

# Strategic Patience: Israel Reshapes the World Order

written by Prof. Kobi Michael | 02.07.2025

*Read the Hebrew original of this article.*

*In English, this article was first published at Strategy International.*

Immediately following the launch of Operation “Rising Lion,” critics voiced dissatisfaction, skepticism, and dire warnings about the absence of clear war objectives, a coherent strategy, or an exit strategy, drawing parallels to perceived shortcomings in the “Iron Swords” campaign<sup>[i]</sup>. Many dismissed alternative interpretations affirming the existence of a strategy with disdain or contempt, combining impatience, a lack of historical perspective, and disregard for the political leadership – treating it as incapable of reasoned decision-making amid a highly personalized discourse. Their extreme predictions of stagnation and a strategic dead end, encapsulated in the “no strategy” mantra<sup>[ii]</sup>, obscured substantive analysis, focusing on isolated events without reference to the broader context or historical perspective.

The October 7 attack was recognized early as transcending the Gaza Strip and a war with Hamas, positioning Israel in a multi-front regional conflict<sup>[iii]</sup> with Hamas as one element of the Iran-led resistance axis. This reality necessitated an updated strategy, formulated in the war’s initial stages, aimed at effecting a second-order change<sup>[iv]</sup> – a transformation of the existing system—rather than a first-order change within the existing framework.

Until October 7, Israel adhered to the existing system, focusing on adaptation and adjustment. As the need for a strategic shift became clear, transforming the system required a significant strike against its primary center of gravity: Iran, the head of the octopus. However, targeting Iran directly was not feasible early on, requiring preparation, capacity-building, and competence development across multiple fronts.

Once the strategic compass was set – transforming the existing system by striking its primary center of gravity—a guiding framework was established. This

framework relied on a sequential logic of building capacity and accumulating power across four main stages, detailed below.

The first stage focused on the southern front while maintaining a defensive posture in the north. Its objectives were to regain control over occupied sovereign territory, prepare for a powerful offensive in the Gaza Strip to dismantle Hamas as an organized military and governing entity, secure the release of hostages, and establish a security environment preventing similar threats against Israel.

The second stage involved developing a response to the northern front, initially reactive in both offensive and defensive aspects, while preparing for the third, offensive phase. Special units operated deep in southern Lebanon to map and assess Hezbollah's infrastructure, laying the groundwork for a ground maneuver.

The third stage, primarily executed in September and October 2024, was the offensive phase, during which Israel decisively defeated Hezbollah, severely damaging its military capabilities, command, and control structures, and eliminating its leaders and senior commanders. A byproduct was the accelerated collapse of the Assad regime, enabling Israel to seize the Syrian Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights buffer zone to prevent hostile elements from establishing a presence in an area lacking effective Syrian governance. Subsequently, Israel destroyed most of the Syrian army's infrastructure in a preventive campaign to prevent hostile groups from seizing it<sup>[v]</sup>. This secured Israel's air superiority and operational freedom throughout Syria, neutralizing potential future threats. The severe blows to Hezbollah and Hamas—Iran's most critical proxies—and the fundamental shift in Syria's situation led to Iran's expulsion from Syria and the loss of its grip on the country, which had been the cornerstone of the territorial contiguity Iran sought to encircle Israel, consolidate regional dominance, and destabilize pragmatic Sunni regimes.

Having stripped Iran of its capabilities and deepened its vulnerabilities—a process that began with the airstrike on October 26, 2024 (Operation "Days of Retribution")<sup>[vi]</sup> in response to missile and drone barrages launched at Israel—and based on intelligence indicating a potential Iranian breakthrough toward weaponizing enriched uranium, Israel launched Operation "Rising Lion" against Iran on June 13, 2025, employing an impressive campaign of deception and misdirection.

Within 48 hours, Israel decapitated the senior military leadership of the Iranian army and Revolutionary Guards, damaged ballistic missile infrastructure, and destroyed significant military assets. The attack stunned Iran, destabilized its regime, and enabled the Israeli Air Force to achieve air superiority and operational freedom.

Through sustained air operations, other capabilities deployed on Iranian soil, and sophisticated cyber operations, Israel continued to degrade Iran's capabilities, disrupting its ability to launch large-scale missile attacks on Israel, as Iran had planned. Bereft of effective proxies and with its missile capabilities severely diminished, Iran was left exposed and vulnerable.

The Israeli offensive inflicted a humiliating strategic setback, revealing the stark contrast between Iran's menacing image and its actual weakness and limited capacity to inflict harm.

Israel carefully coordinated its offensive against Iran with the US administration<sup>[vii]</sup>, hoping that President Trump would join the military effort and deliver a decisive blow to Iran's nuclear infrastructure, particularly the Fordow facility, that eventually happened on June 22, 2025. Despite the separatist faction within the administration, opposing US military involvement, appeared dominant<sup>[viii]</sup>. However, as Israel's achievements captivated President Trump and the global community and encouraged US participation. Once it materialized, the war could be shortened, culminating in a historic achievement.

A strategy is tested through execution and over time, often identifiable only in retrospect.

Nearly two years after the October 7 attack, which shook Israel's foundations and whose horrors will remain etched in the collective consciousness for generations, Israel, through political leadership and military strategy, transformed the war and the Middle East. This transformation will establish a new regional architecture, with Israel as a central pillar of stability.

The new regional architecture will prevent Iran from rebuilding capabilities that could render it a paralyzing threat to the region. Simultaneously, it will foster economic, infrastructural, and social development, opening innovative opportunities for addressing the Palestinian issue.

These regional changes will have significant impacts on the international system. The brutal war that engulfed Israel on October 7, 2023, has reshaped the world order.

Israel spearheaded a historic action for the free world, combating radical Islamic terrorism and a terrorist state threatening to become a regional and global menace under nuclear ambitions. Israel awakened the free world, restoring its willingness to defend itself against such threats.

In the perspective of nearly two years since October 7, Israel's strategic compass and the strategy that dismantled the Iran-led resistance axis are clear, despite deviations and retreats due to constraints. The axis, which dominated the region while perfecting its terror apparatus into an existential threat, has been neutralized.

The Israeli strategy carries risks, particularly regarding Iran's potential response to the devastating blow it suffered. As discussed earlier, the strike on Iran's military capabilities heightened its vulnerabilities, yet the regime's sense of existential threat could drive it to accelerate nuclear weapons development. This possibility cannot be dismissed, but the conditions created by Israel's actions have paved the way for an agreement with stringent enforcement mechanisms and/or forceful intervention by Israel to thwart any Iranian attempt to rebuild its capabilities. A century from now, historians will likely articulate with precision the Israeli strategy that drove this historic transformation.

[i] Michael Milstein, "Phase B of the War Has Begun—Again Without a Strategy," Ynet, October 4, 2024, <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bjhm2t2ac> (in Hebrew).

[ii] Kobi Michael, "Israel's Strategic Patience: A Historical Context," Makor Rishon, November 15, 2024, <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/opinion/795141/> (in Hebrew).

[iii] Kobi Michael, "We Are in the Midst of a Regional and Even Global War," Misgav News, January 16, 2024, <https://www.misgavins.org/michael-global-war/?print=pdf> (in Hebrew).

[iv] Kobi Michael, "On the Way to Changing the Regional Balance of Power," Misgav Institute, 18 October 2024, <https://www.misgavins.org/michael-on-the-way-to-changing-the-regional-balance-o>

f-power/ (in Hebrew).

[v] IDF Estimates It Destroyed About 80% of Syria's Military Capabilities—and Netanyahu Extends a Hand to the New Regime," Ynet, December 10, 2024, <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/rkepzg8vyl> (in Hebrew).

[vi] Israel Defense Forces, "IDF Operations Against Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon," IDF Official Website, October 10, 2024, <https://www.idf.il/242429> (in Hebrew).

[vii] Anna Bersky, "You Won't Escape: Iran Doesn't Want to Discuss It—Trump Is Preparing a Trap for Them," Maariv, April 10, 2025, <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/military/article-1187350> (in Hebrew).

[viii] Itamar Levin, "Two Moves in Congress Against U.S. Joining Israel's War with Iran," News1, June 17, 2025, <https://www.news1.co.il/Archive/001-D-503539-00.html> (in Hebrew).