

A Historic Opportunity to Return to Israel's Realist National Security Doctrine

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 30.10.2025

Main Points:

- For its first four decades, Israel's realist security doctrine transformed it from a small, threatened community into a powerful state with defensible borders. Its decisive victories led to the removal of existential threats, brought it to regional power status, and made it an asset for the United States.
- The principles of this doctrine are: understanding the root of the conflict as hostility toward Jewish sovereignty, maintaining an offensive and initiative-based approach that emphasizes controlling territory, and self-reliance.
- From the late 1980's on however, these principles were abandoned in favor of an idealist doctrine which called for peace with undefeated enemies, a defensive posture after unilateral withdrawals, and an increased reliance on international actors.
- The policies that resulted led Israel's security into a downward spiral in which the hope for peace led to withdrawals, which caused a loss of deterrence, emboldening its enemies, and triggering renewed attacks.
- The end result was a situation in which Israel was surrounded from north and south by terrorist armies, capable both of raining missiles across the country and of conventional invasion, while Iran steadily progressed toward nuclear weapons, crossing every red line set by Israel.
- The Iron Swords War clearly exposed the costs of abandoning the realist doctrine and reaffirmed its relevance. The re-implementation of some of its principles has already begun, and the question is whether Israel will succeed in embedding them permanently in the current era.

The opinions expressed in Misgav publications are the speakers' alone.

For The full article