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Israel's National Security Doctrine

Major General (ret.) Yaakov Amidror

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Introduction

It is often stated that Israel lacks a formal and accepted "National Security Concept," or doctrine, which would frame the policies and efforts to build and use military force. This implies the need for a compass of sorts which would guide national efforts and define priorities in the military realm, in the field of intelligence, and equally important – in relevant diplomatic and economic dimensions, too.

The argument has been advanced that instead of taking decisions in response to local and immediate pressures, Israel should establish a set of "Grand Objectives" in the realm of national security, which can withstand the ravages of time. Determining these objectives and setting them in writing would help avoid hasty decisions which do not correspond with the country's long-term needs.

In several modern Western countries, it is the norm that a new administration articulates its view of national security priorities, and this becomes the guide for operational arms of government. In the US, the administration is obliged by law to publish a formal "National Security Strategy" document signed by the President, and a great deal of effort goes into formulating its principles and refining its language.

It is commonly assumed that the closest variation on such a document in Israel's history was written by the first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. However, while Ben-Gurion's presentation to the cabinet in October 1953 was a comprehensive survey of all national security matters and their implications (including social and moral dimensions), that presentation was not more than a personal, multi-year situation report.

No formal Israeli national security concept document has been written since then, although there were several attempts to develop an overall defense doctrine. Committees appointed to write an integrative security concept at the national level wrote draft documents but did not win cabinet approval. An "IDF Strategy" document, written at the behest of the Chief of Staff in 2015, did not get the stamp of approval from Israel's political echelon, although it did have an impact on military buildup and the use of force, with an emphasis on a concept called "the campaign between the wars" (CBW, or MABAM in Hebrew initials).

It has been reported that in 2018 Prime Minister Netanyahu formulated a fully-fledged national security concept, and parts of this have been published, albeit not as direct quotes from a Netanyahu doctrine. In the autumn of 2019, former IDF Chief-of-Staff Lt. Gen. (res.) Gadi Eizenkot and his colleague Dr. Gabi Siboni published a comprehensive document which sets out the challenges Israel faces and offers ways to deal with them. But even this orderly text falls short of the definition of a formal security document.

This paper is a summation of what should be viewed, to the best of my judgement, as "the national security concept of the State of Israel" in recent years. It is a concept rooted in the era immediately following Israel's War of Independence, from the early 1950s forward to the present day.

A "national security concept" is not a "recipe" meant as a response to occasional challenges. It also is not a sacred text providing formal solutions. It is a formulation of "first principles" which can assist in thinking, particularly in long-term planning, and in setting priorities and allocating resources. It does not presume to determine how specific crises will be handled.

I contend that while Israel has no such document, it does have a national security concept that can be described as an "oral" doctrine. (By "oral" I mean traditional and accepted, as in the "oral" interpretative texts of Jewish tradition.) While informal, this concept has been commonly held by most Israeli decision-makers over the years, with certain points of emphasis unique to each government in its time which is a function of changing realities and the Prime Minister's specific worldview.

Strictly speaking, the national security doctrine should serve to orient both thought and action in the absence of diplomatic solutions. It should proceed from the assumption that diplomatic efforts and arrangements lose their significance in the face of the use of force, or the threat of force by an adversary. Thus, the diplomatic efforts or agreements as such are not a part of the national doctrine, which brings it closer to the realm of a defense doctrine in the narrow sense of the term.

Nevertheless, the doctrine and its derivatives should serve the decision-making process during the negotiations aimed at achieving a diplomatic agreement; "peace treaties" in particular. At such times, the doctrine mainly serves to determine the points at which proposed agreements complement national security requirements or may in fact compromise them. This does not mean that the agreements should be rejected, but such weak points should be brought to light. The main instrument for the implementation of the national security doctrine is the IDF, but it is not the only organization involved. The intelligence community also has important role to play in defense of Israel, specifically the Mossad and General Security Service (Shabak), and in certain situations also Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, National Cyber Agency, the Israel Police, and first responders. In the broader sense, the Foreign Ministry and other relevant government departments which influence Israel's standing in the world (and its diplomatic and economic interactions), also should uphold the guiding principles of a defense doctrine and act accordingly.

Moreover, given the complex realities of the modern world it is vital to establish firm and continuous cooperation among all branches of the national security community in the broadest sense. This is certainly true in inter-war periods, but also during warfare. In the complex, multi-faceted situations arising in the realm of national security there indeed are non-military actions which should be and need to be taken to achieve Israel's national goals. Diplomatic initiatives, intelligence activities, and commercial relations, as well as other strategic tools, all are important instruments in this broadly defined framework.

Nevertheless, it should be made clear that diplomatic and other non-military measures do not and cannot replace the need to build-up military capabilities. Military capabilities remain necessary to provide for the dire situations which may arise due to enemy military actions against Israel and its citizens.

To execute the national security concept the country needs a robust economy to sustain various systemic elements and to finance the actual conduct of war when necessary. As Niccolò

Machiavelli taught, war requires three things: money, money, and more money. Hence the great importance of a healthy, growing, and resilient national economy. (Economics is not addressed in this paper).

The strength of Israel's leadership, of national decision-making structures, and of the ability of top echelons to implement national security policies also are vital components in execution of well-reasoned policies, and for the ability of Israeli leaders to withstand heavy pressures imposed on it by national security challenges. (These matters also lie outside the scope of this paper. The underlying assumption of this study is that proper decision-making processes by a rational leadership aimed at securing the needs of the State of Israel is in place.)

At the same time, the resilience of Israeli society is immensely important and specifically its ability to withstand the pressures rooted in the country's national security challenges, and significantly the sacrifices called for at wartime. While there is an unbreakable bond between social resilience and the ability to respond to national security challenges, this too will not be dealt with in this paper, which focuses upon the national security doctrine in narrow terms.

Some would argue that the discussion of a national security concept should be preceded by an exposition of overall national values and basic interests of the nation, to define what the security forces must defend and what are the dangers they must avert. In this paper, I chose not to address these issues. My assumption is that for Jewish society in the State of Israel (and for those abroad who wish to see the nation-state of the Jewish People be secure, prosperous, and advanced as a Jewish and democratic state in the Land of Israel) – the values and core interests of Israel are sufficiently well defined and accepted.

Given all these caveats, a separate study should analyze all the elements mentioned above that are not covered by this paper. Such a study would produce a basic document defining the essence of "national strength" for the State of Israel – building, preserving, and advancing it. This would constitute a strategic, diplomatic, and political upper layer of "interests" of broader scope than this paper. Such a study will allow for the political and ideological perspectives of the author to be much more manifest than in the present paper (which deals, again, only with narrower aspects of "national security.")

Proceeding from a national security doctrine, the defense establishment should deduce the principles for force build-up and the use of force. This applies to all the security organs, led by the IDF, as well as the components of the intelligence community, AEI, the National Cyber Authority, organizations under the Ministry of Internal Security, and to some extent also to the Foreign Ministry and other ministries dealing with aspects of national security.

This paper presents what I believe to be Israel's actual "national security concept" – which informally constitutes a prevailing doctrine.

For the purposes of this paper, the national security concept may be defined as follows:

The National Security Concept should govern the rules for approaching the creation of capabilities necessary for the state (the build-up of forces) and the application of these capabilities (the use of force in the face of threats of force, or the actual use of violence, against Israel and its citizens by countries, organizations, and individuals).

Basic Facts of Israel's Security Situation

Israel's national security concept must consider as its point of departure three foundational facts:

- 1.** Israel operates in an acutely asymmetric situation regarding significant quantitative issues. It will forever face a yawning gap between the size of its resident population (and specifically, the size of the segments which bear the burden of national defense – i.e., not counting most of the Arab and Ultra-Orthodox communities) and that of her neighboring countries. The latter all have been hostile to Israel's existence in the past, and some remain so. Israel always will be a small country in size, and hence hyper-sensitive to any loss of territory and to high-trajectory (artillery and rocket) fire – unlike most of her neighbors. It also stands alone in international fora, such as the UN, as a singular Jewish state facing an Arab group of 22 countries and an Islamic group with 57 members.
- 2.** Israel can never reach a "conquest of Berlin" moment in the Middle East, i.e., attain – a decisive victory in war, such as that of the allies in WWII; a moment which would radically transform the political culture of the region regarding the desire of neighboring nations and organizations to annihilate of the State of Israel. This means that no victory in any war would ensure, once and for all, that Israel again will not face threats to its existence. Moreover, Israel's first defeat may well be its last, certainly so if its territory ends up being conquered by Arab or Islamic forces. This is not the case for any Arab country which Israel might defeat and occupy its territory.

Thus, Israel is doomed to plan for the next war at the end of any war it fights, no matter how successful; and in every war it must prevail against all odds. In sharp contrast to its adversaries, the IDF has no option of retreat. This is highly acute asymmetry, in the qualitative sense, which greatly influences the use of force as well as its build-up.

- 3.** Israel's "center of gravity" is concentrated in a narrow geographical space, in "Gush Dan" around Tel Aviv, quite close to Israel's old border – the "Green Line." Tel Aviv is only 10 miles from the Green Line, 45 miles from the Jordan River border, and 25 miles from the Gaza Strip. This center of gravity for the IDF and the defense establishment, also applies to the key institutions of Israel's economy, which are Tel Aviv-based. Thus, keeping the enemy away from the greater Tel Aviv region it and defending it from attack is vital and critical for Israel's ability to survive and to function during any wartime scenario.

Maintaining the capacity to move forces from one front to another is also vital for Israel's ability to defend itself, requiring freedom of movement along the roads of central Israel under all circumstances. Beyond that, due to its small size, Israel does not have much redundancy when it comes to critical infrastructure, which is a serious vulnerability. In the era of high trajectory weapons, the difficulty of defending the strategic heart of the country, and the vulnerability of redundant infrastructure, are even more pronounced.

The Principles and Observations Guiding a National Security Concept

The facts described above, and other factors (such as lessons learned from Israel's and the Jewish People's historical experiences), have led to the emergence of several principles which guide decision-makers, and indeed constitute an unwritten but broadly accepted national security doctrine. These include:

1. Israel will make every effort to bolster its ability to defend herself by herself. It cannot and must not rely on others to fight its wars.

(Israel deviated from this principle somewhat in 1956, when France deployed air squadrons for the defense of Israel's skies. The positioning in Israel of American missile defense batteries in 1991 and 2003 could be considered an exception, too. But this was a unique circumstance. Paradoxically, it was the result of America's desire to dissuade Israel from acting in self-defense against Iraq and thus disrupting the coalition's Arab components.)

This basic and principled determination, which dates to the establishment of the state, draws among other factors upon the lessons of the Holocaust. It also reflects Israel's specific geographical predicament, which cannot allow for any reliance on solutions which depend on other nations' decision-making. Israel has no time for that; it could be overrun before help arrives.

To this should be added Israel's perennial message to the world at large, and to the US in particular: Unlike the nations of Europe, Israel shall not ask for foreign (i.e., American) troops to stand in harm's way in defense of Israel. Churchill famously said "give us the tools and we shall finish the work" – but Israel really does mean it.

This combination of historical memory, moral imperatives, and professional needs have made this principle the ironclad cornerstone of Israel's national security concept; that Israel is geared to defend itself by itself. This principle has been publicly acknowledged by US leaders, including President Obama.

In this context, it is important to note that a steady decline is underway in America's presence in the Middle Eastern arena. This withdrawal is exemplified by the failure to respond to Iranian strikes against Saudi oil facilities, to brutal attacks on Gulf shipping, as well as to the downing by Iran of a US drone. American withdrawal from the Mideast also is manifest in abandonment of the Kurds in Syria to Turkish hegemony. All this serves to prove beyond doubt – despite the US targeted killing of Qassem Soleimani in January 2020 – that Israel can rely only upon its own abilities in defending against enemies near and far.

2. Israel will maximize its capabilities by a national military service draft and the creation of a large standing military (relative to the size of its population). Israel also relies on full utilization of a rapid call-up ability of numerous well-trained reserve troops to the battlefield. This requires a long compulsory service, followed by constant reserve training and investment in maintaining the combat readiness of reserve units. These measures are needed to overcome, in an emergency, the significant numerical advantage of Israel's neighbors, without any reliance on foreign forces.

3. Israel must build deterrent capabilities at several levels – both to dissuade enemy attacks on its territory and population, as well as to avert any type of existential threat. It also will act to sustain the unequivocal superiority of its strategic capabilities over all enemies. In addition, the so-called "Begin Doctrine," as enunciated by Prime Minister Menachem Begin after "Operation Opera" against the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. Preventing a nuclear arsenal in the hands of a hostile regional power is an integral part of Israel's deterrent posture.

4. Both to deter, as well as to defend effectively, and to attack and win when necessary, Israel must maintain a "qualitative edge" over its enemies, mostly using advanced technology and highly qualified manpower, particularly in the commanding echelons. Israel will do everything necessary to sustain and increase its qualitative advantages. For this purpose, Israel must invest significant resources in identifying quality human resources, in systematically training this pool of manpower, and in deploying it in the fields crucial for exploiting the qualitative edge – such as technology, intelligence, cyber, fighter pilots, naval officers, and to some extent the special forces.

The ability to call upon the best and brightest is in turn dependent upon maintaining the national draft. The draft makes it possible to sift through the entire cohort of high school students, choose those best suited to serve at the cutting edge of quality in the fields mentioned above, and direct other highly qualified men (and women, in some cases) to ground combat units, which are the breeding ground for military leadership. Added to this is the social role of the draft, which contributes to national resilience and cohesion.

Simultaneously, Israel must advance its defense industries, which are expected to provide the elements and weapons systems that serve as "game changers." Israel cannot fully rely on acquisition of critical technologies from abroad, and hence must maintain and develop its defense industry. (A corollary principle is that Israel must find export markets that keep the defense industries financially viable).

Elements of the qualitative edge also are sustained also by US support. Since 2008, the US administration is obliged by law to maintain Israel's QME (Qualitative Military Edge) and to report to Congress annually that this indeed is the case. This obligation is of significant value to Israel, particularly in terms of technology, as well as in the message of deterrence that it communicates.

5. Israel must maintain a large intelligence corps (in proportion to its size), which operates several parallel and complementary missions:

- To better understand the strategic environment, achieve sufficiently early warning as to

events and elements which may pose a danger, and avert threats before their realization.

■ With the rise in importance of PGMs (Precision Guided Munitions) it is necessary to ensure that "target intel" provides the capacity to strike with high accuracy at a very large number of targets; to concentrate fire where its impact will be the greatest; and prioritize the destruction of targets to ensure the most significant and effective damage to enemy capabilities.

■ Intelligence warfare: The intelligence community also provides Israel with the capacity to act "under the radar" and without the need to use of force publicly. Nowadays, this is carried out mainly in the context of the "Campaign between the Wars." The delays in the realization of Iran's military nuclear project, and the great damage done to Iran's world-wide terror networks, are two examples of Israeli "intelligence warfare."

6. Israel must develop its cyber defense capabilities, protecting its defense and civilian systems, as well as its cyber offensive capabilities, against any actor using this realm against Israel. These capabilities, as they grow more sophisticated, provide Israel with powerful tools well beyond its physical and demographic size, providing an international standing that can be translated into gains in other strategic arenas.

7. The changing nature of the threat to the rear areas of Israel (military and civilian) due to the number of missiles and rockets in enemy arsenals and their growing accuracy – requires a major shift in the order of priority given to the defense of the home front. This, in turn, means that four key efforts must be undertaken: active defense to intercept incoming missiles and rockets; passive defense (i.e., the hardening of potential targets to protect the population, as well as vital infrastructure); the capacity to locate and destroy the enemy's launchers, preferably before their use (counterforce strikes); and enhanced deterrence owing to Israel's ability to inflict severe losses on vital enemy assets. The overall defense effort in the rear areas (and at sea) is to make it possible for military and civilian systems to continue to function as they do in normal times.

8. Israel's military strength is based on the following components, which must be maintained and continuously strengthened:

- A strong and modern air force, enabling action over long distances in the Middle East.
- Relatively large ground forces – which should be made more lethal and less vulnerable on the battlefield.
- A small but highly sophisticated navy – for action across the entire Mediterranean basin and in Israel's southern approaches, on the surface and below it.
- A multi-layered defense system protecting the home front – both active and passive.
- The use of Precision Guided Munitions, in large amounts, backed by efficient and extensive targeting, making possible the (very) intensive use of precision strikes.

Despite the difficulties, Israel needs to revert to the traditional offensive use of ground forces on a large scale, assuring maneuverability to achieve battlefield goals. A command structure

which combines regional commands with mobile strike forces is the right path for the IDF.

It might be advisable for the IDF to establish a missile corps, which will operate a variety of cruise and surface-to-surface missiles across different ranges. This will relieve the Israel Air Force of some of its missions. A new missile corps will facilitate strikes at distant targets regardless of IAF abilities. This is important because of the vulnerability of airfields to attack, and because of questions regarding the IAF's right of passage in airspaces of other nations.

9. To carry out all these decisions Israel must invest a relatively significant part of its national budget and GNP in the development of the military, intelligence and industrial systems that are necessary for this purpose – with a special emphasis on relevant R&D projects. Israel invests in such capabilities (5.2% of the GNP in 2018) in proportion to the size of its economy more than the US does, and significantly more than European nations. The US military assistance package (\$38 billion for FY 2018 to 2027) will continue to be important in financing Israel's defense needs. Israel should not forgo this American assistance, even if it could do so. (After all, \$3.8 billion a year in US military aid is just one percent of Israel's GNP). The military assistance package holds great symbolic value since it signals a solid US commitment to Israel. It also has strategic implications for force buildup, for the replenishing of stockpiles during warfare, and for bolstering IDF capabilities in a post-conflict era.

The rise in the nature and in the level of threat from several sources in recent years probably will require an increase in the annual defense budget by several billion dollars. This means that the IDF budget will demand a higher proportion of GNP. As indicated above, the growing threat is the result of increased enemy capacity (quantitatively and qualitatively, i.e., in terms of accuracy) to hit targets in Israel's rear; as well as the increased threat from countries beyond the horizon, mainly Iran, and of the need to build better capabilities for cyber defense and offense. These threats, if realized, might pose a severe strategic danger to Israel, insofar as they may disrupt the IDF's ability to fight, and could affect the functioning of the home front. Therefore, Israel needs to improve certain critical defensive and offensive capabilities with additional budget.

10. Given Israel's very narrow margin of security, Israeli policy must be cautious and calculated. For example, Israel should avoid being drawn into unnecessary wars, and must initiate "preventive wars" only if no other option is available in avoiding greater dangers in the future. Israel always should choose a cautious policy in the realm of national security, even if this means giving up the option of "greater gains for greater risks." "Caution is better than a gamble" is the right maxim, in most cases for small countries in general. (Israel remains in this category.)

However, Israel should also keep an eye open for opportunities which may arise, particularly at times of great changes or deep crises, to take advantage of such situations, even if there is no guarantee of success. Keeping the complex balance between "caution" and "capitalizing upon opportunities" is one of the most challenging aspect of decision-making. This level of complexity is one of the reasons that significant resources need to be invested in force build-up even at times of relative calm.

11. Israel will act to move battles as far away as possible from its own borders. This can be done in peacetime by establishing defense parameters or binding security regimes which

establish a "cordon sanitaire" beyond Israel's sovereign borders; and in wartime by pushing the fighting into enemy territory, wherever the border is uncomfortably close to its strategic heartland.

Israel also must aspire to "defensible borders," i.e., lines of defense that enable the IDF, deployed initially with its regular forces, to parry an offensive by any hostile coalition (until the reserves are called-up). Contrary to the claim that "territory has no value in the age of missiles," the geographic dimension of Israel's national security concept is extremely important, and even more so in the missile era. This is so because Israel's "center of gravity" is concentrated in a small area around Tel Aviv. It is also because of the need even in the missile age to deploy vital assets far from this area, and to keep enemy missile and rocket launchers as far away as possible from vital infrastructure and population centers, thus providing time for early warning and for successful interception of incoming missiles.

12. At wartime, the IDF and the intelligence community should build-up a capacity to carry out offensive operations in two separate arenas in parallel and in progression. This means that the State of Israel needs defense from all directions – at sea, on land and in the air. And the IDF should be able to go on the offensive on one significant front (today, this would likely be the northern front, encompassing Lebanon and Syria), and before this offensive has been successfully concluded, it must be able to take the initiative also in a second front (probably Gaza). The air force should be able to destroy thousands of targets continuously, in ranges that do not require refueling in the air; and to destroy selected key targets in the so-called "third circle," well beyond Israel's borders; as well as a few specific high-significance targets at even greater ranges. The navy should secure freedom of passage in maritime routes in the Mediterranean; foil sea-borne threats; and fulfill its mission as part of Israel's strategic deterrent posture.

13. Based upon the experiences of recent years (and of earlier periods of conflict), it is clear that Israel cannot hope for a "conquest of Berlin" moment; meaning defeat of the enemy, like that of Nazi Germany in 1945 so that hostilities will cease, once and for all. It has been the bitter fact that after every round of fighting another attempt to strike at Israel follows (until some other, more profound reason leads Arab actors to ceasefire). One objective for any round of warfare is for it to end in a manner that delays the next round of fighting as much as possible. This is achievable if enemy understands that it must expect a much more painful blow in a future round – given the evident harm it suffers during the fighting.

In theory, such deterrence is indeed within reach. However, it is a slippery concept and there is no foolproof method to secure it. (Witness the Arab attack in October 1973 that came six years after the June 1967 War, Israel's most convincing victory; and indeed, the War of Attrition which began with the sinking by the Egyptian Navy of the Israeli destroyer "Eilat" in September 1967, a mere three months after the Six Day War.)

An achievement that can lead to a long delay of the next war would be if the IDF' succeeds in destroying enemy military systems and infrastructure, as extensively and as thoroughly as possible. In such case, the enemy will find it difficult to rebuild its capabilities unless new systems will be rapidly provided to it third parties. The days in which such assistance was assured (e.g., by the Soviets after 1967, or by Iran to Hezbollah after 2006) may well be over.

In warfare against non-state organizations, it is important to destroy their military equipment, their built-up infrastructure (including subterranean facilities), and to strike at their commanders, but also to smash their myths of heroic resistance and martyrdom by capturing them alive. All this is much more significant than the taking of territory. (The conquest of territory should be undertaken to destroy enemy assets, not as a purpose in itself.) Thus, in future confrontations with terrorist and hybrid organizations (i.e., terror groups with regular military features) the IDF should aspire for the destruction of (all) enemy military systems in the fullest sense of this term.

Israel has no direct interest in harming the basic civilian infrastructure of countries which host terror organizations, beyond those elements which would disrupt the war-fighting capabilities of these organizations. However, in extreme circumstances, the ability to strike at infrastructure can add to the deterrent equation.

14. Israel is a status quo power, meaning that it neither seeks to expand into or dominate neighboring nations. Nevertheless, Israel will confront and even go to war against those who try to alter the present balance of power in a manner damaging to Israel's prospects of survival. For the same reason, Israel retains the right to undertake preventive wars, or to use its firepower against specific targets even in between wars to forestall the risk and prevent a dangerous build-up of enemy capabilities.

15. The noted combination of caution as a basic strategic imperative alongside the need to prevent developments that would change the balance of power requires Israel to take risks, and sometimes high risks. The best example is the Campaign Between the Wars, which aims to remove future threats and to secure qualitative intelligence (which in turn translates into a better reading of realities and well-informed action). Thus, it should come as no surprise that over the years the IDF and Israeli intelligence community often have conducted operations marked by daring, sometimes stretching the limits of the imaginable. To some extent, "tactical daring" is the other side and the necessary complement of "strategic caution." The perception it generates also has a deterrent effect.

16. In recent times, another insistent demand has forcefully arisen that must be considered when force is used: The need for "domestic legitimacy." As a democratic state with an open society, Israel prefers to fight its wars only when they are backed by domestic public opinion, something that enhances the resilience of the population as a whole and reduces the level of constraints on decision-makers during the fighting. Such legitimacy is particularly vital when the home front is struck (sometimes very painfully) during the fighting.

At the same time, and almost equally important, Israel should seek to secure international legitimacy especially among like-minded nations, and above all from the United States.

The effort to secure both types of legitimacy can in some cases pose constraints on the use of force. Its cost should be weighed as against the need of the IDF to achieve its goals with minimal losses. At the same time, the requirements of legitimacy should never be ignored, since they are vital for a small country that faces multiple war situations. This is a severe challenge because the need to act according to international humanitarian law obliges Israel, but not its enemies. Alas, international norms bind Israel's hands, but its enemies feel free to attack without such restraints.

Policy and War

An important observation needs to be made regarding the changing interaction between military effort and related diplomatic actions. In past, Israel emphasized the duty of the military to "produce" conditions on the battlefield which would enable the political echelon to obtain a new and better outcome at the negotiating table. In many cases, this is no longer valid. The complex world with which soldiers and statesmen contend today, the "military outcome" does not necessarily lead to desired diplomatic results. Often no further or separate "diplomatic complement" is in the cards because no international diplomatic framework can impose an outcome on parties that refuse to accept the very legitimacy of negotiations.

This makes it even more important that a dialogue be maintained between military and political levels, so that soldiers understand what statesmen wish to achieve. In such a dialogue, it is the duty of the political leadership to define and communicate in unambiguous terms what they want to achieve through combined military and diplomatic action, and to determine in conjunction with the military command what should be the military endgame. This process should be informed by the realization that the desired diplomatic results are not always likely to follow. It works the other way around: At best, political objectives can determine military outcomes.

For example, the military goal today in operations in Syria is to prevent transfer of weapons to Hezbollah and to deny Iran military bases in the region. This is a well-defined objective, which the IDF knows how to translate it into action, and no attendant diplomacy is necessary. If diplomatic action would be added, leading to a Syrian or Russian decision to push Iranian forces out of Syria, this would be a welcome contribution. It is a goal that should be sought through the combined pursuit of intense dialogue with the Russians and IDF efforts on the ground. But the military outcome in this case is sufficiently important to take risks in attaining that outcome even without the additional diplomatic complement.

As noted, in the future Israel is bound to face many situations in which the military objective must be clear since the diplomatic effort is meaningless. Consider UN Security Resolution 1701 which ended fighting in the Second Lebanon War in 2006; an utterly useless and meaningless resolution (given the UN's complete failure to implement its responsibilities under the resolution). The resolution served only to give politicians a cover for the decision to end the fighting, inconclusively.

Therefore, Israel's working assumption for the future must be that there is no way to achieve in the diplomatic arena anything beyond what would be achieved in battle, and any international engagement would at best produce a "1701 plus"-type resolution with zero effect in practice. Therefore, the IDF's objective must be achievement of results on the ground that are not dependent upon any internationally backed and agreed results. This enables Israel to implement unilateral policies, such as forcibly preventing the re-arming of the other side once fighting ends.

The Duration of Military Operations

In past, the common assumption was that Israel must wage short wars to avoid damage to its economy and to quickly demobilize the reserves. This assumption should be reconsidered.

Today, Israel is the stronger party in a confrontation with the likes of Hamas and Hezbollah. It enjoys logistical depth and can sustain or even escalate the military confrontation. Long rounds of hostilities may prolong attacks on the Israeli home front. But under present circumstances, this is a preferable situation for Israel, giving the IDF time to systematically destroy enemy capabilities and infrastructure. However, this doctrinal shift makes more important the development of robust home front defensive systems, and the need to decisively reduce the enemy's ability to launch missiles and rockets.

This should not be read as an advocacy of "mutual attrition," but rather of using Israel's advantages to facilitate the destruction of enemy assets and infrastructure, even if the longer campaign increases the threat to the home front.

The IDF must first carry out a massive, forceful, and rapid ground maneuver that would lead to the destruction of enemy forces and control of the territory defined by the operational plan. The next stage would be to move, in a pre-planned manner and with IDF regular forces (without significant reliance on reserves), to a lengthy and orderly effort to destroy enemy infrastructure and to kill or capture its personnel. This is in fact what happened in "Operation Defensive Shield" in 2002. The takeover of much of the West Bank took a few days (actually, five weeks if all direct operations are counted), but the systemic reduction of Palestinian terror capabilities to their present minimal level took four years.

In a Lebanese scenario, the physical destruction of enemy infrastructure in territories taken by the IDF will have to place over a shorter period (perhaps over several months), after which Israel will withdraw. In past, Israel has not imposed a blockade on countries in which there was an intensive military buildup. In Lebanon after 2006, this function was supposed to be performed by UN forces (which failed miserably in this mission). The more recent success of the effort to disrupt the supply of Iranian and Syrian arms to Hezbollah via Syria requires a reconsideration of this method. But a blockade is not easy to implement, and in any case would be relevant only if enemy arms and infrastructure have been massively destroyed. Thus, the changing perception as to the need for a "short war" is interwoven with a new concept of "blockading capacity," to prevent the supply of arms to an enemy country or a terror organization which has taken over it.

Aspects of Alliance

Due to the asymmetry discussed above in attitudes of the international community, Israel must seek strategic allies who can assist in the buildup of forces; offer certain non-military forms of support in an emergency; and provide backing for Israel's actions while holding off a diplomatic "assault" on Israel by the UN and the international community. This helps preserve Israel's freedom of action.

Israel's seeks to work hand-in-hand with a world power. Certainly today, Israel realizes that there is no alternative to close relations with the US, Israel's ally since the late 1960s.

Therefore, it is imperative to do all that can be done to sustain maintain bipartisan support for Israel in Washington; to bolster the strategic relationship with North American Jewry in all its diversity; and to take US interests into account when making war and peace decisions. This is a fact of life, even if at times Israel will need to act against American wishes for important national security reasons.

At the same time, Israel should seek to establish good relations with other nations to broaden the circle of countries which understand its policies and may choose not to vote against it in international fora. Special attention should be given to countries which are important to Israel's export-driven economy, and specifically those countries that are export markets for Israel's defense industries.

Also valuable are relationships with Israel's eastern Mediterranean neighbors, Greece and Cyprus, and Mediterranean powers further afield such as Italy and France. Supreme importance is attached to the alignment with Israel's peace partners – Egypt and Jordan, which also are part of the Mediterranean alignment. (Egypt and France have taken the lead in confronting Turkish ambitions.) More recently, the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco, and other less overt partners, have formed a regional alignment, as well. The Abraham Accords have contributed directly and indirectly to the dramatic improvement of Israel's international standing; which in turn, contributes to deterrence of Israel's adversaries and thus to the overall balance of Israeli national security.

The Eastern Border Question

There is no national consensus in Israel regarding some vital aspects of national security, such as the question of the country's eastern border. Palestinians are reckoned by the great majority of Israelis to be a poor fit as citizens of an extended State of Israel, but the alternatives to annexation of the West Bank with its large Palestinian population are fiercely disputed. This is obviously a major lacuna in Israel's national security posture. But even so, this dilemma does not overshadow the broad agreement over other aspects of national security doctrine as detailed above.

In any case, under any diplomatic solution in the West Bank, the IDF must secure the Jordan Valley, which serves as a barrier between Palestinians and potential threats from the Arab world to the east. And the IDF must stand ready to fight terrorism in Judea and Samaria in extraordinary circumstances.

A Caveat, and an Optimistic Endnote

Warning: The future is unpredictable. The national security concept presented in this paper is relevant for the Middle East as it is today – a situation where Israel's enemies are terror organizations close to its borders, and Iran seeks to obtain a nuclear weapon and build a hostile "ring of fire" around the State of Israel in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Gaza (and, Iran hopes, in Jordan and the West Bank too).

Should a change come about which would restore the "classic" military threat which involved

the deployment of large standing army forces on Israel's borders, this would mandate different Israeli defense priorities and a different IDF force structure. Thought (and perhaps some action) should be devoted to this possibility even today.

Above all, it is appropriate to end this paper with an optimistic comment, taking note of unintended benefits that have grown out of Israel's national security system.

Israel's defense community uniquely has maintained Israel's qualitative edge by directing the most highly qualified manpower to technological units, to pilot courses and to special forces. This has helped Israel become the "Start-Up Nation." IDF veterans who have been "problem solvers" in uniform, bring with them to the business world the ways of thought which they acquired as they grappled with security challenges. They have formed thousands of innovative technology enterprises, which contribute significantly to the world at large and have propelled Israel's economy to new heights.

This is even truer in the realm of cyber technology, which has been central to military missions, and now become central to the global economy at large. This pattern is bound to persist, as new cohorts of personnel dealing with technological problem-solving using cutting-edge knowledge, leave military service and join the civilian workforce.

In these fields, great importance is attached to "social capital," the ability of young people to mobilize others to work intensively as a team with a focused purpose in mind. Thus, camaraderie during military service forms the basis of the capacity to solve problems in civilian as well as military life. Israel's physical and demographic size become less important, as long as the new tech industries can draw on available high-quality personnel. (Note: The Israeli military spawns many start-ups, but Israel does less well in scaling-up into large multinational enterprises. This requires skills not often acquired during military service.)

An interesting example is the emerging realm of autonomous vehicles. Israel does not produce cars of any kind, since its market is too small and the extensive investment in infrastructure necessary for such manufacturing is not economically viable. However, Israel today is a "superpower" when it comes to the software supporting autonomous vehicles, including the cyber defenses necessary to prevent external elements from cyber-hijacking the vehicle without permission of the rider or driver.

Thus, whenever the economic cost of Israel's compulsory military conscription is evaluated (as compared to professional or voluntary service in the US, for example), this element too must be appreciated. It is the national draft that makes it possible for the state to direct bright young people to technologically and intellectually challenging pursuits. Therefore, from a comprehensive perspective, what Israel loses in immediate costs due to universal compulsory draft is more than compensated by economic and social benefits of a culture of innovation.



General Amidror is the Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security. He was National Security Advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu and chairman of the National Security Council (April 2011-November 2013). He served for 36 years in senior IDF posts (1966-2002), including commander of the Military Colleges (including the National Defense College, Staff and Command College, and Tactical Command Academy), military secretary to the Minister of Defense, director of the Intelligence Analysis Division in Military Intelligence, and chief intelligence officer of the Northern Command. He also is a distinguished fellow at JINSA's Gemunder Center. He is the author of two (Hebrew) books on intelligence and military strategy: *Reflections on Army and Security* (2002), and *Intelligence, Theory and Practice* (2006).

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