The Palestinian Authority has failed: Local autonomy is the only viable future

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 16.07.2025
The Hebron Emirate initiative, led by local tribal leaders, offers a compelling departure from the Palestinian Authority model and offers several advantages.

The ‘Hezbollahization’ of Gaza

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 16.07.2025
Israel must clarify it won’t compromise on its demand for Gaza’s demilitarization in addition to – not instead of – toppling Hamas’ rule.

IDF must act now to avert return of suicide bombings

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 16.07.2025
After the failed bombing in Tel Aviv, one must ask whether the incident marks the return of suicide terrorism to our daily lives. To prevent such a wave of terror, it is crucial to immediately implement the lessons learned from past attacks.

Draw a red line: Jenin at risk of ‘Gazafication’

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 16.07.2025
The West Bank is currently defined as a secondary arena in Israel’s multi-arena campaign. Successfully addressing its challenges will help maintain this definition and prevent the area from deteriorating into a situation that Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas would like to see.

Dancing around Ramadan

written by David M. Weinberg | 16.07.2025
On the soft bigotry of low expectations regarding Muslim violence during their holy month.

Palestinian Laborers Should Not Be Allowed Back into Israel

written by Ruth Pines-Feldman | 16.07.2025
It is a mistake for Israel to rely on Palestinian workers, and at the present they pose a security risk.

Internal Security After the Gaza War

written by Col. (res.) Prof. Gabi Siboni | 16.07.2025
Col. (res.) Prof. Gabi Siboni and Prof. Kobi Michael are leading development of a national strategy for internal security, and the "Israel 2.0" research project, both at the Misgav Institute.

- Following the events of October 7, a comprehensive overhaul and rethinking are required regarding the defense of Israeli settlements, towns, and cities. Internal security arrays cannot be disconnected from other national defense systems.
- Analyzing the needs and practically addressing Israel's internal security requirements requires categorizing the country's settled areas based on a distinction between rural towns, outlying settlements, and large cities and the center of the country or metropolitan areas. Based on such categorization (as outlined in this paper) the principles for ensuring the security of settlements can be derived.
- The following security threats must be addressed: Attack by hostile entities (Israeli citizens and enemies) on cities including mixed towns, ambushes along traffic routes, as well as the blocking of traffic routes.
- In-depth consideration must be undertaken of the option of entrusting a National Guard with the overarching responsibility for settlement security arrays.
- Emergency or rapid-response squads in rural areas and along the borders (the external buffer zone) must prepare to be able to independently defend all civilian areas for up to six hours. The IDF, the police and rescue entities in these regions must be ready to intervene and provide defense within a time range not exceeding six hours. This means appropriate training, qualification, and equipment of rapid response squads, and command-and-control systems for coordination.

Introduction

The events of October 7, 2023 must lead to rethinking in many areas of security, including internal security as an integral part of national security. The incursion

by Hamas terrorists into Gaza Envelope settlements and into IDF camps in that region not only caught IDF forces off-guard, but also demonstrated the extent of the collapse of the settlements' regional defense concept. This was the result of a prolonged process in which the strength of rapid-response squads was sapped. In many places, local emergency teams had been stripped of their weapons or been forced to deposit weapons in inaccessible bunkers, preventing their real-time use in defense against attack.

The sequence of events which began on October 7 requires swift action to enhance settlement security both in frontier areas and in the center of the country. There is a real danger of broader conflict led by Hezbollah, Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, and – in the event of a serious deterioration in the security situation – also potentially violence on the part of Israeli Arabs in the center of the country.

The Significance of October 7 for Internal Security

Despite feats of heroism by rapid-response squads in the towns and farms of the Gaza Envelope, and even some local successes in stopping the tides of assault – in most places the emergency squads were unable to provide an adequate response to the threat. Though they clearly could not entirely thwart the massive assault, obviously more could have done given appropriate preparations.

The events revealed a systemic failure concerning the coordination and cooperation arrays between the military and police and the settlements. In most Gaza Envelope settlements, defense was haphazard at best. It was only the initiative and bravery displayed by combat soldiers of the IDF, the police and the Border Police who arrived in the area independently (rather than as properly organized and outfitted units) that partially saved lives.

A comprehensive overhaul and rethinking are required regarding the formation of settlements' defensive arrays and of appropriate defensive arrays in cities. Such arrays cannot conduct themselves only independently and separately from the other security systems: the military, the police, the rescue entities and soon the National Guard as well. At this time, a broad and comprehensive systemic and nationwide perspective is required to enable the conceptual foundation for creating the arrays, bolstering the coordination and collaboration between them, outfitting, training and professionally qualifying them on a regular basis and,

primarily, institutionalizing their patterns of operation and action.

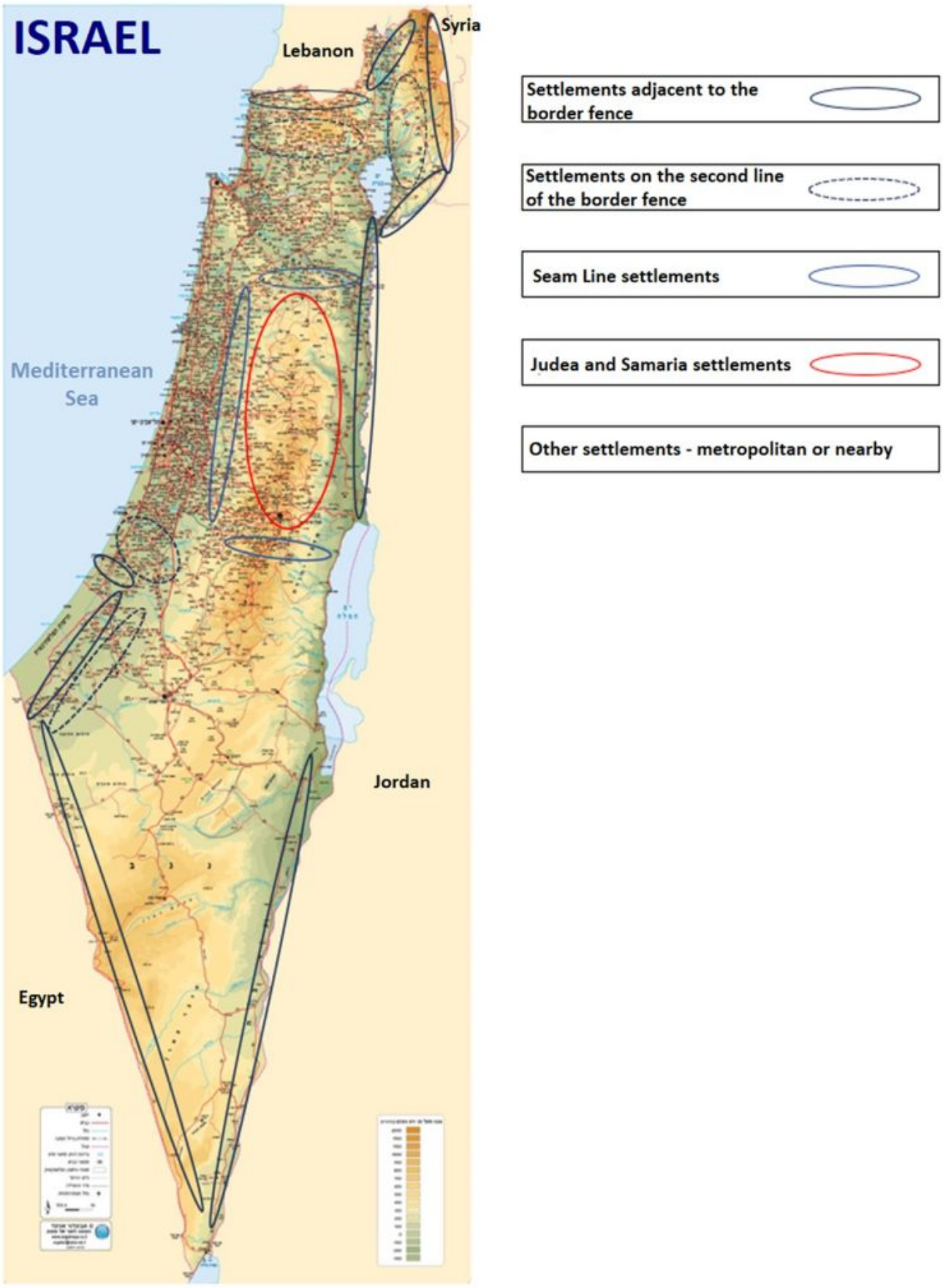
The Threat

In the context of the internal security concept in light of the war, the threat can be broken down into two components. The first concerns a (security) threat arising from action taken by hostile entities (though a clear distinction is required between hostile Israeli citizens and enemies of the state). The second is a (criminal) threat arising from the risk of weaponry falling into the hands of criminal and hostile entities, as well as misuse of such weaponry for purposes other than the one for which it was distributed.

A security assessment also must address the following possibilities: An attack by hostile entities (Israeli citizens and enemies) on settlements and populated areas, including mixed cities, ambushes along traffic routes, and the blocking of such traffic routes. This does not necessarily refer only to primary traffic routes but also to secondary routes and even to settlements' access and escape routes, and to incidents of mass disorderly conduct which could evolve into such an attack. The attacks may be limited to a single settlement or to a region where hostile activity is taking place in several settlements and along several routes.

Categorizing Israeli Cities and Settlements

To analyze and practically address the issue, Israeli cities/towns must be categorized based on a distinction between rural or outlying settlements and large cities and the center of the country or metropolitan areas. It is from this categorization that the principles for ensuring the security of the Settlement Project and of the rest of the country's settlements must be derived. For this purpose, we have developed the following initial categorization:



Border-Adjacent Towns

The threat to this group comprises the following components:

- An enemy incursion across the border in a scenario similar to that of October 7, with the key attribute being activity on an organized and planned “military” level including forces and assignments, taking place across the entire region and accompanied by a bombardment of mortar, rocket and missile fire.
- The enemy is armed with standard means, including light and heavy machine guns, anti-tank weapons, explosives and incendiaries and multiple vehicles outfitted for combat and mobility.
- This threat also includes the blocking both of primary and secondary traffic routes and junctions across the area, alongside a concurrent attack on IDF camps and outposts in the area.
- All these can take place in conjunction with an aerial threat in the form of drones/UAVs.
- This threat can occur without advance warning and with only a short time passing from the moment it breaks out until the enemy enters the settlements.

Second-Line Border Cities

Such settlements include, for example: Ashkelon, Ofakim and Netivot in the south, Kiryat Shmona in the north, etc.

- A threat similar to the one posed to border-adjacent settlements, but with longer time and space constants.
- Such settlements could also suffer from the development or outbreak of mass disorderly conduct, which, as stated above, could evolve into an assault.

Seam Line Towns

The threat to this group comprises the following components:

- An attack by organized, partially organized, or sporadic and disorganized groups on settlements. Such an attack will presumably not be accompanied by a massive bombardment (there may be local use of makeshift explosives). The attackers will presumably use standard, makeshift weaponry, as well as vehicles not outfitted for combat.
- An attack waged by the Palestinian Authority’s armed forces. (We assess this to be a low likelihood, but in view of the escalating security situation

in Judea and Samaria and the accelerating trend of the PA's weakening, this threat should be given due consideration.)
- Ambushes along traffic routes, as well as blocking them.
- The attacks may be limited to a single settlement or to a region where hostile activity is taking place in several settlements and along several routes, as well as incidents of mass disorderly conduct which, as stated above, could evolve into an assault.

Judea and Samaria Settlements

Here there is a threat similar to the one posed to Seam Line settlements, but much more serious. The escalating security situation in Judea and Samaria and the ongoing weakening of the PA increases security risks. The settlements are at risk of terrorist attack, even an attack like October 7, with Palestinian security forces participating in attacks and inflamed mob breaching the fences, while the PA's security apparatus being either unable or unwilling to prevent the mob from breaking into the settlements.

Other Cities

The threat to this group comprises the following components:

- A large number of terrorist squads infiltrating Israel on foot (in conjunction with, or separately from, the motorized incursion).
- Continuous massive and indiscriminate gunfire, including the use of grenades and other weapons, and including in conjunction with an aerial threat of drones/UAVs firing at the settlement's residents on several sectors, while carrying out actions of murder, pillaging and burning.
- Entering residents' homes to murder and abduct residents and burn their houses down.
- Firing at bus stops / public institutions or at crowds, cars, and public transportation.
- Vehicular attacks – running over people standing at bus stops and hitchhiker stops, including open-air stops.
- A 'bargaining' (hostage-taking) attack.

Further Steps

A series of questions must be considered including: What must be addressed;

what were the key points of failure; what role does settlement play in, or how does it contribute to, domestic and general security; where does the line pass between the police and the military and the interactions between the emergency squads and the military and police; and why did emergency squads fail? Formulating organizing principles to address all this requires an in-depth understanding of the importance of settlement and the security rationale of buffer zones and borders.

From buffer zone inwards, settlements serve as a defensive belt for settlements located deeper in the heart of the country, hence the link to domestic security – a National Guard. From buffer zones outward, they defend Israel's borders and sovereignty, hence the link to military security – regional defense and the IDF.

This dual security rationale requires rethinking and translation into developing a mechanism for achieving connection / synchronization / synergy and integration between defense and security organizations and between them settlement rapid-response squads.

Discussion of the principles for coordination and collaboration must begin from the core –settlement emergency squads. From there, we must proceed to the regional buffer zone, breaking it down to the military and the police and to the connection and synchronization between them and the rescue entities and the National Guard. Within this framework, we must formulate an organizational structure, principles for coordination and collaboration, as well as command and control. An in-depth review of these subjects will be presented in the comprehensive document.

We estimate that serious consideration should be given to the option of entrusting a National Guard with the overarching responsibility for the settlement security arrays. All this is contingent on the assumption that a National Guard indeed will be created and will act in a manner which grants it the abilities and powers to be entrusted with such responsibility and to implement it. This also hinges on the size of said National Guard. As we understand it, a standing force must be created, alongside a large scale of forces consisting of about 20 brigades, organized by region.

Recommendations

The events of October 7, which are yet to be investigated and studied, suggest

three immediate and paramount takeaways:

- Emergency squads in the rural sphere and along the borders (the external buffer zone) must be ready to capably and independently defend a settlement for up to six hours. This determination carries implications pertaining to the emergency squads' size, training, the type of equipment they will possess, the rationales of action and the principles of command and control, as well as the coordination with the military, police and rescue entities.
- In light of the above, the IDF, the police and the rescue entities in those regions must be ready to intervene and provide a defense and aid response within a time range not exceeding six hours. The immediate implication of this directive is in organizing, preparation, training and qualification, equipment, a command-and-control system and principles for coordination and cooperation between the entities. In this context, mention should be made of the place and role of a National Guard; a subject worthy of in-depth consideration. In this context, defense entities are required also to build up capability of opening traffic routes forcibly blocked by enemy forces.
- A consideration of the response requires the categorization of the various settlements according to their character, location, and the threat level they face, with a mantle of relevant action capabilities and rationales being formulated and tailored for each cluster or category.

Conclusions

The failures of October 7 regarding security for towns along the border with the Gaza Strip and on Israel's northern border, as well as in second-line cities such as Netivot and Ofakim, require a reconceptualization of the nature and purpose of the Israeli settlement project – in terms of national security and regarding the relationships between internal security and military and national security. This challenge calls for expansive and profound thought and work processes, which will include an in-depth discussion of the current security snapshot, analyzing the failures of October 7 and presenting rationales for potential responses and recommendations for operating principles and a relevant organizational structure.

In this brief document, we have sought to inspire that thought process and introduce to public discourse several substantial points as foundation for the

broader, more comprehensive process necessary in repairing this critical area of national security.