

# ישראל 2.0 ISRAEL 2.0 ★

Prof. Kobi Michael & Prof. Gabi Siboni



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המכון לביטחון לאומי ולאסטרטגיה ציונית  
THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY & ZIONIST STRATEGY





# The Israel 2.0 Project

A Reassessment of Israeli National Security  
in the Wake of October 7

April 2025

**Prof. Kobi Michael & Prof. Gabi Siboni**



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**The Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy** is an independent and non-partisan think tank that advances pragmatic and realistic approaches in Israeli foreign and defense policy, grounded in the values of Zionism. It seeks to strengthen Israel as a Jewish, democratic, united, strong, secure, and thriving state.

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# Preface

The Misgav Institute's "Israel 2.0 Project – A Reassessment of Israeli National Security" is rooted in the earthquake of October 7, 2023, Simchat Torah 5783 – a formative tragedy that has been etched forever into Israel's collective national consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The State of Israel after October 7 is no longer the same country that it was before, and it cannot return to what it once was. October 7 shook the foundations of numerous fundamental assumptions and historical paradigms that had been pillars of Israeli national security doctrine.

Many of these assumptions are no longer relevant to the new reality in which Israel now finds itself. They can no longer provide a basis for the development of strategies and tools necessary to ensure the country's survival, security, and prosperity under these new conditions.

The Israel 2.0 initiative looks to the future, while engaging with the changes and trends emerging from the events of the past year-and-a-half.

This report – a flagship project of the Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy – constitutes a reassessment of the fundamental assumptions of Israeli national security in the wake of October 7. It is a preliminary report, intended to make accessible to decision-makers and the broader public key initial findings.

Given the wide-ranging, ambitious, and challenging nature of this initiative, we have chosen to name it "Israel 2.0." This document envisions a future in which Israel undergoes a renewed process of national restoration, transitioning from "Israel 1.0" (as it might have been considered before October 7) to a new, updated, and improved version. In our view, "Israel 2.0" will emerge based on the revision of core assumptions within the broadest definition of national security, an understanding of current challenges, and the development of appropriate responses.

This project has been led by Prof. Gabi Siboni and Prof. Kobi Michael, supported by the guidance and encouragement of Misgav Institute Chairman Meir Ben-Shabbat. It relies on the dedication and expertise of a broad team of Misgav Institute Fellows, who have undertaken the task with diligence and professionalism.

In its early stages, the project was guided by a steering committee consisting of both Misgav Institute scholars and external experts. The objective was to form a diverse team representing

1 The expression "Israel 2.0" is borrowed from the world of software – i.e., a new and advanced version of software – and is intended to express the concept of Israel's renewal considering the October 7 attack.

a wide range of perspectives, comprised of experienced and knowledgeable individuals from various fields of expertise and practice.

The project began in early 2024, and the current document is therefore a preliminary report. Its focus is on identifying and formulating updated fundamental assumptions, mapping the key national security issues Israel must address, outlining initial challenges, and providing preliminary recommendations for responses. The work is still ongoing, and further analysis and recommendations are required for certain topics; both those mentioned in this document and others not yet included.

This document draws on numerous papers and reports that have been written and published as part of the project since its inception. Throughout the text, footnotes reference relevant papers, where readers can find expanded discussions of the main points presented here.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Misgav Institute Fellows and other experts who have contributed to this project: Mr. Elie Klutstein (Project Coordinator), Prof. Zaki Shalom, Dr. Rafi Biton, Dr. Hanan Shai, Dr. Yossi Mansharof, Prof. Yaron Zelekha, Mr. Eitan Ben-David, Mr. Asher Fredman, Mr. David M. Weinberg, Ms. Noa Lazimi, Dr. Yitzhak Klein, Dr. Adi Schwartz, Mr. Yaakov Plavinsky, Mr. Joseph Rosen, Mr. Yishai Armoni, and Mr. Yaniv Katz.

It is our sincere hope that our efforts will provide decision-makers and the public with a well-reasoned conceptual framework alongside policy recommendations that will pave the way for a promising future for Israel – ensuring its prosperity, security, and continued standing as the nation-state of the Jewish People.

Prof. Kobi Michael & Prof. Gabi Siboni  
April 2025



## Key Recommendations

This chapter presents the main recommendations detailed throughout the document, categorized by different topics. All recommendations concerning the subjects discussed in the document appear in detail at the end of each respective chapter.

This summary begins by addressing the “two-state paradigm.” The October 7 war has demonstrated the continued centrality of the Palestinian arena, and its widespread impacts across the entire region. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake an updated, clear-sighted, and realist reassessment of Israel’s guiding paradigm in this arena.

### The Two-State Paradigm

The two-state paradigm, based upon the idea of a fully sovereign Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel, has lost its relevance in the current reality. It is no longer a viable option under existing conditions, especially in the aftermath of October 7.

- The establishment of a Palestinian state would be dangerous due to the lack of Palestinian readiness and the absence of necessary conditions for responsible and effective state governance. Such a state would inevitably become a source of violence against Israel, while simultaneously functioning as a failed state in a region already saturated with failed states—a foundation for regional and even global instability.
- The Palestinian issue should therefore be addressed through two alternatives:
  1. A multilateral regional framework, within the framework of the currently evolving regional security architecture.
  2. Localized governance based on geographic or familial alignments, where the Palestinian Authority is dismantled and replaced with a federal governing structure.
- Regarding Gaza, the elimination of Hamas as a governing and military entity is the cornerstone of any viable process, and a prerequisite for effectively countering Iran and its regional proxies.

## Security and Military

- It is necessary to enhance civilian oversight of the military and security establishment and ensure proper alignment between responsibility and authority. This includes establishing civilian oversight over senior security appointments.
- Israel's Basic Law concerning the military should be revised, particularly to formally designate the Prime Minister as the Supreme Commander of the IDF, thereby ensuring consistency between his responsibilities and his authority.
- Israel should develop an updated security doctrine focused on continuous preemptive action to prevent enemy forces from building up their military capabilities. This would likely result in ongoing or prolonged states of conflict, requiring sacrifices and commitment from Israeli society.
- Draft a new IDF strategy, aligning operational plans with the updated security concept.
- Restore and strengthen the IDF's combat capabilities, ensuring its ability to effectively defeat its enemies.
- Expand the infantry and ground forces, adding two additional maneuvering reserve divisions (approximately eight brigade combat teams), while enhancing the lethality of ground forces to maintain high operational efficiency.
- Establish an independent civilian intelligence assessment body, composed exclusively of civilians, independent of existing military intelligence agencies.

## Public Security

- A national public security strategy should be formulated as a vital component of Israel's national security doctrine.
- Efforts should be made to create synergy among all relevant authorities to ensure the implementation of this strategy. It should be an integrated part of the national security doctrine, and it would be beneficial to establish an appropriate organizational framework (like the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) to lead its execution.
- As a derivative of the national public security strategy, the National Guard should be strengthened to include approximately twenty reserve brigades, supported by a small standing force.
- A structured operational framework should be developed for emergency response units, ensuring a comprehensive approach integrated with the establishment of the National Guard, and aligned with the principles of a national public security strategy.

## **Agriculture, Settlement, and Sovereignty**

- The national importance of agriculture and settlement must be internalized, ensuring the preservation, development, and transfer of state lands to future generations in optimal condition.
- Government support should be provided to farmers through fair and sustainable assistance, ensuring a broad agricultural presence throughout Israel, including in border and peripheral areas. One effective approach is to subsidize farmers rather than agricultural products.
- Strengthen the role of rural areas as a key sector responsible for providing a continuous and stable supply of food at reasonable prices.
- Establish long-term planning mechanisms for farmers, ensuring stability despite frequent government policy and budget changes. The mechanism should guarantee that budget approvals do not disrupt agricultural planning.
- Expand rural settlement and agriculture, particularly in the Negev, Galilee, and Jordan Valley, by reviving the Nahal settlement project as a key tool for strengthening Zionist land sovereignty, maintaining ecological balance, preserving environmental quality, and protecting natural resources.

## **Security and Economic Sustainability**

- The defense establishment must develop an advanced procurement, development, production, and acquisition plan to meet operational needs.
- Gradually reduce Israel's dependence on the U.S. for the supply of defense equipment, by identifying alternative sources for acquiring ammunition, weapons, and advanced military equipment.
- Diversify risks among multiple countries, foster security cooperation with strategic partners, and establish long-term interests that ensure continued arms sales and military support to Israel.
- In the economic sphere, private consumption should be allowed to grow, which in turn would reduce the cost of living while also improving government spending efficiency.

## Law, Governance, and National Security

- The judiciary is not the appropriate body to oversee the operational orders of the IDF. Operational decision-making requires accountability, which the courts do not bear. There is also an inherent flaw in evaluating military events within a legal framework.
- The Israeli legal and security establishment currently applies interpretations of international law and the laws of war that go significantly beyond what is necessary and required. This unwarranted interpretation of the laws of war lead to the unnecessary imposition of self-restrictions. Therefore, the security establishment should consider a broader range of legal opinions.
- The border area with Gaza should be treated as a conflict zone, with the legal and procedural framework governing military operations in this area adjusted accordingly. The IDF should declare a designated area near the borders as a restricted zone, prohibiting entry. This restriction should be enforced under the assumption that anyone who knowingly violates the prohibition and approaches the fence is considered a suspect. A special legal regime should be declared, as allowed for by emergency regulations.
- The elected leadership currently lacks effective oversight mechanisms over the IDF's senior command and general staff operations. A series of mechanisms should be established to improve accountability among the executive ranks, as well as to reform the process for dismissing heads of Israel's security agencies. For example, it is proposed to strengthen the parliamentary hearing process, mandating attendance and truthful testimony, with criminal penalties for false statements.
- It is recommended to examine changes to the dismissal process for heads of security agencies, enabling the Prime Minister to exercise authority in alignment with government policy. The Prime Minister should also be granted the authority to dismiss any head of a security agency, subject to approval from the Security Cabinet or a specially-appointed ministerial committee. This would establish clear accountability between security officials and political leadership, ensuring more precise implementation of government policy. In turn, the government would bear full and unequivocal responsibility for security decisions.
- The fight against criminal organizations should be recognized as a national security issue, and Israel should adopt a policy of their complete eradication. It is recommended to shift from a retroactive criminal law enforcement model (focused on individuals) to a proactive administrative approach (focused on dismantling organizations and preventing their formation altogether). It should be noted that the erosion of sovereignty and governance within Israel is also noticed by its enemies. A significant portion of criminal organizations operate near the borders, with some groups blurring the lines between crime and terrorism.

## Israel and the International Arena

- The U.S.-Israel partnership should be strengthened, ensuring the redefinition of strategic guidelines in addressing key geopolitical issues.
- A clearer definition of the opportunities and risks in relations with China is needed, particularly focusing on the intersection between economic interests and national security concerns.
- A reassessment of Israel's cautious policy towards Russia is necessary, given that Russia plays a less significant role in post-Assad Syria.
- Israel should adjust its approach toward the Indo-Pacific region, and adopt an official policy that acknowledges the growing interconnection between the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East.
- It is essential to engage with pragmatic European nations as an alternative to the dominant power centers in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin. In this context, strengthening the Israel-Cyprus-Greece alliance would serve as a strategic multiplier in advancing the Middle East-Asia economic corridor, and in countering Turkish influence.
- Israel has important strategic partners in Latin America, in addition to hostile states. It is advisable to maintain open diplomatic channels even with nations that are not currently aligned with Israel.
- Israel should expand its engagement in Asia by fostering cooperation in sustainable development and actively countering anti-Israel trends on the continent. Furthermore, it would be prudent to explore cross-regional alliances with nations that share strategic interests in Asia, such as Japan and India.

## Israel-U.S. Relations

- It is critical to coordinate a broad strategic understanding with the Trump administration, which would include agreements on key issues, primarily Iran's nuclear program, as well as actions against Iran's leadership and economy.
- Reach agreements with the U.S. and Turkey regarding the new geopolitical structure of the Middle East, including understandings on buffer zones and security corridors along the Syrian border.
- Advance agreements on upgrading Israel's relations with Greece and Cyprus, particularly in the energy sector, to prevent Turkey from interfering in these developments.
- Coordinate efforts to address Egypt's military buildup in Sinai and restore the previous security balance.
- Support the implementation of Trump's vision regarding the Gaza Strip.

## Israel-Qatar Relations

- Utilize Qatar's role in hostage negotiations, putting pressure on Doha and mitigating its efforts to position itself as a key player. Limit its activities related to Israel, including targeting senior Hamas officials residing in Doha.
- Launch a large-scale media campaign to expose Qatar's true role as a state sponsor of terror, undermining its image as a moderate Muslim nation and an impartial mediator.
- At this stage, Israeli policymakers should also focus on engaging lower-tier officials in the U.S., working to expose the motivations behind Qatar's foreign policy and the problematic consequences of its influence on American academia.
- Israel would do well to enlist European governments on this issue, encouraging them to take economic measures against Qatar for its support of Hamas and radical Islam.

## Israel-Turkey Relations

- Israel should make it clear to Turkey that its continued sponsorship of terrorist organizations, particularly Hamas, will no longer be tolerated.
- Israel should raise this issue with the U.S., urging Washington to use its leverage to curb Turkey's dangerous actions.
- Israel should take decisive steps to thwart Ankara's attempts to expand its influence in the Palestinian arena at the expense of Israeli strategic interests.
- Following Turkey's involvement in the case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Israel should consider promoting a lawsuit against Turkey via a third-party

nation, citing war crimes committed by Ankara during its occupations in northern Cyprus and Syria, as well as the ethnic cleansing of Greek Cypriots and Kurds.

- Israel should advocate for economic and political consequences against Turkish companies that boycott Israel, leveraging U.S. pressure to enforce such measures.
- Israel must act decisively to neutralize Turkish influence in East Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount, implementing previously devised measures that were only partially enforced.
- Deepening cooperation with Greece and Cyprus will strengthen a trilateral strategic alliance, which can advance the mutual interest in regional natural gas exports.
- Israel should work for the continued and even expanded deployment of U.S. forces at the Syria-Iraq-Jordan border triangle, preventing the entrenchment of pro-Turkish Islamists and other hostile forces in Jordan.
- Israel should persuade the U.S. administration to maintain a military presence in the region, and under the protection of this presence, explore possibilities for covert assistance.

## **Academia, and Media**

### **Reducing Politicization**

- It is recommended to adopt a policy of political neutrality in academic institutions. Preference should be given to the voluntary adoption of appropriate regulations by the institutions themselves, but if necessary, this should be enforced through legislation or regulations.
- The right to express opinions on current affairs should be preserved for individuals in their private capacity, but should not be exercised as part of their academic role.

### **Increasing Transparency**

- University leaders should be required to report regularly to the Knesset's Education Committee, like other public institutions.
- The State Comptroller should conduct a review of politicization in higher education institutions.
- Non-governmental organizations (such as student unions or civil society groups) can play a key role in researching the level of politicization and lack of diversity in various academic departments.

### **Enhancing Diversity in Academia**

- Encourage donors from Israel and abroad to establish funds that promote research in fields aligned with Israel's national priorities, such as Middle Eastern studies, international

relations, political science, strategy, military, and security studies, to counterbalance the existing academic discourse.

- Train and foster a new generation of Zionist leadership, similar to elite IDF programs such as Talpiot and Havatzalot, by identifying young students from middle school and high school, and providing them with academic enrichment programs.

### **Increasing Student Involvement**

- Greater student involvement in shaping academic curricula should be encouraged. The Student Rights Law should be amended to explicitly state that political indoctrination has no place in academic studies.
- Student grievance officers in academic institutions, as mandated by law, should be empowered to address complaints regarding political indoctrination in academia.

## **Media**

### **Regulation and Legislation**

- The main recommendation regarding regulation is to allow time and technology to naturally transform the media landscape. The energy and political battles required to reform the existing structure are not justified, given that the television market will soon transition primarily to online broadcasting.

### **Supervision and Oversight**

- Decision-making within the Public Broadcasting Corporation should be structured to ensure equal representation of Zionist left- and right-wing perspectives. Decisions should be made through broad consensus. For every council member from one political perspective, an equivalent counterpart from the other side should be appointed.

### **Funding and Budgets**

- Government-mandated advertisements in the media should be eliminated, and public information should instead be shared via a dedicated government website or official government portals.

### **Journalism Training and Workforce Development**

- Encourage private investors to establish a high-quality journalism school that will train professionals (journalists, photographers, directors, etc.) with a Zionist-national orientation.



- Through scholarships and structured training programs, the goal would be to cultivate a new generation of journalists and media professionals who will integrate into mainstream media and enhance its professional standards.

## **Content Development**

- Strengthen and expand the Arab Affairs departments within the Public Broadcasting Corporation (Kan) and IDF Radio (Galei Tzahal).
- Increase coverage of Arab affairs, ensuring that Israelis have access to primary sources of information about the Arab world without relying on potentially biased expert interpretations.

## **The Ultra-Orthodox Sector**

- Establish Ultra-Orthodox settlement groups that will relocate to peripheral and border areas, forming communities exclusively for members of the Ultra-Orthodox sector while strengthening Israel's presence and sovereignty in key strategic regions.
- Members of these groups will enlist in the IDF, but their service will be limited to their settlement framework. This initiative will be pursued through dialogue rather than coercion.
- Explore the possibility of creating a community model before settlement:
  - » For the Ultra-Orthodox population, this means establishing yeshivot (Torah study institutions) or other religious frameworks in settlement locations.
  - » These institutions would serve as the foundation for young communities, where members would engage in construction and settlement efforts while maintaining their Torah study and religious lifestyle.



## A Bird's-Eye View

- The goal of this project is to ensure a secure and prosperous State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People. Within the framework of this project, this mission has been broken down into its fundamental components: a secure state, a prosperous state, and the nation-state of the Jewish People. Each of these components has been further subdivided into additional elements, which were analyzed during the working process.
- Achieving this mission also necessitates an update to the national ethos, including: the need to return to an ethos of a mobilized society that recognizes the necessity of a continuous and ongoing struggle for the state's existence, the need to deepen territorial attachment, and to strengthen solidarity and mutual responsibility. A graphical representation of the above can be seen in the diagram below.
- As illustrated in the diagram, updating the national ethos is inherently linked to the overall mission. Additionally, interconnections exist between different fundamental components. For example, there is a connection between updating the security doctrine and the IDF's force buildup with the economy, between agriculture and territorial attachment with national security; a connection between the legal framework and various aspects of security, economy, territorial attachment, settlement, internal security, and more; and a connection between internal security and the state's prosperity. These interconnections were analyzed during the working process and are reflected in the text.

## National Ethos Update

Nation Ethos Update

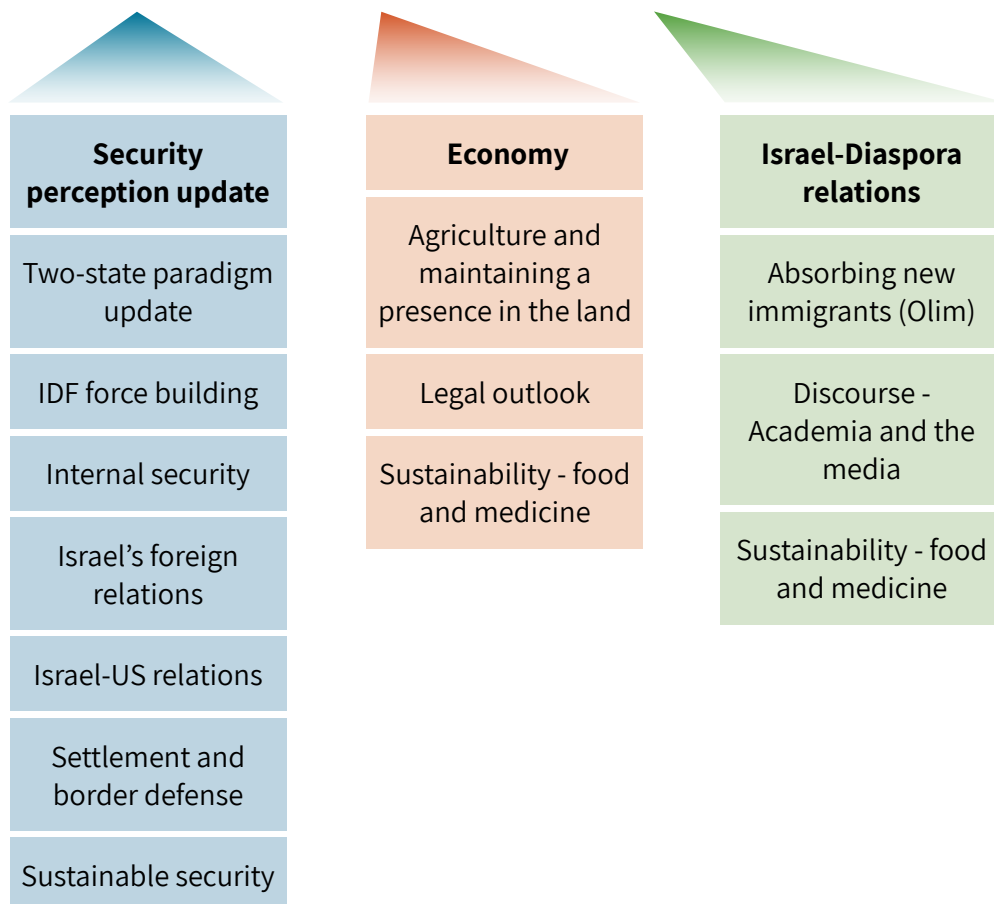
A cohesive and connected society

A society at war: The sword is unsheathed

Roots in the land

Solidarity and mutual assistance

**Israel: Secure and Prospering as the Nation-State of the Jewish People**



# Introduction

The Israel 2.0 Project stems from the formative impact of the events of Simchat Torah 5783, October 7, 2023, which have been seared into Israel's collective national consciousness. The State of Israel after October 7 is no longer the same country it was before, nor can it return to being that country. These events abruptly shattered a long-standing series of fundamental assumptions and historical paradigms that had served as the foundation of Israel's national security doctrine. Many of these assumptions are no longer relevant to the new reality in which Israel now finds itself, and they do not provide adequate tools or ideas to ensure the state's survival, security, and prosperity under the new conditions that have emerged.

This initiative is forward-looking and seeks to engage with the shifts and trends that have arisen in the wake of these events.

The objectives of the initiative are:

1. To examine and formulate updated foundational assumptions for Israel's national security doctrine based on an analysis of the geo-strategic reality that has evolved following the October 7 attack.
2. To define the central challenges and map out the gaps between the current situation and the desired state, in relation to these updated assumptions.
3. To develop policy recommendations aimed at closing these gaps and advancing the realization of the Israel 2.0 vision based on these updated foundational assumptions.

The war that erupted on October 7 is not merely a conflict between Hamas and Israel. It is a regional war spanning seven active arenas with varying levels of intensity: the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, Lebanon, Syria, western Iraq, Yemen, and Iran. One of the immediate motivations for Hamas's brutal attack was its desire to halt the construction of a regional architecture based on normalization with Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. This normalization posed a direct threat to Iran's status, as well as to Hamas's position and the Palestinian cause.

The war also has global ramifications due to the positions of Russia and China – two revisionist powers challenging American hegemony and the existing world order. These countries have chosen to support the Iranian axis as part of their broader goal to weaken the United States, undermine its critical interests and global reputation, divert international attention from other conflict zones, and facilitate the establishment of a new multipolar global order in which their influence as world powers is significantly enhanced.

Formulating a vision for Israel requires an examination of the nature of security threats and their implications, with an emphasis on Iran, its proxies, and the Palestinians. It is important to remember that Hamas's brutal attack enjoys broad support among most of the Palestinian public. Although recent surveys<sup>2</sup> indicate a slight decline in support for Hamas's attack, the organization still commands significantly greater support than Fatah. Yahya Sinwar (prior to his elimination, of course) easily defeated Abu Mazen in poll results regarding hypothetical presidential elections. This reflects the psychological foundation of the Palestinian collective, suggesting that Israel faces a deep-rooted issue<sup>3</sup> that precludes a breakthrough toward an agreement. Considering this, a reassessment of the viability of the two-state paradigm is required.<sup>4</sup>

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**The relationship between the military, society, and the civilian system must be thoroughly analyzed, including the nature of civilian oversight of the military**

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As part of this initiative, a variety of issues and challenges facing Israel have been examined. It will be necessary to review the IDF considering the failures and shortcomings revealed on that dark Saturday morning. This includes assessing the size and structure of the military, particularly the reserve force, its equipment, and its training. The processes for appointing senior commanders, their training, and the duration of their service terms must also be scrutinized. Additionally, it will be essential to reevaluate the recruitment model and redefine the concept of a people's army. Another crucial area for examination concerns the IDF's operational doctrine and its adaptation to the spectrum of threats Israel faces.

Above all, the relationship between the military, society, and the civilian system must be thoroughly analyzed, including the nature of civilian oversight of the military and the underlying causes of its weaknesses—so that these can be addressed and improved.

Alongside these military aspects, the national vision must include an in-depth review of internal security from a broad, strategic national perspective. At the heart of this strategy lies the need to conceptualize internal security, define the interconnections between its various dimensions, and understand their mutual influences—all while integrating methods and means as part of national efforts to strengthen internal security.

One of the most critical issues will be the development of a civil defense doctrine for Israel's communities, particularly in border areas. This includes defining the mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the police, emergency and rescue services, the National Guard (once fully established), and the IDF.

2 PCPSR surveys, conducted by the institute led by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, June and September 2024.

3 For further reading, see: Kobi Michael, Survey, Survey, (Do Not) Chase – What Do Public Opinion Polls Among Palestinian Society Teach Us?, The Institute for National Security Studies, October 29, 2024; and also: Kobi Michael and Elie Klutstein, The Psychological Foundation of Palestinian Society Remains Rigid, Misgav Institute, April 10, 2024.

4 For further reading, see: Kobi Michael and Gabi Siboni, The Two-State Paradigm Tested by the October 7 Attack and the Regional War, Misgav Institute, May 6, 2024.

Internal security also involves addressing property and violent crimes, crime within Arab society and organized crime, agricultural crime, illegal and uncontrolled immigration, and other related issues. Additionally, the size, organizational structure, and operational concept of the National Guard will require in-depth consideration in this vision.

An updated vision for the State of Israel must also recognize that settlement and agriculture play a key role not only in ensuring food security for the country's residents but also as a core value in securing territorial attachment, maintaining state sovereignty, and thus serving as an integral component of national security. These factors also influence and shape the national ethos, which must be adapted to evolving circumstances and strengthened to reinforce the mobilized nation concept.

One of the most critical issues requiring examination concerns the nature of Israel's relationship with the United States. American involvement has manifested in various ways, including an unprecedented historical development: the active participation of the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense in Israel's war cabinet meetings. U.S. involvement has also been evident through pressures exerted by the Biden administration on Israel, including delays in arms deliveries. These delays serve as a warning signal regarding the future of bilateral relations, especially since the United States persisted in these delays even when they directly harmed Israel's vital interests.

Despite Trump's election victory and the assumption that his administration would be more supportive of Israel, demographic and political shifts within the U.S. necessitate a strategic reassessment of Israel's future relations with the U.S. and how to preserve them as a cornerstone of national security policy.

Alongside U.S. pressures, the war also underscored an unprecedented level of strategic cooperation between the two nations. For example, the U.S. took swift action to deter Iran and Hezbollah by deploying military forces to the region and forming a coalition to secure Red Sea shipping lanes—an initiative that also served to protect critical American interests.

This raises an important question: Does this set a precedent regarding Israel's long-standing principle of "defending itself by itself," and what are the implications of this shift? While American military actions helped Israel and projected strength, enabling it to focus its war efforts in the south,<sup>5</sup> these developments necessitate a reassessment of Israel's ability to independently manage a large-scale, intense regional war.

This has far-reaching implications for Israel's national security doctrine, which, in turn, will influence multiple strategic domains. It also necessitates rethinking Israel's approach to regional alliances, exploring expanded cooperation mechanisms, and potentially reorganizing the regional security framework into a new regional architecture that serves as a counterbalance to the Iranian axis.

5 In fact, this is a historic precedent, except for the defense of Israeli airspace by a French squadron during the Sinai Campaign and the deployment of a Patriot missile battery in Israel during the First Gulf War (1990–1991).

The heavy reliance on the United States necessitates a reassessment of Israel's foreign relations framework. This is based on the understanding that in times of emergency and war, Israel may struggle to uphold its security interests in the face of American pressure, which imposes U.S. interests on Israel's fundamental challenges with the Palestinians and its enemies. Such a reassessment will also require a reconsideration of Israel's relations with the international community, including the United Nations and other international organizations, as well as the development and deepening of ties with other countries, with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region. It will also necessitate a shift in policy toward hostile or problematic states in their relations with Israel, such as Russia, China, Turkey, and Qatar.

On October 7, Israeli society was in crisis after nine months of internal struggle over judicial reform. This conflict painted Israel as a divided and conflicted society that had lost the social solidarity that once defined it. This division led the Axis of Resistance to interpret the situation as an erosion of Israel's social and national resilience, believing it would undermine its ability to respond to security threats. It is likely that this perception encouraged Hamas, and subsequently the entire axis, to conclude that the time was ripe for the October 7 attack, with the goal of engaging the entire axis in an intense war of attrition against Israel to weaken and eventually collapse it.

The national mobilization on October 7 proved how mistaken this perception was, demonstrating Israeli solidarity in its fullest form. A spirit of volunteerism swept through all layers and sectors of Israeli society, including the ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities. The fighting spirit and heroism of IDF soldiers, the unity across all its units, and the Israeli public's willingness to endure hardship in the face of great loss while continuing to support the military and government in their war objectives and strategy,<sup>6</sup> were remarkable.

The strength of this cohesion proved to most of the Israeli society just how essential and vital it is. However, as time passes, fractures are beginning to reemerge. Yet, these divisions are amplified by the media and certain political actors who still believe that division and hatred serve as political capital, rather than necessarily reflecting an accurate picture of Israeli society. There are indeed contentious issues, such as the necessity of continuing the war in the south versus the issue of the hostages, the question of ultra-Orthodox conscription and the burden disparity between reservists and the ultra-Orthodox sector, and the conduct of the judicial system. However, on the other hand, there is broad consensus on the war against Hezbollah and Iran, as well as strong confidence in the IDF's ability to achieve the war's objectives on all fronts.<sup>7</sup>

One must ask whether judicial reform has lost its centrality in the public agenda at this stage due to the war. Despite attempts to revive or implement it through private legislation proposals in late 2024, it is doubtful whether it can truly be realized under the current conditions of Israeli society. However, during the war, the Supreme Court issued a ruling concerning the core of

6 Mora Deitch , Rivka Meller, Idit Shafran Gittelman, and Anat Shapira, Findings of the "Swords of Iron" Survey: October 2024, The Institute for National Security Studies, October 20, 2024.

7 Ibid.



the (partial) reform approved by the Knesset. The timing of the ruling, along with the narrow majority by which it was decided, has once again brought the legal issue to the forefront of public discourse.



Additional contributing factors include the conduct of the judicial system and the military prosecution regarding the detention of Nukhba operatives at the Sde Teiman camp, a series of Supreme Court rulings against the government and its ministers, as well as the ongoing adversarial stance of the Attorney General toward the government in nearly all areas of governance, as perceived by its ministers, further exacerbating the already severe crisis in relations between the Attorney General, the prosecution, and the government.

The issue of judicial reform necessitates renewed discussion on rebalancing and adjusting the relationship between the branches of government. Addressing this issue should lay the conceptual foundation for reaching agreements on the need for changes in the interaction between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

Another critical issue requiring in-depth consideration is the relationship between majority and minority populations in Israel. The ultra-Orthodox sector, the Arab sector, and other minorities in Israel have also been affected by the war, and in some cases, have demonstrated a willingness to integrate into Israeli society. This shift and openness should be deepened, expanded, and institutionalized to enable more meaningful integration of these sectors within Israeli society. Such integration efforts would contribute to improving their status, welfare, and prospects while simultaneously broadening the foundations of Israeli solidarity as a whole.

Therefore, one of the crucial topics any vision for the State of Israel must address is the means to strengthen national solidarity and reinforce belief in the justness of its cause. This raises the importance of a deeper discussion regarding the role of academia and the media as

agents of socialization and their influence on public discourse, as well as their contribution to polarization within society.

The rise in global antisemitism following the war may lead many Jews to consider immigrating to Israel, potentially resulting in significant waves of immigration in the coming decade. A notable increase in aliyah, particularly from Western countries, was already recorded in 2024 despite it being a year of war.<sup>8</sup> The State of Israel will need to prepare for this immigration by ensuring the necessary settlement, economic, and social infrastructure to successfully absorb hundreds of thousands of Jews. Additionally, Israel must strengthen its ties with Diaspora Jewry to reinforce its connection to Israel, maintain its support as an expression of the Jewish people's unity, enhance their sense of security, and minimize, as much as possible, the loss of entire communities to ongoing assimilation.

The events of October 7 serve as nothing less than a wake-up call for the State of Israel and Israeli society. This is a world-altering event that demands swift adaptation and change from both the state and its people. Israel must undergo a comprehensive systemic overhaul alongside a transformation of its national ethos to align with the evolving circumstances. For nearly eight decades, Israel has existed in accordance with the enduring tradition of Jewish sovereignty. Now, it must renew itself, update its identity, and redefine its character for the coming decades. In many ways, this war should be seen as a war of independence, from which a great light will emerge out of the immense darkness, and a new nation—Israel 2.0—will rise from the great rupture.

8 Iris Lifshitz-Kliger, *Just Now: The New Immigrants Who Arrived in Israel This Year*, Yedioth Ahronoth, October 25, 2024.

# Basic Assumptions

We formulated and defined the basic assumptions following a series of discussions in various forums, focusing on the following questions: What happened on October 7? Why did it happen? Is what happened fundamentally reversible, or to what extent is it absolute, valid, or relevant for the long term? What fundamental changes are required to enable a more relevant and effective response to the characteristics of the new reality and the nature of the threats?

At the conclusion of this process, we arrived at the formulation of a series of updated basic assumptions:

## Situational Assumptions

We are in the midst of a formative national event that is reshaping Israel's external and internal operational environments.

Israel is engaged in a multi-front regional war led by the "Axis of Resistance" under Iran's leadership, with Hamas and Hezbollah as key components, even if weakened following Israel's achievements against the axis.

Given the intensity of a regional war, and despite Israel's success in positioning itself as a regional power capable of reshaping the regional system, Israel will face significant challenges in defending itself solely by its own means and will require the support of an international and regional coalition—one that can only be led by the United States.

The regional war has global implications due to the support provided by Russia and China, two revisionist powers that reject the existing world order and American hegemony. These nations have chosen to support the Axis of Resistance to weaken the United States, harm its vital interests, diminish its global standing, and enable the establishment of a new, multipolar world order.

In its global dimension, the war represents or reflects a fundamental problem in the perception of many states regarding Israel's very right and duty to fight against radical Islamic barbarism, all while utilizing the platforms and values of the free world.

## The Regional Arena

One of the immediate reasons for the October 7 attack, beyond the messianic belief that the assault would ignite all fronts in the first circle and within Iran’s “ring of fire” on the path to the beginning of the end of the Zionist project, was the desire to roll back the process of constructing the new regional architecture that the United States has been advancing in the Middle East. This effort, particularly the normalization process with Saudi Arabia and the strengthening of Israel’s relations with Arab states, is perceived as a fundamental and significant threat to the entire “Axis of Resistance.”

The broad support for the October 7 attack among the Palestinian public and leadership, the high levels of support for Hamas, along with additional indicators that existed even before the attack, clarify that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not fundamentally a territorial dispute that can be resolved through partition of the land. Rather, it is an identity-based, existential, and religious conflict rooted in the refusal to recognize the very existence of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, under any borders.

**Israel cannot accept the existence of its primary strategic threat—a nuclear Iran—and must act to prevent it by all possible means**

The logic behind the “Iron Wall” concept remains valid. However, over the years, the iron wall that was built has also been neglected and has cracked—both internally and externally. As a result, it did not withstand the test of reality and now requires significant reinforcement across all dimensions: security, economic, and diplomatic.

The primary threat to Israel requires a paradigm shift in the scope and characteristics of its security response. The essence of this change is to stabilize and institutionalize Israel’s position as a regional power that actively shapes the region and proactively works to dismantle threats to its security and existence through military and diplomatic means. This necessitates a large, strong, proactive, and offensive military alongside a system of alliances with states, ethnic minorities, and groups—with Syria serving as an example.

Israel cannot accept the existence of its primary strategic threat—a nuclear Iran—and must act to prevent it by all possible means. The absolute priority is full coordination with the United States.

The peace agreements remain stable, but Egypt’s approach toward Israel will continue to be confrontational and provocative, particularly regarding the presence of the IDF along the Philadelphi Corridor, its obstruction, and the management of the Rafah crossing, especially concerning the identity of the Palestinian authority overseeing it.

Jordan will continue to adopt a critical and even hostile stance toward Israel as part of the monarchy’s response to demographic trends and internal pressures from the Jordanian street, which is deeply antagonistic toward Israel.

## The United States and the International Arena

Although relations with the United States have undergone turbulence since October 7, they remain a fundamental component of Israel's national security strategy, with no viable alternative. This is especially true given that only the United States has the capability to assemble a coalition to assist Israel in its defensive efforts during the war. However, these relations are being challenged by differences in the way both sides perceive the region and its threats, as well as by demographic, social, and political changes within the United States.

The United States' mobilization in defense of Israel and its unprecedented involvement in managing the war reflect a firm American commitment to protecting its vital interests, even at the expense of Israel's own vital interests. The willingness of the U.S. to impose policies on Israel that undermine its fundamental security needs inevitably impacts the nature of the relationship, making it more tense and complex. This necessitates the development of mechanisms to manage disagreements and tensions effectively.

The international community, particularly the United Nations and other international institutions, will continue to be biased, hostile, and critical toward Israel whenever it is engaged in a war against its enemies, even when those enemies initiated the aggression. This is even more evident in cases where Israel conducts preemptive strikes. Therefore, it is necessary to reassess the significance of international legitimacy as an essential strategic resource, considering that even when it is present, it tends to dissipate rapidly. Additionally, Israel must reevaluate its approach to managing diplomatic relations with various countries worldwide, including its interactions with the United Nations and other international organizations.

## Internal Security

The war has highlighted the challenges posed by the absence of a national strategy for internal security. Formulating such a strategy requires conceptualization, integrating various means and methods within the framework of national efforts for internal security. A civil defense doctrine must be developed for Israeli communities, along with defining the mechanisms for coordination and integration between the police, emergency and rescue services, the National Guard once it is fully established, and the IDF.

## Economy and Security Sustainability

The war has brought the issue of security sustainability to the forefront. Delays in arms shipments from the United States and arms embargoes imposed by several European countries underscore the necessity of developing domestic defense production capabilities. This is essential to creating a balanced mix between self-sufficient production of weapons and munitions and the stockpiling of supplies needed for emergency situations.

The war has also exposed vulnerabilities in food security and Israel's dependence on global supply chains, especially given the risk of disruptions to maritime transport due to enemy activity or the reluctance or prevention of shipping companies from reaching Israeli ports in Eilat and the Mediterranean. A commercial and economic boycott by Turkey further emphasizes the need to develop domestic agriculture, food production, construction materials, and other industrial sectors.

The issue of food security necessitates the expansion of settlement and agriculture, both to enhance self-sufficiency and as a core value in maintaining territorial control. It is also an integral part of the updated national ethos, reinforcing state sovereignty and serving as a fundamental component of national security.

## Other

Fundamental failures in the relationship between the political and military leadership, along with a weakening of public trust in the military, necessitate improved civilian oversight of the military in all aspects, including oversight of appointments to critical positions.

Social cohesion and resilience are sources of strength. Mechanisms should be developed to enhance social unity and reduce the influence of extremist elements within society.

The war has intensified the complexity and tensions in majority-minority relations, including among the ultra-Orthodox, Arabs, Druze, and Bedouins. Integrating these sectors into society will significantly contribute to improving their status, welfare, and prospects, while also expanding the foundations of Israeli solidarity.

The status of the judicial system and the need to curb its excessive power, which disrupts the balance between the branches of government, will continue to be a central issue in public debate.

Israel must prepare for a significant wave of Jewish immigration due to the rise in global antisemitism and ensure their successful absorption. At the same time, it must strengthen ties with Diaspora Jewry to reinforce their connection to Israel and maintain their support as an expression of the unity of the Jewish people.

# The Two-State Paradigm

## Challenges

The October 7 attack, along with the widespread support for Hamas and its leaders among the Palestinian public, particularly in the West Bank, necessitates a reassessment of Palestinian readiness for establishing an independent and peace-seeking state, as well as the feasibility and viability of the two-state solution.<sup>9</sup>

An independent entity does not necessarily mean an independent state in the conventional sense. Other models may be possible, especially under the conditions of a new regional architecture, which will inevitably create new opportunities that do not exist today.

Hamas is one of the spearheads of the Iranian axis, which is supported by Russia and China, in its struggle to destroy Israel. This axis perceives Israel as an illegitimate entity imposed on the region as a product of Western colonialism and imperialism, and as a foreign representative of that world in a place where it does not belong.

From a historical perspective, Palestinian leadership has failed to undergo the necessary transformation from a revolutionary and violent national movement to building a functional and responsible state that coexists peacefully alongside Israel, in the spirit of the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian leadership has not directed its efforts toward establishing an independent Palestinian state by developing a civil society, functional state institutions, a stable economy, and national infrastructure. Instead, it has primarily focused its efforts on attempting to thwart and dismantle the Zionist project. The Palestinian ethos of resistance and the operational patterns of the PLO were transferred and replicated within the Palestinian Authority's governing framework.

The establishment of a Palestinian state as a result of the barbaric attack of October 7, and after the absence of condemnation by the PA, alongside statements by several senior PA officials regarding October 7, additional ones that came from the territories of the West Bank, will be perceived as nothing less than a reward for terrorism and will be a guaranteed recipe for its expansion and for the strengthening of radical elements in the region. Moreover, a people whose majority supports an action whose purpose is genocide is not worthy of the right to realize self-determination through the establishment of a state, just as one who declares his intention to murder is not worthy of personal liberty.

9 For further reading, see: Kobi Michael and Gabi Siboni, *The Two-State Paradigm in the Test of October 7 and the Regional War*, Misgav Institute, May 6, 2024.

## Recommendations

The paradigm of two states living in peace side by side has lost its relevance at this time and has no justification for existence under the existing conditions in general, and in those following October 7 in particular, even if there are those in the international community and in the United States who attempt in every way to revive it due to adherence to an idea that represents the foundational value system of the Western world. Against elements promoting the two-state paradigm, Israel will be required to employ all its persuasive power to explain that the establishment of a Palestinian state is dangerous due to the complete lack of readiness and conditions for responsible and efficient state functioning, and that by its very existence under the current conditions, it will inevitably become a source of violence against Israel, alongside being a failed state in a region full of failed states, which serve as a foundation for regional, and even global, instability. Therefore, it would be appropriate to consider providing a response to the Palestinian issue within two possible alternatives: the first within a multilateral-regional framework,

within the new regional architecture that will be shaped. Within the regional system, new spaces of opportunity are emerging for limited and restrained Palestinian independence in a form that is not necessarily the form of a state as per Palestinian expectations, but rather a loose federative structure of two autonomous provinces without geographical continuity between them, and as a possible foundation at a later stage for a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. The second alternative proposed for consideration is a system of local governments in the Palestinian area based on geographical and identity-based/tribal/clan affiliation. This approach is based on the understanding that Palestinian society, like other Arab societies, is a tribal society. These tribes aspire to self-rule, and according to this approach, it is possible to create an effective governing system. The Palestinian Authority would be dismantled and replaced with a federal government.<sup>10</sup>

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**Elimination of Hamas as a governing and military entity is the keystone of any process and a prerequisite for effectively confronting the regional campaign against Iran and its proxies**

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Regarding the Gaza Strip, the elimination of Hamas as a governing and military entity is the keystone of any process and a prerequisite for effectively confronting the regional campaign against Iran and its proxies, as well as for creating the conditions for any progress concerning the Palestinian issue. Since Hamas will not completely disappear and will remain in some hybrid form of terrorism and guerrilla warfare, efforts must be made throughout the Gaza Strip to deepen the damage to terrorist infrastructure. At the same time, an alternative governance structure to Hamas must be established, while preserving the IDF's security capability to operate from the Gaza border to counter terrorism and disrupt infrastructure that supports its advancement.

The only viable way at this time to remove Hamas from centers of power in the Strip is by completing the dismantling of the last significant stronghold in northern Gaza and the remaining capabilities in the central Strip. Additionally, it is essential to prevent Hamas from

10 See Mordechai Kedar, <https://www.facebook.com/PalestinianEmirates>.



taking control of humanitarian aid supplies, which enable its self-rehabilitation, continued dominance over the civilian population, and suppression of any possibility for the emergence of an alternative governing authority. This should be achieved through the establishment of a temporary military administration. Such a move would send a clear message to the civilian population that Hamas is not, and will not be, a legitimate authority after the war. It would also create the conditions for the development of a civilian governmental alternative that is not Hamas.



# Security: Policy, Military, and Operational Doctrine

## Challenges

Israel has been engaged in a multi-front war of attrition and exhaustion since October 7, 2023, with limited control over its intensity, duration, and boundaries—at least until the shift in policy toward Hezbollah beginning with Operation “Beepers” in September 2023.<sup>11</sup> The IDF entered October 7 with a national defense policy that is fundamentally opposed to the defense policy that Israel adhered to until the First Lebanon War.

The reason<sup>12</sup> for this lies in the failure of the IDF, by its own doing, to transform from a decisive, eliminating, and defeating army into one that primarily aims to deter on a psychological level, along with the failure to recognize this military failure and its consequences for national security—or perhaps a conscious disregard of this failure by the political leadership.

The foundations of national security (defense) policy and its logic were formulated by Ben-Gurion, who announced them in the Knesset on June 20, 1950. The core principle was that (as a key lesson from the War of Independence) Israel must never again be drawn into prolonged wars fought on its own territory. This guiding principle was translated by the military into a strategic military doctrine based on three fundamental professional assumptions:

- The enemy’s intentions and psychological state must never be assessed with certainty, and it must never be assumed that the enemy is deterred.
- The defensive contact line can always be breached.
- A defender will always be surprised, and therefore must be prepared in advance to ensure that they are not defeated when that surprise occurs.

As a derivative of the security policy and in light of these professional assumptions, a military strategy was formulated with the following core principle: due to the lack of territorial depth to contain a potential attack within its own borders, Israel must neutralize potential threats to its security while they are still in their early stages, “beyond the fence,” through preemptive preventive warfare at a timing of its own choosing.

11 For further reading, see: Gabi Siboni, *Israel’s Security Challenges in Light of the Simchat Torah Events*, Misgav Institute, May 23, 2024.

12 For further reading, see: Hanan Shay, *The Revolution in National Defense Policy That Led to the IDF’s Defeat on October 7*, Misgav Institute, October 9, 2024.

In order to implement the security policy and as a derivative of the military strategy, the IDF was built as a rapid decisive force, which, to quickly exploit opportunities that may arise for the removal of threats, must maintain a state of high operational readiness at all times to eliminate them, as was the case in the removal of threats in the Kadesh and Lebanon Wars and the destruction of nuclear reactors in Iraq and Syria.



Therefore, and as a consequence of the security policy, the organized terrorist armies that grew along the borders of Lebanon and the Gaza Strip in this century should have been removed while still in their infancy when they were still stationary forces threatening Israel with intensive stand-off fire carried out periodically and through the infiltration of lone attackers. Their removal became essential when, from 2014, they added a maneuvering and assaulting mobile force, both infantry and vehicular, which revived the threat of occupying Israeli territories and settlements—the very threat that the IDF was built as a decisive force to prevent “beyond the fence.”

Despite the three fundamental professional assumptions under which the doctrine was formulated, as well as the primary lesson drawn from the Yom Kippur War, on the eve of October 7, Israel’s defense, like on the eve of the Yom Kippur War, was based on the assumption that the enemy was deterred and that intelligence would provide situational warnings of an expected attack.

Therefore, the question of why Israel’s defense in recent decades was designed and conducted contrary to its security policy, the IDF’s strategy, and the lessons of the Yom Kippur War, and how such a shift occurred without the authorization or involvement of the political leadership (raising the issue of weak civilian oversight over the military and the responsibility of successive

political leaderships), should be at the center of the work of a dedicated commission of inquiry established for this purpose.<sup>13</sup>

The nature of the failures revealed on October 7 pertains to all four components of the security doctrine:

- **Early Warning** – an intelligence assessment disconnected from the information collected, which denied the ability to organize and impaired the assessment of the threat.
- **Failure in defense** – including structural and operational failures in command and control during the invasion event, when it must always be assumed that surprise will occur.
- **Collapse of deterrence** – which failed to prevent Hamas's attack, Hezbollah's and additional proxy forces' joining of the war, or the Iranian attack on April 13.
- **Failure of the defense concept** – which relied excessively on technology, weakened territorial defense, lacked a basic military response, and neglected border settlements.
- **Failure of decisive action** – particularly regarding Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon (at least until September 17, when a shift began against Hezbollah).

Israel possesses the capabilities to decisively defeat its enemies, but its primary limitation stems from a lack of willingness to use force, particularly in a preventive attack to preempt threats. In recent years, the use of force has been applied for deterrence by causing damage rather than for achieving decisive victory. The concept of decisive victory has been replaced with a concept of deterrence.

This situation resulted from a flawed perception of the threat, limited trust in the IDF, particularly in ground forces, the belief that the enemy was deterred and could be further deterred through stand-off fire and efficient intelligence-to-fire integration, lack of internal legitimacy for a preventive attack due to internal divisions within Israel, leading to concerns about the resilience of the home front and national resilience overall, and a lack of international legitimacy.

All collection resources and the highest-quality intelligence will not be sufficient when intelligence assessment is conducted by individuals trapped in a rigid and unvalidated conception, which is also fueled by groupthink and a lack of alternative challenging thought. Over the years, the Control Department in Military Intelligence has weakened, along with its influence on intelligence assessment processes, and it has failed, for various reasons, to fulfill its original purpose.

The multi-front war in which Israel has been engaged since October 7 demonstrates how unprepared the IDF was for a conflict of this magnitude and how flawed its force-building plans were.

13 Kobi Michael and Gabi Siboni, *The Necessity of a Commission of Inquiry and the Importance of Doing It the Right Way*, Misgav Institute, July 25, 2024.

The defense establishment is an immensely powerful entity operating without any effective civilian oversight, facing a weak civilian system and political leadership. The IDF can decide that reserves are unnecessary, dismantle units, and erode their readiness without any supervision or control. It can formulate a multi-year force-building plan and define its force employment strategy without active and influential involvement from the political leadership. In the absence of a coherent, government-directed rationale, we are left with budget and pension battles that erode public trust.

Many staff studies on the necessary changes in officer training have not been implemented. As the quality of personnel declines, so does the quality of the command structure, along with the relative advantage upon which the military was built. The IDF has an excessive number of

officers while suffering from a shortage of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), who should form the professional backbone of its units.<sup>14</sup> This issue extends to the process of appointing generals, leading to a troubling replication of General Staff officers, a lack of diverse and challenging thought, groupthink, intellectual rigidity, and rigid, unchallenged conceptual frameworks.

In recent decades, the first response to any operational problem in the IDF has been a technological solution. The events of October 7 exposed the military's overreliance on technology for intelligence gathering and for both defensive and offensive responses, while the fundamental skills of the military profession have been severely neglected and eroded. The ground forces have been abandoned, as have the reserve forces of the ground units.

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**The events of October 7 exposed the military's overreliance on technology for intelligence gathering and for both defensive and offensive responses**

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The lack of effective civilian oversight over the IDF spans multiple areas, including force-building and operational concepts, appointments of generals and other senior positions, the structure of the military, and various other aspects that result in the IDF operating in a manner inconsistent with the policy of the elected leadership.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, there is a lack of effective control by the Prime Minister over military operations, particularly in cases where the Chief of Staff acts in opposition to the government.

## **Recommendations**

The initial recommendations should be divided into two categories. The first category relates to what is required to achieve victory in the multi-front war in which Israel is engaged, while the second category pertains to what should be done for the continuation and future beyond this victory. The first set of recommendations was formulated by Hanan Shay, whose key points

14 Yuval Bazak, *The IDF – The Path to a More Professional Army, How to Adapt the IDF to Future Challenges*, Military and Strategy, Volume 1, Issue 3, INSS, December 2009.

15 For further reading, see: Gabi Siboni and Kobi Michael, *Oversight of Generals and Senior Positions in Security Organizations*, Misgav Institute, July 22, 2024.

were also addressed in the section describing the challenges and issues. Shay recommends that, to achieve victory, it is necessary to:<sup>16</sup>

- Immediately staff the National Security Council (NSC) and the General Staff with individuals who have appropriate education in the art of war, its principles, and rules, as well as knowledge and experience in planning and managing campaigns and decisive wars.
- Immediately validate the security policy and the IDF's strategy, and in accordance with them, prepare operational plans for eliminating threats "beyond the fence" and ensuring the IDF's readiness to implement them.
- Focus force-building efforts and IDF rehabilitation on the immediate restoration of the capabilities necessary for fulfilling its mission as a victorious, decisive, eradicating, and defeating military force.
- Rely on the professional excellence of IDF operational units, particularly the surprisingly high professional level of the maneuvering and assaulting ground forces, both regular and reserve, and believe that ending the war in a decisive Israeli military victory is within reach, committing collectively to achieving it.

Recommendations for the continuation and future beyond this war. A revised security doctrine must be formulated, centered on the need to continuously eliminate emerging threats to prevent the enemy from building its forces in a manner that could be deployed against Israel under severe conditions and with significant strength. This doctrine may imply a state of constant and ongoing combat, requiring sacrifice and dedication from the nation's citizens. It is crucial to emphasize that even efforts to pursue diplomatic arrangements and shape a new regional architecture that fosters security and intelligence cooperation do not eliminate the need for the continuous elimination of emerging threats.

Regarding the challenge of intelligence assessments, which are primarily conducted by Military Intelligence and the failure of its Control Department, we propose evaluating the establishment of an independent civilian intelligence assessment capability. The personnel of this body will consist solely of civilians and will have no affiliation with existing intelligence agencies. Through legislative measures, this body will have access to all raw intelligence materials and will conduct independent assessments of the information. These assessments will be regularly presented to decision-makers, including periodic evaluations and preparation for various operational scenarios. This is a preliminary concept, and we recognize the need to further develop this idea and define the roles, purpose, structure, and oversight of this body.

Expansion of ground forces. The IDF ground forces should be expanded by adding two additional reserve armored divisions, equivalent to approximately eight brigade combat teams. This expansion requires an increase in all related systems, including platforms, firepower, engineering, and logistics, along with a significant enhancement of the ground forces' lethality to ensure that new units are not formed with low effectiveness. Expanding the reserve structure

16 Shay, *The Revolution in National Defense Policy*, Misgav Institute.

necessitates a corresponding increase in regular units to provide the required personnel flow into the reserves.

**Strengthening Civilian Oversight:** There is a need to improve, refine, and reinforce substantial and effective civilian oversight by the political leadership over the military and security systems, ensuring alignment between responsibility and authority. Civilian oversight must be highly stringent, completely independent of the security establishment, and based on civilian institutions such as the Knesset, the government, and the National Security Council. This oversight must also include approval of critical decisions related to IDF strategy and force-building processes, such as:

- The IDF training budget.
- Organizational changes at the General Staff and major command levels.
- Changes in the reserve force structure, particularly regarding unit closures and the decommissioning of key platforms.

Given the close connection between force-building processes and the development of the operational strategy, these cannot remain solely within the military's domain; the political leadership has a responsibility in this regard. This responsibility can only be meaningfully and effectively realized through deep and significant involvement by the political leadership, based on knowledge and understanding of both aspects. Since force-building and its application are inevitably influenced by senior officials, their worldview, and their professionalism, civilian oversight of key IDF appointments is necessary.

Civilian oversight should be applied to the appointment of senior officers in two dimensions. The first is appointment to the rank of major general. This appointment is presented by the chief of staff to the minister of defense and requires the minister's approval. The second is specific oversight of key General Staff positions. This should include positions such as deputy chief of staff, commanders of the ground forces, air force, and navy, the three regional command chiefs, the head of military intelligence, the head of the operations directorate, and the head of the strategic directorate. These are core positions with decisive influence on the formulation of operational concepts and force-building.

Similar oversight should be applied to senior officials equivalent to the rank of major general in other security agencies. A determination should be made regarding which positions within these organizations will require civilian oversight.

The state comptroller recommends establishing a defined and institutionalized process while maintaining the broad discretion afforded to the chief of staff and the minister of defense regarding exceptional appointment cases. This oversight mechanism should be expanded beyond the minister of defense to include the prime minister and or the security cabinet, or a smaller designated body authorized by it. If necessary, the prime minister, as the head of the security cabinet, could rely on an advisory committee for this purpose.

For other senior appointments, mandatory parliamentary hearings should be conducted by a special subcommittee of the Knesset foreign affairs and defense committee. These hearings



will provide a clearer picture of the candidates and their professional approach to the positions they are being appointed to.

IDF operations in routine situations. The current operational framework in which the IDF and other security agencies reduces its readiness on weekends and holidays and only increases it in emergencies in response to warnings or war should be discontinued. A new operational status should be adopted, in which leave cycles are evenly distributed throughout the year, irrespective of weekends and holidays. Furthermore, under this proposed framework, the current shutdown procedure should be abolished.

Consideration should be given to amending the military law, particularly regarding the need to formally establish the prime minister as the supreme commander of the military, ensuring alignment between the prime minister's responsibility and authority. See the legal section below for a detailed recommendation on this matter.



# Internal Security

## Challenges

When violent events within the state are addressed in an isolated context, responses and solutions are developed without broader consideration, lacking a comprehensive and strategic outlook. This applies, for example, to severe crime and deadly violence in Arab society, violence among groups of migrant workers and refugees, agricultural crime, protection rackets, and more.

It is important to remember that, unlike other areas in the country, the government has no real ability to influence the law enforcement system in Israel. This is because the head of the enforcement system is the head of the prosecution, which in Israel is the Attorney General. Ministerial or even governmental decisions regarding enforcement priorities hold no real standing, as the Attorney General is not obligated to conform to the priorities or policies of the elected government.

All these issues highlight the gap arising from the lack of a structured policy, as well as the inability to implement such a policy, alongside the fact that the State of Israel does not have a comprehensive national strategy for internal security. In the absence of a systemic logic and structured framework, the response is bound to be limited and, in some cases, even irrelevant. The lack of a national internal security strategy, with all its components, creates a significant gap in internal security, and beyond that, a gap in national security as well.

Another complexity in formulating internal security policy arises from the multitude of state authorities involved in various aspects and the necessity of high-level coordination, cooperation, and integration. Additionally, there are numerous and complex linkages between these issues and national security. This complexity is further exacerbated by Israel's political culture and the weakness of the executive branch concerning state institutions responsible for internal security, whether it be the police, the prison service, or other relevant bodies. The National Security Council has also failed to create a comprehensive conceptual framework and an effective oversight system for internal security activities.

The complexity further increases when considering the necessity of involving the private and business sectors, as well as the need to develop an intelligence and research infrastructure required for identifying and detecting threats to internal security and their sources.

In emergencies and wartime, the Israel Police, Border Police, and the National Guard (even in its updated format as mentioned above) will not be able to handle multiple focal points of violent riots, attacks on settlements, road blockages, and blockades of military bases on their own. The IDF will also struggle to provide a response to internal threats while needing to focus

its efforts and attention on mobilizing forces, deploying operational units along the borders, and addressing external threats.

## Recommendations

A national internal security strategy must be an essential component of Israel's national security doctrine. It is important to emphasize the crucial and necessary contribution of internal security to national resilience, and consequently, to national strength, as a fundamental pillar of national security. The internal security strategy must address overarching objectives in core issues of internal security while examining their connection to national security.

A national internal security strategy is intended, among other things, to prevent harm to national and social resilience, which is a fundamental pillar of national strength and national security. This is not about the ethical or value-based dimension of social or national resilience but rather the necessity of protecting it from internal threats. A strong military, military-security power that enables the defense of the state against external threats, economic strength, and political strength are essential to ensuring national security. However, without the pillar of internal security, overall national security will be compromised.

At the core of the process of formulating a national internal security strategy is the need for conceptualization, understanding the connections between different dimensions and their mutual influences, alongside an analysis of the reality, linking means and methods of action to objectives within the framework of national internal security efforts. From the strategy, national internal security policy is derived, translating principles and rationales into methods of action—the way force is applied, efforts and resources, and principles for force-building.



Credit: Jose HERNANDEZ Camera 51

The purpose of the national internal security strategy and the policy derived from it is to protect the country's citizens and residents, state institutions and symbols, national infrastructure, and sovereignty from threats within the country's borders. Among the threats to internal security are terrorism, organized crime, agricultural crime, illegal or uncontrolled immigration, and civil emergencies that may arise from cyberattacks, natural disasters, pandemics, and more. Additionally, there is a need to address threats to Israel's food supply (food security), the supply of medicine and the resilience of the healthcare system (medical security), and threats to Israel's supply chains in various emergency scenarios.

Internal security strategy and policy require the imposition of restrictions on citizens and the public sphere. All these, as mentioned, create tension between rights and the need to maintain security. Efforts should be made to create synergy among all authorities to implement them. This strategy must be an integral part of the national security doctrine, and it would be beneficial to establish the appropriate organizational framework (like the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) that could lead its implementation.

As a derivative of the national internal security strategy, the issue of the National Guard must be refined.<sup>17</sup> In the past two years, the establishment of this force has begun, and the proposed response requires an approach that allows for addressing both the disruption of public order and the security of citizens in routine times, as well as the spectrum of threats in emergencies.

First, it is proposed to expand the Civil Guard (which consists of volunteer police officers) by granting permanent policing powers to volunteers not only during their shifts. No special legislation is required for this, as the Police Regulations (Civil Guard), 1996, stipulate that the police may utilize the Civil Guard for additional actions to maintain security and fulfill duties related to protecting life and property from acts of hostility.

Expanding the number of volunteers alongside broadening their powers will enable a significant and effective increase in the number of active policing forces at all times. This force will be able to handle a variety of security and public order tasks, strengthening the sense of security, preventing terrorist attacks, arresting rioters, and more.

A preliminary threat analysis indicates that the National Guard should be sized at approximately 20 brigades (about 3,000 fighters and administrative personnel in each brigade). The force will be based on reserve fighters with a small core of regular personnel.<sup>18</sup>

The force will operate under the command of the Israel Police (or the Border Police). It will be organized as a military unit (squads, companies, battalions, and brigades) with necessary adaptations for operating in the internal security arena and will be equipped and trained to

17 See also: Yishai Armoni, *Recommendations on the National Guard*, Misgav Institute, July 11, 2023.

18 The analysis was conducted by the authors and was based on the need to operate in multiple locations simultaneously and against widespread internal threats, including the blocking of transportation routes, infiltration into settlements and IDF camps, as well as the spatial distribution of the National Guard in a way that would allow for the rapid mobilization of its fighters and their deployment within their residential areas in the event of a civil emergency.

function in emergencies and wartime. The force will also be capable of being deployed in other civil emergencies such as earthquakes, large fires, tsunamis, pandemics, and similar events. It will be granted operational powers and the authority to use force, which will be established through appropriate legislation.

The newly established force could be integrated into the national emergency response system, which should be created and whose necessity was reaffirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This system would also be able to address emergencies such as national disasters, pandemics, chemical and biological attacks, and large-scale cyberattacks that could paralyze parts of the economy.

Regarding the security of settlements, the security threat model in Israel's internal security doctrine must take into account several factors, including attacks by hostile elements (both Israeli citizens and enemies) on settlements, including mixed-population settlements, ambushes along transportation routes, as well as road blockages.

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**We believe that the rapid response teams should prepare for attacks on settlements, including mixed-population areas of Arabs and Jews**

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A thorough examination should be conducted on the possibility of assigning the National Guard overall responsibility for settlement security systems.

These systems include the rapid response teams in rural areas and along the borders (the outer perimeter), which must be prepared to independently defend the settlements for up to six hours.<sup>19</sup> The IDF, police, and emergency response agencies in these areas must be prepared to intervene and provide defensive and medical assistance within a timeframe not exceeding six hours. The immediate implication is that training, qualification, and the supply of appropriate equipment must be arranged, along with the establishment of a command and control system to facilitate cooperation between the relevant entities.

Additionally, in our view, a structured operational doctrine should be formulated for the rapid response teams, integrating them into the broader process of establishing the National Guard and aligning them with the principles of a national internal security strategy.<sup>20</sup>

As part of this process, the reference threat to which the rapid response teams will need to respond should be defined, and an operational framework should be developed, detailing their deployment at both the local and regional levels. A command and control structure should be established for these teams, enabling them to receive relevant intelligence and build their

19 For further reading, see also: Gabi Siboni and Kobi Michael, *A Preliminary Look at Settlement Security in Light of the War*, Misgav Institute, January 2, 2024.

20 For further reading, see: Gabi Siboni and Kobi Michael, *Deepening the Process of Establishing Standby Squads – Recommendations and Directions for Continuation*, Misgav Institute, November 3, 2023.

operational capabilities accordingly, particularly regarding weaponry, personnel, training, and exercises.

We believe that the rapid response teams should prepare for attacks on settlements, including mixed-population areas of Arabs and Jews, and be capable of responding if disturbances near settlements escalate into direct attacks. Additionally, these teams must be ready to respond in the event of ambushes along transportation routes near their operational areas.

The teams should be organized into structured operational units of squads and teams, equipped with appropriate means and weaponry, and trained not only for combat but also for other essential tasks, such as providing first aid, search and rescue from collapsed structures, and more. At the same time, it is essential to ensure that their members undergo proper training before assuming their roles and receive continuous training as part of routine preparedness, including participation in drills and joint exercises with the IDF and police.

While the rapid response teams should generally be integrated into the Israel Police command and control system, wherever feasible, they should be subordinated to the Border Police.

# Immigration

## Challenges

Israel faces two major challenges in the field of illegal immigration: dealing with the communities of infiltrators and illegal migrant workers already in the country and formulating a clear policy on the “family reunification” of Palestinians.

Israel has largely succeeded in blocking the flow of infiltrators, mainly at its southern border, through the construction of a border fence, detention facilities, and appropriate legislation. However, significant challenges remain in handling the tens of thousands of infiltrators already in Israel. More effective and intensified enforcement is required for this population, alongside encouraging their relocation to countries willing to accept them.

Conceptually, the term “immigration” refers to the movement of populations to settle permanently in a new destination as permanent residents. This movement may occur voluntarily, in search of better economic opportunities in the destination country, or involuntarily, due to conflicts in the country of origin or various natural disasters. Every sovereign state has the right and ability to determine the legal arrangements for entry and residence within its borders, and anyone who violates these regulations in any country is considered an illegal immigrant.

The Citizenship Law established the pathways to obtaining official status in Israel—through the Law of Return, residency in Israel before the establishment of the state, birth, or naturalization through a defined process. This legal framework initially created several civil statuses in the country, including citizens, permanent residents, and temporary residents.

Foreigners may enter Israel only through official border crossings—by land, air, or sea—and only after obtaining a visa corresponding to the “declared purpose of entry” in advance. Therefore, anyone who enters the country outside of official border crossings or does not obtain a legally valid visa is defined in Israel as an “illegal immigrant.” These illegal immigrants are divided into several categories, the main ones being: “infiltrators”—foreigners who entered Israel through unauthorized border crossings; “illegal residents”—a broader definition that includes those who entered legally but did not leave the country after their visa expired or violated their terms of stay; and “asylum seekers”—foreigners who apply for protection on the grounds that their lives or freedom are at risk in their home country, whose requests have not yet been processed.

Illegal immigration harms national security in three main ways. First, the unauthorized entry of individuals into the country’s borders undermines state sovereignty and its fundamental right to determine who is permitted to enter.

Second, mass immigration, even if legal, alters the demographic and cultural composition of the population. Numerous examples of this can be seen in the European immigration crisis, where various countries are struggling with the consequences of massive, and largely illegal, immigration on their demographic structure. The attempt to integrate populations from diverse cultural, religious, and national backgrounds into a unified society has failed, and European countries are now facing a severe demographic crisis, with an aging and shrinking native population alongside a continuous increase in the immigrant population.



Regarding “family reunification,” the security reality in Israel raises concerns about the involvement of Palestinians who gain legal status in Israel through marriage in terrorist activities. Due to this concern, in 2003, an amendment to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law was enacted, prohibiting the granting of status to residents of the “area” (Judea and Samaria and Gaza) and hostile states. This law was passed as a temporary measure and was extended multiple times, with certain modifications following judicial intervention. In 2021, its validity briefly expired, but in 2022, it was re-enacted.

## **Recommendations**

A stable and permanent legal framework should be considered to balance security needs with the right to naturalization through marriage, as practiced in many countries. This should include cooperation with security agencies to formulate an arrangement that will gain broad support in the Knesset while clearly distinguishing between friendly states and populations and those hostile to Israel.

As part of reviewing the fundamental assumptions of Israel’s national security doctrine in light of the events of October 7, it is necessary to examine the relevance of Israeli immigration policy as a whole, particularly its approach to illegal immigration and its impact on national security in Israel.

Illegal immigration also undermines the rule of law and public order. Many immigrants come from countries with weak legal systems and have no real connection to their destination country beyond economic interests, leading them to disregard the laws of the host country. In Israel and other Western countries, significant difficulties exist in enforcing the law on this population, and their social isolation sometimes results in the formation of “no-go zones” where authorities struggle to maintain control, alongside attempts by illegal immigrant communities to influence the social environment.

Only individuals whose asylum requests have been approved should be recognized as “refugees” and entitled to rights under international law.

## Settlement, Agriculture, and Land Holding

### Challenges

Even before the establishment of the state and for many years thereafter, the concept of “the last furrow” was at the core of the expansion of various settlement movements across the country. It was also a key component of the security doctrine, emphasizing the shaping of the country’s borders, land holding, and security. This concept recognized a direct link between the expansion of land control across the country beyond the central urban areas through settlement and Hebrew agriculture and the establishment of the state’s sovereignty over all its regions, especially at its borders and frontier areas. It also acknowledged the significant contribution of settlement to security and border protection. From then until today, the phrase “to the last furrow” symbolizes the determination of settlement and agricultural movements to advance the Zionist enterprise to the state’s borders to establish and stabilize them, despite the various challenges and obstacles.



In recent decades, there has been an erosion in the ethos of settlement and fortification of borders through it, as well as in the importance of Israel’s rural space. At the same time, urbanization trends and the abandonment of rural and agricultural settlement have intensified. The events of October 7 reminded Israeli society of the crucial importance of settlement presence along the country’s borders and its essential contribution to national security. The heavy price paid by settlements in the Gaza border region and the insistence of residents to return and cultivate their land underscore the necessity of updating the security doctrine. We must allocate an important role to Jewish and Israeli presence and the holding of land in frontier regions.

In lands without agricultural settlements, disorderly land takeovers are often observed. Our enemies fully understand how rural presence in an area demonstrates Israeli control and

sovereignty, and how Israel's determination not to retreat from these areas attests to the strength and stability of Israeli sovereignty. For the same reasons, they seek to claim these lands for themselves. Thus, when we are not present – they move in. Just as Jewish presence in the Gaza border region is crucial, so too is its necessity across the entire rural space of the country to reinforce Israeli sovereignty, continue the Zionist enterprise, and serve as an essential component of the defense and security doctrine.

Additionally, settlement contributes to Israel's ability to address various national challenges, including housing issues, agriculture, food security, and the preservation of national resources such as land and water. The global population continues to grow, particularly in failing Third World countries, contrasting with declining birth rates in the developed world. Alongside the overall increase in global population, there is a noticeable trend of rising life expectancy and an aging population in the developed world. In this respect, Israel stands out as a significant exception compared to other developed countries. Population growth trends and rising living standards, alongside modernization, industrialization, urban development, and transportation expansion, accelerate processes of deforestation and desertification, as well as the depletion of natural resources and climate-related challenges. These processes pose challenges for many countries in land allocation for housing, food and water supply, and coping with extreme climate conditions. Already today, it is estimated that half of the world's population faces water shortages, and forecasts suggest that in the coming years, most of humanity will face what international organizations term "absolute water scarcity."

In Israel, the population grew and was estimated at approximately 9.8 million residents as of December 31, 2023. In recent years, population growth has been around 2% per year.<sup>21</sup> Life expectancy as of 2021 stood at an average of approximately 82 years.<sup>22</sup> Alongside population growth and increased life expectancy, Israel faces similar challenges in the housing sector. This sector is affected by high land prices for construction, which are controlled by the state, as well as by the population's preference for living in the area between Gedera and Hadera for employment, transportation, and other reasons. Israel also faces challenges in food security, in addition to its unique challenges in the broader field of security and, in particular, border security.

Only about 10% of the country's land area is built-up (approximately 2,200 square kilometers), while 86% of the country's land is classified as "open spaces." The remaining land is designated as "disturbed land" (1.6%) or areas containing natural or artificial bodies of water (2.4%).<sup>23</sup> Of the open spaces, about 35% of the country's land is closed areas used for IDF training,<sup>24</sup> and

21 "Israel's Population at the Beginning of 2024," Central Bureau of Statistics, December 28, 2023, [https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2023/424/11\\_23\\_424b.pdf](https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2023/424/11_23_424b.pdf).

22 According to the data of the World Bank.

23 "State of Nature Report 2022 – Land Use in Israel," HaMaarag – The National Program for the Assessment of Nature's State, 2022, p. 14.

24 "IDF Training Areas on Land," State Comptroller – Annual Report 71B, 2021.

about 26% is protected as nature reserves and national parks. Approximately 20% of the open space is used for agriculture.<sup>25</sup>

Open spaces in Israel constitute the land reserves for future development and construction for generations to come. Therefore, there is a national importance in preserving these lands,

developing them, and passing them on to future generations in their entirety and in better quality than at present. The growing concentration of the Jewish population in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, alongside accelerated urbanization processes, threatens Israel's existing borders in a manner that could, in practice, concentrate and reduce the Jewish state to a small coastal strip. In this scenario, Israel would effectively—though not officially—abandon entire regions of its historical homeland.

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**The rural space plays a crucial role in the challenge of preserving land reserves for the continuation of national development**

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The high population growth and life expectancy in Israel will require continued development of national infrastructure in the coming years, such as roads, railways, power stations, and more, alongside diverse housing solutions, including the establishment of new cities and settlements. Therefore, the rural space plays a crucial role in the challenge of preserving land reserves for the continuation of national development.

## Agriculture

The allocation of land for the military and environmental factors restricts farmers to specific plots, leading to repeated agricultural cultivation over time, which degrades soil quality and reduces agricultural yield. At the same time, security and geopolitical challenges raise questions about Israel's ability to rely on imported agricultural products and food for domestic consumption, once again highlighting the necessity of local production—namely, the capability for independent agricultural production.

Hamas's surprise attack proved beyond any doubt that Israel's territorial defense doctrine, rooted in civilian settlement along its borders and within the socio-geographical frontier, is essential for national security. This is especially true given the lack of sufficient strategic depth. In many regions across Israel, the rural space in general—and the agricultural sector in particular—forms the security belt surrounding the country's borders, providing an initial line of defense against its many enemies. Without settlement in the Golan Heights, the Jordan Valley, Judea and Samaria, the Arava, the Negev, and the Gaza border region, entire areas would, in practice, be exposed to infiltration by those seeking to harm Israel.

In recent years, the self-defense capabilities of settlements have been stripped away, under the premise that the IDF and security forces would be able to provide protection at the necessary time and place, and that settlements themselves need not engage in active self-defense.

25 "Agricultural Sector in Israel – Economic Overview for 2022," Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, September 2023, p. 26.

However, considering the military's collapse in many cases, it was, in fact, the small standby squads that fought heroic battles to defend the settlements on October 7, 2023.

Over the past decades, a governmental trend has emerged to diminish the importance and necessity of rural areas, leading to their weakening and a decline in their status. The establishment of new agricultural settlements in strategically critical areas for land preservation has nearly ceased or faces significant difficulties. Additionally, the agricultural sector has suffered from declining state support in recent years. Although a significant agricultural reform has been promoted in recent years,<sup>26</sup> the most critical aspects of agricultural production, such as the costs of foreign labor and water, have not received sufficient attention.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, Israel's market for imported agricultural products has expanded significantly.

## Recommendations

Civilian settlement, particularly agricultural settlement, which maintains control over the space, roads, essential crossings, and strategic points in rural areas, serves as a key strategic force multiplier in Israel's efforts to address security challenges. It also acts as a barrier against the infiltration of hostile elements into Israel's urban centers. It is imperative to recognize the national importance of preserving these lands, developing them, and passing them on to future generations intact and in a better condition than they are today.

Israel's economy, especially its agricultural sector, faces structural challenges, as it cannot rely on neighboring farmers to regulate supply and demand—not in Egypt, Jordan, or even Turkey. Therefore, it is essential to support Israeli farmers through fair government assistance.

By doing so, Israel can continue to promote a broad agricultural presence across the country, including in frontier and peripheral regions, to strengthen the Zionist enterprise and establish a necessary pillar for national security and defense.

The central role of the rural sector must be reinforced, primarily to ensure a stable and continuous food supply at reasonable prices. Farmers must receive sufficient support to enable them to sustain their livelihoods with dignity. One effective approach is to subsidize farmers directly rather than subsidizing agricultural products. Although this debate has existed for many years and appeared to be settled, it should be reconsidered—particularly the possibility of subsidizing farmers who cultivate essential crops, allowing them to compete with imported produce. At the same time, the market should be opened to imports.

The primary issue in this regard is the farmers' inability to engage in long-term planning based on government subsidies due to frequent shifts in government policies and budget allocations.

26 Shlomo Teitelbaum, "The Treasury and Farmers Agreed on Fewer Tariffs and More Imports. When Will We Benefit from It?" *Calcalist*, July 5, 2022, [https://www.calcalist.co.il/local\\_news/article/hjuiqabsc](https://www.calcalist.co.il/local_news/article/hjuiqabsc).

27 Eran Sadeh, "The Agricultural Reform Crushes the Farmers," *Calcalist*, July 8, 2022, [https://www.calcalist.co.il/local\\_news/article/byix00lvi5](https://www.calcalist.co.il/local_news/article/byix00lvi5).

Mechanisms must be established to stabilize this support system so that it is not jeopardized during every state budget approval process.

Another recommendation concerns water management: Israel experiences an imbalance between supply and demand in its natural water resources, prompting successive governments to seek solutions to increase water supply and manage rising demand. To reduce Israel's reliance on natural water sources, increase supply, and decrease demand for freshwater, Israel must develop a national water management strategy tailored to environmental and economic needs. This strategy should focus on three main pillars: the reclamation and reuse of treated wastewater, seawater, and brackish water desalination, and improved overall water resource management.

At the same time, farmers should receive targeted assistance in water pricing, particularly for those cultivating essential, low-margin crops. In contrast, highly profitable crops such as herbs should not require subsidized water costs. This approach to water subsidies should complement the broader strategy of direct farmer support. It is important to remember that agriculture is the sole consumer of reclaimed water, which, without agriculture, would otherwise be discharged into rivers and eventually flow into the sea. Supporting farmers should therefore be prioritized, with assistance tailored to the types of crops they cultivate.

The rural space and agriculture serve as primary tools for land preservation. Protecting agricultural lands is crucial for maintaining Zionist land ownership, ecological balance, environmental quality, and the conservation of natural resources. Rural communities are deeply engaged in these issues. Consequently, it is vital to expand, as much as possible, the establishment of new villages, moshavim, and kibbutzim in strategic regions such as the Nevatim area, the Negev, the Galilee, and the Jordan Valley. Each of these settlements could manage approximately 5,000 dunams (fields, orchards, and grazing lands), benefiting both agriculture and land sovereignty. This vision is also feasible through the integration of Nahal (Pioneer Fighting Youth) core groups.



# Economy and Security Sustainability

## Economic Challenges

The structure and equipment of the IDF do not provide an adequate response to Israel's security challenges, such as the need to fight in a multi-front campaign. In recent years, the proportion of defense expenditures relative to Israel's GDP has been reduced from 7% to 5%—a gap reflecting approximately 40 billion shekels. Now, considering the war's challenges, Israel is obligated to once again increase its defense budget.<sup>28</sup>



Credit: Perachel paz Mark

To reverse the trend of military downsizing, Israel must promote a broader economic reform that is not solely focused on the military but also on correcting distortions created in the economic system and the perception that drives it. The government must take a series of measures that, among other things, will enable private consumption to drive economic activity (alongside exports) and improve public spending efficiency and government management. The more successful it is in revitalizing the economy, the more resources it will be able to allocate from the benefits of this recovery toward increasing the defense budget.

28 For further reading, see: Yaron Zelekha, *The Challenges of the Israeli Economy Following the Events of October 7*, Misgav Institute, July 3, 2024.

If between 2003 and 2007, the economy reached a per capita income level of 62% of per capita income in the United States, after adjusting for purchasing power parity—compared to 49% at the beginning of the period—then today, we have fallen back below the 50% threshold. Attention must be paid to this severe deterioration since then, despite Israel having enjoyed until the recent war the quietest security period in its history.

In 2003, private consumption in Israel accounted for approximately 55% of GDP, and by 2008, it had risen to 57%. Before the war, by comparison, the share of private consumption in Israel's GDP declined significantly, even below the levels preceding 2003—to about 50%.

Unlike models in the world that either prioritize private consumption or, on the other hand, emphasize the efficiency of government budget allocation, Israel falls between the cracks: it pursues a policy that suppresses private sector growth while deriving minimal benefit from government actions. The periods of rapid economic growth that began in 1985 and 2003 were driven by policies that freed private consumption to lead the economy while simultaneously improving government performance across various economic sectors. To change Israel's economic situation, it must aim to stop suppressing private sector growth and allow it to lead the economy as a central growth engine, thereby narrowing the gap with other countries worldwide. At the same time, government operations and expenditures must be streamlined.

In the past, in 1985 and 2003, the government was forced to focus internally on its budget and implemented relatively simple measures. Today, however, most of the loss in GDP stems from the high cost of living. This means the government must now take external actions—targeting importers, monopolies, and other entities.

In the field of taxation, there are three problems. In general, taxation is not levied on the less efficient sectors of the economy but rather on the more efficient ones, which reduces the incentive for further efficiency and hampers growth. One issue is the imbalance between indirect and direct taxes, as Israel's indirect tax burden is excessively high. This refers to taxes on expenditures rather than income. The ratio of these taxes to direct taxes is distorted, particularly harming individuals with a high marginal propensity to consume.

The second problem in taxation is that large businesses pay almost no taxes compared to what they are required to pay in the West, while small businesses are burdened with heavy taxes. The main tax burden falls on small businesses. The state is stifling these businesses, which are a key engine of growth.

A third issue unique to Israel is its tax system, which is complex and erratic compared to Western countries. Only large entities, which can afford top-tier tax professionals, benefit from this system. Small businesses, on the other hand, only suffer from this situation.

In the field of competition, most of the problems have emerged mainly in the last 15 years. Prices have risen significantly during this period: from an average of 5% lower than prices in the U.S., they have now increased to 35% higher than in the U.S. The tax distortions mentioned above harm competition. Additionally, high tariffs block imports that could compete with local businesses, and local monopolies receive government protection. Furthermore, the government enforces import quotas that are not related to product quality, demand, or production efficiency. Another issue is cross-cost structures among importers—where a single



entity succeeds in bringing most of the players from a particular industry worldwide to market their products in Israel exclusively under its control. Additionally, the government itself owns and fosters monopolies in certain sectors.

In the area of interest rates, the way Israel determines its interest rate creates upward pressure on housing prices. In turn, this increase raises the need for and dependence on mortgages among young couples, reducing the portion of their salary available for consumption.

Regarding budget efficiency, the government does not examine the effectiveness of every shekel it spends or seek the best alternatives. By doing so, it could save significant amounts in the public treasury and allocate existing funds more effectively.

The final factor is uncertainty: when the level of risk in the environment increases and confidence in our economic future declines, consumer spending responds negatively. A steady hand on the wheel, which corrects deviations as soon as they occur, generates greater certainty and improved trust. Over the past 15 years, there has been no coherent and reliable policy, leading to a rise in uncertainty.

The defense budget requires in-depth consideration and far-reaching changes. To assess the budget, a public committee on the defense budget has been established. The committee's mandate states that it will examine and formulate, among other things, recommendations regarding force-building needs and the defense budget for the next decade, with attention to economic implications and the impact on the state budget and the economy.

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**Israel has neglected its ability to arm itself and independently maintain sufficient stockpiles of weapons and ammunition**

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## Security Sustainability

During the Iron Swords War, which began following Hamas's surprise attack on southern Israel on October 7, Israel faced a major obstacle in achieving its war objectives: dependence on the supply of weaponry and ammunition from foreign countries, primarily the U.S., and on supply chains—dependence that disrupts its ability to conduct an intensive, continuous, and prolonged war.<sup>29</sup> According to reports, the rate of fire has often been contingent on the timing of American ammunition shipments, which have been arriving frequently in Israel since October to support its war effort. Such a situation undermines the independence of Israel's security forces and creates significant reliance on the Americans.

The experience of this ongoing war, lasting for months, demonstrates that Israel has shaped its military force structure over the years with substantial, even exclusive, reliance on a single primary source—the U.S. Consequently, Israel has neglected its ability to arm itself and independently maintain sufficient stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, placing all its trust solely in the Americans. When the government in Jerusalem found itself in disagreements with the U.S., as occurred during the war, the supply of certain weaponry was called into question.

29 For further reading, see: Yitzhak Klein, *Ensuring Israel's Security Sustainability*, Misgav Institute, August 16, 2024.

Moreover, at various points during the war, the U.S. administration used the supply of arms as leverage to pressure Israel into taking actions aligned with its own vision rather than Israeli interests.

It is possible that the gap between Israel's existential security needs and the priorities of the American administration is not a passing episode but rather a reflection of fundamental and significant differences between a patron and a client, between a global power and a regional player. Furthermore, there appears to be a major divergence in worldview within the Democratic administration, particularly regarding issues such as the Iran deal or the two-state solution, exacerbating tensions with the government in Jerusalem.

The public disputes and threats against Israel have damaged its image as a close ally of the U.S. and weakened its standing among friendly nations in the region and beyond, which had viewed Israel as a bridge to dialogue with the Americans. (Of course, this situation has also undermined the image of the U.S. as a nation that stands by its allies unconditionally.)

Additionally, Israel's dependence on the Americans is tied to the limitations of U.S. production capacity, over which Israel has no control. At the same time, as the U.S. supplies ammunition and weaponry to other countries, such as Ukraine, Israel risks being pushed down the American priority list, potentially leaving it unable to implement its security plans.

This concern is even more relevant in light of the necessity to expand Israel's ground forces, following insights from the war in Gaza, as well as the need to adapt the military structure to multi-front warfare and the numerous challenges Israel faces—including a potential pessimistic scenario of a major budget deficit and diplomatic isolation. All these factors necessitate broader armament, requiring independent production capabilities.

The disagreements with the Americans also raise concerns that, when the time comes, if Israel decides to take military action against Iran's continued nuclear development, the U.S. may withhold assistance or weaponry. The U.S. might even block Israel's actions or condition its ongoing "routine" support on greater Israeli restraint.

## Recommendations

Any change in economic policy cannot come from bureaucrats but must be led by those who set the policy: the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister, preferably both together. Leadership is required that prioritizes economic issues, is willing to pay political and personal costs for them, and possesses the courage, knowledge, and managerial ability to implement the necessary changes.

In the recovery process, it is crucial to replace senior bureaucrats and promote young professionals who still believe that change is possible. They need a structured guidance system, role models, and an action plan—though there will be a price for mistakes made due to inexperience. However, without them, initiating change from within the bureaucracy will be difficult.

Private consumption must be allowed to grow to its proper level, and government suppression of consumption must be reduced in a way that encourages private spending, which in turn will lower the cost of living while also improving government spending efficiency.

The security establishment must develop an advanced procurement, development, production, and acquisition plan that will enable it to implement any military strategy it deems necessary, based solely on Israel's security interests. As part of this, the IDF and the Ministry of Defense must anticipate the expected increase in Israel's security needs over the next five to ten years, particularly concerning the force structure required to confront growing threats across multiple fronts.

To overcome dependency on the U.S., alternative sources for acquiring ammunition, weapons, and advanced military equipment should be explored, either in addition to or as a replacement for current procurement from the U.S., based on the additional resources needed to expand the IDF's force structure. Strategically, Israel should thoroughly assess its available weaponry, examine where similar or alternative weapons are manufactured, and evaluate what it can produce domestically or procure from a diverse range of sources.

Israel may advance efforts to find other countries that seek to mitigate their security risks and enhance military sustainability through mutual cooperation. It should distribute its risks among several nations, develop security partnerships with them (even if only in specific fields), offer them Israeli weapons and technology in return, and establish their vested interest in maintaining these ties over the long term, ensuring a steady supply of weaponry and ammunition to Israel. Israel can also collaborate with nations striving to establish their own security sustainability, engage in trade with them, and ensure that transactions are based purely on economic interests.

Another key issue is how to align Israel's economic resources with the funding and implementation of its security strategy. To ensure security sustainability, resources must be allocated across several priorities: expanding and equipping the military—particularly given the need for a significant increase in ground forces based on lessons from the war; investing in research, development, and strengthening domestic production; importing weapons and ammunition while minimizing dependence on the U.S. to the greatest extent possible and allocating independent resources for international procurement; maintaining adequate military and civilian supply stockpiles for emergencies; fortifying infrastructure and decentralizing critical industries. Regarding stockpiles, the experience from the Iron Swords War suggests that maintaining a sufficient supply for one year of operational activity is a reasonable goal, assuming that stored equipment and weaponry can be kept in operational condition.

The government must also expand research and development efforts, focusing primarily on domestic needs: developing responses to emerging strategic threats, including risks identified since the start of the war, such as countermeasures against missile and UAV attacks, anti-tank missiles, and more. Additionally, every use of U.S. aid for arms procurement should be recognized as having a policy and dependency cost. Therefore, Israel should prioritize developing local alternatives to American weapons systems whenever possible within Israel's technological capabilities.

Finally, the government must account for defense budget expenses that are not directly related to procurement but still impact it. These include payments for reserve duty, compensation for wounded soldiers, property damage reimbursements, and funding for displaced people forced to leave their homes. All these factors will influence procurement capacity as a function of the defense budget, even though such expenses do not necessarily represent a long-term disruption to Israel's macroeconomic balance between government expenditures and revenues or its balance of payments over time.<sup>30</sup>

30 The forecast for economic developments published by the Bank of Israel in April 2024 projects additional costs due to the war amounting to approximately 70 billion NIS throughout 2024, with a budget deficit of about 6.6%. In 2025, the deficit is expected to reach 4.6%. Public debt may rise to approximately 67% of GDP in 2024 and remain at this level in 2025. These figures would have been intolerable if they reflected ongoing macroeconomic policy, but they represent a deterioration in public debt levels that is far less severe than the most pessimistic scenarios suggested at the beginning of the war. Naturally, these projections are accompanied by a high degree of uncertainty regarding the future. See: Bank of Israel, *The Macroeconomic Forecast of the Research Department, April 2024*, April 8, 2024, <https://www.boi.org.il/publications/pressreleases/8-4-2024>.

# Law, Governance, and National Security

## Challenges

There has been a decline in the ability of elected officials to manage security policy and law enforcement in Israel.<sup>31</sup> The government is responsible for foreign and domestic security policy, yet the judiciary apparatus has significant influence over policy decisions without bearing any accountability. The events of October 7 exposed a failure in the active dimension of accountability among military and intelligence leaders. They reflect a low level of political leadership involvement in critical decisions regarding strategic dilemmas, defense, readiness, force buildup, and senior appointments. As a result, the level of public oversight over the IDF and intelligence agencies through elected representatives remains weak.



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Hamas's freedom of action in the border area, which allowed it to gather intelligence and prepare for its attack, has legal roots as well. The legal doctrine under which the IDF operated considered the border area as governed by two simultaneous legal frameworks: those who were armed or engaged in combat fell under the laws of war and could be targeted, while those who were unarmed and not actively fighting were subject to law enforcement doctrines and could not be targeted unless they posed a clear, immediate, and tangible threat—subject to strict limitations. This approach led to the gradual and systematic erosion of the buffer zone,

31 For further reading, see: Raphael Biton, *Law, Governance, and National Security – A Reset in Light of October 7*, Misgav Institute, May 8, 2024.

which Hamas exploited for intelligence gathering, monitoring IDF routines, damaging barriers, and even attacking IDF soldiers under the cover of civilians approaching the fence.<sup>32</sup>

Currently, the IDF is establishing an expanded buffer zone (security perimeter) inside Gaza. This zone is already being challenged by Gazan “civilians,” who are likely being directed by Hamas operatives. The same legal and practical mechanisms that undermined enforcement in the previous buffer zone could weaken the new one as well.

Senior commanders in the military, having operated for years under restrictive legal constraints that prevent decisive victory and distance them from direct engagement, may develop an ingrained aversion to combat. This reluctance, which becomes second nature, can even lead to cognitive biases in intelligence assessments.

The threat of exposure to international tribunals, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, has significantly increased the influence of legal advisors in the military and the willingness to accept legal constraints. However, the restrictive approach adopted by the IDF is unlikely to be deemed sufficient by these tribunals. These courts reject Israel’s justified legal positions due to inherent biases, making the chances of fair treatment for Israel and Israelis in such forums very low.

The Basic Law: The law subordinates the IDF to the authority of the government but does not place it under its direct command. The government is responsible for setting strategic objectives, but the detailed translation of these objectives into operational orders—specifying movement, location, timing, methods, and goals—is reserved for the Chief of General Staff. This blurred boundary invites jurisdictional struggles and uncertainty, potentially leading to a misinterpretation of accountability within the military command structure.

The erosion of deterrence following the events of October 7 could also extend to Israel’s struggle against organized crime groups. Israel cannot afford to tolerate the existence of such organizations, some of which have hostile potential, alongside invasion threats and large-scale riots similar to those seen during *Operation Guardian of the Walls*. The fight against organized crime is currently viewed strictly as a law enforcement issue rather than an integral part of Israel’s security doctrine. Law enforcement agencies rely on the classic model of criminal enforcement, avoiding an administrative approach aimed at dismantling and preemptively neutralizing these organizations. This policy hampers efforts to combat organized crime, drains resources, and fails to address the problem at its core.

## Recommendations

Solutions to the legal issues in the Gaza border area: There appears to be no serious dispute over the claim that the October 7 attack was made possible, among other reasons, due to Israel’s security regime in the border area with the Gaza Strip. It is clear that if the IDF had maintained a strict regime prohibiting the approach of both terrorists and civilians to the border fence,

32 For further reading on the Supreme Court’s intervention in military matters and its implications, see: Yiska Bina on the “*Shomer HaSa*” podcast with Gadi Taub, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AqrkumJXz8>.

such an attack would have been nearly impossible to plan, prepare, and execute. It must be remembered that the risk of a recurrence of October 7 is not limited to the Gaza sector alone. With necessary adaptations, a similar event could occur in other sectors, such as the Lebanon border, the Syria border, the Jordan border, and the Judea and Samaria region.

A fundamental step in mitigating the risk of future October 7-type events lies in abandoning two legal doctrines: the first, which applies the laws of war to the border area, permitting the use of force only when there is an immediate threat or an armed individual; and the second, which applies law enforcement principles to those who are not lawful combatants, treating them as though they are participants in a “regular” demonstration. The IDF must declare a designated area near the fence as a restricted zone. This restriction must be enforced under the assumption that anyone knowingly violating it and approaching the fence constitutes a suspect. Likewise, in other border areas, a unique legal framework must be established. Emergency regulations allow the IDF to implement such measures. Within these restrictions, unauthorized civilian entry (from both sides of the border) should be prohibited. Access to the border area with certain types of vehicles (such as all-terrain or high-speed vehicles) should also be restricted. Any unauthorized person violating the security restriction should be treated as an immediate security suspect.

Another lesson that must be adopted to prevent future invasions and massacres is the abandonment of the law enforcement doctrine. The border area (in Gaza and, with necessary adjustments, in other sectors) should be treated as a conflict zone.

The procedural legal framework for overseeing military operations in the border area must also be reformed. A crucial lesson from the period preceding October 7 and from Supreme Court rulings on IDF rules of engagement in the border area is that the judiciary is not the appropriate authority to oversee the military’s operational orders. Managing border security risks requires expertise and knowledge that the judiciary does not possess. It also demands accountability, which courts do not bear. There is an inherent flaw in evaluating operational events through a legal lens. Judges and courts tend to focus on their perceived core functions—fairness and legality—while their ability to assess operational aspects with the same level of scrutiny is limited.

Changing the perception of International Law and Laws of War in the IDF: The Israeli Supreme Court often relies on public international law, specifically the laws of war and armed conflict, to decide petitions concerning the military. However, Israel applies international legal doctrines and laws of war that are not necessarily binding, limiting itself due to an unnecessary interpretation of the laws of war.

It is essential to recognize that international law is a limited legal system that evolves slowly and differs significantly from domestic law. Since international law is ambiguous and subject to numerous disputes, Israel must avoid treating it as an absolute system dictating the precise boundaries of its right to self-defense. Moreover, the consensus among Israeli international

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**Israel applies international legal doctrines and laws of war that are not necessarily binding, limiting itself due to an unnecessary interpretation of the laws of war**

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law experts does not necessarily represent all relevant legal perspectives. Therefore, security officials should seek a diversity of legal opinions.

Unlike views that give equal weight to military necessity and humanitarian considerations in the laws of war, we argue that Israeli security leadership must adopt an approach that prioritizes military necessity. Israel should embrace a legal interpretation that enables victory on the battlefield while adhering to the principles of international law through reasonable—not excessively restrictive—interpretations.

Erosion of governance as a catalyst to erosion of deterrence: The erosion of sovereignty and governance within Israel itself affects the likelihood that its enemies will attempt another invasion like October 7. Israel's adversaries observe areas where the military appears weak and hesitant in confronting criminal gangs, including within its own bases and training grounds, reinforcing their belief in the "spider web" theory of Israeli vulnerability. The fact that many of the criminal organizations undermining Israeli sovereignty are composed of minority groups may strengthen the perception among Israel's enemies that the Jewish state is weakening in the face of organized violence.

A significant portion of the activities of these sovereignty-undermining crime organizations occurs near border regions, involving cross-border expertise and practices such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and weapons trafficking. If some of these organizations were to cross the blurred line between crime and terrorism, Israel would face significant challenges in repelling a sudden invasion of its territory. Such a concern was evident during *Operation Guardian of the Walls*.

Therefore, Israel must immediately cease treating the fight against organized crime as merely a law enforcement issue. The core argument is that the battle against major criminal organizations must be recognized as an integral part of Israel's national security doctrine. Consequently, a policy of total eradication of major criminal organizations, particularly those near border areas, must be adopted.

It is recommended to shift from a reactive criminal enforcement model (focused on individual prosecution) to a proactive administrative model (focused on dismantling organizations and preempting threats). The ability to dismantle these organizations solely through evidence collection, prosecution, and conviction is limited.

It is proposed that the Minister of National Security be granted the authority to issue restrictive orders against the leaders and members of a criminal organization upon receiving intelligence assessments identifying it as a dangerous and armed criminal entity. The executive branch should be empowered to use administrative orders to deny these organizations all means of conducting criminal activities, especially those related to border-area crime.

The minister should have the authority to prohibit designated members of these organizations from moving in groups and to ban meetings between operatives. Additionally, the minister could restrict certain members—identified by intelligence agencies—from engaging in specific professions. For example, individuals linked to criminal organizations could be barred from employment in security services, banking, finance, or construction.



Strengthening the accountability of the security establishment's heads: There are multiple indicators of a lack of accountability among senior security officials. The most striking example was the exclusion of the political leadership from the strategic-intelligence dilemma leading up to October 7. While senior officials debated whether they were witnessing a military exercise or an imminent attack, none of them informed the elected officials overseeing them.

Another sign of an accountability failure is the apparent disregard by military command for the warning signs clearly reported by frontline soldiers and residents of the Gaza border communities. The failure of October 7 is also linked to poor appointment policies within the top security organizations and issues in force structure development. The elected leadership lacks the necessary tools to conduct meaningful oversight over senior IDF command and its general staff operations. The Prime Minister and Defense Minister do not have a sufficiently strong parallel staff structure to counterbalance the IDF high command.

Thus, mechanisms must be established to improve executive accountability and reform the dismissal procedures for senior security officials. One proposal is to strengthen the Israeli parliamentary hearing process, adopting a model like that used in the U.S. The relevant Knesset committee, particularly the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, should have the authority to summon any appointed or elected official for questioning, with refusal to appear subject to criminal penalties. Additionally, beyond the obligation to appear, there should be a legal obligation to provide answers, with refusal to respond—except in cases of justified and pre-defined exemption subject to criminal sanctions.

It is also suggested to review the dismissal process for security agency heads without altering the appointment process. While agency heads would still be appointed by the government under existing rules, a mechanism should be considered that allows the Prime Minister to exercise operational control over the military in accordance with government policy and to dismiss any security agency head with approval from the Security Cabinet or a designated ministerial committee. With approval from the designated governmental body, the Prime Minister would have the authority to dismiss the Chief of General Staff even for reasons as simple as a lack of operational harmony or the belief that a more suitable candidate should take over. The result would be a clear and definitive chain of accountability between security leaders and the political echelon, ensuring that government policy is implemented precisely. In return, government responsibility would also be absolute.

Mitigating the difference between responsibility and authority: Since October 7, public discourse has primarily focused on the degree of responsibility borne by the political leadership for the failures of that day. However, it is impossible to discuss responsibility without addressing authority. In a country facing security threats like Israel's, blurred lines of authority are intolerable. In urgent and existential situations—some of which arise unexpectedly—Israel's security hierarchy must be unequivocally clear. A mechanism should be established designating the Prime Minister as the supreme military commander, with decisions approved by a designated ministerial committee. If ultimate authority rests with the political leadership, so too must ultimate and full responsibility, ensuring that in times of emergency, there will be no uncertainty regarding the boundaries of authority and responsibility.



## Israel in the international arena

Hours after the murderous attacks by Hamas against Israeli citizens in the Gaza envelope, the international arena was in turmoil and was mainly characterized by condemnation of Hamas attacks and support for the State of Israel's right to defend itself.<sup>33</sup> As the war prolonged, international support for Israel eroded. The erosion of international support posed an additional challenge to the military effort as well as to the release of the hostages, which was marked by tremendous pressure on the State of Israel to fight under restrictions, while providing assistance to its enemies, and even to accept Hamas' terms for ending the war from a position of weakness and to hasten to reach a ceasefire in Lebanon despite the existence of a severe security threat on its border and beyond. This situation also had an impact beyond the war itself, forcing the State of Israel not only to contend with anti-Israel international actors around the world and their influence on the continuation of aid to Israel, but also creating difficulties in maintaining and deepening relations with friendly states that preferred to keep a low profile in their relations with Israel, both at the governmental level and in the business sector, until the storm passes.



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At the same time, the change in the mode of operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon and the two Iranian missile attacks on Israel, which reflect a shift from response to initiative alongside the severity of the Iranian threat, may prove to be the turning point in the entire war, which

33 For further reading, see: Joseph Rosen, *Iron Swords as a Catalyst for Challenges and Opportunities for the State of Israel in the International Arena*, Misgav Institute, April 30, 2024.

will also help restore Israel's status and consequently also in re-mobilizing support for Israel's efforts in various arenas from a position of strength. Against this backdrop, the following section will present the main challenges and opportunities in the international arena, with a focus on Israel's relations with the great powers and different regions, including the Middle East.

## Challenges

Prior to October 7, the State of Israel was perceived as one of the world's leading centers of innovation, a technological and intelligence powerhouse that successfully leveraged its innovative capabilities for political gains. A combination of global trends and events in Israel, including the judicial reform, harmed Israel's standing in the international arena.

These trends also impacted Israel-U.S. relations—Israel's status in the U.S. as a bipartisan issue eroded, and criticism against it intensified. Nevertheless, the U.S. remains Israel's central security pillar and a core component of its national security.

Conversely, Israel's relations with the other two great powers, Russia and China, continue on a negative trajectory. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its strengthening ties with Iran, the fabric of Russian-Israeli interests has unraveled, and Russia has become an adversarial actor toward Israel. Its response after the events of October 7 leaves no doubt about its support for the Iranian axis. Although Israel-Russia relations are currently at a low point, Israel remains overly cautious toward Russia and has yet to update its policy on Ukraine.

After October 7, Chinese messaging against Israel intensified, in some cases even expressing antisemitism. Moreover, China continues to provide diplomatic backing to the Iran-led axis and aligns with Russia in its responses to developments in the Middle East. What China and Russia share is that they are both revisionist powers challenging the existing world order, seeking to reshape it and position themselves as more significant players in a multipolar world order.

Meanwhile, despite a convergence of interests with Israel, bilateral relations with India have not taken off over the past year. Even after October 7, the Indian government has maintained its traditional policy of balancing between the Muslim and Arab world and Israel. The war disrupted efforts to shape a new regional architecture, which was highly relevant for implementing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), in which Israel was marked as a critical partner.

The surge in Japan's economic activity in Israel was halted by the war, and security cooperation remains far from realization despite significant potential and governmental willingness before the conflict. Other Indo-Pacific nations still view Israel as a success model and are interested in promoting technological cooperation based on a pragmatic approach, including Singapore, Indonesia, and South Korea. A part of the challenge is also identifying similar opportunities in countries perceived as part of the "Global South," which, despite being pro-Palestinian, are interested in Israeli innovation.

Negative trends have also developed in Europe, which has been swept by pro-Palestinian demonstrations by vocal and antisemitic minorities. European governments that initially stood by Israel are now reconsidering and, in some cases, implementing measures to limit

security cooperation with Israel, including arms embargoes. Managing relations with Europe, particularly at the EU level, has become highly challenging, and the war's impact has extended into civilian aspects as well. However, there are still friendly and pragmatic European countries, particularly considering the war in Ukraine, which leave room for optimism regarding Israel's ties with Europe.

On the regional front, Iran's attack on Israel has reignited efforts to shape a U.S.-led regional architecture, reflected in the formation of a regional defense coalition. However, at this stage, this coalition appears as an exceptional and limited development, with uncertain long-term impact beyond its concrete role as a regional defense umbrella, which will also be tested again in the event of an Israeli decision to strike Iran. The challenge is to establish Israel as a significant part of regional and international frameworks beyond the security sphere, such as the economic corridor between India, the Middle East, and Europe (IMEEC), the revitalization of I2U2, and the Abraham Accords.

Another arena where Israel faces highly complex challenges is the legal-diplomatic and political-diplomatic sphere in international organizations, particularly in dealing with the lawsuit against Israel at the ICC, proceedings against it at the ICJ, and even calls to expel Israel from the UN. These efforts are part of a combined anti-Israel campaign and broad international pressure to advance the two-state solution and recognize a Palestinian state. There appears to be increasing difficulty in promoting cooperation between Israel and professional international organizations due to their heightened caution in advancing initiatives alongside Israel.

## Recommendations

Despite the disagreements between Israel and the Biden administration, and the potential for disagreements with a Trump administration or President Trump himself, who may be unpredictable in certain cases and turn his back on Israel if it does not act as he expects, there is no alternative to the partnership with the U.S., and it must be nurtured to truly reflect a partnership. Accordingly, the Israeli government must prepare for a new U.S. administration, which is expected to be favorable, by focusing on ways to reshape the special relationship between Israel and the U.S. in a manner that better reflects shared values and strategic interests beyond the Middle East. As part of this, understandings must be formulated regarding Israel's operational space against its enemies, and new guiding principles should be outlined by dividing strategic issues that require updating, coordination, or cooperation, expanded upon in the section dedicated to the U.S.

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**There is a need for a better definition of opportunities and risks in relations with China, with an emphasis on the intersection between economic interests and national security interests**

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There is a need for a better definition of opportunities and risks in relations with China, with an emphasis on the intersection between economic interests and national security interests. This consideration should also consider the required and sensitive response to increasing overtures from Taiwan, particularly after October 7. The growing presence of China in the Middle East across various domains that impact Israel's interests must not be ignored.

A reassessment of Israel's cautious policy toward Russia is necessary, given that Russia is no longer a significant presence in post-Assad Syria and considering its ongoing hostility toward Israel and support for Iran. These considerations should not prevent Israel from taking necessary actions against Iran, against a hostile and dangerous Syrian regime should it become one, and against terrorist organizations attempting to operate against Israel from Syrian territory.

Beyond the great powers, attention must also be given to middle powers and other regions where Israel can gain support and create force multipliers against anti-Israel pressure. Accordingly, Israel must change its approach to the Indo-Pacific region and adopt an official policy that recognizes the importance of interrelations between the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East, engaging not only with QUAD countries led by the U.S.

Regarding Europe, it is crucial to work with pragmatic states to establish trilateral and other frameworks as countermeasures to policies against Israel and as alternatives to power centers in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin. In this context, the trilateral cooperation between Israel, Cyprus, and Greece should be strengthened as a force multiplier for implementing the economic corridor plan with the Middle East and Asia, as well as for countering Turkey and enhancing energy security. Italy and other Mediterranean countries could be integrated into this framework. Additionally, Israel should strengthen strategic dialogue and partnerships with Poland and the Czech Republic, which are emerging as the most pragmatic rising forces in Europe, partly due to their proximity to Ukraine.

In Latin America, despite most countries taking measures against Israel, led by Brazil, some have supported it. The Israeli government has significant partners on the other side of the world, particularly Argentina, along with Paraguay, Costa Rica, and Panama. However, Latin America is characterized by sharp political shifts, so maintaining open channels with countries not currently aligned with Israel is important for the future, especially with those claiming neutrality, such as Mexico.

Israel has experienced periods of close relations with Africa, particularly in security, water, and agriculture, as well as periods of diplomatic coldness. South Africa's actions should not cast a shadow over other African nations that have remained supportive of Israel. The Israeli government should engage consistently with key African countries, both through sustainable development cooperation and to counter anti-Israel trends on the continent. In this context, the private sector and academia also have significant roles, and cross-regional connections with countries holding interests in Africa, such as Japan and India, should be explored.

Another region that has not received sufficient attention is Central Asia and the Caucasus, where neutrality and a focus on sustainable development, energy, water security, food, and infrastructure have traditionally been priorities. These are fields where Israel has added value that can be leveraged, especially given the growing inclination of key countries in the region, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to reduce Russian and Chinese influence. Israel can play a significant role in this effort, also serving U.S. interests in the region.

In the Middle East, regional frameworks that were disrupted by the war, such as I2U2 and the potential for normalization with Saudi Arabia, which Hamas sought to derail, should remain central to Israel's regional strategy. It is essential to differentiate between the rhetoric of certain

countries regarding the Palestinian issue and their actual support for Israel's achievements in the fight against the Iranian axis. The more Israel demonstrates dominance and achieves success in the war, the greater the support it will receive from pragmatic states. Given the sensitivity of maintaining a high-profile relationship with the Israeli government, academia and the private sector should be encouraged to promote initiatives with *Abraham Accords* countries and add substantive content to government frameworks established in recent years.

In parallel with these efforts, Israel must recalculate its approach to international organizations, not just the UN and its agencies. It should continue to deepen cooperation with professional international organizations as much as possible, particularly the OECD, NATO, Interpol, and space agencies. On the political front, given the expansion of BRICS and Iran's membership, as well as the potential candidacy of the Palestinian Authority, Israel should work with its friendly members within the organization to advance Israeli interests.

On the political-legal front, efforts should be made to dismantle UNRWA, which perpetuates Palestinian refugee status as a political tool against Israel, while simultaneously exploring alternative mechanisms.



## Israel-U.S. Relations

### Challenges

Over the years, since the establishment of the State of Israel, a unique relationship has developed between the United States and Israel, which has been given various definitions: a “special relationship,” allies, a non-NATO ally, and more. Below, we will detail the components of this relationship, among other things, against the backdrop of the “Iron Swords” war.<sup>34</sup>

The prevailing perception in the United States of Israel’s military-strategic strength is of critical importance in shaping the assessment of Israel’s vitality as a strategic asset for the United States. In this framework, several important dimensions can be noted.



The intelligence dimension: For years, there has been an assessment in the U.S. that Israel possesses the capability to provide the United States with unique information, particularly regarding the Middle Eastern environment, which U.S. intelligence agencies would struggle to obtain. At the same time, there is a prevailing belief that Israel’s proximity to the Arab world and its close familiarity with Arab culture enable it to formulate a different, and even qualitatively better, situational assessment than that of U.S. intelligence agencies regarding Middle Eastern realities. This assessment has strengthened Israel’s status as a strategic asset for the United States.

34 For further reading, see: Zaki Shalom, *Israel-U.S. Relations Against the Backdrop of the Iron Swords War – Challenges and Issues*, Misgav Institute, May 19, 2024. Also, Zaki Shalom, *Restoring Israel’s Status as a Strategic Asset in the Eyes of the U.S. Requires an Unquestionable Victory in Gaza*, Misgav Institute, July 11, 2024.



It is commonly thought that beyond the concrete aspects of power and interests, the relationship between the United States and Israel is also based on a shared value system, primarily the belief in the necessity of a democratic regime, the preservation of freedom of speech and worship, family values, religious tradition, and more.

Although the shared value system is highly prominent in meetings between representatives of the two countries, we believe that the perception of Israel's strength in various dimensions constitutes the main component in shaping the close relationship between the two countries. In contrast, the shared value system holds a secondary status in importance.

There is a clear dependency between the perception of strength and the closeness of relations between the two countries. The basic premise is that the higher Israel's perceived strength in the eyes of the administration, the greater the tendency for cooperation and the fewer the disputes and crises between the two countries. This dependency is reflected in the issue of armament, a central challenge that has accompanied Israel since the beginning of the war. The Biden administration threatened to freeze arms shipments if the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza was not resumed on a larger scale. It should be noted that a similar threat was also made before the ground incursion into Rafah. However, the Biden administration distinguished between offensive weaponry, which was delayed through bureaucratic means (according to a complaint by Congressman Tom Cotton),<sup>35</sup> and interceptors required for the Iron Dome and Arrow systems, which the U.S. continues to supply, even adding its own systems to bolster the defense umbrella.

There is a clear asymmetry between the maneuvering space of the United States vis-à-vis Israel and Israel's maneuvering space vis-à-vis the United States: In principle, from the perspective of the U.S., there is a clear option of almost complete disengagement from Israel. Israel, on the other hand, has no real substitute for its relationship with the United States. This situation creates a state of dependency and inherent inferiority for Israel vis-à-vis the United States.

In practice, Israel also has powerful leverage against the administration: Israel generally enjoys broad support in Congress; in public opinion; it has a fairly strong and effective lobby within government circles; it has a supportive Jewish community with varying degrees of intensity; it possesses technological-scientific capabilities, unique and valuable intelligence strengths, and military capabilities that assist U.S. efforts against terrorism and other enemies in the region. These and other components make relations with Israel beneficial for the United States. The "Iron Swords" war has sharpened Israel's strategic dilemma regarding the relationship between the two countries and the question: To what extent, and under what circumstances, can Israel refuse a request/demand from the U.S. administration, especially when it comes from the president?

In recent months, a new strategic reality has emerged in the Middle East. Change of administration in the United States: The elections held in the United States in November 2024

35 Tom Cotton, *47 Senate GOP Colleagues to Biden-Harris Administration: Delaying Weapons to Israel Undermines Our Ally, Accommodates Iran*, August 2, 2024.

granted Donald Trump a sweeping victory over his opponent, Kamala Harris. His victory also included impressive achievements in the congressional elections.

The question at hand was: Where is the United States headed? Will it continue along the path set by President Obama and later President Biden, a path that led to the weakening of its status, prestige, and deterrent capability on the international stage, or will it take a new course that will restore it to its position as a leading superpower, a model to be emulated, and a source of hope for the free world? From President Trump's actions so far, it appears that the U.S. is moving toward unequivocal support for Israel, certainly regarding the objectives of the war in the Gaza Strip.

In our context, the most binding declaration was embodied in Trump's resolute demand that Hamas release the hostages by the date of his inauguration as president. If this did not happen, he threatened, the gates of hell would open. The president repeated this threat several times. It was clear to all that his prestige and credibility were now on the line. If he did not fulfill his threats, his deterrent power would be significantly harmed. The fact that he did not limit responsibility solely to Hamas led many actors, especially in the Arab world, including Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey, to fear the U.S. response.

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**The collapse of Assad's regime has also contributed to the weakening of Iran's strategic position and has increased the likelihood of an Israeli attack**

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In recent months, the perception has taken hold in the Arab world in general and in Lebanon in particular that Israel has defeated Hezbollah. Many public figures in Lebanon, including those close to Hezbollah, have explicitly stated their belief that Hezbollah has been defeated and that it must now lay down its arms and allow for the establishment of an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement.

The option of an Israeli attack on Iran has become much more concrete and feasible than before. This is due to Israel's severe blow to Iran, including to an important nuclear facility, which exposed Iran's military weakness to the world. If assessments are correct that Iran has been left almost without any significant air defense capability, this means that its ability to thwart an Israeli attack has been severely diminished. Moreover, the severe damage to Hezbollah has deprived Iran of a key component that was supposed to deter Israel from attacking Iran. Trump's inauguration as president likely ensures, contrary to the past, a favorable American stance toward an Israeli strike on Iran, especially in the event that Iran rejects Trump's proposal for negotiations aimed at the complete cancellation of its military nuclear program. The possibility of a joint Israeli-American attack now seems more realistic than ever before. The collapse of Assad's regime has also contributed to the weakening of Iran's strategic position and has increased the likelihood of an Israeli attack against it.

Given the above, it can be assumed that there is a foundation for a strategic shift in Israel's status, particularly in the regional arena. The Middle East that existed for many years has collapsed in every possible sense. There is now a real possibility of constructing a new Middle East. The great powers and leading countries in the region are, historically, in a situation similar to that of Europe after World War II, the fall of the Axis of Evil led by Nazi Germany and the rise of the United States as the leading force on the international stage.

President Trump, perhaps unintentionally, has given significant momentum to the realization of the new Middle East option through his demands for control over the Gaza Strip and the transfer of its Palestinian residents to other countries, as well as territorial control over Greenland, which is under Danish sovereignty, over Canada, and over the Panama Canal. The fact that President Trump has not hesitated to clarify that he is willing to use military and economic force to achieve his goals creates a clear legitimacy for leading a transformation of the Middle Eastern system.

## Recommendations

Israel now has an unprecedented opportunity to upgrade its geo-strategic status. To achieve this, it must act along several lines: ensuring political stability within Israel to guarantee the proper functioning of the government; strengthening the position of the prime minister; maintaining a proper relationship between the political and military leadership; resolving the legal dispute; and ensuring the stability of the Israeli economy.

Formulating the strategic objectives that Israel seeks to achieve within the broadest possible political framework, including the opposition in the Knesset. This should be done while coordinating a broad strategic understanding with the Trump administration, which must necessarily include agreements on the following key issues:

Eliminating Iran's nuclear option. From Israel's perspective, this should preferably be achieved through diplomatic means: an American ultimatum to Iran to voluntarily dismantle its nuclear capabilities under full international supervision. If Iran agrees, economic sanctions will be lifted, and the United States will work to improve Iran's economic situation and remove international boycotts against it. If Iran refuses, it must be made clear that the United States, together with Israel, will lead to the destruction of its nuclear project. The American threat must clarify that the military action could also include targeting Iran's leadership and economy.

Reaching understandings with Turkey regarding the new geopolitical structure of the Middle East. Israel must make it clear to the Trump administration that it respects Turkey's regional status and recognizes its right to promote its security position in the region. Israel has an interest in establishing close relations with Turkey in political, security, and economic spheres. At the same time, it expects Turkey to recognize Israel's right to secure its strategic position in a way that will prevent events like the October 7, 2023, attack from recurring. As part of this, understandings could be reached regarding the creation of buffer zones and security corridors for Israel against Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip. Israel will seek to reach agreements with Turkey on the implementation of self-determination for the Kurds and Druze in a manner that preserves Turkey's security interests.

Israel's framework of understandings with the United States will also need to include upgrading its relations with Greece and Cyprus, particularly in the energy sector. Israel cannot accept ongoing Turkish attempts to undermine its economic status through agreements with these two countries. Israel will seek to reach understandings on this issue under American auspices.

Israel must make it clear to the United States that it takes very seriously Egypt's actions in recent years concerning Hamas. Israel understands Egypt played a leading role in arming Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This activity constitutes a severe violation of the peace treaty with Egypt, which was signed under American auspices. Israel has shown great restraint in dealing with this phenomenon and has avoided bringing it to the agenda. The Israeli government has also refrained from addressing reports of Egypt's involvement in the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. However, Israel must receive guarantees that such incidents will not be repeated.

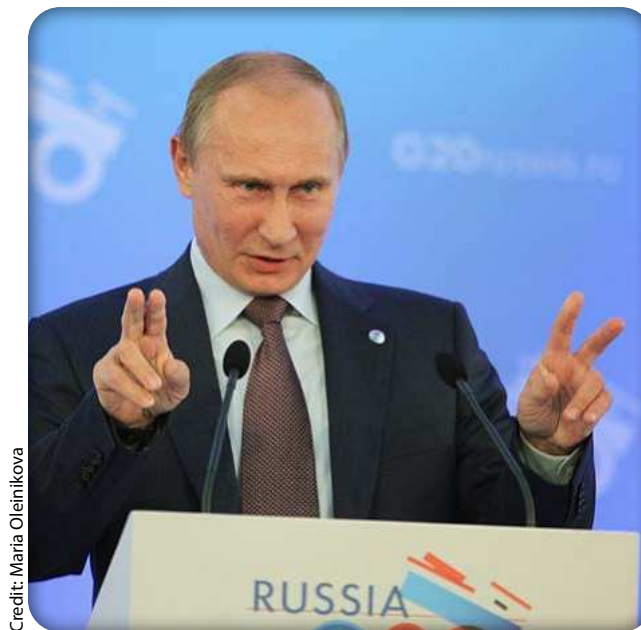
Israel will need to strive to cement its position in Judea and Samaria so that the Palestinian issue is removed from the global agenda. It must lead the U.S. administration to recognize that regardless of whether a Palestinian state is considered a positive or negative solution, it is, in any case, unrealistic under current circumstances. It is possible that the old autonomy formula, adopted by the Begin government, or a model integrating a Palestinian entity into the new regional architecture while laying the groundwork for a weakened Palestinian federation as a basis for a future confederation with Jordan, may prove to be more suitable solutions even today. The administration's role will also be to convince Saudi Arabia and other Arab states not to insist on the "Palestinian state" formula, as defined by the Palestinians or based on the traditional two-state paradigm, which has lost its relevance, as a condition for normalization with Israel.

Finally, President Trump's close advisor, Elon Musk, recently stated that Hamas must be destroyed because it teaches hatred. The administration now has the power to compel the Arab world to stop educating children to hate Israel. This is a long-term and difficult task, but the new administration can make it clear that any state that continues to educate its children to hate will not receive American aid. The United States will clarify that its experts will examine school textbooks and will impose sanctions on countries that do not demonstrate, at least gradually, efforts to change their stance toward Israel.

## Israel-Russia Relations

### Challenges

In recent years, Israel has pursued a cautious policy toward Russia based on two complementary efforts: reducing Russia's capacity for harm in the northern arena, particularly in Syria, and fostering bilateral relations in various fields to minimize areas of disagreement and create leverage and gestures that would serve the first effort.<sup>36</sup> The fall of the Assad regime and the weakening of the Iranian axis significantly alter Russia's role in the northern arena, as well as Israel's range of options for action in this theater, as Russian constraints become less significant and most of Russia's attention is directed toward Ukraine.



Bilateral relations between Israel and Russia have, over the past decade, progressed and resolved many longstanding issues due to the convergence of interests between the two countries. However, as the scope of relations expanded, so did Russia's expectations for greater returns in exchange for its role in the northern theater.

Israel has been perceived in Russia as a close ally of the United States, but one that does not blindly follow its lead. This created an opportunity for the Kremlin to drive a wedge between the two, while for Israel, it was an opportunity to position itself as a mediator between the superpowers. Russia had a strong interest in advancing bilateral relations both for access to Western markets and for the symbolic significance of conducting business and trade with a U.S. ally. Russia also sought to reclaim disputed church assets in Israel. Additionally, there may

36 For further reading, see: Joseph Rosen, *From Caution to Initiative: The Need for a Policy Shift in Israel's Approach to Russia Following October 7*, Misgav Institute, June 26, 2024.

have been concern in Russia about Israel's ability to harm its interests in Syria through Israel's campaign between the wars (MABAM).

Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014 and expanded the war against it in 2022. Russia and Iran, which had already developed close operational cooperation in the Syrian theater—including intelligence sharing, operational coordination, training, arms transfers, and logistical support—are now collaborating in the Ukraine war as well. The two countries are also aligned on Middle Eastern interests, including preventing a new regional security architecture, weakening the American presence, and undermining Israel. Their cooperation over the years significantly contributed to Iran's entrenchment efforts in Syria. However, the operational successes of the IDF during the "Iron Swords" war, particularly against Hezbollah in Lebanon, combined with rebel attacks in Syria against the Assad regime, have significantly weakened this axis and created fissures between Moscow and Tehran, forcing Iran to reassess its strategy.

At the same time, Russia has also cooperated with Iran's junior partners, Hamas and Hezbollah. Russia's ties with these terrorist organizations are longstanding and have deepened further since Russia's intervention in Syria in September 2015. Like Iran, Hezbollah benefited from training and weapons supplied by Russia in Syria, as well as from Russian tolerance toward arms transfers via air, land, and sea routes from Iran to Lebanon. Russia's relationship with Hamas is even older and deeper. For years, Russia promoted reconciliation talks between Palestinian factions, ostensibly to advance Palestinian unity in support of a two-state solution. In practice, Russia never added Hamas to its national list of terrorist organizations, despite recognizing the Muslim Brotherhood as such.

Politically, Russia has demonstrated anti-Israel and antisemitic positions, condemning IDF operations, in some cases even comparing the IDF to Nazi Germany and the siege of Leningrad, adopting Hamas's stance, and repeatedly calling for an end to the war as soon as possible. Kremlin-controlled media outlets have been given free rein to amplify antisemitic rhetoric, significantly influencing Russian public discourse and bringing antisemitism to the surface.

Simultaneously, Russian actors have expanded their influence campaign inside Israel through social media, aiming to widen divisions in Israeli society and emphasize disagreements between Israel and the United States, promoting the narrative that Western aid to Ukraine comes at the expense of aid to Israel. In this effort, the Russian Orthodox Church plays a crucial role, and its dual function under Putin's regime warrants careful scrutiny.

## Recommendations

The fall of the Assad regime has fundamentally changed Israel's core objectives concerning Russia in the northern arena. Since Russia has lost a central partner (Assad) for maintaining its interests in the Middle East, including its presence at the Tartus and Hmeimim bases, it must rethink its strategy to protect these interests. Consequently, Russia is engaging with Syrian rebels to at least secure these basic interests.

Under this new reality, Israel has a historic opportunity to act with greater independence, determination, and initiative to influence the shaping of the future northern theater. In addition to successful military operations to eliminate the remnants of the Syrian army and strengthen

its presence on the Syrian border, Israel must take diplomatic steps to ensure that the next regime in Syria does not threaten Israeli security and that Russia does not return as a restraining force on IDF operations in the northern arena if needed.

In this context, Israel must closely monitor Russia's policy adjustments and shifts in the northern arena and its continued cooperation with Iran. If the war in Ukraine ends, Russia-Iran cooperation is expected to change and inevitably decrease significantly without their two main shared operational theaters. These changes will also require reassessment of the extent of the risks Russia poses to Israel's interests. A possible end to the war in Ukraine and a reduction in Russia's ties with Iran could also create opportunities for renewed significant engagement between Russia and Israel, particularly on the bilateral level. However, given the new geopolitical circumstances, any steps in this direction should be taken from a position of Israeli strength, avoiding the excessive caution that has characterized Israel's approach to Russia.

Until such a shift occurs in the Russia-Ukraine war and Russia's new Middle East policy becomes clearer, Israel should operate under the working assumption that Russia is a strategic rival and threat to national security. Israel must maintain its operational freedom to strike targets in Iran, especially considering the increased export of Russian weaponry and missile technology to Iran—supplies that are currently struggling to pass through Syria. At the same time, Israel should maintain a working-level communication channel with Russia to ensure minimal understandings and message transmission, while also preserving political and strategic dialogue to create a hierarchy of messaging, response, and plausible deniability between the two states during crises.

Israel should increase monitoring and countermeasures against Russian influence operations in Israel, utilizing cyber tools and adopting appropriate regulations that address this activity comprehensively—not only in the Russian context—while paying special attention to the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in these activities. Another issue related to the church is its assets in Israel, which should be addressed through regulatory and legal means to prevent any progress toward their transfer to Russian control.

A professional and strategic dialogue should be initiated with Ukraine, focusing on sharing combat doctrines and methods, particularly in dealing with attack drones. Following October 7, expectations for Israel to provide military aid to Ukraine are unrealistic, but humanitarian and medical aid, intelligence sharing, and even the establishment of a legal framework for future security cooperation should continue as a symbolic countermeasure to Russian actions.

If the war between Russia and Ukraine persists, Israel should coordinate a visit by the Ukrainian president to highlight the similarities and shared interests in confronting radical entities, thereby strengthening international support for Israel's position. Israel should make clear to Russia that its new policy reflects pragmatism and geopolitical interests, and as such, it may change depending on Russia's future actions concerning Israel.

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**Israel should increase monitoring and countermeasures against Russian influence operations in Israel, utilizing cyber tools**

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Israel must prevent, as much as possible, Russian involvement in “the day after” in Gaza, which could allow Moscow to gain additional footholds in the Middle East and manipulate the conflict according to its interests. Given Russia’s hostile diplomatic activities, the Israeli government should prepare for potential Russian initiatives regarding Middle East nuclear disarmament, which may emerge as a countermeasure to Israeli actions against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Considering the rise in global antisemitism, not only in Russia, following October 7, renewed efforts to encourage large-scale immigration to Israel should be made. Additionally, Israel must take measures to prevent Russia from cynically exploiting the issue of antisemitism and Holocaust memory for propaganda purposes. It is recommended to revoke Israel’s official recognition of May 9 as Victory Day over Nazi Germany and instead align with most of the Western world, which recognizes May 8 as the Allied victory over the Nazis. Furthermore, Israel should publicly condemn continued antisemitic rhetoric from Kremlin officials, even when such narratives are used against Ukraine.

Several agreements between Israel and Russia were signed after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, while others are still under negotiation. Israel should reassess all agreements and consider canceling some of them. Additionally, Israel should tighten oversight to ensure Israeli companies comply with Western sanctions against Russia and, therefore, reduce the presence of such companies in the Israeli economy.



## Israel-China Relations

### Challenges

Before the war, China demonstrated increasing activism in the Middle East, as seen in its mediation of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia and its presentation of principles for implementing a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. These moves showcased China's ability to identify opportunities and fractures in the international arena and exploit them to its advantage.

This activism, particularly in the Palestinian context, is not beneficial to Israel. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not hold a high priority on China's agenda, except in cases where China can gain an image boost by positioning itself as a responsible global power, challenge the U.S., or when regional instability threatens Chinese economic interests. Chinese statements regarding the conflict have never been backed by actions or significant financial aid to the Palestinians.

Beyond its blanket support for the Palestinians, without distinguishing between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, China has challenged Israel on the international stage by calling for an international forum to discuss the war and repeatedly demanding an immediate ceasefire to prevent Israel from achieving gains against Hamas. China's negative stance toward Israel serves its broader struggle against the U.S. and the existing world order.

Chinese social media, especially TikTok, have also challenged Israel in the realm of influence operations by spreading antisemitic and anti-Israel content, at the very least with the tacit approval of the Chinese government, if not through direct orchestration. Additionally, reports from employees within Chinese companies indicate an organizational culture that encourages antisemitism among workers, including support for BDS.

Beyond the direct challenge to Israel, China's position is also perceived as responsible by many countries in the "Global South," which often view the Palestinians as "victims" or the weaker side in the conflict. This allows China to entrench anti-Israel positions within the Global South, which is significantly exposed to Chinese influence.

Regarding the Houthi threat, China once again demonstrated its strength in rhetoric and shaping its international image but showed weakness in action. Along with Russia, China condemned U.S.-led efforts to counter Houthi attacks but did not take any real steps to ensure the security of shipping lanes, due to some form of immunity granted by the Houthis.

Ultimately, China holds significant leverage over Iran, being its primary oil export destination, accounting for 83% of Iran's oil exports, and serving as a critical financial lifeline for the Iranian regime. However, China has chosen not to exercise this leverage, despite its proclaimed commitment to peace and stability. Additionally, in recent years, Chinese weaponry has flooded the Middle East, with some of it reaching Israel's enemies.

Alongside these diplomatic and security challenges, Israel must also address China's economic power and its potential to harm Israeli interests. While China is no longer the leading Asian

investor in Israel, especially in the high-tech sector, its importance to the Israeli economy remains significant, particularly in the supply of raw materials for Israeli industry.

During the war, and considering China's negative stance, concerns arose that Beijing might use economic pressure on Israel to push for an early end to the conflict. However, no large-scale actions were taken in this regard. It is important to note that China's economic leverage over Israel is limited, as Israel has no outstanding loans from China, almost no Chinese investments in its high-tech sector, and infrastructure projects involving Chinese companies are subject to strict Israeli government regulation. Nonetheless, the potential risk presents a challenge for Israeli decision-makers and requires better preparation.



Credit: Oleg Zartdinov

## Recommendations

Despite China's negative stance toward Israel since the beginning of the war, Israel should adhere to the traditional "One China" policy, which also serves as a diplomatic compass for the United States. If there is no shift in the U.S. position on this matter, Israel should not initiate a change in its own approach. At the same time, Israel should reassess its overall relations with Taiwan and expand cooperation in the technological and economic fields in a way that does not violate this policy.

Israel should express strong discontent with China's position since the outbreak of the war through clear and high-level bilateral channels, emphasizing that China's actions contradict President Xi's stated goals of promoting stability, development, and global prosperity. It is important to convey that Israel is determined to achieve victory and, despite its special relationship with the U.S., operates independently and proactively against its enemies.

Demonstrating operational and political independence, particularly if it leads to military success, may also help soften China's position.

Israel should establish an interagency security monitoring forum to track the extent of Chinese arms and critical component transfers to the Middle East and their leakage into the Iranian axis. This forum should provide updated situational assessments, trends, and countermeasures to different types of weaponry encountered by the IDF. Similar dedicated forums should compile intelligence on Chinese espionage activities (both industrial and otherwise) in Israel and assess the scale of cyberattacks—these findings should also inform an updated policy toward China.

Economically, while China has not imposed sanctions on Israel due to the war, the risk remains, making it necessary to map out critical raw materials supplied by China and explore alternatives. Israel should also assess the extent of China's influence over supply chains of essential components. Additionally, the completion of the free trade agreement (FTA) between Israel and China should continue to be postponed. Although this agreement only covers goods, signing it under the current circumstances would send the wrong message to both China and the U.S. However, this does not imply severing or worsening economic relations with China. Bilateral ties remain important, particularly given China's growing influence in the Middle East and its ability to engage with all actors in the international arena.

Israel should update the Foreign Investment Review Committee, led by the Ministry of Finance, making it more proactive and incorporating updated criteria that address regulatory gaps exposed during the war. This would help ensure economic continuity and protect advanced technologies and sensitive sectors from harmful foreign involvement. While Chinese investments in Israel have declined in recent years, updating this mechanism could send a necessary message to China, setting clearer boundaries for economic relations. Additionally, it could strengthen Israel's bargaining position with the U.S. regarding potential integration into U.S.-led economic and technological frameworks with allied nations.

In this regard, the committee should also thoroughly examine the impact of China's dominance in the electric vehicle (EV) sector on the Israeli economy. Over 20 Chinese car brands operate in Israel, accounting for about a quarter of all new vehicle sales, with Chinese EVs already making up around 70% of the market. As Chinese automakers face restrictions in North America and Europe, they are increasingly shifting sales toward Israel. The primary concern about these vehicles, as raised in the U.S., is potential espionage, but significant economic interests are also at play. Therefore, a comprehensive and serious assessment is needed to confirm or refute such risks and to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of restrictive measures. It is important to note that espionage threats could arise not only from Chinese vehicles but from any electronic device, whether Chinese or otherwise. Moreover, the dominance of a single manufacturer in an entire sector poses the risk of monopoly formation and price increases, driven by Israeli importers.

## Israel and the Indo-Pacific Region

### Challenges

In recent years, the Indo-Pacific region has become a central geopolitical focal point in the global system, partly due to the broad implications of the great-power rivalry between the United States and China.<sup>37</sup> This rivalry is reflected both in the economic and security spheres, with the Indo-Pacific region also adding a dimension of potential direct friction between the powers, primarily around Taiwan and the South China Sea. This situation leads the region to adopt a proactive approach and increase defense budgets against emerging threats, foremost among them a scenario of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and an escalation into a full-scale war between the United States and China.

Most countries take a pragmatic approach that moves away from a “zero-sum” perception in managing their diplomatic relations with the United States and China. However, despite these significant trends that present numerous opportunities for the State of Israel, no strategy or concept addressing the entire region has yet been adopted. As a result, Israel remains behind and does not fully realize its potential in relation to the region.

It is important to consider that the changes and characteristics of this region also impact other arenas and the actions of the great powers, including in the Middle East. For example, this region includes four nuclear-armed states, not including the United States and Russia, and the mere possibility of the use of nuclear weapons could lead to a nuclear arms race and the removal of restraints on the use of conventional weapons to achieve political goals, which would pose a very serious challenge for the State of Israel.

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**Israel remains behind  
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Pacific region**

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This region is expected to be the main growth engine of the global economy in the coming years. Currently, about half of global trade passes through it, and it accounts for 40 percent of global GDP. Its role in global supply chains further increases its importance. Therefore, Asia is a crucial component of Israel's economy, and there is also an existing framework of agreements, including partnerships in regional organizations and free trade agreements with many countries.

However, an important challenge arising from the war is maintaining the continuity of supply chains and promoting investments and transactions between the region and Israel, partly due to the attacks by the Houthis from Yemen.

There is also a major challenge in breaking the “zero-sum game” perception between a formal and deep relationship with the State of Israel and the need of countries in the region, most of which belong to the “Global South,” to safeguard their interests vis-à-vis the Arab and Muslim world, and in some cases also in relation to their local Muslim populations. This challenge intensified following October 7, as many countries ignored the severity of the event and treated Hamas' actions as part of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Few countries expressed clear

37 For further reading, see: Joseph Rosen, *It's Time to Adopt a Strategy for the Indo-Pacific Region*, Misgav Institute, July 21, 2024.

support for Israel's right to self-defense, with India standing out the most. The continuation of the war has created concerns about the high visibility of relations with Israel due to sensitivity to domestic public opinion and interests in relation to the Arab world, which has effectively led to a cooling of relations even with friendly countries.

Against this backdrop, it is also important not to overlook the demographic and political trends that present a general challenge not unique to Israel. Countries in the Indo-Pacific region are undergoing processes of Islamic radicalization, internal instability, and ethnic and religious tensions that escalate into political and military crises. These factors lead some of these countries, including fragile democracies, to distance themselves from the United States and its partners in the region, and move toward increasing Chinese influence, as seen in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, and others. While this is not a challenge exclusive to Israel, these circumstances further complicate Israel's efforts to expand its relations in the region.

At the same time, since October 7, Israel's relations with key anchor countries in the region have been characterized by heightened caution on their part and by maintaining a low profile in relations with Israelis. This has affected not only the diplomatic sphere (despite support mainly from India) but also the economic sphere. This trend has once again highlighted the challenge of breaking the "zero-sum game" perception between Israel and the Arab world and the ways in which the State of Israel is forced to contend with the traditional caution of Asian countries toward international conflicts.

## Recommendations

The State of Israel must formulate an updated, pragmatic, and complex strategy to maximize its benefits, create significant strategic value for the U.S. in the region, and strengthen cooperation with regional countries. The anchor states in this strategy should be India, Japan, Singapore, Australia, and South Korea; in a second tier, other friendly but equally important countries, particularly in the security domain, such as the Philippines, Thailand, and others, should also be considered.

Although many countries in the region are identified as part of the "Global South" and hold a traditionally anti-Israel stance, there is a small group of Indo-Pacific countries that take a more positive approach toward Israel at the UN, ranging from abstention to support, usually in alignment with U.S. and EU positions. Israel should support these countries and assist them in maintaining this stance. Additionally, it is important to recognize the gap between the anti-Israel rhetoric of many states in the region and their actual policies—despite their critical positions on Israel, these countries differentiate between the political sphere and the Palestinian issue and the economic ties with Israel, which are crucial for achieving their development goals. The fact remains that the countries in the region did not boycott Israel following the outbreak of the war.

A focused effort must be developed toward Muslim-majority countries in the region that have not directly experienced the shifts initiated by the Abraham Accords in the Middle East before October 7. Their negative stance toward Israel reflects traditional and automatic support for

the Palestinians, but it is due to a lack of familiarity with the region and the updated map of interests in the Middle East.

Beyond bilateral relations, Israel must work towards integrating into regional frameworks to create force multipliers and increase its visibility in the region. Some of the organizations worth examining include IPEF, RCEP, MRC, and BIMSTEC. Simultaneously, Israel should engage with friendly ASEAN member states (most of which have good relations with Israel) to develop avenues for expanding cooperation, at the very least by selecting one or two sustainable development projects involving Israeli companies.

Parallel to regional economic frameworks in the Indo-Pacific, the Israeli government should work with the U.S. and its QUAD partners (India, Japan, and Australia) to establish a QUAD dialogue framework with Israel, focusing on technological aspects. This can be raised with the U.S. partner in the strategic dialogue between the two countries. At the same time, understandings should be advanced with the U.S. to integrate Israel into specific projects under the AUKUS partnership framework, particularly in areas related to advanced semiconductors, quantum computing, cybersecurity, and more. In general, Asia has a strong interest in Israeli technologies, and Israel's greatest potential lies in advanced technologies that are at the core of U.S.-China competition.

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have created a reality of increased defense budgets in the region. This trend presents an opportunity for Israel to leverage its capabilities and experience gained in the war to boost defense exports while deepening dialogue and cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries. Countries in the region are seeking to diversify their defense imports away from Russia in favor of Western technologies, creating additional opportunities for Israeli exports. This applies both to strengthening security cooperation with longstanding partners and to developing new security ties, despite the sensitivity of some countries to the Palestinian issue. Therefore, Israel should expand its defense engagement beyond sales and consider increasing production bases in the region, particularly in India, to ensure supply for Israel during emergencies and serve as an additional export channel to third-party countries during peacetime.

Another recommendation is to establish a permanent inter-ministerial forum focused on the Indo-Pacific with an operational orientation. This forum should include most government ministries, led by the National Security Council or the Prime Minister's Office, to maintain an updated situational assessment of developments (both negative and positive) in the region and to promote an agreement framework that supports private sector activity in areas such as food security, water, agriculture, healthcare, sustainable energy, and academia in the region.

## **Specific Recommendations for India and Japan**

### **India**

India has a unique capability among global powers to serve as a bridge between the Global South in Asia and the Middle East. Israel should engage with India to revive the I2U2 framework and establish Israeli involvement in IMEC, based on the recognition of Israel's critical role in the success of this initiative. Specifically regarding I2U2, this framework strengthens India-Israel



relations while also advancing the vision of India's leadership, which aims for the India-Israel partnership to have a positive impact on their neighbors in the Middle East and South Asia.

India is Israel's second-largest trade partner in Asia after China. In recent years, economic ties between India and Israel have expanded, presenting numerous opportunities for further deepening the relationship, which would also influence other regional countries. Therefore, a timeline should be set for completing a free trade agreement between the two countries. Additionally, Israel's agricultural excellence centers in India should be transformed into technology incubators for food-tech and agro-tech, incorporating business models that would enable Indian and neighboring farmers using these centers to enhance their productivity, while making the centers themselves financially sustainable rather than merely training facilities.

Investments from India in Israel should be encouraged, not only in infrastructure but also in Israeli technologies. In this context, innovation should be promoted by establishing innovation frameworks in India that foster technological entrepreneurship and allow participation from entrepreneurs across South Asia—like the innovation center opened in Gujarat by both countries. The private sector in both nations should be encouraged to engage in high-potential fields with regional influence beyond bilateral India-Israel relations, such as agro-tech, food-tech, clean-tech, blue economy, med-tech, and climate-tech.

It is necessary to develop political-strategic dialogue frameworks between the countries beyond those taking place between the ministries of defense and foreign affairs, with an emphasis on national security advisors.

Public diplomacy – strengthening the connection between Jewish communities in the diaspora and Indian communities around the world based on a shared value foundation, and creating force multipliers in the fight against anti-Israel and anti-Semitic narratives.

In the security domain, India has been working in recent years to diversify its defense procurement and reduce its dependence on Russian weaponry, which is still very dominant in the Indian market. In parallel, India is investing significant efforts in developing its own capabilities (led by DRDO and NTRO) under the framework of Made in India. The State of Israel has an advantage over other suppliers due to the operational nature of Israeli technologies, many years of joint activity with the Indians that includes knowledge transfer and proven loyalty throughout India's wars, with an emphasis on Kargil (1999).

In this context, it is recommended that India and Israel expand the industrial-defense production base in order to ensure the supply of armaments to the IDF, and that surpluses or portions of this production be directed to promoting exports to third countries, subject to the sensitivity of the technology and relevant regulations, in order to create additional channels of income and to increase Israel's strategic asset in the region; and that cybersecurity cooperation between the countries be expanded: sharing methodologies, exchanging information regarding ways to cope with cyberattacks, adopting technologies and know-how for cyber defense with an

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emphasis on governmental services, and holding a regional (Indo-Pacific) dialogue regarding cyber norms. All of this with a regional perspective beyond bilateral Israel-India cooperation.

## **Japan**

At the end of 2022, Japan updated its core national security documents for the first time since 2013, reflecting concerns over China's military buildup and the implications of Russia's war in Ukraine. One of the key aspects of Japan's new security concept is a significant increase in its defense budget, with a focus on missile systems, air defense, and cybersecurity. These changes in Japan's security posture present numerous opportunities for the State of Israel and are also significant in the broader context of the Indo-Pacific region.

In the defense domain, the war in the Middle East and the potential threats Japan faces from North Korea and China create many opportunities for Israel to advance knowledge-sharing, operational experience, methodologies, and technology cooperation with Japan. In this context, the political-security dialogue between the two countries, established in 2018, should be leveraged. A technological-defense cooperation framework should be developed, focusing on cybersecurity, radar systems, air defense, and missile technology. A pilot program should be established with Japan's defense industries using a B2B model for specific technologies that align with Japan's security strategy.

In the economic domain, Japan has surpassed China in recent years as the largest source of foreign direct investment flowing into Israel, including an increase in the number of offices opened by leading Japanese corporations in Israel. Therefore, negotiations on a free trade agreement should be expedited, and diplomatic efforts should be made to secure Japanese support for Israel's inclusion in regional economic frameworks, such as IPEF and RCEP, in which Japan is a key participant.



## Israel-Europe Relations

### Challenges

Europe encountered the war in the Middle East amid significant political, demographic, economic, and security transformations that had been accelerating due to several factors: massive migration from Muslim countries, an intensified political struggle over the leadership of the European Union following years of German dominance under Angela Merkel, Russia's invasion of Ukraine bringing war to Europe's borders, and an uncertain economic future with continued energy dependence.



Credit: REC Stock Footage

These developments have deepened polarization between left and right in Europe; between conservative and pragmatic states and those that prioritize progressive liberalism at all costs; between those supporting continued European aid to Ukraine and those arguing that the cost is too high; between those who still believe in multiculturalism and those fearing Islamic radicalization in Europe; and between those seeking to advance ties with China and those supporting Taiwan and calling to restrict China.

The European Union has never appeared less united, and against this backdrop, Israel has also become a controversial issue over the past two years. Even before the war, European countries criticized Israel for what they perceived as democratic erosion. With the outbreak of the war, the initial support from some European governments for Israel's right to defend itself—expressed through arms supplies and curbing pro-Palestinian protests in key capitals—was later replaced by harsh criticism over the prolonged fighting and concerns about a humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

Key governments that had supported Israel, even against vocal domestic opposition, and actively assisted in arming Israel and in joint military operations with the United States (such as the UK against the Houthis), eventually succumbed to public pressure. This, combined with political shifts, led them to take steps to restrict defense exports to Israel, potentially culminating in a full embargo. A European decision on this matter depends on signals from the United States and a decision by Germany, while other European states lack real leverage in this domain despite the negative message such a move would send.

Despite Germany's public support for Israel, in practice, even without an official decision, German defense exports to Israel have significantly declined. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron declared that France does not export arms to Israel, following the decision to bar Israel from participating in a major defense exhibition in Paris. Similarly, the UK decided to suspend 30 out of 350 export licenses to Israel; Italy announced it would halt arms exports to Israel, though its defense ministry confirmed that contracts signed before October 7 would be honored; Belgium's government called for a comprehensive European arms embargo on Israel; and in the Netherlands, a court ordered the suspension of component supplies for F-35 aircraft.

Beyond the security challenge, European Union institutions and key member states are pushing for unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state. Additionally, European countries are pressuring for expanded humanitarian aid to Gaza and are working to protect UNRWA, despite

the agency's role under Hamas in the October 7 attack and its contribution to perpetuating the conflict.

At the same time, European concerns are mounting over continued Israeli military operations in Lebanon despite a ceasefire agreement, the takeover of the buffer zone in the Syrian Golan Heights, and a potential Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear and oil facilities. This has led to European efforts to restrict IDF operations in these theaters and promote an end to the war. Some European states are also considering imposing sanctions on Israeli ministers, following legal proceedings against Israel at the ICC and ICJ, and after the European Council already imposed sanctions on three organizations and five individuals over alleged violence against Palestinians and obstruction of humanitarian aid. These policy initiatives align with U.S. pressure on Israel to end the war prematurely, making it increasingly difficult for Israel to counter attempts to shape a regional architecture that would harm its core interests.

Economic challenges from Europe have also emerged. Although the EU remains Israel's second-largest trading partner after the United States, significant difficulties have arisen in maintaining open skies between Israel and Europe. Despite the European Aviation Authority's decision to permit flights to Israel, airlines have been slow to resume operations. This has hurt economic activity between the two sides and contributed to Israel's sense of isolation. Additionally, the European Commission faces growing pressure to reevaluate research and development projects with Israeli universities, including those under the Horizon Europe program, in which Israel participates.

Concerns over academic cooperation are directly linked to pro-Palestinian and pro-Hamas demonstrations across Europe, particularly on university campuses. These protests reflect a sharp rise in antisemitism in Europe since the war's outbreak, raising serious concerns for the security of Jewish communities. The surge in antisemitism is not solely driven by Muslim immigrant populations but also by progressive elements on the European far left, which were already hostile to Israel before the war. At the same time, Israel cannot rely on the support of far-right elements in Europe, some of whom hold antisemitic views as strong as those on the radical left, even though they currently focus on Muslim migration as Europe's central problem.

Despite these challenges, some European countries continue to support Israel. Overall, just as the EU lacks consensus on other key issues, there is no unified European stance on Israel either. This provides Israel with maneuvering space to engage with different European countries and even leverage wartime achievements to deepen ties with supportive nations.

## **Recommendations**

Israel should distinguish between symbolic gestures from European states and practical steps that directly harm its ability to protect its vital national security interests. In this context, Israel must utilize all channels to counter efforts to impose an arms embargo on Israeli military imports, while focusing specifically on countries and components that are critical and irreplaceable from other sources.

At the same time, the war presents a significant opportunity to further strengthen industrial-defense cooperation between Israel and European countries that are directly affected by the

war in Ukraine, particularly the Czech Republic and Poland. These two states are emerging as the most pragmatic in Europe, with the highest growth potential (partly due to Ukrainian migration) and a strong willingness to invest in military buildup, where Israel can play a crucial role. Israel's defense establishment, defense industries, and Ministry of Economy should prioritize these countries in Europe, recognizing that they represent a new and different leadership within the continent.

Israel should reach new understandings with Germany regarding defense cooperation and continued arms exports, while making it clear in strategic dialogue that IDF operations adhere to international law and meet stricter standards than any other country has previously upheld. In the UK, the Labour Party does not show strong support for Israel, but public diplomacy efforts targeting the Hindu community in Britain, which has ties to Labour, could help balance the current government's criticism. The Israeli government should present alternative political proposals or, at the very least, policy ideas to reduce European pressure, particularly from France, which is pushing to introduce its own unilateral initiatives. If there is an active dialogue on political alternatives, the likelihood of Europe taking unilateral steps on the Palestinian issue decreases.

Israel should also establish multilateral frameworks with friendly European countries such as Greece, Cyprus, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Serbia, and the Netherlands. This would help prevent a European consensus against Israel while also advancing technological and defense cooperation with some of these states. Such cooperation would serve as a force multiplier for Israel within Europe and as a backup against European Commission decisions to suspend scientific collaborations with Israel under the Horizon program. Israel should also engage with Italy and Greece on implementing the IMEC project, in which Israel is expected to play a key role.

As part of the fight against antisemitism in Europe and efforts to reach critical audiences, Israel should consider using a narrative that emphasizes similarities between Israel and Ukraine in their struggles against forces that challenge the existing global order. This can also be leveraged to expose the hypocrisy of the BDS campaign against Israel and highlight its antisemitic nature.

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## Regional Challenges for Israel

### Challenges

The war has a negative impact on Israel's integration into the region and on public opinion regarding it in Arab countries.<sup>38</sup> This impact has harmed normalization, particularly in the level of People-to-People relations between Israelis and citizens of Arab states. The tension in relations with Egypt and Jordan is spilling into a dangerous realm, as alongside significant hostility towards Israel and sympathy for the Palestinians among the publics in both countries, there are evident signs of distancing between the leaders and erosion in security understandings, with an emphasis on Egypt. This trend is only worsening and escalating following President Trump's vision regarding the Gaza Strip, which is based on relocating its residents to Arab countries, including Egypt and Jordan.

The internal stability in Egypt and Jordan is deteriorating. The economic reality in Egypt, in the shadow of the crisis in revenue from the passage of commercial ships through the Suez Canal and the decline in tourism, is worsening, while demographic factors only accelerate problematic processes. Jordan is under internal demographic pressures, a rise in the power of political Islam, and a tangible threat from Iran on its eastern border, all against the backdrop of an economic, energy, and water crisis. The combination of internal issues with a public hostile to Israel and the ongoing war is a dangerous mix. Given the significant erosion of trust between the leaders, the risk only increases.



Credit: noamgalai

38 For further details, see: Asher Fredman, *Israel's Regional Challenges Following October 7*, Misgav Institute, May 26, 2024.

On the other hand, the pragmatic Arab leaders in the region are pleased— even if they do not express it publicly or even criticize Israel publicly— with Israel’s success in severely striking Hamas and the possibility of its elimination, the severe blow to Hezbollah, and the weakening of Iran. Indeed, the successful repulsion of the Iranian attacks on April 13 and October 1, 2024, and the building of a coalition against it, highlighted the advantages of continuing regional cooperation. Israeli success in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, and damaging Iran while restoring deterrence against it, will make Israel more of an asset for regional leaders. Failure will harm Israel’s status and invite criticism and hostility towards it.

The Abraham Accords states, with an emphasis on the United Arab Emirates, have maintained the framework of the agreements. However, despite the stability of the agreements, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of their erosion in the event of prolonged stagnation and the absence of a clear Israeli decision accompanied by a political horizon concerning the Palestinian issue. The clearer the Israeli decision, the easier it will be for regional countries to accept Israel’s security and other conditions regarding an arrangement with the Palestinians.

Until October 7, there was positive momentum for normalization, and Israel was on the verge of an agreement with Saudi Arabia and even advancing ties with additional Muslim countries, such as Indonesia. Although the fundamental logic and motivations for cooperation with Israel remain in place, the hostile atmosphere towards Israel in many Muslim countries makes it difficult for regional leaders to openly support normalization. It is possible that states considering advancing normalization with Israel will demand greater concessions, in the form of Israeli compromises to the Palestinians as well as U.S. assistance. Another challenge that existed before October 7, and has only intensified since, is the insistence of the current U.S. administration to incorporate the Palestinians into the equation when discussing possible normalization agreements. It is likely that a Trump administration would be more convenient for Israel in this regard but would certainly demand a price from Israel on the Palestinian issue to advance normalization with Saudi Arabia, a top priority for President Trump.

Iran and its proxies continue to be perceived as a central threat by many states in the region. The potential for regional security cooperation in the fight against Iran was demonstrated on April 13, 2024, when Jordan actively participated in thwarting the Iranian aerial attack against Israel and to a more limited extent in the second Iranian attack on October 1, 2024. Expanding this cooperation requires open activity, as there is a limit to how much it can be developed “under the table.” Another challenge is that deepening such cooperation entails the risk of exposing Israeli military or intelligence assets to hostile elements that may infiltrate some of the security bodies of regional states.

Qatar continues to pose a complex and problematic challenge for Israel. Alongside its active involvement, backed by the U.S., in negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of hostages, Qatar continues to support Hamas, host its leaders on its soil— despite reports of its demand for them to leave Qatar— allow it to manage its terror funds from Qatar, and encourage Al Jazeera to act as a mouthpiece for Hamas and to continue inciting the entire Arab world (further elaboration in the section on Qatar).

## Recommendations

Maintaining security along the Jordanian and Egyptian borders and continuing security cooperation with regional states. Israel must strive to maintain calm along these borders and assist as much as possible in preserving the stability of the regimes. At the same time, it should advance—despite significant public hostility—the improvement of economic and political relations. (It should be noted that during 2024, there was a significant increase in trade between Israel and Egypt, partly due to the decline in trade volume between Israel and Turkey.)

Relations with Egypt hold high strategic importance for Israel; therefore, efforts should be made to reach understandings regarding the Philadelphi Corridor and to prioritize Egypt as a mediator with Hamas over Qatar. Conversely, it is important to clarify to Jordan and Egypt the limits of incitement against Israel and their involvement in its persecution in international tribunals. Jordan is dependent on Israel for water and energy supplies, and it would be wise to find a creative and discreet way to remind it of this.

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**It is in the interest of both Israel and the Abraham Accords states to identify avenues that will provide renewed legitimacy to the peace and normalization agreements**

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Preserving and deepening ties with the Abraham Accords states: The relations between Israel and the other Abraham Accords countries have mostly remained stable, but there has been a deterioration in personal interactions and public expressions of warm peace between Israel and these countries. While economic and security ties have continued, there is a limit to how much these relations can develop if they remain below the surface due to fear of public backlash. It is in the interest of both Israel and the Abraham Accords states to identify avenues that will provide renewed legitimacy to the peace and normalization agreements.

Expanding normalization and regional integration in light of the ongoing war, including granting special status and Saudi-Emirati leadership in a renewed arrangement for the Gaza Strip, and leveraging U.S. support to establish security cooperation under CENTCOM and counter ballistic and other threats from Iran and its proxies.

Creating conditions for constructive involvement in Gaza with regional partners. The Gaza Strip will require reconstruction and economic development, as well as a process of de-radicalization. Moderate regional states, such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, may be able to play a role in Gaza's rehabilitation and administration after the war. However, these states will be unwilling to engage in Gaza if doing so leads to their perception as assisting an Israeli "occupation" of the Strip or as undermining Palestinian national aspirations. At the same time, considering that these states are aware of the nature of Hamas, their willingness to participate in Gaza's governance or reconstruction as long as Hamas remains the dominant force on the ground is very low. However, if the price of their involvement in Gaza in the "day after" scenario is recognition of a Palestinian state, this may be too bitter a pill for Israel to swallow at this point, given the absence of the necessary conditions required from Israel's perspective.



## Israel-Qatar Relations

### Challenges

The events of October 7, which were made possible in part due to Qatar's support for the terrorist organization Hamas, and Qatar's conduct in the negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of hostages, have clearly demonstrated that the emirate can no longer be considered a pragmatic partner for Israel.<sup>39</sup>

Qatar is one of the primary financiers of Hamas, both directly and indirectly. The emirate also provides Hamas with political and logistical support. Despite reports of instructions for Hamas leaders to leave Qatar, it continues to host key figures from Hamas's leadership. Despite the significant leverage Qatar holds over the organization, it has limited itself to mere threats and has refrained from exerting its full influence on Hamas to advance a framework for prisoner releases. Qatar's double game, its ambitions to enhance its regional standing under the guise of mediation efforts, and its leveraging of its regional influence to exert negative impact on the free world—especially in the U.S.—all work against Israeli interests. Qatar's active involvement in the “day after” in Gaza would further complicate and burden the situation.

Qatar's response to the events of October 7 underscored its support for Hamas, both through the Al Jazeera network— which has become Hamas's propaganda mouthpiece and the most dangerous incitement platform in the Arab world— and through its continued opposition to so-called Israeli “crimes.” The emirate is working to bring about an immediate end to the war in Gaza under conditions that would leave Hamas in power.

Qatar also seeks to play a dangerous role in the “day after” scenario. The emirate is a staunch supporter of the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza but prefers Hamas over Fatah, making it likely to push for a model involving Hamas's participation in governance.

Iran and Qatar maintain close relations. Iran supported Qatar after the Gulf states imposed a boycott on it, during which the import of Iranian goods into Qatar increased significantly. The partnership between the two states is also evident in their solidarity and Doha's alignment with Tehran, even at the cost of clashing with Washington: following Iran's aerial attack on Israel on April 14, Qatar informed the U.S. that it would not allow the use of its airspace and bases for military action against Iran.

Qatar also tirelessly works to strengthen Islamist movements such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The emirate has hosted the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership, including its spiritual leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Qatar's financial support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt allegedly began as early as 2013. It has also been claimed that Al-Qaeda and ISIS operatives established financial networks within Qatar, and in 2021, the U.S. State Department launched an investigation into Qatari assistance to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Qatar

39 Noa Lazimi, *Israel-Qatar Relations: Key Challenges and Policy Recommendations*, Misgav Institute, June 30, 2024.

also backs the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe (especially in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Germany) through its Qatar Charity foundation.

Over the past two decades, Qatar has successfully cultivated an attractive and influential image in the West, leveraging its immense wealth, role as a major energy supplier, and various soft power tools, including extensive funding for American academia, investments in overseas assets, and positioning itself as a top mediator. The status Qatar has achieved in Washington, where it is seen as a vital strategic ally, poses an obstacle for Israel in enlisting U.S. pressure to change Qatari policy toward Hamas. Italy, Germany, and Britain have also become some of Qatar's most important trading partners.

Qatar is the largest foreign donor to academic institutions in the U.S. According to estimates, over the past two decades, the total value of Qatari donations to American universities and contracts signed with them has reached \$4.7 billion. It appears that to maximize its influence over American academia, Qatar has concentrated its donations on a small number of elite institutions in the U.S. At institutions that received undocumented funds, political campaigns to silence academics were more prevalent, and students reported greater exposure to antisemitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric.

## Recommendations

Israel cannot expect Washington, at least in the near term, to replace its warm embrace of Qatar with a more assertive approach that would force Doha to withdraw its support from Hamas and exert its full influence on the organization. Therefore, Israel must do everything in its power to minimize Qatari influence in the Palestinian arena, which comes at the expense of vital Israeli interests.

Israel should not accept Qatar's central role as a mediator in the hostage deal. At the same time, if the emirate refuses to comply with demands to expel Hamas leaders from its territory and instead resorts to empty threats or symbolic statements about instructing them to leave, Israel should consider targeting Hamas leaders in Doha. Additionally, regarding the "day after," Israel must block Qatar's efforts to establish itself as a key player in advancing frameworks for Gaza's civilian governance and reconstruction, as this would effectively strengthen Hamas's governing mechanisms that remain in place after the war.

In discussions with international actors, it is crucial to highlight Qatar's ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and terrorist organizations, as well as the severe consequences of its interference in the Middle East for regional stability. In this context, a broad media campaign should be launched to expose Qatar's true face as a state sponsor of terrorism and undermine its image as a moderate Muslim state and fair mediator.

At this stage, Israeli policymakers should focus their efforts not necessarily on the U.S. administration but on lower levels of influence. It would be more effective to engage in productive dialogue with members of Congress, professional bodies, organizations, and advocacy groups working to expose the motivations behind Qatari foreign policy and its problematic influence. Among other things, the focus should be on the issue of Qatari influence in American academia and the need to take steps to counter this phenomenon. Promoting the initiation of a federal



investigation into universities receiving Qatari funding could also be an effective measure to examine the extent of its impact on the rise of hostility toward Jewish students on campuses.

Israel would do well to enlist European governments in this effort so that they take economic measures against Qatar due to its support for Hamas and radical Islamism. Additionally, efforts should be made to engage with actors in the private sector, civil society, and influential opinion leaders who maintain ties with the emirate, encouraging them to boycott conferences and international events hosted or funded by Qatar. Declaring the cancellation of their participation as a protest act until all hostages are released could serve as a significant pressure mechanism.

## Israel-Turkey Relations

### Challenges

Since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became Turkey's Prime Minister in 2003 and later its President in 2014, relations with Israel have consistently deteriorated.<sup>40</sup> Erdoğan has adopted a harsh anti-Israel stance and frequently condemned Israel's actions during military operations in Gaza and the West Bank. The momentum of the Abraham Accords and the strength Israel gained from them pushed Turkey to adopt a more conciliatory approach, alongside its shift in policy toward the Gulf states and Egypt. This led to a renewed dialogue between Jerusalem and Ankara.



Credit: thomas Koch

Erdoğan aspires to restore Turkey's historical glory from the Ottoman era and establish it as a regional superpower based on Islamic solidarity, investing heavily in developing a robust defense industry and securing its presence and influence in Syria following the fall of the Assad regime. As part of this strategy, Erdoğan pursues an aggressive Islamist policy, erodes Turkey's secular heritage, and strengthens ties with Iran-aligned states. Simultaneously, Turkey has cooled its relations with the U.S., Europe, and NATO. These tensions escalated in 2019 when Turkey purchased Russian S-400 air defense systems, contradicting NATO's arms policy. This purchase infuriated Washington, which retaliated by blocking Turkey's acquisition of F-35 fighter jets and imposing additional sanctions on Turkish procurement agencies.

Since October 7, Turkey has hardened its stance against Israel in a manner unprecedented even in previous periods of tension. For example, Turkey's decision to sever trade relations with

<sup>40</sup> For further details, see: Noa Lazimi, *Israel-Turkey Relations: Key Challenges*, Misgav Institute, May 26, 2024.

Israel as an act of solidarity with Hamas— and to bolster its standing in the region— represents a worrying shift from hostile rhetoric to tangible economic measures against Israel.

Turkey serves as a major hub for Hamas operations abroad (for instance, the failed suicide bombing in southern Tel Aviv in August 2024 was orchestrated in Istanbul) and actively supports Hamas in various spheres: economic, military, political, and ideological. Despite the October 7 attacks, Turkey continued strengthening ties with Hamas leadership and views it as a legitimate candidate to lead the Palestinian population. Following the announcement of the freeze in Qatari mediation, there have been increasing reports of Hamas leaders relocating to Turkey. Through these and other means—such as its attempts to act as a mediator in hostage negotiations—Turkey seeks to gain influence in the Palestinian arena. Ankara is also trying to shape the “day after” scenario in Gaza, having called for a security arrangement that would position Turkish forces in Gaza and the West Bank after the war. For now, this initiative has been thwarted.

Ankara is a major contributor to the Gaza Strip. According to a statement by the Turkish president in early April, Turkey has already delivered approximately 45,000 tons of aid to Gaza, including food, medical supplies, hygiene products, tents, ambulances, and generators. Recently, efforts have been underway in Turkey to organize a humanitarian aid flotilla to Gaza’s shores, led by the “Freedom Flotilla Coalition,” which includes the IHH organization—responsible for the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla.

Despite being one of Israel’s key trading partners and despite past political crises that did not impact economic relations, in this war, Ankara decided to restrict the export of dozens of goods to Israel, particularly in the construction sector. It later froze all trade with Israel, granting only selective approvals to Turkish exporters. Such a boycott could have severe consequences for Israel’s construction industry, which relies heavily on Turkish imports.

Turkey has been increasingly asserting its presence in East Jerusalem. It is working to penetrate both the religious establishment and the Islamic political system in the city. Ankara transfers millions of dollars annually to Islamic associations in Jerusalem, one of the most prominent being *TİKA*, which promotes an extremist Islamic agenda. Through these activities, Turkey seeks to align the Muslim population in the city with its own positions. Additionally, under the guise of religious tourism, Turkey aims to establish control over mosques on the Temple Mount and other holy sites, playing an active role in incitement and provocation against non-Muslim visitors.

Turkey is one of the largest gas consumers in the region, and like Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus, it seeks to become an energy hub. Amid the deteriorating relations in recent years, Israel has established a new framework for cooperation with its neighbors Cyprus and Greece, much to Ankara’s dismay. This project has been stalled due to Turkey’s military intervention in Libya in January 2020 and its maritime agreement with Libya’s prime minister, which effectively blocked the eastern Mediterranean and sought to prevent Israel and its partners from laying an underwater gas pipeline to Europe without Turkey’s approval.

Since the fall of Assad— a process facilitated in part by Turkey’s broad support for the rebels— Ankara has been working to establish a pro-Turkish governance alternative that aligns with

Erdoğan's neo-Ottoman ambitions to turn Syria into a Sunni Islamist stronghold under Turkish patronage. Turkey has wasted no time and has already declared its commitment to help Syria “rebuild” while strengthening its trade, security, and energy ties with Damascus. It has even offered to train the new army under the leadership of *Abu Mohammad al-Julani*. More recently, Turkey has escalated its actions by threatening a military invasion— a move likely aimed at pressuring the U.S. to withdraw support for the YPG, a Syrian-Kurdish militia affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*PKK*), which is designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the U.S., and the EU.

The expansion of Turkish influence in Syria could place Ankara in a more adversarial position toward Israel, especially as the conclusion of *Operation Iron Swords* remains uncertain. The scenario in which Erdoğan leverages a favorable regime in Syria to facilitate the movement of hostile actors and weaponry toward Israel's border—or even orchestrates infiltration attempts through proxies—must be taken seriously.

In conclusion, Turkey's actions in the region and its broader international policies contribute to instability in the Middle East, positioning it as a player with whom Israel may find it increasingly difficult to maintain strategic ties. Moreover, its recent maneuvers and alignment with the radical axis pose a significant potential threat to Israel's national security.

## Recommendations

Israel should not longer tolerate Turkey's direct support for Hamas, particularly its central role in building Hamas's economic empire, which enabled the barbaric October 7 terror attack.<sup>41</sup> Israel should make it clear to Turkey that continued sponsorship of terrorist organizations, especially Hamas, will no longer be ignored. It is recommended that Israel push this issue with its close ally, the United States, urging it to use its leverage to curb Turkey's dangerous actions.

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Israel should pressure the U.S. to demand that Turkey close Hamas's offices on its territory, revoke citizenship and passports granted to Hamas leaders and their associates, and expel all Hamas operatives from its soil immediately. Additionally, Israel should push Ankara to take legal action against entities operating within Turkey that are involved in financing organizations designated as terrorist groups by the U.S., as it has previously demanded in relation to Iran and Russia.

Israel must cut off Ankara's attempts to expand its influence in the Palestinian arena at the expense of vital Israeli interests. Turkey's efforts to position itself as a mediator in hostage negotiations must be blocked, and its involvement in the “day after” in Gaza must not be permitted.

41 For further details, see: Noa Lazimi, *Israel-Turkey Relations: Policy Recommendations*, Misgav Institute, June 13, 2024.

Following Turkey's intervention in the ICJ case against Israel, Israel should consider promoting a lawsuit against Turkey through a third-party country for war crimes committed by Ankara during its occupations in northern Cyprus and Syria, including the ethnic cleansing of Greek Cypriots and Kurds in those regions.

The complaint filed by Economy Minister Nir Barkat against Turkey at the OECD, citing violations of international trade agreements following the severance of trade relations with Israel, is a step in the right direction. Efforts to pressure Ankara in international economic forums should continue. Israel should also engage the U.S. in this matter, urging it to impose economic and political costs on Turkish companies boycotting Israel. Washington has a key legal tool in this context—the *Export Administration Act*, which prohibits U.S. companies from participating in or complying with economic boycotts imposed by third-party states against U.S. allies, including Israel.

Israel must reduce its dependence on Turkish imports, particularly in the construction sector, and seek alternatives. One option could be imposing a 100% tariff on Turkish goods, weighing the benefits of such a measure against the potential harm to lower-income populations in Israel. A less severe approach could involve labeling goods from hostile countries, including Turkey, allowing Israeli consumers to decide whether to boycott Turkish products.

Israel should take decisive action to neutralize Turkish influence in East Jerusalem and on the Temple Mount. Several important measures were formulated in the past but were only partially implemented. Policymakers should condition any Turkish-funded activity in East Jerusalem on the cessation of Hamas operations in the area. Additionally, Israel should take a firm stance against subversive organizations undermining Israeli sovereignty in the capital, such as *Mirasımız* ("Our Heritage") and *TIKA*, and shut them down immediately. The recent decision by the Jerusalem Municipality to revoke property tax discounts for the Turkish-backed *Yabous* organization, which is linked to anti-Israel entities, is a step in the right direction.

Israel should deepen its cooperation with Greece and Cyprus, thereby strengthening a strategic trilateral alliance that would support their shared interest in exporting gas from the region. This alliance could also serve as a regional bloc to counter Turkey's hostile actions. Together with Greece and Cyprus, Israel should work against Ankara's aggressive behavior in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly its efforts to obstruct the *EastMed* pipeline project and other provocations. The trilateral alliance should continue urging the EU to condemn Turkey for violating the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*. Additionally, Israel should enlist U.S. support for the regional partnership and encourage Washington to pressure Turkey to halt its provocations.

Regarding Syria, it is still too early to determine the nature of the emerging regime in Damascus, its level of reliance on Ankara, and its stance toward Israel. Israel took the right step by swiftly deploying tanks and infantry forces across the border fence, and it should continue leveraging the current momentum to strike various targets in Syria, thereby degrading Iran and Hezbollah's capabilities. Furthermore, Israel must insist on the continued presence and even expansion of American military forces in the Syria-Iraq-Jordan border triangle. This would prevent the entrenchment of pro-Turkish Islamist forces and other hostile actors in neighboring Jordan,

which is already under threat from Iran's efforts to topple the regime and launch attacks on Israel from the east.

Regarding the Kurds, Israel should consider providing covert support in coordination with the U.S., ensuring that such assistance remains discreet. It would also be beneficial for Israel to convince the American administration to maintain its military presence in the region and, under this cover, explore potential avenues for secret aid. A strong Kurdish presence serves as a crucial counterweight to the spread of radical Sunni Islamism, which is hostile to Israel.

The situation differs when it comes to other minorities in Syria, such as Christians and particularly the Druze, who—unlike the Kurds—are geographically much closer to Israel's border. Supporting them aligns with Israel's interests, but this should be done without provoking Erdoğan unnecessarily or escalating the situation in a way that could backfire against Israel.

# Discourse, Academia, and Media

## Challenges

The threat to the State of Israel is an existential threat of the highest order, requiring absolute mobilization. Since the threat to Israel is unprecedented in scope, Israel's response must also be different from the past.<sup>42</sup>

The war that Israel faces will not be decided solely by military force but by all the resources that each side brings to the battlefield, foremost among them human resources. Determination, belief in the righteousness of the cause, willpower, values, and a moral compass are required by the fighting army no less—if not more—than all other resources at its disposal. Human resources are built through a continuous process of public discourse, which in democratic states takes place voluntarily.

The public in a democratic society is dependent on epistemic authorities, as it tends to attribute credibility to them, prefers their opinions over those of others, and rarely challenges them or seeks additional sources of information. Those with epistemic authority can often serve as the “final word” in each field, thus shaping public opinion and having a decisive influence on decision-making.

In public discourse in Israel before October 7, as well as since that day, the dominant perception has been the utopian-naïve perception, which did not allow for the correct identification of the threats facing the state and, consequently, did not assist in the proper handling of these threats.

Academia in Israel, as in other places in the world, tends to encourage herd thinking and intellectual mediocrity. Senior lecturers appoint and promote junior lecturers who are favored by them and who hold a worldview like their own. The appointment system in academia, as well as the distribution of awards, allows for mediocrity and clique formation, which encourages conformity and creates fear among those with different opinions from expressing their views.

Another structural problem is moral relativism and the value crisis that has afflicted the West in recent years. In wide circles, the distinction between democratic and non-democratic societies has been blurred. Justifications can be found for almost every atrocity committed by totalitarian regimes or terrorist organizations. Additionally, there is a tendency not to view academic research as a continuous effort to uncover larger parts of the truth but rather as a tool for social activism aimed at rectifying real, artificial, or imaginary injustices.

42 For further reading, see: Adi Schwartz, *Israeli Discourse 2.0: What Went Wrong?*, Misgav Institute, May 7, 2024.

Furthermore, a central motivation for an Israeli academic is to be regarded as worthy in the eyes of American academia. There is a very strong positive incentive to align positions with those accepted in American discourse.

Israeli academia did not challenge the perceptions within the security establishment and the political echelon, such as the claim that Hamas was deterred or regarding Palestinian aspirations in general. Most of the Israeli academia saw Israel as responsible for the lack of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and those who argued otherwise were ostracized from the mainstream.

In the media - a universal structural problem is the superficial and shallow discourse in journalism, which has only worsened over time. Economic pressures and intense competition lead media outlets to attempt to achieve maximum reach (ratings), often at the expense of the quality of journalistic output. The result is a populist and inflammatory discourse, filled with slogans, in which it is impossible to conduct a serious discussion on the significance of events.



Credit: PrinceOfLove

Another structural problem is the inherent dependence of journalists on their sources of information. Every journalist relies on sources to provide news, and these sources will always prefer to work with journalists who rarely criticize them and serve more as a conduit for transmitting their messages to the public. Journalists who are found to be overly critical of the government system are pushed aside, denied access to leaks, and may quickly be expelled from their media outlets. The result is that journalists become spokespersons for their sources rather than acting as the “watchdog of democracy.”

In Israel, there is a unique problem: the control of the Israeli security establishment over public discourse and the decision-making process is considered severe, and any journalistic attempt to criticize the military places the journalist outside the mainstream and compels them to align with the army.



The Israeli media did not fulfill its role in the days leading up to October 7. The necessary questions were not asked of the security and political establishment, and there was no serious tracking of the procurement or preparations that the security system should have undertaken in anticipation of a war. There is almost no real and pointed criticism of the senior military ranks through a realist-assertive approach. When the security establishment states that “ Hamas is deterred,” the media accepts it as absolute truth.

Most media outlets suffer from monolithic “groupthink” that lacks diversity. This is reflected in the narrow range of opinions presented and the prevention of the expression of views considered provocative or “extreme.”

Another problem that exists in Israeli media is their defeatist stance and the sense of despair that some of them convey, precisely in times when resilience and public composure are required. The media rarely focus on Israel’s successes in the campaign and see themselves as an opposition to the government, committed to criticizing it at all costs.

## **Recommendations – Academia**

An independent and non-partisan academia serves as a beacon of intellectual creativity, and government intervention may stifle academic innovation and pluralism.<sup>43</sup> However, Israeli academia, which is supposed to function as a space for critical discussion and the exchange of ideas, has been drawn into ideological extremism, employing silencing mechanisms that contradict the spirit of academic freedom. To correct this distortion, we propose intervention mechanisms aimed at restoring balance to academia—something it cannot achieve on its own from within. It is important to emphasize that the goal of intervention is not to suppress academic freedom of expression but to ensure the existence of a pluralistic and diverse discourse while safeguarding the fundamental values of Israeli society.

In recent years, Israel’s higher education system—especially university administrations and senior officials—has become a political entity that serves as an opposition to the incumbent government. Any attempt to introduce changes to the higher education system is highly likely to provoke responses such as “the end of democracy” and “fascism.” The heads of the system are expected to resist any change and to leverage their full influence to prevent such changes. This resistance must be taken into account. Additionally, since every government decision is subject to review by the Supreme Court, and given the current political climate in which the court frequently intervenes in and overturns government decisions, it is highly likely that the court will prevent the government from implementing significant changes.

Adding to these challenges is the most critical one: the effort to reform the higher education system without harming its valuable components. High-level academic research is a crucial national asset, particularly for a country like Israel, which relies on technology to strengthen its economy and national security.

43 For further reading, see: Adi Schwartz, *Israeli Discourse 2.0 – How to Fix It?*, Misgav Institute, August 14, 2024.

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**It is recommended to adopt a policy of political neutrality in academic institutions. Preferably, this should be done voluntarily**

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**Reducing Politicization:** It is recommended to adopt a policy of political neutrality in academic institutions. Preferably, this should be done voluntarily, meaning that academic institutions themselves should implement the necessary regulations. However, if they fail to do so, mandatory measures, such as legislation or regulations, could be considered. This would prohibit recent phenomena in Israel, such as collective political statements from the Council of University Heads (e.g., regarding hostage deals) or statements by senior officials within specific universities. The right to express opinions on current affairs should be preserved for individuals in their personal capacity, but not as part of their academic role. Another way to achieve this goal is by introducing an ethical code in academic institutions to ensure a clear distinction between academic activity and political activism. The aim is to prevent faculty members from turning university classrooms into platforms for political indoctrination, to protect students, and to promote pluralism and intellectual diversity.

**Increasing Transparency:** It is recommended that non-governmental organizations (such as the Student Union or other civil society groups) monitor the level of politicization and lack of diversity in various university departments. A potential model for this is the monitoring conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the United States regarding antisemitism on campuses. A structured methodology should be developed to ensure that such monitoring is not perceived as an attempt to settle personal or institutional scores. Another recommendation is to require university presidents to provide regular

reports to the Knesset Education Committee, like other public bodies. This would involve a mandatory biannual or annual meeting in the Knesset, where Members of Knesset and other public representatives could receive updates and pose necessary questions to university leaders. Additionally, it is recommended that the State Comptroller investigate politicization in higher education institutions.

**Enhancing Diversity in Academia:** It is recommended to encourage donors from Israel and abroad to establish research funds dedicated to benefiting Israeli society. The goal is to engage Zionist donors and motivate them to invest annually in supporting doctoral research and academic studies that promote Israel's agenda, for example, in fields such as the Middle East, international relations, political science, strategy, military affairs, and national security. This would serve as an alternative to the dominant academic agenda currently present in universities. Furthermore, it is recommended to train and encourage a young generation of Zionist leadership. Similar to programs like Talpiot and Havatzalot, the state should identify young students from middle school or high school and develop academic study and enrichment programs for them. Universities typically compete for outstanding and talented students, and they would have an interest in winning government bids for the right to train these young individuals. These students could later form the next cadre of top-tier students in higher education.

**Increasing Student Involvement:** Greater student involvement in curriculum planning could positively influence the intellectual climate. This could be achieved through the Student Union, which, at least at present, appears capable and willing to elevate its level of engagement in universities. To avoid government-led initiatives that might be perceived as political interference

and provoke fierce opposition, it would be preferable for student representatives to take the lead in advocating for changes to academic faculty and promoting diversity. Additionally, it is recommended to amend the Student Rights Law to explicitly prohibit political indoctrination in academic coursework. Student ombudsmen, who already exist within academic institutions by law, could then address student complaints regarding political indoctrination.

## Recommendations – Media

The essence of the media as a primary social tool, which assists in making information accessible to the public, in clarifying positions, and in making informed decisions, is its ability to operate freely, without government intervention or the imposition of political positions from any side. Turning the media outlets in the country into an institutional propaganda arm stands in clear contradiction to their reason for existence in a democratic state. The media must be able to function as the “watchdog of democracy” or as the “fourth estate.” Therefore, we are not trying to block opinions or limit the freedom of action of media outlets but rather to create the necessary conditions to increase diversity and prevent the stagnation that has spread in Israeli media and has led it to function in a monolithic manner that misses its purpose.

Most of the media market in Israel is in private hands. While more than 80% of higher education institutions in Israel receive public funding and only about 15% of institutions are private institutions, in the field of media, the situation is completely reversed. Except for the Public Broadcasting Corporation and Army Radio, the entire media market is in private hands. Naturally, the ability to influence private entities is significantly lower than that over publicly funded entities.

Another challenge that currently exists in Israel, and is particularly severe in the field of media, is the challenge of legitimacy. The journalistic elite tends in a certain political direction and makes it very difficult for new players or those who do not align with that direction to enter.

**Regulation and legislation:** Until recent years, many restrictions were imposed on the establishment of television channels, which made it difficult for new players to enter the picture and caused the market to be in the hands of a small number of players. In 2023, Minister of Communications Shlomo Karhi presented a bill that sought to close the Second Authority and reduce the regulation involved in operating television broadcasts. Unsurprisingly, the proposal was met with strong criticism from research institutions and media outlets.

Unintentionally, the advancement of technology may resolve the problem of regulation on its own. Currently, the broadcasts subject to regulation are those transmitted via cable and satellite only. Broadcasts transmitted via the internet are not subject to any form of regulation. As the market share of internet-based broadcasts increases, the Second Authority (and with it the regulation) will cease to be relevant to the Israeli television market. The implication is that it will be easier for new players and those not yet economically established to enter the television market. The main recommendation regarding regulation is to let time and technology take their course. The energy and struggles required to change the existing structure do not justify the effort. The assessment is that within a period of months or a few years, the television market will be entirely or largely transferred to internet-based broadcasting.

**Supervision and control:** The ability of elected officials to influence the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, which replaced the Israel Broadcasting Authority in 2017, is greater than in private media outlets. According to the *Israeli Public Broadcasting Law, 2014*, the corporation has a council, which is supposed, among other things, to determine broadcasting policies, approve programming schedules, and appoint the corporation's CEO. The main recommendation is to ensure that the decision-making process in the council takes place with equal representation of Zionist left and right in the council and that decisions are made with broad consensus. To prevent real or perceived complaints about political takeover attempts, it would be appropriate that for every council member with a certain political leaning, a member from the opposite side is appointed.

**Funding and budgets:** One of the ways in which the state creates distortion in the media market is through government advertisements. Some of these advertisements are *statutory advertisements* of notices that are published as required by law. In the print press alone, this amounted to approximately 10 million shekels in 2023, and over the five years from 2019–2023, it amounted to more than 60 million shekels. The leading newspapers where these notices were published were *Israel Hayom* and *Yedioth Ahronoth*, followed by *Globes*, *Haaretz–TheMarker*, and *Maariv*. The implication is that the state tilts the market in favor of the major players (i.e., the established and relatively strong newspapers) and against new players and competing content creators who do not receive a share of government advertising. The recommendation is to completely abolish these mandatory advertisements and instead make the necessary information available to the public via a dedicated website or the websites of the publishing bodies.

**Training of personnel:** One of the central problems in media discourse is the control of a few key players over the agenda through continuous coverage (*follow-up*). The meaning is that a relatively small number of media outlets (such as Channel 12, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, and Reshet Bet) amplify reports published by each other and thus bring about greater prominence of these reports. In such a situation, reports published by other media outlets are pushed to the sidelines and do not receive similar exposure. Over time, setting the public agenda in this way makes it very difficult to attract high-quality personnel to new media outlets. Even when there are competing media outlets (for example, in the print or television sectors), it is difficult to attract journalists or even high-level technical staff because the reputation of these media outlets is lower.

The recommendation is to attract private capital to establish a high-quality journalism school that will train all professionals (journalists, photographers, directors, etc.) with a Zionist-national orientation. Through scholarships and a serious training process, the goal is to create a young generation of journalists and professionals who can integrate into media outlets and raise their professional standards.

**Content:** One of the central problems in media discourse is the reliance on a small number of epistemic authorities (military spokespersons, defense correspondents, former senior security officials, etc.) and the avoidance of real reporting on the prevailing sentiments and intentions of our Arab neighbors. The state cannot influence or dictate to private media outlets how and what to cover, but it does control public media outlets (the Public Broadcasting Corporation and Army Radio), which are free from commercial considerations. The recommendation is to

strengthen in a binding manner the Arab affairs departments within the Public Broadcasting Corporation and Army Radio and to expand the content dealing with the Arab world. The intention is for the primary information about what is happening on the other side to be available to every Israeli without needing to rely on filters from various experts with different biases.



# The Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) sector

## Challenges

The rapid growth rate of the Haredim, the fastest among developed countries, makes it critically significant for Israel's future.<sup>44</sup> Harnessing Haredi strength while considering their way of life can drive significant growth in the Israeli economy and mend social divisions.

**Regarding conscription,** the Haredim see enlistment in the IDF as an existential threat to their way of life and as harm to the world of Torah. Confronting them on this issue leads to entrenchment in their positions and the perception that this is an attempt to impose a change in their way of life.

**Regarding employment:** Contrary to common belief, the Haredi employment rate is approaching 70%, which is an increase compared to previous years. Even among men, the employment rate is 55%, although there is still a significant gap compared to the general sector regarding fields of employment. The prominence of work in education is particularly notable, a field that is not considered productive and offers low wages.

**Regarding segregation:** The Haredi public manages to preserve its way of life, among other things, through its separation from general society and by raising the barriers that separate the sectors. This enables the conditions for maintaining their unique way of life and creates a homogeneous society that shares common ideals of uncompromising observance of commandments and a life based on Torah study.

There are three main challenges concerning the Haredim, all of which impact one another: security, employment, and segregation. Therefore, addressing any one of these challenges will influence others and may partially solve them as well.

The challenges regarding conscription: The entrenchment of the situation over the years, making it seem self-evident; fear of spiritual deterioration due to the harm to segregation; harm to the world of Torah due to the mass enlistment of yeshiva students; ideological opposition from a non-Zionist public; lack of trust in the authorities after years of politicization of the issue; technical issues in the military, such as kashrut and gender segregation; and finally—the preservation of Haredi identity. The rabbis believe that conscription of at-risk youth could expel them from their own community.

44 For further reading, see: Yaakov Plavinsky, *The Haredi Sector as a Growth Driver in the State of Israel – Challenges and Barriers*, Misgav Institute, May 13, 2024.

The challenges regarding employment: Lack of relevant education and knowledge of the English language, which impact earning potential and integration into the job market; the employment rate among men is still low, as a result of a conscious choice to remain in Torah study; barriers to integration due to lack of military service; mutual distrust—the Haredim toward state institutions and employers toward integrating Haredim into their workplaces. Additionally, there are various technical barriers.

The issue of distrust and reluctance to employ Haredim is a significant barrier, as many are unaware that when Haredim seek employment, they are often willing to forgo some of the restrictions imposed on them, if they can work. Nevertheless, they are still not accepted for various jobs.

Segregation leads to difficulties in employment and underrepresentation in the media, which perpetuates the negative image of the sector. Additionally, members of the Haredi sector avoid participating in national events and ceremonies, which affects conscription and, consequently, national security.

The new reality, following the attorney general's directive to advance Haredi conscription, and against the backdrop of the negative perception of Haredim as unwilling to share the burden, will only continue to fuel confrontation and further entrenchment of each side in its position.

The enlistment of Haredim within a designated framework would allow the military to address the concerns and needs of the Haredi community, in areas such as kashrut, gender segregation, and more.

A possible settlement plan for the periphery is Nahal core groups, in a format similar to the early years of the young State of Israel. However, a shortage of labor makes implementing this solution difficult.



Credit: Nina Mikryukova



## Recommendations

The framework we propose includes the establishment of Haredi core groups that will be sent to settle in the periphery and along the borders as a unified framework exclusively for members of the Haredi community.<sup>45</sup> Members of these groups will enlist in the army but will serve only within the settlement framework. In this way, they will contribute to Israel's security, take part in bearing the burden, and at the same time, they will be able to maintain a lifestyle that aligns with their values, continue their Torah studies, and avoid external threats to the ideology they adhere to.

Any framework of this kind must be built through dialogue with the leaders of the Haredi community, its rabbis, and its figures of authority, and it cannot be implemented by coercion. A concerted effort will be required to properly market the program to the Haredi public, with an emphasis on segments of the community that are suited to integrating into the recruitment initiative for these core groups.

The core groups must be established exclusively within the military framework. Such a framework will provide a response to the demand for the sector's participation in bearing the national burden, serve as an additional tool for easing the deep public controversy currently present in the country, and could act as a bridge between different sectors of Israeli society. It will also partially address the IDF's manpower shortage. Additionally, it will expose the young recruits to security-related, settlement-oriented, and agricultural activities.

To ensure the success of the settlement initiative, it would be advisable to consider building a community model even before physically settling the land. This would mean, in accordance with the Haredi population and its way of life, exploring the establishment of a yeshiva or another Torah-based framework at the settlement site. Around this institution, a community of young people would be formed, engaging in construction and settlement activities while maintaining a Torah-observant lifestyle and continuing their Torah studies.

45 For further reading, see: Elie Klutstein, *Torah Settlement Core Groups: Land Presence and Torah Study Alongside a Response to Security Necessity*, Misgav Institute, April 18, 2024.



## Conclusions

The entire Israeli society, its leadership, institutions, and security forces underwent an existential upheaval on October 7, 2023. After a year of intense and bitter internal struggles, the external enemy that seeks to destroy Israel was once again revealed in its full force, turning the spotlight on the factors that unite Israelis. Since then, the Israeli spirit of heroism, volunteerism, joint reserve service by different groups in society, inner strength and resilience, cohesion, and unity have pushed Israel forward.

This covers many fronts against the Iranian axis and its proxies, who seek, through terror, delegitimization campaigns, and by portraying themselves as victims, to undermine the ability and willingness of Israelis to survive and thrive. The cohesion and unity displayed have been impressive and powerful, but over time this has eroded, with old divisions and factionalism resurfacing. National resilience obligates Israelis as a society and as a state to develop and refine the social and political mechanisms for managing their internal disagreements.

The October 7 attack imposed on Israel the need to formulate an updated strategy aimed at fundamentally changing the regional system,<sup>46</sup> as opposed to the logic of containment or adaptation to the existing system, which shaped Israeli strategy until October 7. In terms of outcomes, despite difficulties in implementing the strategy, delays, and even some mistakes, Israel has succeeded in positioning itself as a significant regional power and has led to a fundamental change in the regional system. Hamas has been almost entirely destroyed as an organized military entity, and its governmental function is under challenge. Hezbollah has been severely damaged and has lost many significant capabilities. Iran was attacked on October 26 in a way that made it even more vulnerable, eroded its status as a regional power, and caused it to lose significant assets, including Syria. It has been stripped of capabilities in a way that sets the conditions for a significant Israeli attack on nuclear infrastructure, energy facilities, military targets, and symbols of governance, which could accelerate the process of destabilizing the regime and even its downfall.<sup>47</sup>

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**National resilience obligates Israelis as a society and as a state to develop and refine the social and political mechanisms for managing their internal disagreements**

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46 Kobi Michael and Gabi Siboni, “A Great Crisis Leading to a Fundamental Change in the Middle East”, Misgav Institute, December 16, 2024.

47 Kobi Michael and Gabi Siboni, “Completing the Strategic Objective Through a Strike on Iran Now – Opportunities and Risks”, Misgav Institute, December 19, 2024.

On the other hand, and alongside the understanding of the necessity to focus together on the war against external threats, the failures that preceded October 7 and on the day of the massacre itself, as well as the management of the war afterward, have sharpened the need to reassess the validity of the basic assumptions that underpin our functioning as a state, as a society, and as individuals. Among other things, Israel must reexamine the values and insights that were the foundations of the State of Israel, identify the extent to which they have been forgotten or eroded, adapt them to the present, and elevate them in a way that will assist Israel in the continuing war.

This document addresses various issues related to the state's handling of challenges and processes and provided recommendations for strengthening its security and future prosperity. These included security challenges and the appointment of security system leaders; Israel's foreign relations in the near and distant circles, including with the Abraham Accords and peace agreement countries; the management of the Israeli economy; governance and law; discourse agents and their influence; relations between different social groups, and more. At the foundation of all these were fundamental insights regarding the promotion of essential values such as strengthening the presence on the land across all borders of the country, maintaining and building security capabilities, and ensuring political independence.

In examining these fundamental issues, the Israel 2.0 Project refrained from addressing core questions that were at the heart of the deep public dispute in Israeli society in the months preceding Hamas's attack on southern Israel. This does not mean that the proper balance between the branches of government in Israel is not an important issue, but that the authors here believe that now is not the right time to focus on these questions and that Israel must first address the more urgent challenges before the country.

For now, this document provides decision-makers with a range of recommendations to guide Israel toward a better future, for the benefit of improving society, the military, the economy, and state institutions, its relations with the countries of the world and the region, and its status in the Middle East and around the world.



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