

Israel 2.0: New Foundations after the War

written by Col. (res.) Prof. Gabi Siboni | 12.01.2024



The Misgav Institute National Security and Zionist Strategy is launching the Israel 2.0 project,[1] whose purpose is to lay down a vision and updated conceptual foundation for the State of Israel over the coming decades.

The importance of the project lies in the formative significance of the invasion on Shabbat/Simchat Torah of October 7, 2023, a calamity that has been burned into Israel's collective national consciousness for the coming generations. Post October 7 Israel is no longer the country it had been until then, and Israel will not be able to revert to being the same country. The invasion abruptly overturned a long list of basic assumptions and historical paradigms that were a key facet of its national security. Many of them are no longer relevant to the new reality that Israel now faces. These paradigms do not allow for the development of tools and ideas for ensuring the State of Israel's existence, security, and prosperity under the new conditions that have formed.

The war that began on October 7 is not just a war between Hamas and Israel. It is a regional war being fought on six active fronts at different levels of intensity, including the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, Lebanon, Syria, western Iraq, and Yemen. It can be assumed that one of the reasons for the murderous attack was the wish to stop and reverse the process of building a regional architecture based on normalized relations between Israel and Arab countries in the region, with emphasis on Saudi Arabia.

Because Washington considers such a new regional order to be a US strategic

interest with positive influence on American international standing, the war also impacts the international scene. Russia and China, which dispute global US hegemony, chose to support the axis of resistance that attacked Israel, seeking to weaken the US, undermine its vital interests, weaken its global status, and allow for a new, multipolar global order to be formed in which their influence as global powers could be expressed.

Here we share a number of basic assumptions about the future of Israel that require reexamination. These are but examples of matters that need deep consideration and analysis. For example, it must be examined whether Israel's conflict with the Palestinians is territorial by nature and resolvable by dividing up the country, or whether this matter is an identity-existential conflict that cannot be solved at this time; and if so, what must be done given this insight.

Another example pertains to the question of whether Israel is indeed capable of deterring enemies that are arming to destroy Israel, or whether Israel is unlikely to stand firm against the

Another example pertains to the question of whether Israel is indeed capable of deterring enemies that are arming to destroy Israel, or whether Israel is unlikely to stand firm against the radical axis. In this regard, it is necessary to revalidate the "Iron Wall" concept and adapt it to the changing circumstances and the characteristics of existential threats.

Forming a renewed vision for Israel ("Israel 2.0") also requires examining the IDF, owing to the failures and omissions that were readily apparent on that terrible Saturday October 7. It will be necessary to examine the size and structure of the military, including the scale, equipment and training of its reserve force. It will also be necessary to examine the process of promoting officers to various functions, their training, and the duration of their postings in the IDF. Also worthy of scrutiny is the recruitment model and a redefinition of the nature of the people's army model. Another component that must be examined and updated pertains to the IDF's operational planning and adapting this to the range of threats that Israel is contending with. And above all these, relations between the military and Israeli society and the civil system must be examined, combined with increased civil oversight and refinement of the military.

Alongside these, a new look at Israel's vision for the future will require in-depth

examination of everything related to public (internal) security in a broad terms. An overarching plan must be developed for civil protection of Israel's communities, including integration and coordination of rapid response squads with police, emergency and rescue agencies, with a National Guard force (once formed), and with the IDF, particularly regarding frontier towns. The size, organizational structure, and operating concept of a new National Guard force requires serious attention.

Civil mobilization to defend local communities also pertains to changes in the national ethos, to the strengthening a "mobilized nation" concept. Public security also involves coping with property and violent offenses, organized crime, agricultural crime, uncontrolled, illegal immigration, and many other aspects.

An updated vision for Israel will also necessitate an understanding that settling and cultivating land has a key function not just in the context of national or local security, but also a core value of possessing land and maintaining the state's sovereignty.

One of the key subjects that requires examination pertains to the nature of Israel's relations with the United States. Deep US involvement, manifesting in the historical precedent of active participation by the US secretaries of state and defense in war cabinet meetings, combined with changes in American demographics and politics, require attention to the future of Israel's relations with the US and the need to maintain this as a fundamental facet of Israel's national security.

This also applies to the US contribution in deterring Hezbollah (and Iran) through rapid deployment of a military force to the area and forming a coalition to secure navigation in the Red Sea. It will be necessary to examine whether these moves serve as a problematic precedent in relation to the Israeli principle of "defending itself by itself." American intervention may have helped Israel project power while it is focused on the war in Gaza,[2], but this necessitates rethinking of Israel's ability to cope independently with a regional war on a broad, intense scale.

This also applies to the US contribution in deterring Hezbollah (and Iran) through rapid deployment of a military force to the area and forming a coalition to secure navigation in the Red Sea. It will be necessary to examine whether these moves serve as a problematic precedent in relation to the Israeli principle of "defending

itself by itself.” American intervention may have helped Israel project power while it is focused on the war in Gaza,[3], but this necessitates rethinking of Israel’s ability to cope independently with a regional war on a broad, intense scale. This has far-reaching implications for Israel’s national security concept, from which lessons for many other fields will be derived. This matter also bears on the shaping of a new regional architecture and Israel’s part in it.

The attack of October 7 found Israel in a crisis after nine months of protests related to judicial reform. The crisis created a schism in Israeli society, allowing many to view it as a divided, quarrelsome society that had lost its characteristic social solidarity. This may have led various factions of the axis of resistance to interpret the developments as erosion of Israel’s social and national resilience, impacting on the strength of the IDF and on the ability of decisionmakers to respond to security threats.

But the traumatic atrocities of the invasion overwhelmed the divides and rifts, instantaneously restoring Israeli societal solidarity to its full glory. A spirit of voluntarism and national recommitment multiplied across all sectors of Israeli society, including the Arab sector. The fighting spirit and heroism of IDF soldiers, unity in the ranks of all military units, alongside a setting-aside of political disputes in deference to the war aims – are a source of astonishment.

The power of national cohesion displayed is critical, a clear indication that the Israeli public understands the existential threats stemming from enemy unwillingness to accept Israel’s right to exist in any borders.

The judicial reform initiative that led to Israel’s constitutional and social crisis in 2023 has been dropped from the national agenda (at least for now). Nevertheless, the Israeli Supreme Court published two judgments during the war pertaining to the judicial reform effort. This is problematic. The judgments passed by a bare majority, and rekindle the debate over judicial reform when this is unhelpful to the national war effort.

Therefore, in the context of our “Israel 2.0” project this matter also will need to be addressed, particularly the core issue of the balance of power between the three executive arms of the state. Also to be discussed: How to manage social and public discourse in general, and the destructive effect of extremist rhetoric and protest.

Another issue that calls for extensive attention is majority-minority relations in Israel. The Ultra-Orthodox sector, the Arab sector and other minorities in Israel have been affected by the war, with parts of these communities seeking greater integration in Israeli society. These trends must be deepened and consolidated both to improve the standing and wellbeing of Israel's minority communities and to secure foundations of Israeli national solidarity as a whole.

Even if it seems that after the Simchat Torah invasion Israeli society bonded as never before, it is nevertheless necessary to act to intensify and sustain such this positive trend.

Israel's great dependence on the US calls for reexamination of Israel's foreign relations as a whole, based on an understanding that in emergencies and wartime Israel will have difficulty asserting its own security interests in the face of American pressure. This examination also will necessitate rethinking of Israel's relations with the international community, including the UN and other international organizations.

The intensification of antisemitism around the world in the wake of the current war may cause many Jews to consider moving to Israel over the coming decade. Israel needs to be ready to with communal, economic, and social foundations for successful absorption of hundreds of thousands of Jews. At the same time, Israel will be required to deepen its ties with Diaspora Jews to strengthen their affiliation with and support for Israel as a manifestation of the Jewish People's cohesion, and to ensure their sense of security and minimize the loss of whole communities to ongoing assimilation.

Until October 7 and for about eight decades, Israel existed in the spirit of Jewish sovereign tradition; a tradition that must be overhauled. The Hamas invasion of October 7 is no less than a wakeup call for the State of Israel and Israeli society. The attack has changed national priorities, requiring Israel to recover quickly, adapt and change. Israel must now go through a process of overhauling its governmental systems, combined with a change in national ethos. In many senses, the war should be considered a moment of national revival, in which a strong light will emerge from an abyss of darkness. This is "Israel 2.0" that will materialize out of great crisis.

[1] The title "Israel 2.0" is drawn from the software world (i.e., a new, advanced

version) and suggests the renewal of Israel in the wake of the Simchat Torah invasion.

[2] The title “Israel 2.0” is drawn from the software world (i.e., a new, advanced version) and suggests the renewal of Israel in the wake of the Simchat Torah invasion.

[3] This is effectively a historical precedent, except for a case of Israel’s skies being defended by a French squadron during the Suez Crisis.