

The Growing Risk of an Israel-Iran Confrontation in Syria

by [Michael Herzog \(/experts/michael-herzog\)](/experts/michael-herzog)

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Michael Herzog was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United States in 2021. Previously, he was an international fellow at The Washington Institute.



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The push by Iran to fill the void created by the defeat of the Islamic State looms large in Israel's strategic landscape. If the current trajectory persists, these two determined regional actors could increasingly face each other in Syria and eventually slide into confrontation. Tehran seeks to create an enduring military presence in Syria that it can turn into a front with Israel by sponsoring permanent proxy forces such as a "Syrian Hezbollah," building a Mediterranean naval base, and establishing indigenous industries for accurate rockets. This is part of a broader strategic move to consolidate a contiguous sphere of direct influence—a "land corridor" that stretches through Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean. Whereas Israel views such moves as a long-term strategic threat, the United States and Russia appear reluctant to confront Iran in Syria. So Israel is expanding—and increasingly acting on—its redlines in this theater.

In this timely Policy Note, Michael Herzog assesses the range of current risks and makes the compelling case that an Iran deeply entrenched in Syria will foreclose any hopes of future stability in the country.

THE AUTHOR

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