkiye. The Abraham Accords are an attempted replacement, but an incomplete one. In the view of Expert No. 14, once Iran is neutralized, "Türkiye will fill the vacuum — patronage of Hamas, control over Syria, pressure on Jordan, and nuclear potential."

The Horn of Africa. Turkish expansion accelerated after Israel recognized Somaliland: F-16s in Mogadishu, tanks and air defense, Erdoğan's visit to Addis Ababa, and the port of Hobyo under an 80-year concession. As the historian (No. 3) put it: "Ethiopia in 2026 does not need Israel — for security, for technology, or for legitimacy."

The Kurds as a lost asset. Six experts identify the loss of the Kurdish buffer as a strategic loss. In the rabbi's words (No. 14): "America abandoned the Kurds. It can abandon us as well."

The humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. According to the human rights advocate (No. 11), there has been mass violence against Alawites (more than 1,400 dead by his estimate), large-scale attacks on Druze communities, and systematic persecution of Christians. The scholar of religion (No. 13) described Russian presence as "one of the few factors restraining the complete marginalization of Christians."

The religious dimension. Fidan's statement is part of a project of "Sunni nuclear sovereignty" (No. 13). The internal Israeli crisis is not political but identitarian: a messianic vision versus liberal democracy. The Palestinian issue is a religious conflict with no purely political solution.

The deficit of democratic oversight. The activist (No. 12) argues that back-channel diplomacy with Moscow is opaque to the Knesset, while the "Trump Plan" is being discussed in conditions where 91 percent of citizens remain uninformed. "Security begins with a functioning democracy, not with yet another weapons system."

The media failure in covering threats. The journalist (No. 10): "There is an enormous gap between what experts discuss and what concerns the viewer. The expert talks about 'multipolar nuclear instability.' The viewer asks: 'Am I going to have to run to the safe room again?' Subjects that cannot be converted into a crawl headline and a siren are pushed to the margins of public attention — and it is precisely in those margins that the issues now reside which will reshape our world in five to ten years." Forty-four percent of Israelis are dissatisfied with media coverage of Türkiye. The journalist estimates the figure for Russia would be no lower.

"Managed hostility" with Russia. The political scientist (No. 2): relations with Russia and Türkiye are best described as "managed hostility — not alliance, not enmity, but not friendship either." This creates a unique situation for Israel: on the northern flank, two major players remain, and Israel has neither a strategic alliance nor a convergence of values with either.

Society's cognitive lag. The sociologist (No. 8): "A nuclear Türkiye remains at the margins of public perception. A situation in which 3.7 percent name Türkiye as the main threat of 2026 while its foreign minister publicly talks about the bomb is a classic case of cognitive lag — society is not keeping pace with the transformation of the threat. If Fidan's rhetoric is followed by even symbolic steps, the issue will shift from 'I'm not following this' to 'panic' — without an intermediate stage of comprehension. And panic is the worst adviser."

Deterrence as "the absence of strategy." Expert No. 7: "Deterrence is not a strategy; it is the absence of strategy. It is managing symptoms instead of treating the disease. Israel has spent sixty years living under strategic uncertainty, and every decade we are told it works. Then October 2023 happens, and it turns out that deterrence against Hamas did not work — we mistook silence for submission and stability for security."

Overall Conclusions

Despite deep worldview differences — from left-liberal to right-religious, from secular to strictly observant — the panel of 14 experts shows a broad consensus on the key strategic assessments.

Fidan's statement is a serious signal (14 of 14). A regional nuclear cascade is a real scenario. Turkish ambitions are tied to a neo-Ottoman project and do not depend on the outcome of the Iranian program.

The weakening of U.S. support ranks as the most serious threat (8 of 14 ranked it first; 13 of 14 placed it in the top two). The withdrawal from Syria is one element in a broader trend of contraction in the American security perimeter.

Russia plays a balancing role (12 of 14). The Russian channel remains an operational tool. Its intermediary role in de-escalating crises is significant for Israel, given Russia's wide-ranging ties to the principal Middle Eastern actors.

The "periphery doctrine" has lost its relevance. All three pillars are gone. The Abraham Accords are an attempted replacement, but an incomplete one.

A Palestinian state ranks as the least significant of the five proposed threats (12 of 14 ranked it fifth), though 8 of the 14 experts regard the Palestinian question as "zero" — that is, underlying all the others.