

Dr. Jonathan Schanzer | Evaluating Operation Breaking Dawn and What's Next for Gaza and Israel

– Wendy: Welcome back, everybody. Tonight it is my great pleasure to welcome Dr. Jonathan Schanzer, who will be evaluating Operation Breaking Dawn and what's next for Gaza and Israel. Dr. Jonathan Schanzer is Senior Vice President for Research at FDD where he oversees the work of the organization's experts and scholars. He's also on the leadership team of FDD Centre on Economic and Financial Power, a project on the use of financial and economic power as a tool of statecraft. Jonathan previously worked as a terrorism finance analyst at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he played an integral role in the designation of numerous terrorist financiers. He has held previous think tank research positions at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Middle East Forum. Jonathan has written hundreds of articles on the Middle East, along with more than a dozen monographs and chapters for edited volumes. His new book, "Gaza Conflict 2021: Hamas, Israel and 11 Days of War" challenges and corrects the wildly inaccurate news reported during the conflict. It is the first book published on the war. Jonathan, thank you very, very much for joining us tonight, and we're looking forward to your presentation. Over to you. Thank you, and Carly.

– Carly: Thank you very much, Wendy. So Jonathan, this is a pleasure, and I'm really looking forward to spending the hour, both looking at the war itself, but also where next. So on the 5th of August, Israel launched Operation Breaking Dawn, a war that they said they expected would last sort of a week. In the end it was 66 hours before at 11:30 p.m. on the 7th of August, a truce was signed. During that time, 48 people died, around 17 children, 4 women. The IDF believed the majority of civilians were killed by rocket misfires from Gaza, and that the rest were PIJ militants. So before we get too far into the actual operation, let's look back to start with. What is it that brought us to Operation Breaking Dawn, and particularly the focus on Palestinian Islamic Jihad versus Hamas?

– Dr. Jonathan Schanzer: Sure. Well, first, thank you very much for having me, it's a real pleasure to be with all of you. I'm incredibly impressed that the numbers of people who've joined, and I've been a big admirer of Lockdown University, so thank you. I think actually the genesis for all of this begins during last year's war actually. During the war we learned of something that I had never heard of before, but we've been struggling to get a handle on ever since. And that is that there is, what's being described as a nerve centre that is based in Beirut. It is run jointly by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Core, the IRGC, its terrorist operatives known as the Quds Force as well as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad. I joked that this is probably the last remaining functioning institution in Lebanon. As we all know, Lebanon continues to unravel politically, and economically it

continues to rack up billions and billions of dollars in debt that it probably will never really be able to repay. So the country is sort of a disaster right now, but this nerve centre continues to operate. Now during the last war we saw that the nerve centre was actually working to bring Arab Israelis out into the streets. It was providing intelligence to Hamas and Islamic Jihad in terms of where to fire rockets and where they were landing, and how to correct some of their trajectories. And then things sort of went quiet, but they were only quiet for a time because then we began to hear other things about this nerve centre, specifically that it was providing weapons to Arabs in the West Bank as well as Arab's inside Israel proper. And that the more these weapons continue to flood into the West Bank, the more these operations continued, the more we saw lawless pockets existing within the West Bank. These pockets, I think probably the most notable moment over the last several months was actually, I mean, it really came to the fore with the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh. Everybody probably remembers, this is the Al Jazeera journalist who was shot in the crossfire between armed gunman in Jenin and the IDF. Of course, there was a big spat over who was responsible and how to hold those responsible for a stray bullet basically from this conflict, but throughout this entire time Islamic Jihad has grown, and these lawless pockets have grown, thanks to Islamic Jihad and Hamas. And so just before the recent operation broke out, the Israelis were trying to get a handle on some of this chaos in the West Bank. They arrested a man whose name is Bassam al-Saadi, he was in Jenin, again, same pocket of unrest. And when they arrested him, that's when the intelligence system started blinking red, where the Israelis were watching Islamic Jihad preparing for a high profile terrorist attack inside of Israel. We now know that it was designed to be an anti-tank rocket attack against a civilian bus. That is now what the Israelis have revealed about the plot that they were watching, but that basically prompted the Israelis to try to preempt an attack by Islamic Jihad. And when they did that, that's when the war erupted.

- Carly: So in terms of this operation that Israel launched versus previous, much has been said about Israel being clear upfront on the kind of direct goals on letting people know early on exactly what they were doing and why. There was also the video released a couple of weeks ago from Shifa Hospital showing to the world in advance of a conflict this time about where weapons were being stored, but just talk us through what the aims of the IDF were for this particular operation, and how successful were they?

- Dr. Schanzer: The aims were actually were really quite modest because at the end of the day, Hamas, which is the sovereign, let's put them in air quotes, right? The sovereign of the Gaza Strip, they weren't involved. And so that meant that there were far fewer militants and far less military material, far fewer targets for Israel to neutralise. As long as the enemy was only Islamic Jihad, the goal was to take out top terrorist operatives, and the Israelis did that,

and they took out two of Islamic Jihad's top military commanders, one in the North, and one in the south. One by the name of Tayseer al-Jabari, and the other one by the name of Khaled Mansour. They were able to take out those two top operatives as well as some of the lieutenants, the sort of second and third level below the top operatives. And then they took out some monitoring posts, they took out some production facilities for weapons, storage facilities for weapons. And then actually what was really amazing was that, you mentioned this was a 66-hour operation, somewhere around 60 hours in was when we learned that Egypt had successfully brokered a cease-fire, and that was going to come into place very soon. And that's when actually Islamic Jihad started firing more and more rockets into Israel. This is, by the way, a very common tactic among both Hamas and Islamic Jihad. They do this to sort of get in their last licks and to try to demonstrate to their populations that they are the ones who were setting the tone and pace of each conflict. But what really was amazing, and I thought Prime Minister, yeah, Yair Lapid really deserves some credit for this. He didn't respond. Iron Dome fired a lot of these, or shot a lot of these rockets out of the sky. Many of them, as we know, were fired errantly, some of them landed on the Gaza population, unfortunately some of them hit the Mediterranean Sea, some of them hit the Negev desert, but essentially Israel did not respond to this significant flurry. If you actually look, the last day or so of the conflict, heading into the last day, they were noting, the IDF was noting that 650 or so rockets had been fired. And by the end of the conflict they were saying that it was over 1,000. So you get a sense that they fired off quite a large number of projectiles in that last day, and the IDF didn't respond. Why did they not respond? And, Lapid, I think did a good job of explaining this. He said, "Look, we already achieved all of our objectives. We weakened Islamic Jihad, we destroyed those outposts, we destroyed the weapons factories, we destroyed the storage facilities, we are done." And as long as Hamas didn't get involved further, didn't broaden out the conflict, Israel was quite content waiting until that cease-fire took effect.

- Carly: So before we talk about Hamas and the cease-fire, in previous operations there's always been this theory that Palestinian Islamic Jihad had had less rockets, they were shorter range, and the kind of big guns as it were, were reserved for Hamas. Now we did see sirens and the Iron Dome in operation over Tel Aviv, which up until now has traditionally been thought of as more within Hamas' capabilities. Do you think that means over the last year or so that Islamic Jihad has been getting their hands on longer range, or actually they always had some and we were underestimating it?

- Dr. Schanzer: They always had some, I mean, the numbers that we look at, and this is all back at the envelope because it's not like these groups settle up with Ernst and Young on their rocket storage capabilities, but Hamas is seen to have 15 to 20,000 rockets, PIJ is believed to have maybe somewhere between 5 and 8,000. So the arsenal

is smaller, and they have some long-range rockets. They actually, we saw they have the ability to dig tunnels, one of which Israel destroyed. They have drones also, which Israel destroyed, they scuttled a couple of drone attacks, but the arsenal is much smaller, and a lot of that is by virtue of the smaller budget. And then they're not the sovereign, so they're not able to tax the population and to use the population's resources much in the same way that Hamas can, but they have the ability to reach Tel Aviv. Most of the rockets though, I think, and I heard this from some very good sources inside Israel, most of the rockets that they fired were they are kind of garbage rockets. I don't think this was a serious attempt to do any real damage to Israel. I think PIJ went into this knowing that almost every one of their rockets were going to be shot down out of the sky by Iron Dome. And, of course, that was the case, Iron Dome was 97% successful, which is a remarkable percentage. This is an incredible defensive weapon. And one got a sense that maybe they were kind of clearing out some of their garages with some of the sort of smaller rockets, the mortars. By the way the mortars are often the hardest ones to defend against. Iron Dome cannot target mortars, so it's the those poor Israeli citizens that are right on that Gaza envelope, right off the border of Gaza, they were the ones who got hit with the shorter range mortars that Iron Dome could not handle, but they were clearing out a lot of the shorter range stuff. They fired off a few longer ones to demonstrate that they could, but at the end of the day I actually don't see this as a strategic battle waged by PIJ. And certainly it wasn't anything that Israel, and as I think I already explained, Israel did not want any part of this, they wanted to end it as soon as humanly possible.

– Carly: So now let's talk about Hamas. The cease-fire was negotiated by Egypt, and they are often seen as the ones that can bridge the gap and get the messages between the two sides. Are you aware of Israel doing anything to prepare Hamas in advance to make sure they didn't get involved? And do you think it was the 66 hours that prevented Hamas from joining? Or Hamas just doesn't have the appetite right now?

– Dr. Schanzer: I think they don't have the appetite, quite honestly. I think that last year's war, certainly I think Hamas came away looking like it had fought a somewhat professional battle against Israel after those 11 days of conflict that I documented in my book. There was no question that they came out looking somewhat strong, but they took a beating as well. I mean, there was that al-Jalaa building that was destroyed that had an electronic warfare system inside the building that was attempting to jam Iron Dome, that was destroyed. The so-called metro tunnel system, these were the commando tunnels that Hamas had spent years, maybe even decades building, those were also destroyed, that entire metro system was destroyed. Large numbers of Hamas commandos were taken off the grid, so to speak. There was really, I think they were reeling. And by the way, they also burned 4,500 rockets, and they needed to replenish. So there were lots of

reasons why Hamas would not want to get involved in this. Now we can also say though in the same breath that they didn't stop Islamic Jihad from waging this war against Israel. And I think that really has to do with the fact that Iran is the state sponsor, the one that provides training, the one that provides weapons, the one that provides cash to both organisations. And so if Iran is saying, "Look, we are unleashing PIJ right now", and they are going to wage a war, there is very little that Hamas is going to do about it. And as we saw they stood by and they applauded, but they just did not get involved. Now there is, I think, an interesting debate that I saw beginning to unfold in Israel during the war, and I suspect it will continue to be something that will be discussed. And that is, should Hamas not pay a price for allowing this to take place in the territory that it controls? If they are the semi-sovereign, if we're going to call them that, they are the ones that control the Gaza Strip, should they not be held accountable when you see more than 1,000 rockets being fired into Israel? Should there not be some deterrence that is mounted for an attack along these lines? Because really the fear that I have right now is that Hamas may have learned a lesson here. Hamas may have said, okay, well, if a smaller group that we disavow is able to fire rockets at Israel, then maybe we can just stay in control of the Gaza Strip and unleash some other group. Maybe a group that we've never heard of, maybe a group that is created now by Iran much in the same way that PIJ has been created by Iran, and they can continue to wage war by proxy. Israel needs to, I think be very careful to not let that happen. And so we'll have to see exactly the messaging between Hamas and Israel in the aftermath of this particular operation.

- Carly: And despite the fact that they both have the same benefactor, how much engagement is assumed to go on between Hamas and Islamic Jihad on the ground in Gaza?

- Dr. Schanzer: Oh, it's a huge amount of coordination. I mean, during the last war, PIJ was extremely active, and they were working hand in glove with Hamas. There can be no question about that. I think they trained together in Iran and in other Iran sponsored training camps around the Middle East, and I think they're very well integrated. I think actually a lot of the weapons and rockets that Hamas receives, they are able to pass some of them on to Islamic Jihad. That's our understanding at any rate. There are, of course, differences within the organisation. I think PIJ answers directly to Iran when Iran issues orders. Islamic Jihad essentially just says, yes sir. With Hamas, it's a little bit different, but I think it's important to note that Hamas is still a proxy of Iran in just about every sense. They just don't necessarily take orders and execute, what they do is they have other sponsors as well, notably Qatar and Turkey are two of the other sponsors that Hamas has, and they also have external headquarters. So they've got figures that are based in Qatar and Turkey and Iran and Lebanon, West Bank, Gaza. These leaders have a certain process of consensus, if you will, that determines the

decisions that they make. And so it's quite a bit different than PIJ, they have just a different character, a different personality for these two organisations, but again, you've got to remember that the bulk of the weapons and training and cash all come from the same place, and that's Tehran.

- Carly: So looking at the cease-fire itself, obviously Egypt again playing an incredibly important role in negotiating that truce, and Lapid and other colleagues really heaped praise on the CC in the 48 hours afterwards. But what was also interesting to note was the actual statement that came from the Egyptian ambassador to the UN within that 24-hour period, which was seen as an incredibly strong rebuke of Israel, use of terms like apartheid, etc. So where does that all fit together politically?

- Dr. Schanzer: Yeah, It's complicated as it always is in the Middle East. The Egyptians I think, that used to be the capital of the Arab world. They used to be, I mean, under Gamal Abdel Nasser, they were the ones who were leading the charge to destroy Israel. They ultimately gave up on that, as we know in the late 1970s. And then there was that moment where they kind of gravitated back toward the United States culminating... Certainly in the 1990s and 2000s we saw a fairly stable period with Egypt playing a role of a responsible steward for the Middle East, if you will. Then the Arab Spring came and destabilised the country rather thoroughly. And there has been this battle, a seesaw battle between the CC government and the Muslim Brotherhood. And this has put Egypt on the outs with the United States. They have been struggling to find a way back into a leadership role in the Middle East. I think they've done a good job of rebranding themselves, if you will, but things are not quite over yet in terms of their disagreements with the United States on democratisation and human rights. And these are issues that I suspect will linger for quite some time, certainly among Democrats here in the United States, less so among Republicans, but of course, that's always going to be something that pops up every few years then. And so that has been the way that they have been trying to manage their role. But in order to be the peacemaker, in order to be the broker of cease-fires, they have to not just be allies with Israel, they need to be able to earn the respect and trust of the likes of Islamic Jihad and Egypt and Qatar and Turkey and Iran, right? This is quite a mixed bag that they have to contend with. And so I think their rhetoric, I don't love it, I have to say, but I understand that it is probably necessary in order for them to carry out the role that they do. And when you speak quietly with the Israelis, they will say the same thing. They will say that relations are actually quite good between Egypt and Israel, that they'd prefer that they don't see this kind of rhetoric, but at the end of the day they understand that Egypt, A, is not interested in allowing Hamas to grow in strength militarily or politically. And on top of that that the Egyptians have committed to the role of bringing these conflicts to an abrupt end, and that is certainly in Israel's

interest. I'll just say parenthetically though that there's another country that also has been engaging in some rather fiery rhetoric during conflicts along these lines, and that is Jordan. And Jordan is actually not brokering cease-fires, Jordan is not actually playing any significant role in ending these things. If anything, it looks like they're embracing the rhetoric of Hamas and Iran, and stoking the flames of these conflicts. And I think in my mind, that is unsustainable. It would be one thing if they were partnering with Egypt and playing a significant role in any of these conflicts, but if they're not, I think quiet is probably preferable. That's what we saw from the likes of Morocco and from the UAE and Bahrain, the other countries that have peace with the Middle East. Very mild statements. This is what you would expect from countries that have made peace with Israel, not a country like Jordan, which is actually one of the longest serving peace partners of Israel, and they are really looking like they are trying to prolong conflict, not end it.

- Carly: And then there's been another country where Israel has been looking like it was making progress over the last year, which is Turkey. And President Herzog visited recently, and then in this latest operation, the rhetoric out of Turkey was also fairly extreme. Do you put that in the same campus kind of, we have to please our home base, or do you see that as the, the honeymoon is over with Israel and Turkey?

- Dr. Schanzer: I think the honeymoon was a bit premature in its announcement. I never bought it in the first place. Look, Turkey is essentially a state sponsor of terrorism. This is, I know it's a NATO country, but it's a NATO country in name only. I think that if you were to talk to a lot of the senior leaders of these NATO countries, they would quietly admit that Turkey needs to go. The problem with NATO is that, we always joke, it's like the Hotel California, "You can check out, but you can't leave." There is no mechanism for jettisoning a country that does not belong in this NATO alliance any longer. And you see Turkey working with the likes of Russia right now helping to facilitate payments for gas and for other things necessary for Russia's war in Ukraine. But I think more to the point for Israel, I mean, the second largest jurisdiction of Hamas operatives, including fundraisers and militants is Turkey, okay? And it's been that way since 2011, and that's been one of the causes of significant friction between Israel and Turkey. The rhetoric from Erdogan has been fiery and nasty and rather unhelpful, but I would just actually even take it a step further. And most people don't realise this, the Turks helped Iran at the height of the nuclear debate. This is back in 2012 to 2015, the Turks helped Iran evade sanctions to the tune of \$20 billion. Okay? The largest sanctions evasion scheme in modern history was one conducted by Turkey on behalf of Iran. We've seen Islamic state operatives flowing freely across the Turkish border into Syria, the Turks caused a huge problem there. In fact, I blame Turkey for a lot of the mess that we saw in Syria, and that we continue to see

today. You have Al-Qaeda, you've got Muslim Brotherhood. It is just, I mean, you sort of joke about the, I mean, Turkey reminds me a bit of the, the canteen scene from Star Wars. Every bad actor from across the galaxy appears to be gravitating to this place. It is just truly remarkable to see how Turkey has evolved in the exact wrong direction. So for those who were saying that, "Oh gosh, we're going to see a honeymoon, this is going to be great." Turkey was never going to change its spots. And I'm actually glad to see Turkey come out in the way that it did in support of Islamic Jihad because once it did, I think the veil came down. And Israel and the rest of the world could see Turkey for what it is.

- Carly: So as we're making our way around the region, people always look to what do the Abraham Accords countries say when these situations happen? And how does that balance come out? So where did you see the Abraham Accords countries coming forwards in the way you would expect? And was there anything of concern or surprise?

- Dr. Schanzer: No real concern, in fact, I mean, I think Morocco had a somewhat positive statement, but lukewarm, let's say, and that's good. We saw statements coming out of the UAE condemning Iran for supporting Islamic Jihad, same with Bahrain. So I think that those countries were in good shape. Sudan, of course, I mean, that was another country that joined the sort of rush of normalisation back in 2020. That one, the wheels have come off the bus a bit on that because Sudan is going through some internal political turmoil, and I don't see that being fixed anytime soon. So the big three though held strong, the one that I was a little disappointed in, which it's not a Abraham Accord country, but it's a maybe, we put it in the maybe column, and that's the Saudis. Obviously we had this kind of fanfare stemming from President Biden's trip to Israel, and then from there he flew directly to Saudi Arabia. There was a lot of talk about how that might be a precursor to full normalisation. Of course, while Biden was there, there were announcements of the easing of overflight for Israeli aircraft, and that continues to move ahead apace. And there are also going to be hajj visas issued to Israeli Arabs that want to go and visit Saudi Arabia. So things are moving in a good direction. We also have seen the Saudis and Israelis quietly work together in the realm of intelligence and even some military cooperation through CENTCOM. This is the Central Command of the US military. Israel had been part of EUCOM, the European Command. Last fall, they moved over into CENTCOM, and that has actually paved the way for some defensive cooperation and some closer coordination between the two militaries. So all this is really positive, and then all of a sudden amidst this war, you see the Saudis come out and they start talking about defending Al-Aqsa and criticising Israel for disproportionate force and the like. Really stock language coming from Arab states, but one would've hoped that at this point we would see less of that coming from Saudi Arabia. So a bit of a disappointment, but one does get a sense though that the Saudis are just trying to keep a lid on this,

they don't want to gallop too quickly. Israeli foreign ministry officials are saying the same thing that these are going to be baby steps and that we shouldn't be expecting too much. But again, I would say, look, the Israelis maybe aren't pushing the Saudis, but the Saudis maybe could dial back on the rhetoric a little bit, especially when they know that this is an Iran funded organisation, and that Iran is the primary foe for both Israel and Saudi Arabia.

- Carly: So the other country that Israel has been hoping over the last few weeks, that will be a part of the discussions around airspace opening is Oman. And there's been lengthy discussions with the El Al CEO seeking approval for the Saudi Oman corridor. And then early this week, the ruler of Oman has a call with Iran to talk about how to help ease sanctions. Oman at one point was also listed as a country that people hoped would step into the Abraham Accords. Where do you see Oman's role in this?

- Dr. Schanzer: Yeah, I mean, it's interesting. You may recall a few years ago, then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu travelled to Oman and met with the former sultan, Sultan Qaboos, who since passed away, he was ill, we knew he was ill, and the new sultan, Sultan Haitham has come in. And I think, my sense is that he's just been trying to get his feet under him, and he's trying to figure out how to rule in a way that feels inclusive and that represents Omani interests. And so he may be a bit slow to make the move toward normalisation. I still think that the predicate has been set, I think the board is set. He can certainly make this move at any time, but the problem with Oman is that, it fancies itself to be the Switzerland of the Middle East. And I got to say, Switzerland isn't a good look even for Switzerland, right? Where you're working with everybody and you have no alliances with anyone, and you kind of, you pursue your own interests, and it could get a bit messy. And that's exactly what's happened in Oman. The Houthis, for example, have a headquarters there. This is the Ansar Allah terrorist group out of Yemen that continues to wreak havoc in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. There has been reports of smuggling through Oman. Oman was the host of the original nuclear talks dating back to 2013 that ultimately yielded Iran those billions of dollars in sanctions relief. So they're doing that while also talking about normalisation and working closely with the United States. They're sort of, they're all over the place, they're all over the map. And so I would say it'll probably take another few years for Oman to settle on a policy in which they maybe fully recognise Israel. I'd be pleasantly surprised if it happens sooner than that, but right now I think they're too busy trying to play Switzerland. And my sense is that it probably still won't end very well.

- Carly: So we've talked around the role of Iran and all this, so now let's focus on that little bit, especially since Minister of Defence, Gantz, a few hours ago used the arrival of the Cypriot Minister of Defence to lay out the Israelis theory on how much money the Iranians

are sending to Islamic Jihad and the true extent of the enabling. Now obviously there's other things going on with Iran with regards to the sanctions and the potential nuclear agreement, and these on/off, again, talks in Vienna. So where does the timing fit into all this? How much of what's going on in the last few weeks has been, Iran looking for other opportunities related or unrelated to the nuclear talks, and where do you see Iran's kind of current position?

- Dr. Schanzer: Well, I think right now, I think we're all looking on with some concern as the nuclear talks in Vienna have suddenly really surprisingly been jump-started again. They looked rather more a bund just not too long ago, and now they've got renewed life. The concern, of course, there is that, the estimates that we're seeing is that there could be \$275 billion yielded to Iran within the first year, and perhaps \$1 trillion over 10 years. That's a lot of money, and that's a lot of money that will trickle down into the hands of Iran's proxies, again, the Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, and beyond. So it's a huge concern. And, of course, whatever restrictions will be put on Iran would be fleeting. Pursuant to the original deal, the restriction on ballistic missiles ends next year. And ballistic missiles, of course, are the delivery system for a nuclear weapon. So we've got, I think a lot of concern about what's happening in Vienna. But what's I think fascinating for me, and what I think, we need to start looking at these skirmishes in Gaza that they are part of a broader trend of a shadow war that has been taking place between Israel and Iran for the last seven to 10 years. This is, of course, what is known in Israel as the campaign between wars or the war between wars. In Hebrew, they call it the Mabam, the m'aracha bein ha-milchamot, as they say in Hebrew. And what this is, is it's a constant asymmetric battle in which Israel has been targeting Iranian assets with cyber weapons, for example, taking out Iranian nuclear scientists with newfangled weapons that are inside Iran, taking out Al-Qaeda figures that had been seeking safe haven inside Iran, battles on the high seas in which Israel has been able to successfully target maritime vessels belonging to Iran. And then, of course, there is the sort of hot zone in Syria where Iran has been trying to transfer very advanced weapons into the hands of Hezbollah. And the Israelis are striking almost every night, they're taking out these weapons, and they're also taking out Iranian personnel who are trying to facilitate this as well as Syrian personnel and Hezbollah leaders. This is all happening almost every night on some level on one of these playing fields. And Gaza is also part of it, right? And so what Israel has been trying to do is to weaken Iran and its proxies wherever it can. It's sort of mowing the lawn, it's putting out fires, it's whack-a-mole, whatever... However you want to describe it, it has just been a nonstop campaign for Israel. I think Israel has been getting the best of Iran, quite frankly, but Iran continues to find ways to try to undermine Israel, to put Israel in the crosshairs to so doubt in the minds of the Israeli public, to sow fear into the minds of the Israeli public, and the IDF continues to stand tall. So this is the context,

again, it's been going on for 7 or 10 years. I don't expect it to end anytime soon, if anything I expect this multi-front campaign to only heat up further. The question is when we stop calling it an asymmetric campaign, and when we start calling it a war, and that remains to be seen.

- Carly: And in terms of the international community's reaction, there was a lot of talk about helpful timing, the world is very distracted between Ukraine, and what was Taiwan over the weekend. Generally speaking, the international community kind of seem to hold their nerve, and back Israel up in doing what was necessary. How did you feel about the kind of the general reaction of much of the world?

- Dr. Schanzer: Look, I think, this was a JV game to borrow from President Obama, this was not prime time. And I think that probably had something to do with it, it was only a few days long, this was one small proxy of Iran battling against Israel. Nobody has a whole lot of love for Islamic Jihad, and I just don't think it resonated with the public, and I think the news cycle had people distracted. The thing that I've been mulling for the last several days is, why is there such a huge difference between a Hamas battle and an Islamic Jihad battle? And I actually think that it's what Hamas embodies at the end of the day, that it is a Palestinian nationalist movement. It is a movement that works hand in glove with Iran, so it's part of the Shia axis, if you will, but it's also a splinter of the Muslim Brotherhood. And so, the three of these things, the amalgam of these three things really does, I think draw upon a wider swath of the Arab world. And by the way, the Muslim Brotherhood angle on this in particular, but certainly the Palestinian nationalist narrative, there were activists worldwide that really swing into action every time one of these conflicts erupts. And so I believe it really is, it's that network that probably was not fully activated during this most recent round of conflict. And again, a lot of this really does have to do with its tactical stuff. There was no Jerusalem headlines here. I mean, when you look at the last war, and again, you got to think about kind of what animates the public. There was no talk about Sheikh Jarrah, that neighbourhood where Israel was purportedly about to evict some Arab squatters. Of course, those people are still there more than a year after last year's war, but we can talk about that maybe perhaps another time, but the last war was at least framed as a battle for the soul of Jerusalem. And so it took on a much bigger narrative than what we saw here, which was a guy got arrested in the West Bank and a couple of other senior leaders trained by Iran were killed in Gaza. That was the context for the war, and quite frankly, no one had any stomach for it.

- Carly: So, one country where Israel has been, I think struggling over the last few months because of the greater challenges Israel faces more than anyone else is Russia. And obviously Israel was to start with walking a fine line in terms of condemning Russia, now Prime Minister Lapid, but at the time Foreign Minister Lapid was one

of the first to be particularly outspoken on the atrocities in Ukraine. And if you look at the Russian reaction over the last week, it was aggressive towards Israel's response, and now has said, "Well, this is no different to what we are doing in Ukraine." Simultaneously, there is a lot of talk of Russia moving even closer to Iran, training on Iranian drones now in the last few weeks. How dangerous has the Russian-Israel relationship become? And what could the possibilities for Israel will be there?

- Dr. Schanzer: Yeah, I mean, look, the Israelis were in a precarious situation. Actually, it's funny, I went to Israel in February and literally landed on the evening that the war broke out in Ukraine. And the Israelis were shocked at the way that their relationship with the Russians were described in the mainstream media. I think they were being unfairly described as friends or allies of Russia. The truth is that it's far more tense than that. Russia, of course, entered into this Syrian civil war in an attempt to prop up the Assad regime, and they actually had done just that. And so as a result, every time Israel wants to engage in that campaign between wars that I mentioned in Syria, which again is almost every night, they need to deconflict with the Russians. And so when the Israelis talk about Russia, they talk about them as their northern neighbour, right? They're not talking about a country that is far off in Siberia, this is a country that is literally just to their north and they need to have that engagement. It's been described to me by senior Israeli officials as a professional relationship, not a friendly one. And the Israelis were doing everything that they could early on to try to bring and end to the conflict and to try to provide some humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainians without having to poke the bear, as they say, right? The idea of getting into a full-throated battle with the Russians was not in Israel's interests so long as they had to contend with Iran and Hezbollah, and the Assad regime in Syria just to their north. And so that's been dragging on for several months, and the Israelis continue to contend with people who are pointing a finger at them saying, "Oh, you're friendly with Russia." Well, in the last few weeks, as you noted, we're now seeing that the Iranians are training Russians on drones. The Russians are putting Iranian satellites into orbit, the Russians are kicking the Jewish agency out of Russia, the Sokhnut, which is a huge deal for Israel because there are still thousands of Jews still living in Russia that may at one point want to get out, but at least in the meantime, they've been really benefiting from Israeli assistance in sort of an NGO type fashion. And so all of these things are kind of boiling to a head. I think what it's ultimately doing is it's sharpening Israel's perspective that they're ultimately going to need to choose the side unequivocally of the United States. I still think they're loath to do it because of the military operations that they need to conduct in Syria, that's not going away anytime soon. So once again, Israel is stuck between a rock and a hard place, and I suspect that Putin's going to continue to push on that narrative that you mentioned sort of saying, well, how dare you invade Gaza? Of

course, Israel didn't invade Gaza, they defended against rockets out of Gaza, but Putin's line is, how dare you do that and then condemn me for what I'm doing in Ukraine. So it's, I think the rhetoric's only going to get worse and Israel's decision-making is probably going to feel more and more constricted.

– Carly: So obviously this was Prime Minister Lapid's week five in the job before the elections on November 1st. How generally do people think he did domestically? You can see the Israeli polling come in every week and each party move a seat or two here and there, but what's the general sentiment on the ground been about his and the rest of the cabinet's performance?

– Dr. Schanzer: Yeah, I think he got a small bump in the polls. I don't know if it changed the dynamic in terms of a coalition that he would be able to build in order to get those coveted 61 Knesset seats to actually form a government in November, but I think he got a bump. I think the important thing quite frankly is, this was the first war probably since 2008. Oh, we don't call it a war, by the way, I mean, Israelis called them operations, they saved the word "war" for something far bigger, but it was the first conflict that was led by someone whose name is not Benjamin Netanyahu since 2008. And so this was, I think, significant, Lapid was able to demonstrate that he could do it, that Yesh Atid could do it, that Gantz could do it, that the coordination that occurs between the Prime Minister's office and the chief of staff of the IDF is quite good, it's a well-oiled machine, and you don't need to be, you don't need to brand yourself as Mr. Security in order to be able to prosecute a war. And so I think Lapid was able to do that. I don't know how much of Bibi's market share he took, but I think Israelis had to have taken note that he did this rather well. And I also, again, I would just point out that his decision to halt all operations, even as rockets were flying into Israel because a cease-fire was looming, and because the IDF had achieved all of its objectives, I think resonated really well with the United States. I think to not see the Israelis just hammer Islamic Jihad out of anger, but rather just thinking about what their strategic objectives are, that was an incredibly important message to send that Israel is willing to maybe just take a deep breath as long as Iron Dome continues to function, as long as interceptors continue to flow from the United States and assistance pursuant to our MOU with the United States and Israel, the memorandum of understanding. As long as the money flows and the weapons continue to flow, Israel does not have anything to prove as long as its objectives are met. And I think the Israeli public, and quite frankly, American leadership appreciated how he comported himself during this war.

– Carly: The other thing that I think to know, and those of us outside of Israel who often have to discuss the conflict, I think all discuss this internally was the speed of the response to incidents that could have been blamed on Israel. Often during these operations, the IDF

says, we're going to investigate civilians that were killed, we're going to look into what happened in that particular area. In this case within four or five hours in one situation, particularly where four children were killed by what has now been shown to be a misfire of a rocket, Israel was able to show clearly and concisely that it wasn't them and they weren't in the area. Is that a new capability or is that a government who are putting as much stock and importance on getting that information out quickly? What do you think has led to that change?

- Dr. Schanzer: Oh, I think it was the disastrous showing of last year that probably has focused the mind of this government in particular. The last year's war was a drubbing of Israel, and it was a, I mean, it was a pile on. The media coverage was horrific, I mean, I wrote an entire book on how the narrative was just not correct here in the United States, certainly on Twitter where I think we can expect to see a lot of crazy conspiracy theories, but even how it was reported on TV in our mainstream print media, it was disastrous on all counts. And a lot of that had to do with the organisation of the other side and the way that they advocate, but a lot of it, and a lot of it has to do with the leanings of our, what we would call our legacy media here in the United States. But then there's also, how did Israel combat it? And I think they combated it rather poorly. And so I think there was a sense, certainly among Lapid and Bennett that there needed to be more of a focus on this. I think there was more of a rapid response on the part of Israel during this most recent round of conflict. And I think the video that they were able to show, some of the graphics that they were able to produce was all quite good, but again, I think that the jury is still out because while they were able to maybe walk away with minimal damage this time around, there's two things to note. One was that Hamas was placing a gag order on the reporting of that particular errant rocket that you just mentioned, that they were actually preventing Western media from reporting on it. And they abided by the gag order, which is just truly remarkable that if your job is to tell the truth, and you're not able to do that for fear of death, maybe you need to find another job. I mean, I'm sympathetic to the threats, but there's no excuse if you're AP Reuters, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, your job is to tell the truth. And if you're not doing that, well, then we've got a problem. So there was, I would say, the playing field was not level even during this most recent round. And so I'm glad to see maybe a bit of improvement, but I don't think we're there yet by a long shot. The other thing to just remember also is that, again, this was a JV game, this was a short-term operation against an enemy that did not have that wide sympathy that we have seen in other conflicts past. And so, maybe if there's a way to describe it, it's that Israel was sort of doing this one with training wheels. The question is, what happens when they take the training wheels off in what would be a true battle? How will they perform? One other thing maybe to just note parenthetically is, this government I think works in ways that a Bibi government does not.

Netanyahu has typically taken on the messaging almost entirely upon himself as the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office. It's been very centralised media operations, let's say, during Likud government periods. This one was a little bit different. I actually think that it may have been a good model that others can learn from, but if Bibi, for example, comes back and wins, does he revert to the old model of centralised media dissemination, or does he embrace some of the change that we have seen within the Israeli system that's been developed over the last year? That is a big question that I don't think anybody knows how to answer. We'll find out in November.

– Carly: Yes, I'm sure you saw the Netanyahu interview on Fox News, still making clear that he is the security candidate. So I think we could hazard a guess as to where that might go. So in the last five minutes or so, there's often this conversation about that the situation with Gaza is in the long-term unsustainable, and that how many times can you continue to just mow the lawn, as the Israelis say. And every two to three years, there is more than an operation, and in fact a war, and what new thinking or approaches may even be possible here. So given you've quite literally written the book and many, many other chapters, do you see any potential change in this dynamic, or is this the way of the future, at least for the time being?

– Dr. Schanzer: Look, in my view, it all hinges on one thing, and that is the US policy toward Iran. All of the armed groups inside the Gaza Strip are armed because of Iran. They are able to pay their salaries primarily because of Iran. We could also maybe blame Turkey and Qatar a bit for that. The training comes from Iran. So the big question is, are we heading back into this nuclear deal? Because if we are, that means the regime in Iran is going to get \$275 billion within the first year. And I guarantee you that a huge amount of that, I don't know how many billions, but it will be billions, will trickle down into the hands of Hamas, Hezbollah, PIJ, etc. And that is a sure-fire way to continue the unrest and violence that we see flaring up in the Gaza Strip on average every two to three years. That is the way that it always goes. And I don't see anybody else stepping in to provide that military assistance and that training in the way that Iran has. I actually just recently wrote an article for the Middle East Quarterly looking at the assistance over the years. It has been consistent since Hamas' founding in late 1987, early 1988, we have seen billions and billions and billions of dollars flowing from the coffers of Tehran to Hamas for the sole purpose of supporting an organisation that is dedicated to the destruction of Israel. You want to stop these wars in Gaza, you've got to stop the flow of those funds, and that all ends in Tehran.

– Carly: And presumably a similar argument is true for Hezbollah?

– Dr. Schanzer: 100%. And with Hezbollah, it's probably worse because there are no other real patrons right now for Hezbollah, and Hezbollah

is not only an organisation dedicated to the destruction of Israel, it's actually hollowed out the entire state in Lebanon due to corruption and just flat out illicit finance just flowing throughout the country. The thing that I'm actually most concerned about right now on the Lebanon front is the provision of PGMs, these precision-guided munitions that Iran has been providing to Hezbollah. This is what Israel has been trying to strike in Syria on a regular basis as they're smuggled through, but these PGMs by most estimates right now out of Israel, Hezbollah has about 500 of them. It could be 400, it could be 600. Again, it's not like these guys have to disclose anywhere what they have in their arsenal, but let's just say hundreds of PGMs, and these PGMs are able to potentially evade Iron Dome, and they are incredibly accurate, deadly accurate, to the point that they're able to hit a given target within about 10 yards of where they intended. So now imagine what that means for the Dimona nuclear facility in the south, what that means for the chemical plant in Haifa, the Kiryat in Tel Aviv, and on and on. So that is a huge, huge concern. It all stems from Iran. Again, when you look, just zoom out for a second at the problems that we see across the region, I know there are a lot of people in the Arab world that like to kind of point to the argument of what they call linkage, that it all stems back to the Arab-Israeli conflict. I would say that what we've seen over the last, certainly the last two or three years is that the Arab-Israeli conflict is shrinking, and it seems to be potentially on the way to evaporation almost. And then there is the other side of it, which is where do you still see the conflict? You see it with Iran. Everywhere Iran has its tentacles, you see conflict right now. And so they're the main problem in the region. There was a theory, I think, by the Obama administration, and perhaps now by Biden, that if we throw enough money in Iran that perhaps it would become a responsible actor and share the Middle East with the rest of its neighbours. That is fanciful thinking. And I think we're in a very dangerous place right now, we've got a hope right now that the United States doesn't cave on this deal that is being dangled in Vienna. I think it would be a disaster not only for Israel, but for much of the Middle East. So we're holding our breath.

– Carly: Well, Jonathan, thank you very much for a fascinating hour. I'm very much looking forward to reading your book on the 2021 war. And I'm going to hand back over to Wendy to wrap up.

– Wendy: Well, thank you very much, Jonathan, for your in-depth and insightful analysis of this current situation. I must say you managed to outline and explain how tenuous and fragile all these alliances really are. It's really so worrying. One minute we are like, we're listening to different presentations and one week we feel more optimistic, and there are other times when it really is quite frightening. But it was really reassuring to see Israel showing restraints despite ongoing fire from Islamic Jihad. And I'd like to say, we look forward to having you back to update us on these rapidly

changing events in the Middle East with all your measured and objective insights.

– Dr. Schanzer: Thank you.

– Wendy: And I'd like to thank all our participants for joining us tonight and to urge them all to buy your book and to... I'm sure we can get on Amazon, is that right?

– Dr. Schanzer: You can, it's right here.

– Wendy: Yes, very good.

– Dr. Schanzer: There you go.

– Wendy: Thank you very much. The "Gaza Conflict 2021: Hamas, Israel and 11 Days of War." Why don't you hold it up again, please?

– Dr. Schanzer: Sure.

– Wendy: Very good. Good luck.

– Dr. Schanzer: Thank you very much.

– Wendy: Good luck with the book. And thank you very, very much, it was an outstanding hour. Fascinating, insightful–

– Dr. Schanzer: Thanks for having me.

– Wendy: And education. And, Carly, as always, a huge thank you. Good night, everybody. Enjoy the rest of your evening or your day. Thanks, bye bye.