# After ‘Rising Lion,’ impressive achievements amid complex challenges

written by Prof. Kobi Michael | 15.07.2025

The conclusion of “Operation Rising Lion,” in Hebrew *Am K’Lavi*, presents Israel with new opportunities alongside formidable challenges. The focused strike against Iran marked an unprecedented military and intelligence achievement, temporarily removing a dual existential threat to the security of Israeli citizens.

Yet, alongside the understandable sense of satisfaction, the transition to a ceasefire with Iran places Israel in a more intricate strategic environment than ever before. Chief among the challenges is the establishment and implementation of an effective enforcement mechanism to monitor Iran’s actions while managing parallel arenas and maintaining close, ongoing coordination with the United States.

The operation in Iran was courageous and precise. The objectives set by Israel’s war cabinet were achieved: Significant damage to Iran’s nuclear program, including its rollback and the imposition of major obstacles to its recovery; severe disruption to Tehran’s ballistic missile system and launch capabilities; and the neutralization of key figures in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran’s military command structures. This sent a clear message, consistent with the spirit of the “Begin Doctrine,” that Israel will not accept a reality in which its enemies develop capabilities that pose an existential threat to its survival.

Nevertheless, the campaign is far from over. As long as the current regime remains in power, its retaliation is only a matter of time. Tehran is likely to activate its “emergency generator,” possibly crossing lines it had previously hesitated to breach. This could include attempts to target senior Israeli military officials, politicians or civilian targets either in Israel and abroad. The next phase in the confrontation with Iran must focus on establishing robust enforcement mechanisms: preventing the reconstitution of Iranian capabilities, sustaining deterrence and ensuring that Israel does not again face an existential threat. These mechanisms must also enable the pre-emption of emerging security threats

to Israel, as well as Jewish and Israeli interests globally.

Now more than ever, extraordinary cooperation between Israel's political and military leadership is required, particularly to replicate the remarkable success against Iran in the Gaza Strip. Despite meaningful achievements in degrading Hamas's military infrastructure, weakening its governance capacity and increasing Israel's control over the flow of humanitarian aid, Hamas has not yet been dismantled as a governing force. Many of its tunnels remain intact, and the hostages it continues to hold serve as leverage for the group's survival and potential recovery. Hamas has also shown no hesitation in sabotaging the American aid mechanism, such as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, even firing at Gazans near aid distribution points.

Against this backdrop, the Trump administration is working toward a ceasefire agreement and the release of hostages, either as part of, or as a foundation for, a broader regional deal. Reaching such a comprehensive agreement could indeed advance key Israeli interests like normalization with Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and other potential partners, alongside security arrangements with Syria and Lebanon. This could open the door to regional cooperation in areas such as energy, water, agriculture and environmental protection, laying the groundwork for a new regional architecture in which Israel serves as a central pillar, one capable of delivering security and prosperity to the region.

However, should a ceasefire be imposed on Israel while Hamas remains an effective sovereign in Gaza, Israel will face renewed threats from the Strip and other arenas along the "axis of resistance," which would be emboldened by what they would perceive as Hamas's ultimate victory and the vindication of the resistance model.

The practical implication for Israel is the need to adhere firmly to the principles of the "Operation Gideon's Chariot" plan, culminating in the full conquest of the Gaza Strip and the establishment of a temporary military administration. This administration must ensure that Hamas is denied any possibility of recovery, while maintaining control over humanitarian aid distribution.

The objective of the military administration is to sever Hamas's ties to the civilian population, which forms the backbone of its power, by controlling the aid supply. It should also create the conditions for the emergence of a Palestinian civilian

administration, supported by a pan-Arab task force and the beginning of a structured reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip.

Israel, through unity and close coordination between its political and military leadership, must strike a careful balance between its most urgent strategic interests and the expectations of the Trump administration. It must demonstrate creative flexibility, without compromising its supreme objective: The decisive defeat of Hamas in Gaza. This goal must not be sacrificed on the altar of regional integration, no matter how appealing the American vision may be.

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