

Israel's twilight zone: Jewish State needs decisive action, from Gaza to Iran

written by David M. Weinberg | 26.04.2025

KNOW COMMENT | The State of Israel finds itself in such a strategic moment: In a murky twilight zone with critical security clocks ticking on all fronts.

Keeping Israel weak

written by David M. Weinberg | 26.04.2025

Beware the discourse that seeks to strip Israel of “too much” regional dominance and power.

When Trump's ego meets Khamenei's tenacity

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This third installment of my trilogy on Iran examines the minimum threshold for an American nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic, and American and Israeli options in the likely case that such a deal is not achievable.

In previous weeks, we reviewed the treacherous Iranian record (its overarching revolutionary ambitions to dominate the region, its proxy wars, and nuclear and missile programs), and President Donald Trump's strategic worldview.

I argued that Trump's plans for winning in the global struggle against China and his hope for a reset in relations with Russia depend on proving his mettle in confrontation with Iran.

I furthermore argued that if Trump's threats against Iran amount to no more than another Obama-style soft deal that kicks the Iranian nuclear can down the road – then Trump's presidency will be over, at least in international affairs. He will never be the “transformational” president with “historic” achievements that he so explicitly wants to be.

The key to getting a “good deal” with Iran is to differentiate between arms control and nuclear disarmament. President Barack Obama settled for arms control in 2015, restricting Iran's nuclear program but leaving it intact, legitimized, and primed to accelerate as soon as temporary restrictions expired. And he freed tens of billions of dollars of frozen funds to fuel Iran's military march forward.

Obama aimed low and ultimately paved the way for Iran's emergence as a nuclear threshold state.

South Africa, by contrast, initiated nuclear disarmament in 1990, as Libya did after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This path leaves no enrichment and weaponization infrastructure hanging around for the regime to change its mind.

That is exactly what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Trump this week: Libya is the model. US National Security Advisor Mike Walz specified that Iran must “hand over and give up” all elements of its nuclear program, including missiles, weaponization, and uranium enrichment.

In Trump's shorthand: “Supervise, check it, inspect it, and then blow it up or just make sure that there [are] no more nuclear facilities.” Last week he said that he is pursuing a deal “that would be just as good as if you won militarily.”

Three experts from the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington DC this week laid out in detail what such a win would be, what complete disarmament must entail. It means “full, permanent, and verifiable dismantlement, export, or in-place destruction” of Iran's uranium and plutonium production assets; “anytime, anywhere” inspections; and an end to nuclear weapons R&D.

It also means termination of Iran's ballistic missile, cruise missile, and drone arsenals; an end to Iran's illicit nuclear and missile imports and exports; and especially to its nuclear, missile, and arms agreements with Russia, China, and North Korea. And oh yeah, also an end to Tehran's longtime support for Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and other proxy forces.

All this would require super-invasive American or International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring of Iran's bank accounts, uranium mines, mills, ore processing facilities, military and missile bases, ports and airfields, along with total destruction of Iran's underground bunkers for nuclear activities and weapons storage.

IN MY VIEW, the likelihood that Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei will agree to anything remotely resembling such a dismantlement of Iranian power, such an evisceration of Iranian sovereignty and supremacy - is nil.

I think it more likely that Israeli Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara and General Security Service Director Ronen Bar will vote for Netanyahu in the next Israeli election than Ali Hosseini Khamenei bowing nicely before Trump and presiding over disembowelment of the Islamic Revolution.

Remember: Tehran has spent four decades and hundreds of billions of dollars developing its military power and regional ascendancy, accompanied by considerable suffering ("sacrifice") of the Iranian people to this end. All this, based on deep ideological-religious conviction, on a dark eschatological vision that involves genocide against Israel and West and downright destruction of enemy civilization.

So, it is much more likely that in this weekend's talks, Iran will do what it does best: - delay, offer reversible concessions, and deflect US power. Previous American administrations have even rewarded Iran with sanctions relief simply for staying at the negotiating table! As FDD director Mark Dubowitz notes, Iran is a master at rope-a-doping American presidents.

The difference - for Trump, Netanyahu, and the West - is that this time, there is no time. Iran is minutes or months away from unveiling its first nuclear bomb.

According to a biennial report published Tuesday by international nuclear watchdogs IAEA and NEA, known as the Red Book, Iran's uranium reserves are

much larger than previously estimated, and it is set to increase production of uranium ore from 21 to 71 tons this year. No country in the world has enriched uranium to 60 percent, as Iran has, without building nuclear weapons – so Iran's intentions are clear.

THIS LEAVES the Trump Administration with three choices. The first option is to capitulate; to cut a weak, watered-down, wishy-washy deal with Iran that pretends to check Iranian nuclear and other power while vapidly claiming that it is a "HUGE" victory for Washington.

You have to wonder who will prevail: Trump's ego or Khamenei's tenacity?

I would like to believe that Trump will not fall into this hole, but given his unpredictable nature, self-regard as the greatest global dealmaker, and oft-expressed desire to be recognized as world class peacemaker – this cannot be ruled out.

Israel must do everything in its power to prevent such an American collapse. Selling out to Iran would be ghastlier than bowing to Russia (regarding Ukraine), and far more devastating to Israel's security.

Trump's second option is to bomb Iran to kingdom come – not only its military and oil facilities but also regime loci of power. This would be an attempt to eliminate Iran's military threat for decades, to strip Iran of the economic ability to swiftly rebuild its military, and to decapitate the current leadership and hopefully effect regime change.

Trump's third option is to let Israel do the job or at least start the job of destroying Iran's frontline nuclear and missile bases, with Washington kicking-in with auxiliary offensive and defensive moves to back-up Israel and demonstrate to Tehran that its hegemonic gig is up.

If and when Iran is stupid enough to make good on its threats to retaliate by lashing-out at Israel, at US troops and facilities in the Arabian Gulf, and at American allies in the region – Trump will have no choice but unleash America's military might against Iran too.

In this scenario, nasty wags assuredly will accuse Israel of "dragging" the US into war but so be it. In the absence of Iranian nuclear capitulation to the US, there

will be no choice. I think this to be the most responsible and most likely scenario.

After all, twice over the past year Iran assaulted Israel with ballistic missiles, and Iran holds deep responsibility for the 2023 Hamas and 2024 Hezbollah assaults on Israel too. Israelis have learned the hard way to take seriously Iran's further genocidal threats.

According to the text of the Passover Haggadah read in Jewish homes this weekend, "in every generation enemies arise seeking the elimination of the Jewish People" (*bechol dor vador omdim aleinu lechaloteinu*), "but G-d gives the National of Israel strength to overcome, survive, and thrive" (*veHakadosh Baruch Hu matzileinu miyadam*). It surely will be so in the impending mega-confrontation with Iran, too.

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Israel's High Court just shattered the international courts' false Gaza narrative

written by Arsen Ostrovsky | 26.04.2025

The truth matters. The law matters. And what Israel's Supreme Court just showed is that even in the fog of war, when politics runs hot and justice often runs cold, there is still room for reasoned, moral and lawful adjudication.

Hit the Houthis but eviscerate Tehran

written by David M. Weinberg | 26.04.2025

An American-Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear bomb facilities and missile bases is essential; the linchpin of a necessary regional reset; the fulcrum for ameliorating most flashpoints in the region.

Raising a glass to Israel: Wine, war, and the spirit of Purim

written by David M. Weinberg | 26.04.2025

Israeli wine is more than a drink—it's a symbol of resilience and tradition. This Purim, we raise a glass to history, victory, and the enduring spirit of the Jewish people.

Victory now, peace with the Arab world later

written by Dr. Raphael BenLevi | 26.04.2025

Pursuing a ceasefire without first eliminating Hamas would actually remove any incentive the Arab states have to advance relations with Israel.

Remembering Dore Gold as the diplomat who defended Israel's borders and history

written by David M. Weinberg | 26.04.2025

Gold's prescient work on defensible borders and combating Palestinian denialism remains crucial in today's geopolitical landscape.

The Lies of 'No Other Land'

written by Lahav Harkov | 26.04.2025

No number of glitzy Hollywood events can change the fact that there is a preponderance of evidence showing that Masafer Yatta is a recent invention built up by activists, NGOs and foreign governments as a battering ram against Israel.

Does the IDF Code of Ethics Represent Torah Values?

written by Brig. Gen. (res.) Ari Singer | 26.04.2025

The IDF's code of ethics, known as "*Ruach Tzahal - Spirit of the IDF*," was compiled in 1994 by a committee chaired by Asa Kasher. In 2000, Brigadier General Elazar Stern, then the Chief Education Officer, led another committee composed of professors of Philosophy of Ethics to revise the first version. The manifest is divided into four fundamental values: Defense of the State of Israel and its residents, Patriotism and loyalty to Israel, Human Dignity, and Statehood. There are ten values derived from these fundamental values: Perseverance in the

Mission and Pursuit of Victory, Responsibility, Reliability and Trustworthiness, Personal Example, Human Life, Purity of Arms, Professionalism, Discipline, Camaraderie, and a Sense of Mission. In the original document, these values are in alphabetical order except for the first value, considered the most essential of any army – victory!

The first draft generated much controversy from those who claimed that the Ethical Code had no trace of any Jewish or Zionist substance. As a result of this criticism, the fundamental value of **Patriotism and loyalty to Israel** (*ahavat haMoledet veNe'emanut laMedina*) was added as a fundamental value. A more “Jewish” translation would use “Love of the Homeland” instead of the *parve* word “patriotism” used in the IDF’s official translation. The second version also included four sources of inspiration for the Code, one being “The tradition of the Jewish people throughout their history,” which precedes the fourth source, “Universal moral values based on the value and dignity of human life.”

Controversy continued after the second version. Opponents of the second version claimed that most of the authors, especially Asa Kasher, are identified with the extreme left of the Israeli political spectrum. Many of the committee members were on record justifying their refusal to serve in the IDF as a morally valid method of political protest. The opponents claim there is a need for a different, more Jewish creed that better represents the fighting spirit of soldiers who fought in the Swords of Iron War and were faced with exceptional ethical challenges in a prolonged war in an urban theater of operations against a sub-conventional terrorist army.

In the current social climate, trying to change the code of ethics would be a mistake. But I also believe that changes are not necessary. A deeper look reveals terms that carry great significance in Jewish thought.

The first value, “Perseverance in the Mission and Pursuit of Victory,” is a translation of *deveikut ba’mesima ve’chatira l’nitzachon*. The word *deveikut* is translated as perseverance, which does not capture its meaning. *Deveikut* epitomizes the most profound connection between a man and his wife (Bereishit 2:24) and the aspiration to have the same relationship with G-d (Devarim 13:18). The *Tanya* describes it as “the cleaving of spirit to spirit – the ultimate attachment and union as a result of love” (*Iggeret HaTeshuva* 9). *Nitzachon*, Hebrew for “victory,” also derives

from *netzach*, “eternity.”

This value teaches two key lessons for modern warfare: Fighting spirit matters more than technology and weapons, particularly against enemies who spread fear and doubt. Additionally, mission planning must focus on *netzach*, on eternal objectives, rather than short-term gains.

The final value, *Shlichut*, goes deeper than its translations of “sense of mission,” “loyalty,” or “representativeness.” In Jewish thought, *shlichut* describes a relationship between an emissary (*shaliach*) and their sender (*meshalaiach*). When I ask soldiers “Who is your sender?” their answers vary: active personnel typically name their commanding officer, while reservists say “my country.” I suggest a broader view: our sender is our nation across all generations – past, present, and future. While soldiers do take orders from commanders and the IDF follows government directives, the Jewish concept of *shlichut* sees the emissary as the “extended hand” (*yada arichta*) of the sender. This creates a more profound connection than the U.S. Army’s concept of “selfless service.”

I’ve analyzed many IDF values rooted in Jewish thought beyond the examples discussed above. While a full analysis of each value exceeds this article’s scope, consider the value “Purity of Arms” (*Tohar haNeshek*). This phrase appears contradictory in Jewish thought, which is why I prefer the traditional rabbinic term “Holiness of the Camp” (*Kedushat haMachaneh*).

This discussion extends beyond theory. While most After-Action Reviews focus on technical and operational aspects, I use the IDF values (*Erkei Tzahal*) to evaluate the ethical and behavioral dimensions – what Jewish tradition calls *middot* – of military operations. Understanding these values through their Jewish context elevates soldiers beyond mere tactical considerations, fostering a deeper sense of purpose and resilience.

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