

GUIDELINES FOR  
ISRAEL'S  
NATIONAL  
SECURITY  
STRATEGY

GADI EISENKOT  
GABI SIBONI



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*Translated from the Hebrew by Susann Codish*

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Policy Focus 160

First publication: October 2019

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# Abstract

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SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT, THE STATE OF ISRAEL HAS faced many complex security challenges, which have required the nation's leaders to articulate fundamental national security principles and formulate responses based on the national security strategy first defined by Israel's founding leader, David Ben-Gurion. Their validity has withstood the test of time, while specific responses have been adapted and adjusted to meet Israel's present and future challenges.

For Israel, the main shift in security challenges stems from Iran's aspirations for regional hegemony, nuclear military capability, and a contiguous sphere of influence via Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip. Concurrently, Israel faces internal societal changes. Alongside the country's growth in population, economic strength, and scientific and technological capabilities, alarming fissures have developed in Israeli society.

The nation's values reflect its characteristics at a profound level, serving as a type of fundamental declaration expressing the nation's identity, vision, and *raison d'être*. They serve as the broadest, immutable common ground for all inhabitants. Derived from them are Israel's vital national interests and vital security interests. The supreme security interests of the State of Israel are to maintain its sovereignty, guard its critical assets, and ensure the safety of its inhabitants.

Geography is a dominant factor in Israel's national security. Most of Israel's population and vital infrastructures are located within the narrow strip of the coastal plain. This, the most critical part of the nation's territory, is under permanent threat by various types of surface-to-surface missiles capable of significantly disrupting daily life, damaging the area's vital installations and assets, and impeding the mobilization of reserve units and troop movements to and from the various arenas.

The international community takes a keen interest in Israel's strategic environment, primarily over five issues:

- **Energy.** The Middle East is a center of energy production and exports, an important factor in the global energy market.
- **Trade routes.** The security of the many trade routes that intersect in the Middle East is significant to the global economy.
- **Export of instability.** From migration to terrorism to the spread of radical ideologies, the world is taking pains to prevent the transfer of negative phenomena apt to affect Europe and the entire international arena.
- **A sense of shared values.** Israel's founding on Western democratic ideals is the basis for this interest.
- **Holy sites.** Israel's territory includes sites holy to many religions, including sites central to three major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

At the same time, the international arena is fertile soil for hostile entities to foment anti-Israel sentiments, deny its legitimacy to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and champion its demise. Regarding the regional arena, Israel is an anomaly in a predominantly hostile region. It differs from its neighbors culturally and economically and has a completely different type of government. The instability that characterized the region for many years has worsened since the start of the Arab Spring, whose events undermined the nation-based regional order and effectively replaced it with the historic Shia-Sunni religious clash. Alongside this, many aspects of Israel's internal strategic scene involve dimensions relevant to national security, including in the political, economic, social, and security realms.

Israel today finds itself navigating a landscape of changing threats. The major distinguishing shift is that the principal adversary is no longer a coalition of Arab states set on destroying Israel through large-scale ground maneuvers. Adversaries now include nonstate organizations wielding a strategy of limited attack and incursions onto Israeli soil. While the overarching goal of these enemies remains the same—causing the State of Israel's collapse and thus eliminating it as a political entity—their modus operandi has changed fundamentally. It now combines two efforts—physical and cognitive. The cognitive effort consists of applying continuous pressure on Israeli society and Israel's standing in the international community.

The nature of external threats to the State of Israel can be divided into the following categories: **Conventional threats** from state militaries or nonstate organizations operating like state militaries. **Nonconventional threats**, mainly consisting of efforts to achieve military nuclear capabilities. **Subconventional threats**, which include guerrilla warfare and terrorism from actors both within and outside Israel. **Cyberspace and information threats**. Alongside these, **internal challenges and threats** to Israel center on an erosion of solidarity among segments of the population, damage to belief in the justness of the Zionist cause, and a weakening of the internal legitimacy of Israel's actions.

To confront these threats, Israel should act according to national security principles that have both military and societal dimensions. Military principles are as follows: The State of Israel will act overall based on a **defensive strategy** designed to ensure the existence of the state, and thwart and postpone threats to create extended periods of quiet, concurrent with **proactive military and political efforts**. This is a fundamental principle of national security, manifesting Israel's desire not to fight and to delay conflicts as much as possible. **Quality over quantity**. Israel is inherently at a disadvantage compared to its enemies. It must therefore compensate with qualitative superiority. **Moving the battle onto enemy territory** and striving for victory in the war. **Minimizing combat duration**. This involves the need to reduce harm to the public and the nation's infrastructures as a result of combat, attaining combat goals in the shortest possible time. **Defensible borders**. Israel's map of threats reinforces the importance of territory to realize homeland defense. A fundamental principle in this context demands that, in any arrangement, Israel can rely on its fully independent security control, including in the Jordan Valley. **Nurturing a fighting spirit**. The nation's fighting spirit and belief in the justness of its cause is a basic component of Israel's national security strategy.

The societal security principles are as follows: **The people's military**. The military, no less the reserves, represents a coalescing agent and Israel's "melting pot," based on the ethos of a fighting nation. In this model, the state military calls up its strike force from within the civilian population—i.e., the reserves. The State of Israel will maximize all national recruitment potential for the sake of IDF service. **Universal national service**. The IDF has the first right of selecting whom to enlist

to its ranks based on the military's needs; all segments of the population—including the ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs—should be recruited for civilian service.

The principle of attaining and preserving freedom of operation is central to successfully confronting challenges and fulfilling goals. This principle is closely connected with the need for flexibility related to tools of force and their informed use. The principle of self-reliance is vital for freedom of operation and reflects the continuous desire to increase Israel's might in a broad range of fields, especially that of security, to ensure the state's ability to defend its vital interests without help from foreign troops or agreement from foreign nations.

The national security strategy is based on Zeev Jabotinsky's "iron wall" concept. In other words, peace is possible only once Israel's enemies have concluded that their efforts are ineffective and serve to increase their own suffering. They must be convinced that they can attain much more through dialogue than through violence. Another component is based on ideas that originated with David Ben-Gurion regarding the interrelationships among society, the economy, science and technology, military might, international standing, and foreign policy.

Israel will always prefer to use political rather than military tools, but the country should prepare for the reality that war might be forced upon it to confront threats to its vital national security interests. Therefore, absent a political means to curb threats, the State of Israel will use force, carried out by the IDF and other security organizations.

Israel's security establishment will act continuously to defend the state during periods of calm, in emergencies, and in wars. To do so, it will engage in three major efforts: **Prepare for war by force buildup of every kind.** Next it will **develop and enact a "campaign between the wars"** (*mabam*, as known by its Hebrew acronym). This constitutes one of the fundamental changes in the security-related modus operandi of the State of Israel. It entails no longer only preparing for war but also striving toward proactive offensive measures dependent on high-quality intelligence. **Wage war.** The IDF must be at a high and immediate state of preparedness to use force against an array of threats to defend Israel's sovereignty, citizens, and inhabitants; stop the threat; and attain victory over the enemy.

This text proposes an update to traditional basic terms of Israel's national security as follows: **Deterrence** that involves discouraging the



nation's enemies from acting against it based on military and security force buildup and the preparedness and willingness to counter the enemy's intention to violate the sovereignty, daily life, and security of the nation's citizens. **Intelligence superiority** that can provide early warning to preemptively foil the enemy's intention to harm the nation, providing enough time to respond. **Defense** in all dimensions with an emphasis on the ground, where Israel cannot tolerate long-lasting damage to its sovereignty. **Victory**, attained when the IDF has achieved the objectives designed by the government in the shortest timeframes and at the lowest price possible, and when the enemy leadership internalizes the reality that continuing the confrontation will not only fail to help it achieve any goals, but will with absolute certainty result in a loss of its core assets, to the point that it threatens the leadership's own political and personal survival.

Israel's national security will be strengthened by other means as well, among them its special **political-strategic relationship with the United States**. This is a cornerstone of the overall Israeli effort to attain national security by political means. **Combating delegitimization efforts**, relatedly, requires a comprehensive strategy and cooperation with parties in the international community and in the Jewish diaspora. **National security through economic means** will be aimed at developing society, education, and culture to further Zionism and strengthen social cohesion and solidarity through technological innovation. This will, in turn, help sustain mutual interests and partnerships with relevant parties in the international community.

The social component of national security is meant to provide the combined economic, values-based, and moral foundation for the use of force. This effort is also important for building up the internal legitimacy of all other national security efforts. Alongside this, Israel must strengthen its bond with diaspora Jews. Israel's role as the national home of the Jewish people is and has always been dependent on the mutual relationship and support between the state and the Jewish diaspora. This connection is a pillar of Israel's national security and is reflected in its national values and *raison d'être*.

Israel's special relationship with the United States is pivotal to Israel's national security on multiple fronts. This partnership is essential for coordinating strategy internationally, including on diplomatic and

economic issues. The provision of U.S. military aid, as defined under the U.S.-Israel memorandum of understanding, and the profound U.S. commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative advantage are cornerstones of Israel's national security.

While Israel should always work to bolster its deterrence and to strengthen its peace treaties with its neighbors, its security strategy must be based on the permanent assumption that the state's deterrence and peace treaties could collapse. Therefore, the Latin adage *Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you want peace, prepare for war) still holds. Israel must maintain wide security margins and continuous preparedness for a possible escalation on a short timetable to fulfill its responsibility to defend the nation, secure its existence, and win every war.

This document seeks to provide a fundamental approach to Israel's national security strategy and a grand strategy for strengthening the nation, its development, and its existence as a just, model nation. The authors' hope is that it will lead to a discourse on adopting an official security strategy, including confidential components relating to the core of Israel's power. It could thus inspire leaders of the country's security, education, economic, and technological establishments and serve as a compass for strengthening Israel as a powerful, safe national home.

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# Acknowledgments

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WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE for providing us the platform to research and write this paper. Specifically, we want to thank Rob Satloff, the Institute's executive director, for his continued support and insightful feedback, and Michael Eisenstadt, director of the Military and Security Studies Program, for his useful and focused remarks. We would also like to thank Susann Codish for her expert translation of this text from the original Hebrew and Jason Warshof for the outstanding editing process.

Special thanks to Gilad Kabilo of the Institute, who assisted us throughout the entire process and provided his valuable insights and contributions.

We would like to thank the Institute for National Security Studies. Specifically, we would like to thank Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Amos Yadlin, the director of the INSS, for supporting this work and his helpful comments, and Dr. Anat Kurz for her sharp and helpful remarks.

Finally, special thanks to Colonel (Res.) Yuval Bazak for his unique contribution to the development of both the methodology and content of this work.



# Preface

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SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT, THE STATE OF ISRAEL HAS faced many complex security challenges, which have required the nation's leaders to articulate fundamental national security principles and formulate responses based on the national security strategy first defined by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Their validity has withstood the test of time, while specific responses have been adapted and adjusted to meet Israel's present and future challenges.

At its inception, the Zionist movement attempted to base its vision of a Jewish homeland on cooperation between Jews and Arabs and on vigorous efforts aimed at developing the Jewish homeland for the benefit of all its inhabitants. However, the series of violent incidents between 1921 and 1929, in the course of which Jewish settlers were attacked by Arab rioters, made it clear to the era's Zionist leaders that development of the Jewish national home in the Land of Israel could only take place under a security umbrella based on the settlers' own capabilities. This realization, which gained growing acceptance during the 1930s, resulted in Ben-Gurion adopting in practice—though never conceptually—the Revisionist Zionist leader Zeev Jabotinsky's "iron wall" principle:

What is impossible is a voluntary agreement. As long as the Arabs feel that there is the least hope of getting rid of us, they will refuse to give up this hope in return for either kind words or for bread and butter, because they are not a rabble, but a living people. And when a living people yields in matters of such a vital character it is only when there is no longer any hope of getting rid of us, because they can make no breach in the iron wall. Not till then will they drop their extremist leaders whose watchword is "Never!" and the leadership will pass to the moderate groups,

who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to mutual concessions. Then we may expect them to discuss honestly practical questions. And when that happens, I am convinced that we Jews will be found ready to give them satisfactory guarantees, so that both peoples can live together in peace, like good neighbors.

But the only way to obtain such an agreement is the iron wall, which is to say a strong power in Palestine that is not amenable to any Arab pressure. In other words, the only way to reach an agreement in the future is to abandon all idea of seeking an agreement at present.<sup>1</sup>

Ben-Gurion translated Jabotinsky's iron wall principle into one of the key foundations of Israel's national security strategy: while it is impossible to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict by force, force is crucial for the existence of the State of Israel.

The national security strategy developed by Ben-Gurion proved its efficacy up until the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The Arab nations were unable to crack the iron wall by military strength and were therefore forced to modify their approach to the conflict with Israel. The subsequent twenty-five years brought about profound changes, fundamentally transforming Israel's strategic environment: peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan were signed; the Palestinian issue topped the local as well as the international political and security agenda; and the Soviet Union collapsed, reconfiguring both the global order and regional politics. In addition to these developments, sociopolitical upheavals known collectively as the Arab Spring swept regional countries beginning in late 2010.

For Israel, the main shift in security challenges stems from Iran's aspirations for regional hegemony, as manifested by the country's efforts to achieve nuclear military capability and to develop a broad, regional sphere of influence via Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip. Parallel to these efforts is the development of more potent and accurate missile capabilities. Iran's rising influence in the region following Saddam

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1. Zeev Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall," originally published Nov. 4, 1923, in *Razsviet*, the periodical of the Zionist Organization in Russia. Translation from the Russian available at <http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>.



Hussein's downfall in Iraq in 2003 has served as a catalyst for Shia jihad, which in turn aids Iran's bid for hegemony. A second profound issue has been the lengthy deadlock with the Palestinians, which creates a number of challenges, foremost of which is the long-term impact on Israel's identity as a Jewish, democratic state.

Concurrently, Israel faces internal societal changes. Alongside the country's growth in population, economic strength, and scientific and technological capabilities, alarming fissures have developed in Israeli society. These divisions and the erosion of national solidarity have intensified the social gaps between rich and poor, the identity gaps between Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, and Ethiopian immigrants, and the divides between religious and secular groups.<sup>2</sup> Productive political discourse has suffered as a result, with people adhering in relative isolation to the values of their subgroup rather than to those of the nation as a whole. These phenomena may also affect individuals' motivation to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and willingness to bear the national burden. Reinforcing a national protective mindset requires addressing these challenges.

Therefore, a national security strategy must strike the right balance among national objectives, staying power, and resources allocated to sustain that power. Moreover, the link between the strategic objectives and social cohesiveness and motivation critical to achieving this staying power demands close observation from those who craft security strategy. They must be mindful of tipping points and devise ways to address them. A discussion of secure and defensible borders will necessarily form part of this discussion, given the risk of war from various corners as well as the possibility of changing territorial contours and associated perils.

The core of Israel's national security strategy was and remains within the purview of the political leadership. It requires a broad national view and the identification of all current and future challenges and appropriate responses. But, above all, it requires a decision between conflicting tensions and goals. This document analyzes the challenges central to Israel's national security for the foreseeable future and represents a foundation for developing a security policy and an overarching security strategy by the government in power. The document is designed

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2. Mizrahi refers roughly to Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin; Ashkenazi to Jews of European origin.

to help steer the various security organizations as they develop their organizational strategies, especially the military one (the IDF strategy). It is likewise meant for use by the nation's leaders and policymakers to determine how the security establishment confronts the challenges outlined herein.

# 1

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## Introduction

NATIONAL SECURITY REFERS TO A NATION'S ABILITY TO effectively confront threats to its existence and interests under all possible circumstances. Furthermore, it encompasses the overall national effort the government directs to create a satisfactory situation toward this end.<sup>1</sup>

The achievement of national security depends on the existence of a national strategy that optimally—if not maximally—incorporates political, military, economic, and cognitive substrategies, as well as those related to social, demographic, and various other issues. The matrix of entities comprising the national security strategy, in the case of this paper, is the responsibility of the Israeli government.<sup>2</sup>

Israel's national security strategy reflects the basic components of the state's security activities and delineates related objectives and interests. At the same time, it addresses a range of discrete potential threats, spelling out goals for specific conflicts and establishing guidelines for adapting these goals in a given confrontation.

Israel's security strength issues from several sources:

- geostrategic situation (chief among them)
- freedom of decision and action based on security and military considerations regarding any threat or risk, whether existing or potential
- national resources to support security and military capabilities
- socioeconomic strength to support security needs
- staying power, steadfastness, and commitment during difficult conditions of war

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1. Lexicon of IDF terminology; translated from an IDF internal document.

2. The national security strategy and national security approach (or, simply, security strategy) are common ways of referring to this document.

Any nation's overall security strength integrates these various components, explaining why the development of national strength depends on their interrelation and synchronization. Israel's National Security Strategy must therefore focus on the following areas:

- Defining the **national and security interests** whose preservation are critical to the existence, character, and values of the State of Israel
- Determining **national security needs** over the long term
- Determining **national security objectives** as derivatives of the defined interests
- Constructing and maintaining **national strength** that allows Israel to independently confront national security risks of any type or scope (political, military, economic, demographic, social)
- Constructing and maintaining **military might**, thus providing the capacity to defend the state's existence and territorial integrity, deliver security to the state's inhabitants, and prevent military dangers to Israel's development and sovereign rights
- Constructing and maintaining an **economic, social, political, and demographic infrastructure** capable of ensuring critical national and security interests for many years to come

## Foundational Documents

Israel's core regulatory mechanisms for national security are located in its foundational documents. These include basic conventions, basic concepts, and the general approach to attaining national security. At the level of overarching strategy, foundational documents are written by the political echelon and are a function of the state's critical national objectives and interests. As such, they reflect the basic conventions of national security.<sup>3</sup>

It is customary to categorize national security documents into three types:

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3. The fundamentals of national security, including military components, reflect the ways in which the state views its security, whether or not these fundamentals are spelled out in official documents. For example, the IDF is a military meant to defend the homeland, the State of Israel has adopted a defensive strategy, and so forth.

- **National security doctrine.** This refers to the fundamental principles and rules stemming from the nation's basic situation, elementary needs, and deep-seated values. These principles are notable for their relative stability over time and greatly affect the articulation of a national security strategy.
- **National security strategy.**<sup>4</sup> This refers to the current government's viewpoint on national security. It defines the range of fundamental, consensual operating assumptions about national security. In defining its national security strategy, the government must take a long-term view based on Israel's critical national interests.
- **National security policy.**<sup>5</sup> This refers to the manner in which the current government's national security strategy is implemented. The national security policy determines priorities and agendas for implementing the concrete actions required to provide security to the nation's inhabitants.

National security then consists of a gamut of components that go beyond the purely military aspect. It deals with security, political, economic, social, demographic, and other components that together form the foundation on which the nation's and people's security rests.

The national security strategy should articulate the grand plan for realizing, coordinating, integrating, and directing all the resources and means available to the nation to attain its objectives. The strategy must be an organic expression of the nation's values, interests, and goals, defining the intended national security aims. At all levels of military and security activity, the national security strategy informs the foundational security documents and is the source, at different levels and in different areas, for establishing and activating the nation's strength.

The national security strategy is meant to ensure coordination and synchronization of national security efforts among the echelons over different periods of time. It must ensure a correlation between the national goals and the actions and efforts meant to secure these goals (vertical coordination); it must integrate and coordinate the many national

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4. Foundational Security and Military Documents (in Hebrew), Doctrine and Training Brigade/Israel Defense Forces.

5. Ibid.

security activities to ensure they are operating coherently (horizontal coordination); and it must ascertain that national instruments of force and efforts are developed congruent with the current and future challenges of the State of Israel.

In practice, the set of foundational security documents theoretically informs the development and operation of various efforts and is likewise the main instrument for attaining the required system of coordination.

Every organization must formulate its own broad strategy, which constitutes the foundation for its operations. (See Appendix C for charts detailing Israel's national security documents and IDF documents.)

## The National Security Establishment

On the level of national security, Israel operates three interrelated systems:

- **The national security system** managed by Israel's executive branch of government is set up to permanently direct national security during wars and also during sequential conflicts not rising to the definition of war. The prime minister, as head of the executive branch, is therefore head of the national security system.
- **The Ministry of Defense**, managed by the minister of defense, consists of all the military and civilian parts constituting the defense system. It is important to stress that the Ministry of Defense is one component of the national security establishment, which sometimes leads to confusion over the responsibilities, functions, and authority of the prime minister, who is head of the national security establishment, and those of the defense minister.
- **The military system**, headed by the chief of staff—who is the military's commander-in-chief—comprises all the armed forces.<sup>6</sup> The military system includes two subordinate systems: the operational system, through which the military runs its force and executes

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6. A distinction must be made here between the supreme command echelon in the armed forces, which is personified in the IDF chief of the General Staff, and the supreme command echelon of the armed forces, which is of necessity a civilian position also known as the commander-in-chief. In Israel, which adopted the British model, this latter function is fulfilled by the prime minister.

operations, and the professional-institutional system, charged with force buildup appropriate to the military's missions.

- **Other defense systems** generally include the Mossad (national intelligence agency), Israel Security Agency (ISA, or Shin Bet), Israel Atomic Energy Commission, and Israel National Cyber Directorate, all of which come under the prime minister's authority, as well as the Israel Police and Prison Service, to the extent that these are related to security.

These systems are interrelated in complex ways. Indeed, a discussion about the nature and essence of their interactivity and relationships is as lengthy as the discussion of war itself, and for excellent reasons. While war is the continuation of politics by other means, and therefore merely a servant of politics, politics also serves the conduct of war and is charged with creating conditions allowing for the construction of military force and its application.

The conduct of war and of politics are entwined. They cannot be separated in a simplistic dichotomous way. To tease them apart, it is necessary to define the principles that regulate the functions, authority, and operational mechanisms of all factors, while noting their interrelations and interfaces. (See Appendix C for charts on Israel's national security establishment and military system.)

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## Values and Interests

### National Values

The nation's values reflect its characteristics at a profound level, serving as a type of fundamental declaration expressing the nation's identity, vision, and *raison d'être*. They serve as the broadest, immutable common ground for all inhabitants.

The State of Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital, is the national home of the Jewish people. Its existence is just, based on the historical connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, a connection that has lasted for thousands of years.

The State of Israel is a Jewish and democratic state that strives to maintain absolute equality of rights for all its citizens, regardless of religion, ethnic origin, or gender.

The State of Israel seeks to base its actions on principles of freedom, justice, and peace, as envisaged by the prophets of Israel.

The State of Israel seeks to honor the sanctity of life and establish a model society of mutual responsibility, while respecting the minorities living in it, as stated in its Declaration of Independence.

The State of Israel will remain true to the principles of the United Nations Charter and be a full-fledged member of the family of nations.

### Vital National Interests

Israel's vital interests are as follows:

- **Reaffirming the state as the national home of the Jewish people.**

The State of Israel will foster the existence, security, and success of the Jewish people, and serve as a source of pride for Jews all over the world. The State of Israel will conduct itself based on the values of the Jewish people, strive to establish a solid Jewish majority, serve as a wellspring of inspiration for the entire Jewish people, and continue its historic mission of the ingathering of the exiles.



- **Entrenching and expanding the Jewish majority in all parts of the state.** The State of Israel will encourage Jewish immigration and strive to optimally integrate and assimilate newcomers into Israeli society. It will work to prevent emigration, strive to bring Israeli citizens living abroad back home, and encourage natural growth and Jewish settlement in all parts of the country.<sup>1</sup>
- **Forging stronger ties with world Jewry.** During its first years of existence, the State of Israel needed much help from Jewish diaspora communities, which made possible the development of early Jewish settlements and the building of educational and healthcare infrastructure. Because of Israel's improved economic situation and changes in diaspora Jewry's attitudes to the state, these roles have evolved. The State of Israel must actively strengthen its ties with Jewish communities around the world, which also means allocating resources to this end.
- **Bolstering Israel's qualitative advantages.** The State of Israel will strive to develop qualitative superiority of human resources as well as unmatched scientific, technological, and economic excellence. At the same time, it will augment support for disadvantaged population segments, with an emphasis on education for all its citizens, and provide equal opportunities so that all its inhabitants can maximize their human potential.
- **Developing human capital.** In the absence of substantial natural resources, the State of Israel will develop its human capital as the most important component of its national resilience and the most significant factor in generating the nation's qualitative advantage, necessary for developing and strengthening the nation, defending the homeland against all other nations and players in the region (both enemies and rivals), and serving as the major engine for growing economic resilience.
- **Establishing economic power.** The State of Israel will work to establish its economic power and independence while developing trade relations and supporting economic and research cooperation with other nations, international organizations, and institutions. This will serve as the foundation for expanding national and military might and

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1. The term "settlement" refers to the presence of Jewish communities regardless of their location.

scientific achievements, reducing social gaps, bolstering Israel's status as a member of the world's leading nations, and promoting national and security interests in the international arena.

- **Attaining peace with its neighbors.** The State of Israel will strive for true peace with its neighbors,<sup>2</sup> work to normalize relations with them, and establish alliances with moderate nations and parties in the region. It will do this on the basis of identifying and maximizing mutual interests, in order to reduce regional hostility aimed at Israel and create the conditions for a lasting peace.
- **Bolstering Israel's standing among the nations of the world.** The State of Israel will strive to improve its international standing, a key component of its security and its political, economic, and social resilience. The State of Israel will also act to strengthen its relationship with the United States and develop relations with other key nations (e.g., in Europe and Asia), as well as bolster its standing and a recognition of the justness of its cause among all nations.
- **Promoting social and national resilience.** The State of Israel will work to enhance cohesion among all segments of Israeli society, reduce social gaps, and mend the array of societal rifts. The importance of building social cohesion applies both to Israel's Jewish population and to relations between its Jewish majority and its non-Jewish minorities.
- **Enshrining the roles of the defense and security systems.** These systems, the IDF chief among them, will serve first of all as the nation's shields, but they will also carry out national functions by unifying streams within Israeli society, demonstrating excellence and professionalism, and promoting education in the spirit of the nation's values.

## Vital Security Interests

The supreme security interests of the State of Israel are to maintain its sovereignty, guard its critical assets, and ensure the safety of its inhabitants. The critical security interests derived from this statement are as follows:

- Basing the country's security on **defensible borders**, consisting of barriers and territorial outlines that allow for conduct of an effective defense against enemy militaries and hostile organizations and

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2. See Appendix B for two states of "peace."

deny them territorial gains, foil harm to inhabitants and assets by any means, and prevent the smuggling of arms into the state's territory, whether above or below ground.

- **Preventing the emergence of nonconventional threats**, which means first and foremost keeping military nuclear capabilities out of the hands of regional entities hostile to Israel.
- Maintaining **effective deterrence** to the realization of any threats to the State of Israel, its inhabitants, or assets, and to the creation of any threat to its vital interests in its sovereign territory and beyond.
- Preserving **the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan** and promoting cooperation and alliances with the region's moderate entities to expand Israel's spheres of influence and capacity to act.
- Reaching a **political understanding with the Palestinians** that, optimally, resolves the national conflict between the two peoples or, at least, manages the conflict until such time as a final resolution is possible.
- Planning **population placement and its defense** against every type of threat, conventional or not, and promoting settlement to strengthen remote and mixed-population areas, especially remote areas critical to border defense (e.g., the Golan Heights, central mountain ridge, and Jordan Valley). This effort also entails strengthening Jewish settlement in outlying areas of the Negev, Galilee, and Wadi Ara.
- Maintaining **an advanced and defensible national infrastructure** to support national security efforts with: developed roadworks enabling rapid movement of forces and population from and to all parts of the country, given possible scenarios; land and seaports enabling contact with the world in all circumstances, no matter the threat; and advanced critical infrastructure (e.g., medical, electrical, communications) with built-in redundancies and capacity to operate without interruption, whether a specific threat is conventional or not.
- Strengthening the IDF as the official military of the people with **military might** to realize its mission of safeguarding the state, by maintaining its ability to confront the entire spectrum of threats posed to the State of Israel, its inhabitants, assets, and vital interests. The IDF will—at all times, in every situation, and in all locations, whether

physical (sea, air, ground, or space) or nonphysical (cyberspace) or any other physical or virtual sphere—be prepared to apply the force needed to maintain and develop national interests.

- Maintaining **lengthy periods of calm** to the extent possible, to allow for the stability required to develop the state, ensure its economic, social, and political prosperity, and permit resources to be redirected toward education, science, and other civilian areas to enhance the nation's overall potential.
- Developing and maintaining the ability to **attain victory** in any military confrontation against any type of enemy, so as to rapidly remove threats and strengthen the deterrence necessary for the existence of a stable security situation over the long term.
- Maintaining **lasting control and superiority in the air and at sea** to protect assets and interests and to keep aerial and maritime routes in and out of Israel open in all situations.
- Maintaining **defensible communications infrastructures, both physical and virtual**, to enable the operation of all critical systems necessary to national security for the defense of the nation's inhabitants and interests, including economic, intellectual, and other assets based on infrastructures in cyberspace.
- Creating and maintaining **legitimacy, domestically and internationally**, that ensures the freedom of operation required to apply military force to prevent or remove an existing or emerging threat, while maintaining internal endurance, continuous functional ability, and effective responses during military confrontations and terrorist attacks.
- **Reducing dependence on external factors to establish, maintain, and operate military might**, while maintaining the principle of self-reliance vis-à-vis all critical capabilities needed to defend vital interests.
- Promoting **regional and international alliances and cooperative ventures**, while expanding security cooperation, with the United States and others, through meaningful intelligence capabilities via multi-dimensional defense and lasting deterrence—leading to, on the one hand, a reduction in the scope and frequency of conflicts and, on the other, winning them and thus improving the future security situation.

# 3

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## The Geostrategic Environment

### The Geographical Sphere

Given that the purpose and essence of military power is to defend the homeland, all critical civilian services and installations within the nation must be viewed as part of the national defense system for military needs. These civilian services depend on the defense provided by military power but also serve as support for the military power engaged in a war effort.

The overarching national perspective demands that all efforts, both civilian and military (defensive and offensive), come under the authority of one chain of command (the government/security cabinet) covering the entire arena, including the civilian home front, where the assets and potential of national might are concentrated, and the different operational arenas from which threats are posed to the State of Israel.

The major enemy threats to Israel fall within two spheres—northern and southern—that are linked by a network of corridors. The longitudinal axes connecting the different parts of the country traverse areas exposed to both direct and indirect fire by existing and potential hostile entities, while some cross regions that are susceptible to separation, if only temporary, of the nation's two major spheres. This creates the need for independent operational capabilities for each sphere.

The narrow shape of Israel and its location surrounded by hostile areas allow it to conduct a single aerial arena of operations based in the strategic rear, covering the full range of threats from both close and distant circles, on land and at sea. The land-based rear also serves as a corridor for aerial transportation between different arenas of operation and as a logistical support base for the Israeli Air Force in the different arenas.

Most of Israel's population and vital infrastructures are located within the narrow strip of the coastal plain. This, the most critical part of the nation's territory, is under permanent threat by various types

of surface-to-surface missiles capable of significantly disrupting daily life, damaging the area's vital installations and assets, and impeding the mobilization of reserve units and troop movements to and from the various arenas.

Given Israel's particular circumstances, its broader regional environment, and the spectrum of threats it faces, the geostrategic component continues to play a crucial role in national security and will in all probably do so for the foreseeable future.

## The Strategic Sphere

Like every other nation, Israel conducts relations with many varied entities both near and far, a fact manifested in three arenas: domestic, regional, and international. In turn, these arenas are themselves inter-related in complex ways and affected by current events and emerging trends. Developments in each arena as well as their influence on one another constitute the basis for understanding Israel's current and future challenges. Some challenges emerge as threats, whereas others present themselves as opportunities.

Conditions in the geostrategic environment and the nation's response to them affect national security. Hence, it is necessary to identify emerging challenges, formulate a strategy for dealing with them, and work to implement that strategy so as to promote national security objectives by reducing, neutralizing, and preventing the realization of threats and by exploiting opportunities.

## The International Arena

The dynamic world order in recent years has been characterized by renewed tensions between the United States, Russia, and China after the brief post-Cold War calm; the return of Russia to the Middle East as an active player; the rise of China and its increased involvement in the Middle East; and constant nuclear proliferation, among other changing factors. These trends undoubtedly increase the potential for threats to Israel in the international arena but at the same time generate a new array of opportunities.

The international community takes a keen interest in Israel's strategic environment, primarily over five issues:

- **Energy.** The Middle East is a center of energy production and exports, an important factor for Europe and East Asia even in this era of

transformation in the global energy market, such as the development of oil substitutes and alternative energy sources, which could reduce the Middle East's importance in this context.

- **Trade routes.** The security of the many trade routes that intersect in the Middle East is significant to the global economy.
- **Export of instability.** The world is taking pains to prevent Middle East exports of negative phenomena apt to affect Europe and the entire international arena—e.g., radical Islamic ideologies, terrorism, and refugees.
- **A sense of shared values.** Israel's founding on Western democratic ideals is the basis for this interest.
- **Holy sites.** Israel's territory includes sites holy to many religions, including central sites to three major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

At the same time, the international arena is fertile soil for hostile entities to foment anti-Israel sentiments, deny its legitimacy to exist as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and champion its demise. These processes are supported by several trends in the international arena:

- demilitarization and delegitimization of the use of force as a conflict-resolution device in the eyes of the liberal West
- anticolonialism, which views Israel's sovereignty as an illegal occupation and immoral, and its corollary, the endorsement of virtually every means to oppose the occupation
- the abuse of legitimate concerns about human rights, which has the effect of limiting the use of military force that could actually save lives, a trend that is often exploited by hostile entities in using civilians as human shields for propaganda against Israel's military and the state
- the growing trend of invoking international law in conflicts, while also taking practical steps against purported violations in various international legal institutions
- turning international institutions (e.g., UN Security Council, UNESCO), where Arab nations and hostile organizations enjoy an

inherent advantage, into arenas for issuing anti-Israel resolutions on a host of issues

- promoting economic, academic, artistic, and other types of boycotts against Israel
- the development of rapid digital communications systems and social networks, which are exploited by diverse groups for anti-Israel propaganda

All the same, and over the past two decades, terrorism from extremist Islamic groups in the United States, Europe, and around the world has created clear grounds for cooperation and an opportunity to change the Western world's attitude to terrorism and the nations that support and finance it.

## The Regional Arena

Israel is an anomaly in a predominantly hostile region. It differs from its neighbors culturally and economically and has a completely different type of government. The instability that characterized the region for many years has worsened since the start of the Arab Spring, whose events undermined the nation-based regional order and effectively replaced it with the historic Shia-Sunni religious clash.

The regional environment has undergone many changes since Israel was founded some seventy years ago. Perhaps the most significant has been the transition from a state-based order to a situation, especially since 2011, in which many states have faced failure, even as certain relatively stable states have endured. These developments are playing out amid a range of struggles among four political camps in particular: Iran and its proxies, led by Iran and including many Shia entities, the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, and Sunni Palestinian organizations relying on Iran's help; the Sunni camp, including most Middle East kingdoms and other governments; the global jihadist camp, currently dependent on the Islamic State and al-Qaeda branches; and the Muslim Brotherhood (including Hamas), which appeared to have made significant gains thanks to the Arab Spring upheavals, but has turned defensive since the toppling of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt.

The renewed involvement of the Great Powers has likewise influenced the regional arena. After years in which these powers' interests—and



involvement—in the region were on the wane, the trend has clearly reversed, mainly with Russia and China. The return of the world powers to Israel's strategic sphere will affect the nation's freedom to operate, possible alliances with hostile entities, and the flow of weapons and advanced capabilities to the region. At the same time, these trends represent opportunities, such as for cooperation, leverage, and so forth.

Thus, the Middle East is a ground where certain global struggles are playing out, mirroring to an extent the Cold War exertions by the United States and Soviet Union, and specifically where the United States and Russia are now vying for primacy, even as Washington has reduced its regional footprint in recent years.

Several phenomena are generating significant challenges to Israel's national security for the foreseeable future:

- the wars raging just beyond Israel's borders and the need to keep these from spilling over into the country
- the need to balance the desire for nonintervention and the necessity to disrupt and stop negative trends that could harm national interests
- growing international involvement in the region and the need to cooperate or coordinate with international actors, as well as to maintain freedom of operation
- the refugee crisis in the immediate neighborhood and its ramifications for defending the borders, as well as for maintaining a balance between the desire for nonintervention and the moral and humanitarian imperative
- the related disruption of the demographic balance in Israel's neighbor states and the threat this generates to those governments' stability and structure
- existing and developing nonconventional capabilities
- the renewed superpower conflict in the region

Meanwhile, opportunities issuing from changes to the old order include the gradual appearance of mutual interests with regional nations on security, the economy, and more.

## The Domestic Arena

Israel's internal strategic arena involves several dimensions relevant to national security, including in the political, economic, social, and security realms. Some specific examples are:

- the demographic balance of different parts of Israeli society, its development, and expected impact
- the society's strength, motivation, and resilience, given developing tensions and rifts among its constituent parts
- the configuration of a geographically narrow country and the concentration of population in one metropolitan area—along with the vital infrastructures and resources being located in the small area of the coastal strip
- national priorities and the way resources are allocated
- the expansion of economic interests to encompass the maritime zone

The history of Israeli military confrontations over its decades of existence shows societal willingness to engage in such conflicts, and accept losses in them, if the state and its way of life are at stake. In these crises, Israeli society tends to unite behind the national leadership. In conflicts lacking clear aims or whose aims are the subject of profound disagreement, however, support weakens and consequently so does the nation's staying power. Hence, clearly defining the aims of conflicts and gaining domestic support for them is a crucial foundation for Israel's ability to manifest its might toward attaining national security objectives.

As a result, foreseeable challenges in the internal arena would appear to require:

- Dispersing the population and the nation's vital assets to the country's geographical periphery, while strengthening disadvantaged populations in areas remote from Israel's center
- Strengthening the Jewish presence in outlying areas and other critical spheres
- Articulating a clear policy on national security needs in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank)

- Strengthening equality and cohesiveness of the various components of Israeli society and consolidating domestic legitimacy and support for the stated goals of possible future confrontations

# 4

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## National Security Threats and Challenges

ISRAEL FINDS ITSELF NAVIGATING A LANDSCAPE OF changing threats. The major distinguishing shift is that the principal adversary is no longer a coalition of Arab states set on destroying Israel through large-scale ground maneuvers. Israel now faces a range of adversaries. At one end of the spectrum are nonstate actors wielding a strategy of limited attack and incursions onto Israeli soil. These organizations use such actions to attain political goals set by associated political echelons, as well as to undermine Israeli society.

At the other end, Israel's current enemies are Iran, its proxies, and jihadist organizations. While the overarching goal of these enemies remains the same—causing the State of Israel's collapse and thus eliminating it as a political entity—their modus operandi has changed fundamentally. It now combines two efforts: physical and cognitive. The physical threat is manifested through military and terrorism efforts aimed at Israel's forces, citizens, and assets. The cognitive effort consists of applying continuous pressure on two focal points viewed as the soft underbelly of Israel's national security: Israeli society, on the one hand, and Israel's standing in the international community, on the other.

The campaign targeting Israeli society is designed to unravel social bonds and deepen rifts, spur conflict among population segments, and prompt a lengthy process of ramped-up domestic pressure for territorial concessions anchored by bases of resistance. The eventual hope is to precipitate brain drain, causing Israel's social elites to abandon the state, and thereby weakening society and leading to its eventual collapse.

At the same time, a large-scale campaign is being waged to demonize Israel in the eyes of the international community, harm the nation's standing and economy, and erode its legitimacy as the Jewish nation-state. The goal of the delegitimization campaign, similar to the effort targeting Israeli society, is to sap the country's strength and reduce its ability to defend itself against threats.

Israel's adversaries are using two interconnected strategic ideas to hurt the country through attrition and conflict. One consists of continuous terrorist and guerrilla campaigns and standoff-fire efforts, including the development by terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas of extensive combat capabilities designed to deter Israeli action, but also to exhaust the IDF, the Israeli public, and the country's decisionmakers. Part and parcel of this effort are increasing precision-standoff fire abilities, developing subterranean, aerial, and maritime offensive means, and building up underground penetrative capabilities to harm the Israeli civilian front on the ground.

Alongside these offensive abilities are defensive ones embedded mainly in urban areas, including expanded use of civilians as human shields. These methods too are meant to exhaust Israel, in particular ground troops maneuvering along the border. Activity from within the civilian population, meanwhile, seeks to exploit for propaganda purposes IDF harm to civilians, thus intensifying international pressure against Israeli freedom to operate. Such activity likewise amplifies delegitimization of Israel.

The second strategic concept involves attaining nonconventional military nuclear capabilities (yet to be achieved) and chemical capabilities (long present in the region even as their contours have changed).

Some Middle East nations and entities have elected to abandon or reduce their preoccupation with an armed struggle against Israel and have even recognized the state and established relations with it, although generally on the level of regime and security elites.

Finally, the instability for which the region is known, finally, could transform the current reality. This might entail renewed potential for conventional threats due to strategic turning points in the region. Israel's national security strategy must strengthen relations and mutual interests in the region with these countries to reduce, and ideally prevent, such transformations. At the same time, Israel must be prepared to provide effective remedies in case they do occur.

## **Threat Factors and Other Challenges to National Security**

The threat factors and challenges to the State of Israel can be categorized as follows: threats from (relatively) functional states, e.g., Lebanon;

threats from low-sovereignty, multiple-player regions, e.g., the Sinai Peninsula and Syria; challenges from within Israel, e.g., damage to the social fabric, threats of public order violations, harm to state sovereignty within parts of the homeland.

## External Threats

The nature of external threats to the State of Israel can be divided into the following categories:

- **Conventional threats.** These emanate from state militaries or non-state organizations operating like state militaries and possessing a range of integrated capabilities, including aerial and ground fire, large-scale ground maneuvers, special operations, and cyberspace and information operations, supported by intelligence and logistical capabilities. Such threats will become more severe should Sunni states grow less friendly to Israel.
- **Nonconventional threats.** These emanate from nations' efforts to achieve military nuclear capabilities that could endanger Israel using planes or long-range missiles. A clear example is Iran, which is moving long-range missiles onto Iraqi soil. In the future, these missiles could be outfitted with nonconventional warheads and aimed at Israel.
- **Subconventional threats.** These cover a wide range of possibilities, including high-trajectory fire from civilian areas, with the major goal of harming Israel's citizens, and use of the subterranean space for military and terrorist activity. The threat is heightened given increased precision, activity in cyberspace, and the enemy's influence-wielding efforts. Exemplars are Hezbollah and Hamas. This threat includes terrorism from actors both within and outside Israel.
- **Cyberspace and information threats.** These threats, emanating from enemy states and organizations, entail capabilities designed to disrupt the functioning of Israel's vital systems, upset daily life, conduct espionage, and steal data. They may also involve efforts to influence opinion and consciousness, damage the legitimacy of Israel's use of force, harm the legal system, and encourage economic and academic boycotts.

In addition, long-range surface-to-surface missiles, both conventional and nonconventional, from more distant nations and organizations constitute threats to the nation's population centers and strategic assets. These threats might disrupt Israel's ability to call up its reserves and move troops to various fronts, damage Israel's air capabilities as a result of severe damage to air force bases, and directly destroy critical assets and installations, such as air- and seaports, natural gas and electrical installations, manufacturing plants, and hazardous materials stores.

Nonconventional threats are a strategic weak point for Israel. Damage from related attacks could be so severe as to paralyze the civilian economy, due to both the physical and psychological effects. The resultant impact on national security demands action to stop such threats, prevent every effort to develop them, and—if one emerges anyhow—retain meaningful deterrence to their realization. The Iranian nuclear threat, specifically, is at the core of efforts to export the regime's revolutionary ideology and its desire for regional hegemony in Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gaza Strip.

## Internal Challenges and Threats

Internal challenges and threats to Israel center on an erosion of solidarity among segments of the population, damage to belief in the justness of the Zionist cause, and weakening of the internal legitimacy of Israel's actions. The rifts cover social (between rich and poor), identity (Ashkenazi vs. Mizrahi, secular vs. religious), and political (right vs. left) terrain, with associated differing visions and values. These problems are exacerbated by the negative impact on outlying areas (Galilee, Arava, Negev) owing to demographic processes and neglect.

## Risks

Israel's security strategy must account for the possibility that risks facing the country could become concrete threats, including policy and government changes in immediately neighboring countries. Such changes could occur as a result of internal processes that bring about far-reaching deterioration in the reigning elite's attitude to the State of Israel, effectively turning those nations into adversaries or even enemies.

## Ramifications of Threats and of Israel's Geostrategic Position

With the exception of its borders with Egypt and Jordan, some of Israel's borders are subject to dispute, and are based on the respective armistices, ceasefires, and interim agreements. Israel's long, narrow configuration results in similarly long borders that lack depth, making them difficult to defend. In most parts of the country, the borders are not based on natural boundaries, aggravating the inherent problem, as does extensive settlement along the borders and a lack of buffer zones between border areas and civilian populations.

According to Israel's longstanding security strategy, border settlement has served as part of the defensive system, with the goal of delaying the enemy and enabling the call-up and movement of reservists to operational arenas. But the proximity of civilians to the border also amounts to a weakness, with operational and psychological ramifications. The security strategy must therefore determine a balance between the settlements' defensive utility and denial of strategic achievements to the enemy.

The absence of depth and proximity of threats to vital assets in the border zone also create an intelligence challenge for Israel. This entails finding sufficient time to issue alerts so that troops can be deployed and reservist units called up and moved to the front.

Furthermore, the presence of reserve call-up centers and traffic axes threatened by both direct and indirect fire necessitates preemptive steps to neutralize threats and enable troops' deployment to the front. Later on, the imperative becomes rapidly shifting the fighting to enemy soil, rendering threats more distant and allowing strategic effort to be concentrated on executing decisive moves.

The proximity of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) to Israel's major population centers and vital assets will require—even in the case of a future agreement with the Palestinians—an arrangement that ensures troops can be deployed to the area given any developing threat. Maintenance of full security control of the Jordan Valley will also be necessary to prevent the formation of a potential Eastern front, ensure demilitarization of Palestinian-controlled areas, and prevent force buildup consequent to arms smuggled in from the east.

The State of Israel is noted for geostrategic factors that greatly affect the expression of typical military might, with challenges such as the following:



- Operating forces work according to a land-based military strategy—i.e., achieving war goals depends on the ability to attain strategic objectives using ground troops, whose starting point is along Israel's land borders. This entails a need to prevent the compromise of Israel's sovereign territory by the use of military force, with ground forces as a central component.
- Threats emanating from neighboring states and organizations could force Israel to engage in more than one active arena simultaneously. Two or even three land-based arenas—e.g., Lebanon and Syria; Gaza; Judea and Samaria—could develop, in addition to other active arenas, should hostile entities penetrate those states or a strategic reversal somehow occur.
- Growing urbanization and the move from combat on barren fronts to densely populated areas will likely increase friction in ground maneuver and delay and wear down such operations. Frontal operations could well continue at length and entail steep military and public opinion costs. Maneuvering swiftly into the enemy's depth and threatening its centers of gravity necessitates developing the ability to execute a systemic flanking maneuver along external lines, at sea, in the air, and on land.
- In addition to the ground arenas, a naval arena could well develop off the Lebanese and Gaza coasts that poses significant challenges to Israel's shipping freedom and defense of economic assets. This challenge might worsen further amid a negative strategy shift by neighboring nations, with ramifications for freedom of shipping in the Red Sea as well.

Israel's geographical location and features also confer benefits, such as the ability to:

- cut off shipping lanes to Lebanon and Gaza
- swiftly move troops among arenas on short internal routes, and operate aerial forces in all arenas against any existing or potential threats
- prevent hostile military entrenchment in Judea and Samaria, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula, or at least act preventively against such entrenchment

- stop the emergence of conventional military forces in the Golan Heights, Lebanon, Gaza, and Sinai—or, alternatively, take preemptive steps at the first sign of conventional military capabilities in these areas

## Reference Threat and Reference Scenario

The reference threat refers to acts by the nation's enemies in four threat capacities:

- **The threat of terrorism as an extended phenomenon during peacetime, war, or emergencies.** It covers a range of varied methods, such as cold weapons, firearms, improvised explosive devices, and even nonconventional terrorism, both chemical and biological.
- **The threat from nations that have proven their capabilities in all dimensions of war** and against which Israel must act.
- **The nonconventional threat**—in the near term, chemical and biological, and in the longer term, military nuclear.
- **Cyberspace and information threats** emanating from regional enemies and global rivals.

Each of these threats could play out separately, or else in various combinations or all at once—as well as in peacetime, war, or an emergency.

The reference scenario is constructed on the possibility of simultaneous action against a broad range of threats, as described in the reference threat. Severe and extreme threat conditions must serve as the blueprint for establishing all constituent parts of Israel's might. Moreover, the reference threat must assume that the State of Israel will have to act independently without any external support.

The security strategy must confront a combination of external threats and internal challenges based on the understanding that the danger lies in their simultaneity. Therefore, the strategy must provide a coherent response strengthening every component separately while creating synergy from joining them together, assuming that the demand of the security system will be to operate concomitantly to defend the nation and bring about victory.

# 5

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## Augmenting National Security

### Israel's National Security Principles

The core of Israel's national security consists of several principles that have withstood the test of different circumstances over time. As such, these principles can serve as general guidelines for national security policymakers.

### Military Security Principles

The State of Israel will act overall based on a **defensive strategy** designed to ensure the existence of the state. Within this strategy, Israel's national security principles are as follows:

- **Proactive military and political efforts.** In peacetime, this means conducting a campaign between the wars; during war, maintaining high readiness toward achieving clear victory.
- **Preventing war and postponing confrontations.** This is a fundamental principle of national security, manifesting Israel's desire not to fight and to delay conflicts as much as possible.
- **Quality over quantity.** In terms of material and human resources, Israel is inherently at a disadvantage compared to its enemies. It must therefore compensate with qualitative superiority.
- **Moving the battle onto enemy territory.** The lack of depth and proximity of strategic assets and critical infrastructures to the nation's borders, as well as their exposure to enemy fire because of their concentration along the coastline, require the rapid shifting of fighting onto enemy soil.
- **Minimizing combat duration.** The need to minimize harm to the public and the nation's infrastructures as a result of combat, as well

as to enlist the nation's resources and the threat posed to most if not all the nation's citizens, necessitates attaining combat goals in the shortest possible time.

- **Defensible borders.** Israel's map of threats reinforces the importance of territory to realize homeland defense. A fundamental principle in this context demands that, in any arrangement, Israel must rely on its fully independent security control, including in the Jordan Valley.
- **Nurturing a fighting spirit.** The nation's fighting spirit and belief in the justness of its cause is a basic component of Israel's national security strategy. Nurturing it in every possible way is imperative.

## Societal Security Principles

These principles guide the role of Israeli society in national security:

**The people's military.** The military, and no less the reserves, represents a coalescing agent and Israel's "melting pot," based on the ethos of a fighting nation. In this model, the state military calls up its strike force from within the civilian population—i.e., the reserves. The State of Israel will maximize all national recruitment potential for the sake of IDF service. The essence of the IDF as the official people's military is of supreme value because the IDF benefits from the intellectual and physical capabilities across Israeli society. The current challenge is to transition to a more professional, varied, and remunerative people's military. Unless service is viewed as a fundamental Israeli value, willingness to serve will suffer.

**Universal national service.** Three major factors will help the people's military model thrive: (1) a sense of partnership and solidarity from all population segments in contributing to the nation (as well as full equality of rights); (2) appreciation for those who serve, especially combat soldiers; and (3) incorporation of most of the nation's citizens in the workforce. Alongside these stand two principles: that the IDF has the first right of selecting whom to enlist to its ranks based on the military's needs and that other groups in society, including those exempt from military service (i.e., the ultra-Orthodox and the Arabs), should be recruited for civilian service. Such civilian service can be done in the police, fire departments,

Magen David Adom (Israel's version of the Red Cross), schools, hospitals, nursing homes, youth movements, and all other organizations that contribute to society as a whole.

Those who do serve in the IDF, especially combat and combat-support soldiers, should be better compensated than others. Without denigrating the function of any IDF soldier, there must be a significant, visible difference between those who serve in national/civilian service or in the military rear, on the one hand, and those who serve in combat or combat-support roles, on the other.

**National reserves.** All citizens eligible to serve in the IDF, including those who fulfilled their mandatory service, national service, and did not serve at all, are required to serve as part of a national reserve. It is necessary to establish a mechanism for calling this reserve up for special reserve duty, which would be activated only in extreme emergencies, while maintaining a small-scale, adjusted process for training and maintaining operational fitness.

## Maintaining Security Margins

The connection between national security and the people and the state, as well as the fundamental understanding that the nation can survive defeat only once, will, in the foreseeable future, force Israel to prioritize national security considerations ahead of all others.

Regional instability and uncertainty require that the national security strategy base its considerations on the most extreme reasonable scenario and maintain satisfactory security margins vis-à-vis related threats and risks to enable national defense under even the most difficult circumstances.

These security margins must be considered in terms not only of the threat of war but also of the chances for peace. To this end, genuine arrangements and agreements with neighboring states could expand Israel's security margins when it comes to regional and international threats alike. Taking calculated risks means providing sufficient margins as a foundation for handling various eventualities. This also requires forging alternative paths should a political process deteriorate or even collapse, eroding these margins.

## Political and Military Freedom of Operation

The various strategic environments faced by Israel, with all their associated challenges, entail constraints and opportunities for the nation's political leaders as they seek to realize national security objectives.

For the political and military echelons, the principle of attaining and preserving freedom of operation is therefore central to successfully confronting challenges and fulfilling goals. This principle is closely connected with the need for flexibility related to tools of force and their informed use.

Israel's legitimacy challenge, which directly affects its freedom of action, likewise requires the use and modification of soft power (e.g., political, legal, economic, psychological) in tandem with kinetic military force.

The principle of self-reliance is vital for freedom of operation, and reflects the constant desire to increase Israel's might in a broad range of fields, especially that of security, to ensure the state's ability to defend its vital interests without help from foreign troops or agreement from foreign nations. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between operational dependence on foreign forces and other forms of cooperation, such as intelligence sharing, arms supply, political backing, and economic credit.

# 6

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## Threat Responses

ISRAEL'S SECURITY STRATEGY IS BUILT ON A DEFENSIVE approach aimed at ensuring the existence of the state, engaging in proactive political and military efforts, creating effective deterrence, neutralizing threats when necessary, and prolonging the intervals between confrontations.

Nonetheless, Israel's *military strategy* is offensive, based on the understanding that it is impossible to defeat the enemy while acting defensively during confrontations or being operationally inactive during periods of calm. To make military gains showcasing Israel's victory—e.g., meeting the confrontation's objectives, achieving success at the strategic level, and defeating the enemy at the operational-tactical level—and strengthening the "iron wall" notion underpinning the nation's security strategy, application of offensive force is needed. Such application must be decisive, while preserving the legitimacy of Israel and its military during and between confrontations.

In the national chain of command, the government/security cabinet is the supreme commander; subordinate to the government both in application of force and force buildup is the Chief of General Staff, the supreme military commander. The heads of Shin Bet and the Mossad are directly subordinate to the prime minister. The police commissioner is subordinate to the minister of public security.

The organizing principles of the national security strategy include the following:

- expanding the nation's staying power by developing all resources serving national security and defining the potential of the nation's resources allocated to national security
- coordinating and synchronizing all national security efforts to develop maximal flexibility for responding to the various challenges

- creating and preserving deterrence vis-à-vis the regional environment and potential enemies within it by strengthening the nation's military might and adapting it to the challenges, and by being resolute in the application of significant military force whenever necessary
- applying a continuous preventive strategy in periods of calm, including strengthening deterrence vis-à-vis the regional arena and enemies, activities aimed at increasing enemies' constraints—including damaging their capabilities and force buildup—and maintaining strategic channels of communication, influence, and incentives

All these are meant to prolong periods of calm and help win confrontations when they occur. Finally, in confrontations, the national security strategy calls for rapid action to damage and remove most of the threat while reducing harm to the State of Israel and creating the conditions for better security on the day after.

## National Security Efforts

The national security strategy is the organizing principle that encompasses most efforts to ensure the advancement of Israel's interests in the short, middle, and long term. Here, Jabotinsky's iron wall concept is fundamental. In other words, peace is possible only once Israel's enemies have concluded that their efforts are ineffective and serve only to increase their own suffering. They must be convinced that they can attain much more through dialogue than through violence.

The second component is based on ideas that originated with Israel's founding leader, David Ben-Gurion, regarding the interrelationships among society, the economy, science and technology, military might, international standing, and foreign policy. The State of Israel constructed its defensive force based on the recognition that the country would always be numerically inferior (few vs. many). This compelled Ben-Gurion's conclusion that Israel's security, when faced with fundamental threats to its existence, must rely on its reserve forces. Alongside the air force, navy, and intelligence capabilities created for regular active-duty troops augmented by reserves, the ground strike force rests fully on Israel's reservist soldiers. Ben-Gurion articulated two fundamental principles for the security response: (1) shifting combat onto enemy soil, as noted earlier, given Israel's lack of strategic depth; and (2) achieving



military decision in the shortest possible time, because of the economic difficulty of fielding a large-scale reserve force in extended combat, and because of the difficulty of preserving legitimacy within the international community for the use of force over time.

These details validate the imperative to maintain the reserves as the strike force for ground maneuver—a critical component in Israel’s national security.

## National Security Through the Use of Force

Israel will always prefer to use political rather than military tools but prepares for the reality that war might be forced upon it given threats to its vital national security interests. Therefore, absent a political means to curb threats, the State of Israel will use force, carried out by the IDF and other security organizations.

The use of force and military means is meant to:

- deter nations in Israel’s strategic sphere from using troops and/or conventional or nonconventional means that could endanger the existence of the state
- defend the existence and integrity of Israel under every circumstance of the start of a war, whether traditional or nontraditional
- attain the war’s objectives, both political and military, by shifting it to enemy ground as fast as possible
- defend the routine security of the State of Israel against terrorist attacks of every scope and type
- defend the integrity of the population and civilian infrastructures against troops and military means apt to be used against them and to cause harm and losses

For the gamut of arenas and situations, the permanent security objectives and basic assumptions of the IDF and security establishment include:

- ensuring no combat of any kind occurs within the sovereign territory of the State of Israel—including, e.g., standoff fire, terrorist attacks, attacks from the air, conventional combat—and preventing the violation of Israel’s sovereign rights, including freedom of movement in international airspace and waters

- ensuring no foreign military force or other armed force is present inside Israel's strategic rear beyond a predefined line
- maintaining freedom of military operation in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) while preserving order and providing security to the Jewish settlements there
- preventing attacks on strategic and other sites delineated by the Israeli government
- preventing attacks of any kind, physical and other, on vital national infrastructure
- ensuring the security of Jewish communities and institutions around the world and acting to defend them should the need arise

Finally, Israel bases its security response to confrontations on four components: deterrence, intelligence superiority, defense, and victory.

## Principles of Applying Military Force

Israel's security establishment will act continuously to defend the state during periods of calm, in emergencies, and in wars. To do so, it will engage in three major efforts:

- **Prepare for war by force buildup of every kind**, including developing operational strategies for existing and future threats; developing manpower for a range of security establishment needs while maximizing the nation's potential; acquiring and developing means of warfare suitable to the many varied threats and congruent with Israel's operational strategies; organizing the military in line with the needs of force application; and finally, maintaining a routine of training and drilling at all levels.
- **Develop and execute a "campaign between the wars" (CBW)**.<sup>1</sup> This constitutes one of the fundamental changes in the security-related modus operandi of the State of Israel. It entails no longer only preparing for war but also striving toward proactive offensive measures dependent on high-quality intelligence. The CBW has several core goals: deter the enemy and keep war at bay; weaken enemies and

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1. *Mabam*, as known by its Hebrew acronym.

other malign forces in the region; reduce or eliminate the enemy's force-buildup processes; create optimal conditions for the IDF to win the next war; and, finally, help generate legitimacy for Israel to use force while simultaneously damaging the enemy's legitimacy. Actions within the CBW inherently possess significant risks because they might deteriorate into a full-scale military conflict. Therefore, a comprehensive risk assessment must be conducted prior to each action.

- **Wage war.** The IDF must be at a high and immediate state of preparedness to use force against an array of threats to defend Israel's sovereignty, citizens, and inhabitants; stop the threat; and attain victory over the enemy. In addition, once war is begun, it must be ended with a clear outcome with the goal of strengthening national security and of projecting strength in order to postpone the next round of combat.

The major attributes of the IDF's use of force are the soldiers' will to fight, the quality of its commanders, and their ability to undertake feints and stratagems against the enemy. These abilities are superior to all others held by the IDF.

### Deterrence

Deterrence involves discouraging the nation's enemies from acting against it based on military and security force buildup and the preparedness and willingness to counter the enemy's intention to violate the sovereignty, daily life, and security of the nation's citizens. The purpose of deterrence is to allow for lengthy periods of calm in which the nation can develop its education, welfare, and economy, as well as build up a sufficient security force to be ready for the collapse of deterrence and emergence of escalation scenarios.

In Israel's security strategy, deterrence is a basic principle. The nation's ability to generate deterrence is closely linked to its ability to achieve victory on the battlefield. Indeed, effective deterrence assumes backing by the ability and will to reach that victory. Deterrence draws its power from this might in the background and is in turn fueled by the credence the enemy gives it. Generally, however, Israel must be prepared for a time when its deterrence might fail due to several factors.

At times, for example, enemy hostility and frustration overcome calculations of relative capabilities, whereupon war can break out even if

the enemy has no objective capability to confront the IDF's might. At other times, escalation results from the enemy's proven ability to attain significant political achievements from a military campaign that granted it only paltry gains on the battlefield. Here, the rationale issues not from relative military strengths but from the anticipated outcomes at the level of grand strategy. Finally, past confrontations prove that the State of Israel can generate a deterrent effect when faced with enemy nations' desire to destroy it, but against limited operations, especially terrorist acts, the effect of deterrence has been very small.

Therefore, actual deterrence is based on generating the ability to act effectively when necessary, on convincing the enemy that the threat of deploying the means to achieve victory is credible, and on flexibility for decisionmakers in use of various tools to act in interim situations. This last item is a hallmark of Israel's limited confrontations against various nonstate entities.

## Intelligence Superiority

The second component of Israel's threat response is intelligence superiority that can provide early warning to preemptively foil the enemy's intention to harm the nation.<sup>2</sup> This gives the State of Israel sufficient time to formulate an appropriate response to the threat and avoid a state of permanent preparedness, which erodes the nation's resources.

The IDF and other security organizations must provide decisionmakers with specific intelligence about the threat factors and enemy intentions to act against the nation. This is necessary to provide time to set up an appropriate, practicable military response, both in terms of immediate force application and of long-term force buildup.

Over the years, Israel has developed excellent intelligence expertise to identify the enemy's abilities and recognize its intentions to target the nation. This expertise is applied to a scenario in which Israeli territory is attacked by military forces. For such situations, the security establishment constructed a common language of concepts that ranks indicators of the enemy's intention to attack.

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2. Traditionally, Israeli security strategy was characterized by Four Ds—Deterrence, Detection, Defense, and (Military) Decision. Evolving from Detection is the concept of Intelligence Superiority, reflecting changes in Israel's strategic thinking and de facto modus operandi.

The reality of changing threats requires a current conceptualization of the early-warning concept. The massive enemy use of short-range rockets does not require lengthy preparation processes. The same is true for popular weapons and guerrilla warfare methods. Consequently, one may define intelligence superiority by two main characteristics:

- **Remote intelligence superiority.** The ability of the intelligence agencies to provide early warning to deploy troops beyond the nation's borders—e.g., intelligence warnings in Syria or pinpoint intelligence warnings in the Gaza Strip. In both cases, the intelligence community must provide early warning in the absence of a permanent ground presence. Beyond the nation's borders, providing effective early warning is inherently difficult when it comes to high-trajectory fire, such as short-range missiles, or the deployment of low-signature forces operated by terrorist organizations using guerrilla tactics.
- **Intelligence superiority with presence on the ground.** The IDF's combat in Judea and Samaria during the past fifteen years of conflict is characterized by the ability to generate effective early intelligence warnings. This ability is constructed based on the IDF's permanent presence in that region. There, the IDF and Shin Bet manage to greatly reduce the scope of terrorism. The attempt to realize a similar outcome in Gaza and Lebanon demonstrates just how hard it is to generate effective intelligence from afar.

The security organizations will work to provide decisionmakers in Israel with early intelligence warnings regarding strategic reversals that could occur in the region as well as the intelligence needed for adapting and adjusting the nation's force buildup.

## Defense

The third component of Israel's threat response entails defensive capabilities in all dimensions, with an emphasis on the ground, where Israel cannot tolerate long-lasting damage to its sovereignty. Defense consists of these components:

- **Defending the borders.** Defending the nation's territory to maintain state sovereignty within the borders and defend against invasion by hostile troops or armies, as well as prevent incursions, illegal border

crossings, and other actions. Defense will be practiced along the land borders, the coastline, the airports, and seaports.

- **Defending the airspace.** Defending the State of Israel's airspace and preventing it from being used by entities hostile to the nation.
- **Defending naval and shipping routes.** Defending the nation's territorial waters, defending the nation's economic assets at sea and its ability to maximize maritime natural resources, and defending shipping routes to and from the state.
- **Maintaining public security.** Defending the state by stopping organized and nonorganized terrorist activity within and outside the nation's borders.
- **Developing the ability to defend the nation against high-trajectory fire** by means of several main components:
  - **early warnings on high-trajectory fire**—the ability to provide localized warnings (in time and space) to allow the public sufficient time to respond and take cover, as well as prevent disruption of daily life as much as possible
  - **passive defense**—constructing safe spaces in homes, public buildings, and elsewhere in the public space to minimize victims harmed by high-trajectory fire
  - **active defense**—maintaining the ability to intercept high-trajectory fire while in flight to minimize, as possible, damage to critical national infrastructures, the IDF's and security establishment's ability to stop threats, and the public at large
  - **the civilian component**—strengthening the citizens' staying power and ability to recover by reinforcing local governments, aid and rescue organizations (while incorporating volunteer associations), and local leaders
- **Defending cyberspace.** Defending national cyberspace while maintaining cooperation between security organizations and the Israel National Cyber Directorate, based on the understanding that, in emergencies and wars, the IDF will have greater authority to set priorities when it comes to national cyberspace defense.

- **Defending against enemies' and rivals' offensive psychological efforts.** Maintaining the ability to defend against psychological operations by enemies and rivals against a range of relevant target audiences in Israel and abroad.

## Victory

In the context of national security strategy, victory means realization of the war's objectives and gaining the enemy's coerced acceptance of the nation's terms for an arrangement or ceasefire. Given this desired outcome, once deterrence collapses, it is imperative to stop the threat as rapidly and clearly as possible to renew deterrence, return to routine life, and allow an extended period of calm based on security strength.<sup>3</sup>

The state of victory, moreover, is attained when the enemy leadership internalizes the reality that continuing the confrontation will not only fail to help it achieve any goals, but will with absolute certainty be expected to result in a loss of the assets on which its regime rests, to the point that the leadership's own political and personal survival is at stake. Victory may be reached by several means:

- A quick, forceful military operation supported by all security organizations with the IDF on the offensive, and which would include the operation of every force component, including: military ground maneuvers on the front and into the enemy's depth; operational and strategic high-trajectory and standoff fire attacks based on precise intelligence on previously selected targets as well as opportunity-based targets; special operations; strikes in cyberspace; and offensive psychological operations—with the basis of any victory being the ability to seize the initiative as quickly as possible and create ever-growing pressure on the enemy's critical assets, while disrupting the assessments of its decisionmakers at all levels
- National defense efforts—military and civilian—to minimize damage and maintain the fabric of civilian life
- A political initiative consisting of several components, including: efforts to create international legitimacy for the objectives of Israel's

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3. These guidelines evolve the concept of Military Decision to that of Victory, reflecting the changing battlefield and regional strategic situation.

actions and an endeavor to generate a domestic and international political coalition to stop the enemy from achieving its objectives, while acting in concert with the relevant parties in the international community to reach an arrangement convenient to the State of Israel

It is appropriate not to use the concept of military decision in the national security or even the strategic context. This concept has an essential place in the operational and tactical military discourse. At these levels of operation, it is imperative to reach military decision over the enemy, meaning total eradication of the enemy's combat ability, wherein it is brought to a state of helplessness, or physical destruction, and thus surrenders.<sup>4</sup>

## Causes for War

Every campaign must be part of a political effort and have political objectives. Articulating these lies within the purview of the political echelon.

In war, the State of Israel strives for a result that will be manifested in the enemy's lack of ability or desire to act. The larger goal of pursuing victory is to strengthen deterrence and change the strategic situation in the long term, and this achievement is thus manifested in damage to the enemy's renewed ability to build up its forces and in lengthy periods of calm between confrontations. The major characteristic of an effective application of force is the operation of massive, rapid military strength, designed to remove the threat and defend the nation while reducing damage to the State of Israel.

A campaign aimed at victory can be realized in several scenarios, some initiated by Israel and some by exploiting opportunities resulting from enemy aggression to change the strategic situation from the ground up. In this context, four scenarios are evident:

- **A defensive response to a severe, intolerable enemy attack**—a reactive defensive campaign to stop an enemy's severe offensive initiative. The severity aspect centers on threat force and the potential to cause Israel intolerable harm.
- **Proactive attack by Israel**—a campaign for victory and possibly decisive victory by means of a preemptive war aimed at stopping

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4. Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Strategy and War* (in Hebrew) (Israel Defense Ministry Press, 1999), chap. 8, "Decisive Victory and Attrition."



the enemy's intention and ability to attack Israel (at a high level of certainty and given early warnings) by damaging the enemy's preparations and force buildup. Such a proactive attack can be exploited to achieve victory to change the state's strategic balance in the long term.

- **Proactive damage to the enemy's force buildup.** Israel can initiate actions to damage the enemy's force buildup through both the campaign between the wars and as part of a wider campaign aimed at thwarting the enemy's strategic capabilities.
- **Deterring reprisal**—a campaign designed to retaliate against the enemy for an operation it has already carried out or to create deterrence so that the enemy does not engage in similar operations in the future.

In the context of a limited campaign, Israel's meta-objective is to maintain a reasonable security routine and allow the nation to develop in every sector (e.g., education, economy, healthcare, tourism). This security routine is maintained thanks to defensive actions at the borders, in the nation's airspace, and in other areas; strategic measures to foil threats below the threshold of war, and win a clear victory should war break out; and activities that are part of the campaign between the wars. These details aside, a limited campaign must be the last option, after diplomatic and other intermediate steps have been exhausted, and must have a clear political goal.

Before embarking on a limited campaign, a wide-lens risk analysis must be carried out to find the proper balance among: the physical harm to the damaged area compared to other areas under threat since the establishment of the state; the sense of security of the inhabitants, with the broadest picture taken into account; and whether the costs of a limited campaign are warranted as they pertain to the larger Israeli economy and public.

In addition, before embarking on a limited campaign, an analysis must be undertaken of political goals, along with the associated costs and benefits. A military operation has two possible goals. The first is causing the enemy's governance to collapse in the threat sphere (e.g., Hamas in the Gaza Strip) by full occupation, as a result of which Israel would have to deal with a long-term operational burden to eradicate terrorist infrastructures. This is a heavy economic responsibility that would force Israel to provide

for the needs of the population, and a heavy political burden because it would be difficult, if not impossible, for Israel to find any outside party capable of taking over the role of ensuring security in the sphere.

The second possible political goal of a limited campaign is restoring deterrence. In such a case, the overall cost to the economy in terms of significant damage to the national fabric must be assessed against public insecurity in the nation's ability to realize deterrence against popular terrorism. Embarking on a limited campaign must, as already noted, be the very last option, and the nation's leadership has a critical role to play in creating resilience and stability so as not to go to war after every attack or series of attacks.

## National Security Through Political Means

The special political-strategic relationship Israel enjoys with the United States is a cornerstone of the overall effort to attain national security by political means. Nonetheless, additional political tools must be activated to that end, including a process of arrangements, alliances, and cooperation with regional states, and the development of relationships and agreements with various nations around the region and the world. This would involve:

- Strengthening and upgrading the diplomatic system working to promote Israel's national security interests around the world, including reinforcing Israel's legitimacy and standing in the international community
- Waging a legal campaign to reduce the scope of action for terrorist groups and state as well as nonstate actors working against Israel's national security interests
- Managing a national campaign to promote Israel's strategic goals in the international arena, combating the delegitimization campaign, and achieving the necessary freedom of action for using military might

## Combating Delegitimization Efforts

In the absence of significant successes in harming Israel with military means, ideological methods have developed to fill the gap. Their objective is to deny legitimacy to Israel's existence as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

These efforts are led by civilian groups, gathered informally under the umbrella of a movement to boycott Israel, divest from it, and impose sanctions against it. This movement is aimed at developing and promoting ideas in academia and the media that deny Israel the right to exist and at defining Zionism as a colonialist enterprise foreign to the region.

The movement represents a threat by encouraging boycotts and sanctions against Israel aimed at isolating it economically, culturally, and academically. The promotion of boycotts is often based on lies and half-truths, but the use of economic, cultural, and academic channels might in the long run damage Israel's political capabilities and freedom of operation, and harm the nation's ability to achieve legitimacy for its actions and even reduce its ability to act against its enemies.

The Palestinian issue lies at the heart of these efforts. The delegitimization movement strives to highlight and prioritize the Palestinian cause at the expense of Zionism, while drawing parallels between the Palestinian issue and minority and native struggles around the world in order to arouse sympathy, create a sense of shared destiny, and gain support.

The State of Israel has already taken action against this phenomenon, but such efforts must be expanded. Israel must now develop a comprehensive strategy to confront it and enlist its national capabilities, parties in the international community, and parties in the Jewish diaspora to do so. This response must be based on several fundamental principles:

- Cooperation with civilian organizations already operating on behalf of Israel and against the boycott movement, while providing them support as needed with data and intelligence.
- Active engagement by state institutions with civilian, economic, cultural, and academic bodies, while proactively taking part in their development. Such relationships are crucial at both the interpersonal and interorganizational levels for opening communication channels and relationships to counteract anti-Israel messaging and ideas.
- Action against the financing of boycott organizations through exposing their sources and through political action.

### **National Security Through Economic Means**

The economic component of national security is aimed at developing society, education, and culture to strengthen the state and bolster social

cohesion and solidarity. In turn, such efforts are meant to support a welfare state appropriate to the needs of the whole population.

Israel will benefit by positioning itself as an economic growth engine that, through technological innovation, helps global human development, and by using these components to build mutual interests and partnerships with relevant parties in the international community.

On national security more strictly, Israel must adapt the development of economic infrastructures so that they can be harnessed for national security needs and to support the war effort (e.g., physical means of reinforcement, functional continuity, energy sources, retrofitting industrial plants for war manufacturing).

In addition, Israel's economy must allow for national security budgets for building and developing the security establishment and all its military and civilian components, and also for maintaining reserves of raw materials, equipment, and various products that Israel must buy from foreign parties for wartime use.

The establishment, maintenance, and development of an infrastructure for developing and manufacturing weapons systems, armaments, and combat equipment is critical for the IDF's ability to fulfill its role without depending on external sources, as is investing in military R&D and enlisting the nation's scientific capabilities to ensure the IDF's technological advantage and the defense industry's competitive advantage.

Additionally, Israel must use its defense-export and R&D apparatus to strengthen security and political ties, the economy, and the industrial security infrastructure. These measures help the critical economic infrastructure function uninterrupted in wartime, diverting economic resources to the IDF (e.g., ground, air, and naval transportation systems, industries, and services).

Finally, a system must be established to support businesses to prepare for war, its various needs, and reconstruction thereafter. Also, to this end, is the need for an interministry organizational system to help keep up necessary economic activity as long as war lasts.

## National Security Through Social Efforts

### Israeli Society

The social component of national security is meant to provide the combined economic, values-based, and moral foundation for the use of force.

This effort is also important for building up the internal legitimacy of all other national security efforts.

Israel's social fabric consists of many threads, a challenge for seeking consensus but also an invaluable asset in building a vibrant society. Despite its various social challenges, Israel has managed to develop a strong economy capable of supporting the security effort.

But one cannot simply assume this will last forever. The resilience of Israeli society is a keystone of national security, and it is therefore imperative to expand the sphere of consensus while striving to identify and solidify common denominators for all groups.

The existence of an ethical, moral society that subscribes to the justness of its cause underlies Israeli national existence and is equivalent to any physical security capability. Integrating the Arab minority into the national endeavor is a necessity, as is demanding its loyalty to the state and its institutions. The centrality of education for social development requires minimizing, as possible, the construction of separate school systems for different population segments, a phenomenon that only deepens social rifts. Strengthening state-sponsored education is therefore essential, given the crucial role this plays in shaping the common denominator of Israeli society.

## Diaspora Jewry

Israel's role as the national home of the Jewish people is and has always been dependent on the mutual relationship and support between the state and the Jewish diaspora. This connection is a central pillar of Israel's national security and is reflected in its national values and *raison d'être*. Over the years, this relationship has been manifested by Israel's assistance to endangered Jewish communities around the world and its efforts to integrate and assimilate new immigrants, while world Jewry has offered political support from its particular nations of residence, economic support for the developing nation, and a strategic depth that has been critical throughout Israel's existence.

World Jewry is also a component of Israel's might. It is a source of development through direct investments, philanthropy, and especially the immigration of young Jews from all over the world. Significant assistance accrued to the young state during the massive *aliyah* waves of the 1950s, the security crises before the Six Day War and after the Yom Kippur War,

and the large Jewish immigration influx from the Soviet Union.

But given troubling trends within Israel, within diaspora Jewish communities, and between Israel and these communities, the time has come to reexamine some basic assumptions regarding the Israel-diaspora relationship.

The vast majority of Jewish communities around the world today are economically stable and physically secure compared to the past, although they face rising antisemitism from both the far right and the far left. The safety of those communities is at times affected by Israeli actions, and members may find themselves asked to take responsibility for or explain Israel's position. In practice, these communities are on the frontlines in the struggle over Israel's legitimacy and against the boycott movement, which seeks to drive a wedge between Israel and diaspora Jewry and could well make Israel a burden to the communities and damage their relationship with the state. In recent years, an increasingly diverse world Jewish community sometimes struggles to find a connection with the state. These challenges aside, the success of diaspora communities has made them a key asset in enlisting political support for Israel in their respective countries. Critically, the U.S. Jewish community is the central component in the traditionally bipartisan American support for Israel and is the core of the bilateral special relationship, which in recent years has come under growing pressure because of political and social developments.

Israel must increase its efforts to support and strengthen ties with world Jewry as a component of its national security. This strategy must be realized by official entities dedicated to the subject in both the executive and legislative branches and be reflected in the country's decisionmaking processes. The state must gird for this effort and allocate human and material resources to build an aid infrastructure aimed at strengthening the connection with diaspora communities, especially in the United States. These must be based on the sense of shared destiny among the state, its citizens, and Jewish communities abroad. Finally, Israel must continue to act based on a sense of responsibility for the entire Jewish people while creating a space that serves as the national home for the Jewish people.

## National Security Through the Civilian Sector

Israel's situation and the spectrum of threats on its borders, especially on the civilian front, require the whole civilian population to participate in the national security effort as follows:

- Using border and frontier communities to support the territorial defense system and protect border areas in general; incorporating civilian authorities, youth movements, and schools to help authorities deal with the threat of ballistic missiles and other aerial threats, conventional or not; using these resources for recovering from such attacks
- Incorporating the civilian population in defending against and stopping terrorism and improving public security; maintaining an inter-ministry organizational system for defensive purposes; and upholding a stable current of routine life in the civilian rear

## National Security Through the Physical Infrastructure

To meet national security goals through physical infrastructure, Israel's various government ministries must be integrated in the planning, coordination, and execution stages of developing systems in accordance with national security needs. Tasks include diverting economic resources for national security (e.g., transportation and hauling, industry, healthcare, food manufacturing and marketing), together with planning, coordination, and execution of population dispersal, settlement, and other national projects. Such a physical infrastructure must also be aligned with the network of national roadways, sea- and airports, power stations, and energy and water installations.

Specifically, it is critical to retain the independent ability to conduct commerce by sea, a goal that requires establishing the capacity for independent shipping in emergencies and wartime. Today, the State of Israel has no effective ability to maintain shipping to and from the state during emergencies, when security fears or higher insurance costs prevent foreign shipping companies from sailing for Israeli seaports. It is vital to address these gaps.

## Other Aspects of Threat Responses

Israel must act to retain its standing in the eyes of the international community—especially the United States and other Western nations—because the state interest is to seek international backing for its basic existence as well as for important national decisions. In the Middle East arena, Israel must operate in a way that, to the greatest extent possible, reduces security threats against it and generates cooperative opportunities. Nonetheless, the principle of independent response asserts that relying on alliances cannot lead to any military dependence on a foreign entity for defensive purposes in any reasonable scenario. Other components consist of:

- **Expanding the scope for maneuver.** This entails increasing Israel's political and military freedom through a range of connections and action with parties in the regional and international communities.
- **Opening channels of communication with different target parties.** This means maintaining both overt and covert lines of communication with relevant parties in order to identify mutual interests and stop hostile activity aimed at Israel and its interests.
- **Maximizing mutual interests.** Such an endeavor requires constant investigation to identify common denominators with neighbors while promoting mutual interests with these and other stakeholders, including regional nations and the Palestinians.
- **Enhancing strategic depth.** Israel suffers from particularly limited geographical and political strategic depth, both because it is located in a hostile region and because of its small size. Given this, a continuous effort must be made to enhance the nation's strategic depth with compensatory means, such as regional cooperation, discourse with parties with mutual interests, and support for processes helpful to the State of Israel.



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## Conclusion

THE STATE OF ISRAEL EMERGED FROM THE WHIRLWIND of war and has, ever since, defended itself and won other wars. David Ben-Gurion and the commanders of the prestate Jewish settlement defense organizations—and later the commanders of the IDF—realized the severity of the threat they faced, resulting in the creation of a unique, successful operational strategy. Even though it was never cast as a formal, binding security strategy, it has served the nation well for decades.

Many observers claim that Israel is the most powerful nation in its region. But, in fact, the state still faces a “few versus many” situation. This unchanging reality has always led Israel to avoid lengthy wars and instead base its might on a reservist strike force tasked with rapidly shifting the fighting onto enemy soil and achieving victory as quickly as possible. This overarching principle applies today as much as ever.

In recent decades, new security threats have augmented the old state-based ones. This has challenged Israel to innovate methods to preserve the safety and values of a secure, democratic, Jewish state for the benefit of all its citizens and the Jewish people as a whole.

In addition to the familiar threats—conventional, nonconventional, and subconventional—are those issuing from the cyber domain. To the northeast, meanwhile, Israel confronts the potential reemergence of a hostile front, with Iran leading a coalition of radical forces against the nation. Furthermore, Israel faces external threats meant to damage its international legitimacy. And new complications have surfaced in Israel’s relationship with diaspora Jewry, which has always been a significant component in constructing national security and must remain so in the future.

Yet other challenges are present in political discourse, given voices that argue and act against the value of a democratic Jewish state. Only a profound discussion about national values, initiative, and action can strengthen Israel as a secure, democratic, Jewish state that has yet to

suffer a true wartime defeat, and serve as the foundation for its continued status as the national home of the Jewish people. At the same time, strengthening ties with diaspora Jewry, as already indicated, is a fundamental need. Israel's national security and power depend on this.

Even amid these new challenges, Israel's four basic national security concepts have remained preeminent: deterrence, intelligence superiority, defense, and victory. Furthermore, Israel's security strategy must always be based on the assumption that the state's deterrence and peace treaties could collapse. Therefore, the Latin adage—*Si vis pacem, para bellum* (If you want peace, prepare for war)—still holds. Israel must maintain wide security margins and continuous preparedness for a possible escalation, on a short timetable, to fulfill its responsibility to defend the nation, secure its existence, and win every war.

Israel's special relationship with the United States is a source of power and a central pillar of its national security for coordinating strategy internationally, including on the diplomatic and economic fronts. Central to this relationship is U.S. military aid to Israel under the two countries' current memorandum of understanding and the profound U.S. commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative advantage.

Israel's permanent mandate is, finally, one of self-reliance. This entails construction of the capabilities to defend the nation independently, complemented by regional and international partnerships, especially with the United States. Validating the principle of independence is especially important given recent debate over a possible defense pact with the United States. Although such a pact would seem to carry many advantages, it warrants very careful consideration, particularly as to the constriction of Israel's freedom it would certainly bring. This returns the discussion to the principle that only Israel can be responsible for its security.

This document has sought to provide a fundamental approach to Israel's national security strategy and a grand strategy for strengthening the nation. The authors' hope is that it will lead to a discourse on adopting an official security strategy, including confidential components relating to the core of Israel's power. It could thus inspire leaders of the country's security, education, economic, and technological establishments and serve as a compass for strengthening Israel as a powerful, safe national home.

# Appendices

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## Appendix A. National Security Concepts and Terms

**Boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement:** Referred to in this document informally, e.g., as the boycott movement, a collection of efforts to harm the State of Israel by mainly economic, cultural, and academic means through the promotion of boycotts and other targeting of bodies from or associated with Israel.

**Defense:** A collection of actions used to counter and mitigate threats to the security of the nation, its citizens, or its assets based on the application of force.

**Delegitimization:** In this particular case, a collection of efforts by ideological means to deny legitimacy to Israel's existence as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

**Deterrence:** Efforts to discourage the nation's enemies from acting against it through military and security force buildup and the preparedness and willingness to use various measures to counter the enemy's intention to violate the sovereignty, daily life, and security of the nation's citizens.

**Early warning:** The ability, through intelligence means, to accurately identify an imminent threat to the security of the nation, its citizens, or its assets.

**Force buildup:** The planning and development of the nation's forces in light of security challenges and assessments.

**Intelligence superiority:** Intelligence capabilities that can identify the enemy's abilities and recognize its intentions to attack the nation, for the purposes of providing early warning, supporting defensive actions, and enabling force buildup.

**Military Decision:** A tactical or operational situation in which the opponent's combat ability is totally eradicated and its leadership brought to a state of helplessness or physical destruction, leading to surrender. Sometimes referred to as Decisive Victory.

**National security:** A situation in which the nation can effectively confront threats to its existence and interests under all possible circumstances. Additionally, refers to the overall national effort the government directs to create a satisfactory national security situation.

**National security doctrine:** Principles and rules stemming from the basic conditions in which the nation finds itself, its elementary needs, and deep-seated values. These principles are notable for their relative stability over time and greatly affect the articulation of a national security strategy.

**National security goals:** In the case of Israel, maintenance and advancing of the state as a Jewish democratic state in the Land of Israel and as the home of Jews wherever they may be.

**National security policy:** The manner in which the seated government's national security strategy is implemented. Determines national security priorities and agendas for implementing the concrete actions required to provide security to the nation's inhabitants.

**National security resources:** All national resources, including political, security, economic, legal, and social.

**National security strategy:** The current government's viewpoint on national security, defining the range of fundamental, consensual operating assumptions on the topic. Requires a long-term view based on critical national interests.

**National values:** The nation's basic declaration and features—defining its identity, vision, and *raison d'être*, and reflecting the broadest, immutable common denominator of all its inhabitants.

**Political and military freedom of action:** The ability to operate politically and militarily in an independent fashion to maintain national security goals, in this case for the State of Israel.

**Security interests:** Operational components without which ensuring the existence of or protecting the nation's vital interests is impossible.

**Security margins:** When taking a calculated risk, the buffer that allows an actor to confront a situation amid a deteriorating or collapsing political process.

**Strategic environment:** The sphere of operations, internally and externally, affecting national security.

**Victory:** The IDF's achievement of the goals defined by the government, together with the enemy's coerced acceptance of the nation's terms for an arrangement or ceasefire. Attained when the enemy leadership absorbs the realization that continuing the confrontation will not only fail to help it achieve any goals, but will with absolute certainty result in a loss of its core assets, to the point that the leadership's own political and personal survival is at stake.

**Vital interests:** Core components without which national objectives cannot be fulfilled.

## Appendix B. Criteria for National Security Analysis

In matters of *peace and security*, a distinction must be made, as follows, between legal/diplomatic peace and a state of peace as seen from the perspective of military strategy:<sup>1</sup>

- **Stable peace:** This is true peace, in which no hidden threat or danger lurks—and violence is neither an option nor a potential. It is a peace that offers security.
- **Protected peace:** This is a situation that does not remove the threat of war between nations. Instead, it requires maintenance of military might in preparation for renewed war. Peace based only on treaties or accords—as compared to the stable peace described above—in effect amounts to a different form of confrontation.

*National military might*, meanwhile, consists of the following factors:

- Most important, the fundamental geostrategic realities
- Absolutely certain freedom of action and operation based on military and security considerations in response to any given threat or risk, active or potential, existing or possible
- The base of national resources guaranteed to support security
- Military components such as doctrine, organized units, trained personnel, expertise, and weaponry
- The nation's resilience, staying power, and willingness, including by the leadership, to persevere under difficult wartime circumstances

Assessing military might also requires acknowledging its limits. Thus, the task of ensuring national existence and vital interests is shaped by the following broad precepts:

- The military is only one component of overall national security might.
- The military is not omnipotent, and its ability to fulfill its designated role and undertake its missions depends on creativity and the guarantee—at the national political level—of sufficient conditions in the field,

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1. Based partly on Avraham Tamir, "National Security" (in Hebrew), Israeli Ministry of Defense internal document, 1981.

first and foremost on the level of geography (e.g., defensible borders).

- **Basic operating national security assumptions:** The only basis for establishing a political strategy for national security is as follows—the collapse of any existing accord or treaty, the collapse of all deterrence, and the fulfilment of the reference threat.
- **“If you want peace, prepare for war”:** This adage, translated from the Latin, implies convincing preparedness to guarantee the preservation of vital national interests. It is the most, or only, reliable assurance of the creation and maintenance of deterrence to prevent war.

*Freedom of military and political operation* is based on the following:

- **Self-reliance:** This concept alludes to Israel's ability to defend itself with its own forces while creating and preserving a range of options for action.
- **Deterrence, intelligence superiority, defense, and victory:** This refers to Israel's overarching strategy of deterrence to defend its vital interests based on achieving victory as a clear manifestation of national strength. Such victory relies on early warning of war from intelligence sources, sustained ability for broad national defense, and preventing enemy achievement of its goals and, in turn, creating the freedom to act to develop the nation and take political action.
- **Maintenance of security margins:** Proper preparation for war requires codifying security arrangements that establish acceptable security concessions; optimally allocating resources given budgetary constraints; and setting national priorities based on political agreements. Security margins also allow for calculated risks on the road to peace. When a party takes such risks, security margins enable the handling of situations when the political process deteriorates or collapses.

## Appendix C. Charts

Chart 1: Israel's National Security Documents

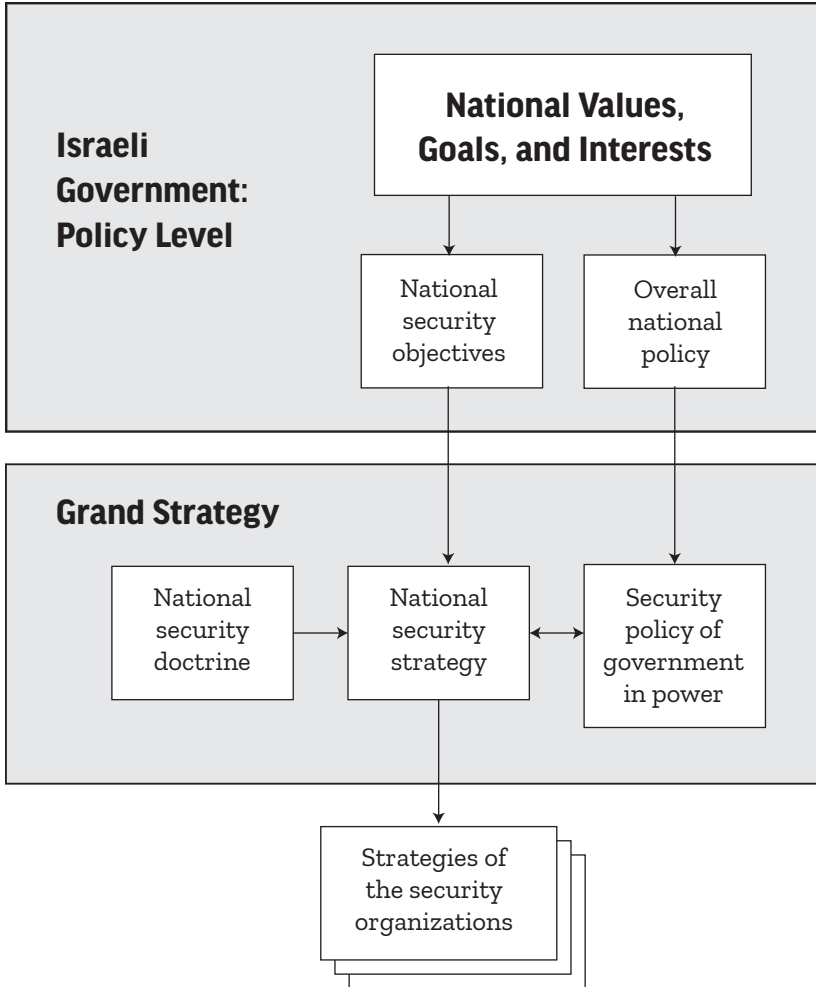
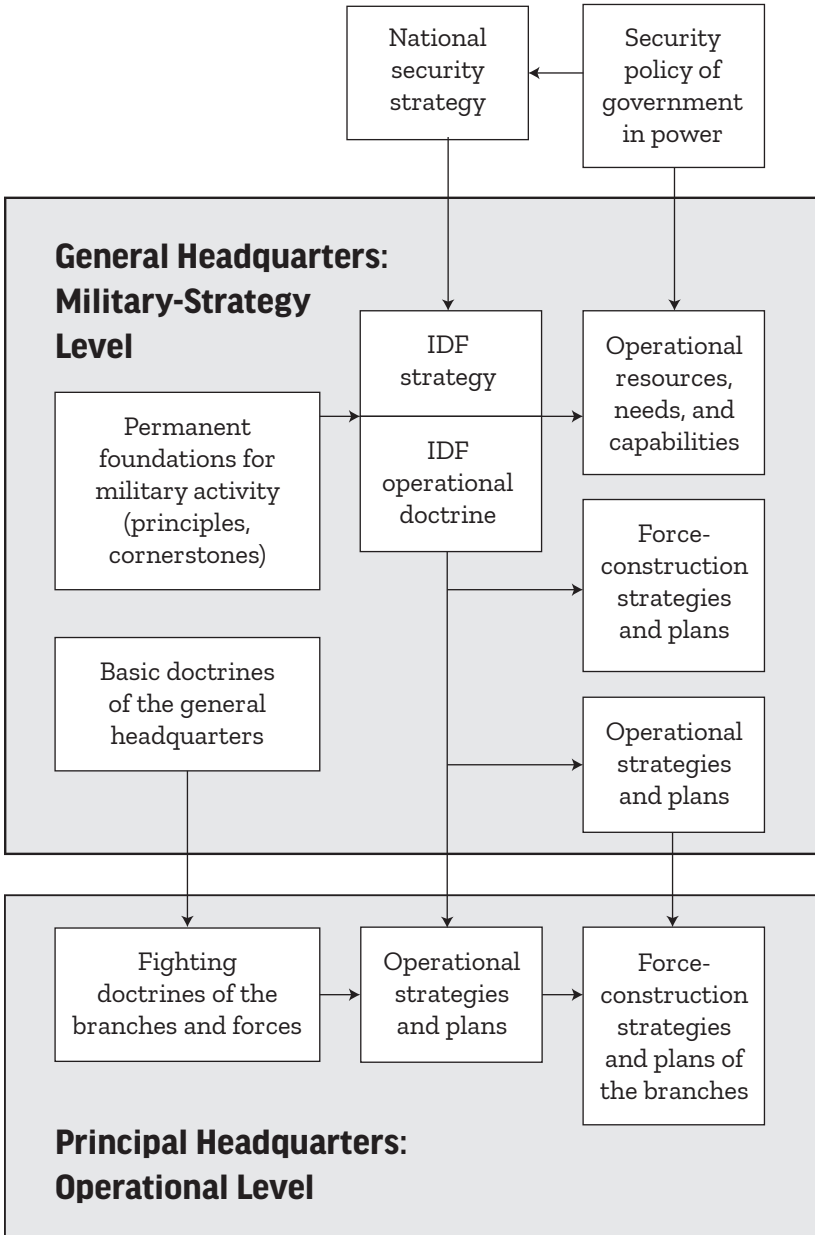




Chart 2: IDF Documents



### Chart 3: Israel's National Security Establishment

All the defense organizations must be constructed in such a way as to allow them to fulfill their respective designations. The chart below demonstrates how the military is constructed.

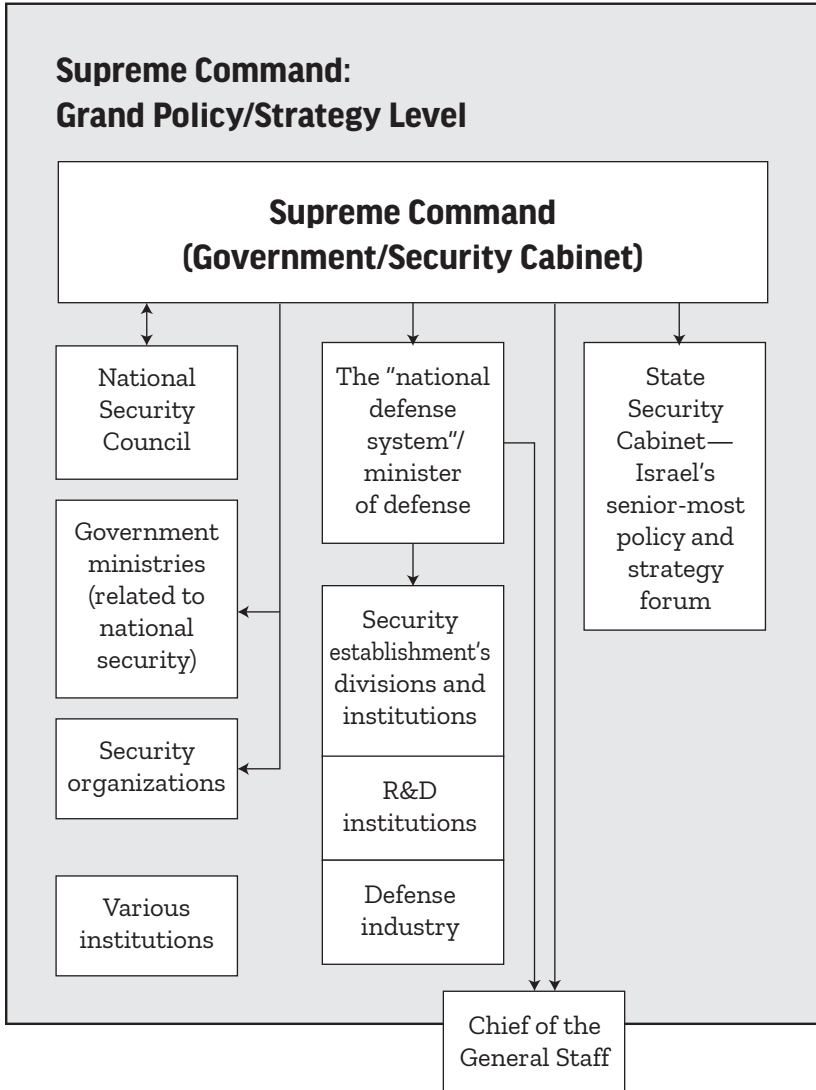
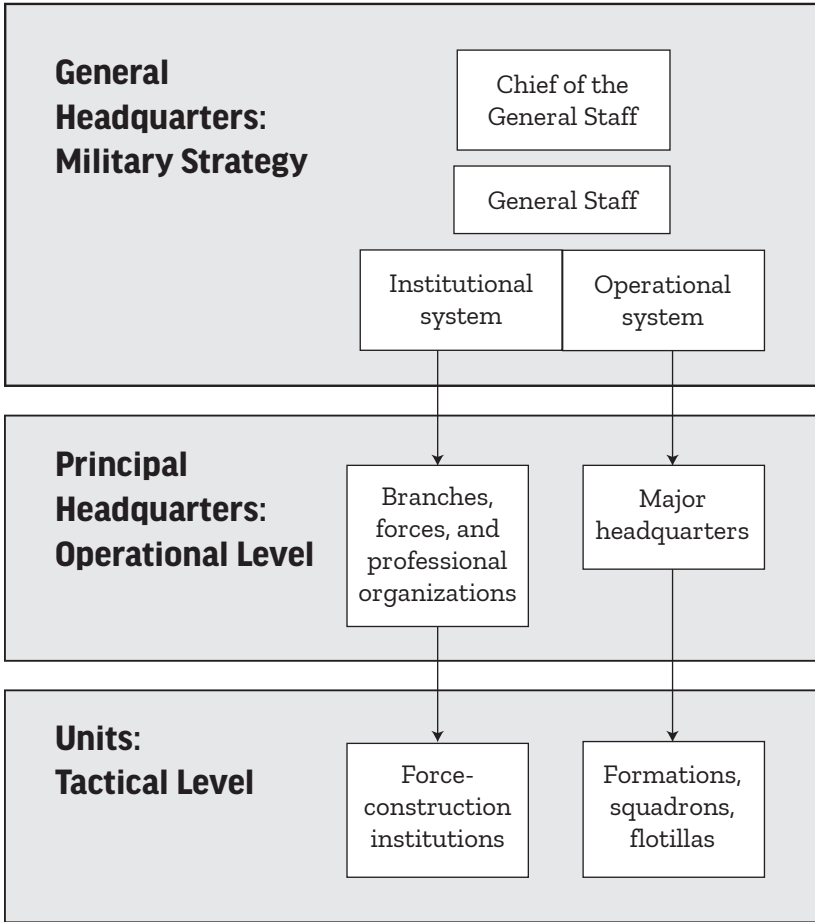


Chart 4: Israel's Military System



# The Authors

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SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT, THE STATE OF ISRAEL HAS faced complex security challenges. These have required leaders to articulate principles based on the national security strategy first defined by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Their validity has withstood the test of time, while requiring various adjustments and adaptations.

The main shift in Israel's security challenges today stems from Iran's aspirations for regional hegemony. Concurrently, Israel faces internal societal challenges. Alongside a growing population, a strong economy, and technological achievements, alarming fissures have developed in Israeli society.

This analysis examines the current map of Israel's threats and sets forth principles to address them. It reflects a fundamental update to Israel's basic security-military concepts, emphasizing the importance of the "campaign between the wars" and outlining causes for war. In many areas, the country's military and civilian decisionmakers will have to coordinate their efforts, such as on socioeconomic issues and the crucial task of strengthening ties with diaspora Jewry.

The goal of this text is to prompt an open debate within Israel's government and security establishment on formulating an effective national security strategy that can form the basis of a robust, durable national security policy.



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