

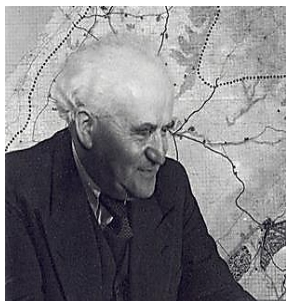
The Concept of Security in Light of October 7, 2023 –

“A bone stuck in Israel’s throat...”

Brigadier General (Ret.) Dr. Yossi Ben Ari



Dr. Joseph (Yossi) Ben Ari,
B.G. (ret.)



David Ben-Gurion, first
Prime and Defense minister
of Israel

(Photo - Ministry of Defense)

The Concept of Security (or more precisely, National Security Concept) of the young State of Israel was formulated by its first prime and defense minister, David Ben-Gurion. Sitting in his hut in Sde Boker in the early 1950s, he determined its three elements: *deterrence, early warning and decision*.

The concept, one of whose guiding lines is the absolute necessity to bring the battle to the enemy and fight inside his territory (and then to reach some kind of political settlement), was applied in Israel's wars decades later, and to a large extent proved itself by contributing to Egypt and Jordan's leaving the circle of conventional confrontation and eventually signing peace agreements with Israel.

However, that was not the case with Syria or Lebanon, or post-Khomeini Iran and its proxies, both near and far, but to this day those threats, the conventional and unconventional, are different from those faced by Ben-Gurion. They require a security concept, political and military methods of action, which are absolutely different from what he conceived.



Dan Meridor, former member of
Foreign Affairs and Security Committee
(Photo – Facebook)



Itzhak Mordechi
Minister of Defense 1999,
(Photo – Wikipedia)

Historically, the Ben-Gurion security concept has gone through several updates and facelifts: Dan Meridor began the process as early as 1986, being a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Israeli Knesset, but Chief of Staff Dan Shomron stopped him. He tried once again under the direction of Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, and his Director General David Ivry. The work was completed but Mordechai's tenure of office ended earlier than expected and his successor, Moshe Arens, did not have time to deal with it.

Ehud Barak, Prime Minister and Minister of Defense as of the summer of 1999, probably preferred not to limit himself with a doctrine which would obligate him.

In 2006, Shaul Mofaz, at the time Defense Minister, assigned the task to Dan Meridor again, who assembled a group of experts from the IDF, the defense systems, the defense industry, government ministries and academia. On



Shaul Mofaz
Minister of Defense, 2006
(Photo-Government Press Office)

Passover Eve their result was submitted to Mofaz's successor, Amir Peretz, but he was immediately caught up in the vortex of the Second Lebanon War and thrown aside. The team's work was presented in 2008 to the Political-Security Cabinet (led by Olmert and Barak), but was not formally approved and therefore not adopted as a new Israeli national security concept.



Ehud Barak
Prime and Defense
Minister, 1999-2000
(Photo- Ministry of
Defense website)

The main conclusion of the group was to add a "fourth leg" to the concept's tripod, *self-defense* (including against cyber threats). Indeed, in the fifteen years that have passed since then, enormous efforts have been invested and a substantial portion of the defense budget has been cleared to mainly this "leg." Among the more prominent measures have been the expansion sheltered areas in the home front (the extensive construction of shelters and protected areas in the cities, towns and villages along the conflict lines, and requiring the construction of "safe rooms" and bomb shelters in every new residential building throughout the country); the establishment of sophisticated barriers, above and below ground, along Israel's borders; developing and equipping anti-missile, anti-rocket and anti-artillery defense: short range (the Iron Dome aerial defense system and the Iron Beam, an experimental system that uses laser beams), medium range (the Magic Wand and David's Slingshot), and long range-ballistic (the various versions of the Arrow).

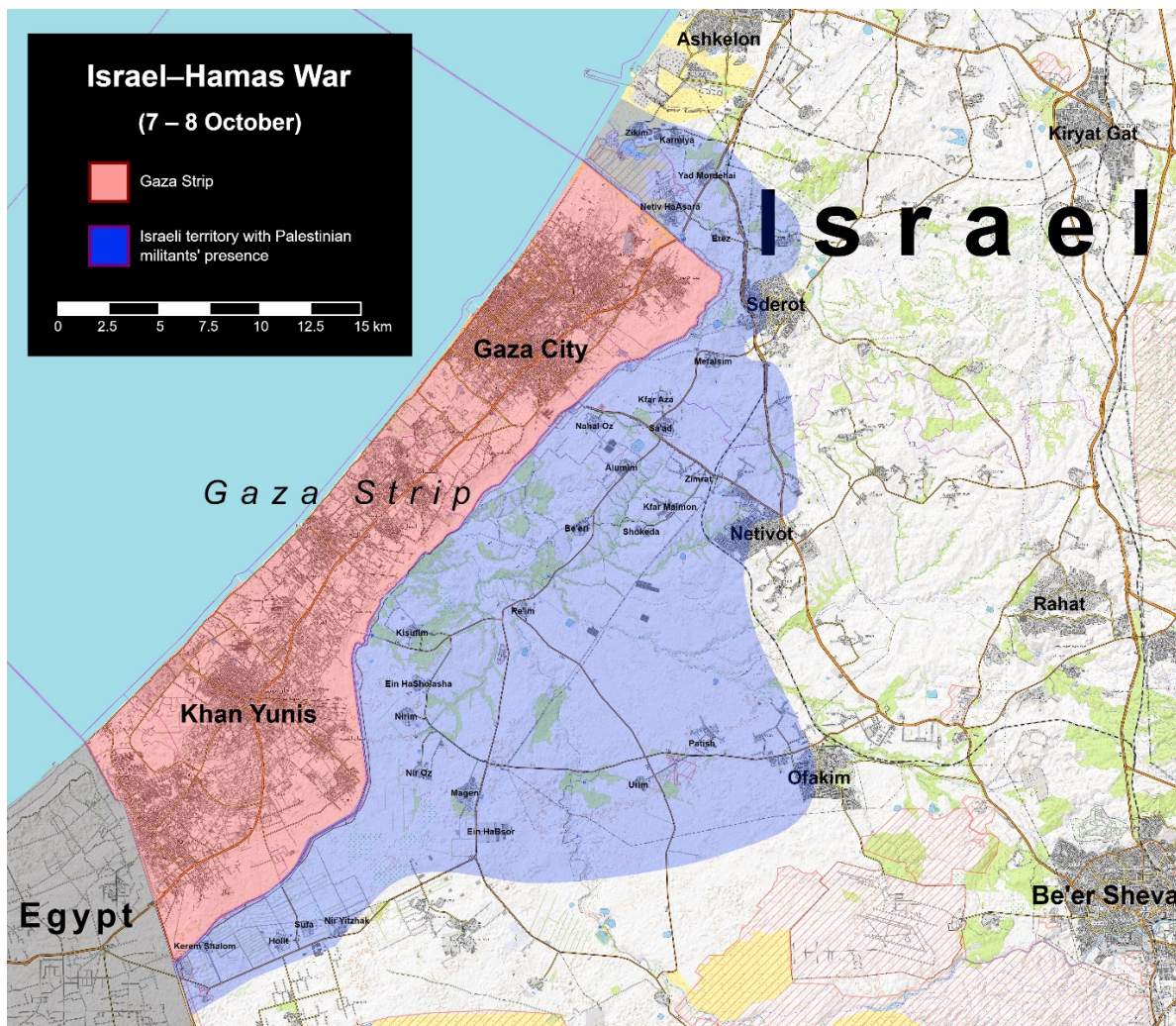


Extensive construction of
shelters and protected spaces
(Photos - Eilat Municipality)



protected spaces
(Photo -"Mifram" website)

And now, the war which began on October 7, 2023, that hit us hard, illustrated once and for all that the State of Israel has to be honest and courageous to turn its concept of security upside down. How?



The surprise attack on Israel, October 7th, 2023 (Photo – Wikipedia)

First, to say "adieu" to the concept of *deterrence*, which for the most part has become meaningless. As we saw, Hamas was absolutely not deterred by Israel when it conceived, planned and carried out its operation al-Aqsa Flood attack and massacre. The same has been true for Hezbollah since it was founded: that led to Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000. Since then, Hezbollah has been deterred only when it found it convenient, and if any deterrence still remains, it is temporary and fades with the passage of time.

While it is unpleasant to admit, historically Israel's deterrence, even it was recognized as a regional military power (and allegedly has nuclear military capability), did not prevent extensive

Arab-initiated violence and attacks. So it was in the War of Attrition, the Yom Kippur War, the first intifada (we ignited the second intifada) and all the terrorist attacks initiated by the Palestinian Terrorist Organizations, including the October 7 disaster.



Rockets launched from Gaza to Israel (Photo - Haaretz newspaper)

Second, except perhaps in tactical areas (interpreting intelligence "secrets") and indicating the potential capabilities of our enemies, it has been conclusively proven that we should not expect the intelligence community to provide the decision makers at the political-military level, with **early warnings**, related to the intentions of our enemies on a strategic level, as it cannot solve "mysteries". We have never been caught more unaware than on that Black Saturday which turned the celebrations of Simchat Torah into a national disaster. So what? Retrospectively, throughout the country's history, it never benefited from a strategic intelligence Early Warning before violent Arab initiatives. That was the case on the eve of Operation Rotem (February 1960, the surprising, unannounced entry of the Egyptian army into the Sinai Peninsula); that was also the case on the eve of the Six Day War (the rapid return of the Egyptian army from Yemen and its entry into the Sinai Peninsula); the case on the eve of the Yom Kippur War, the first intifada, and the October 7, 2023, disaster. Consciously abandoning expectations of a strategic early warning will also save the enormous amounts of money invested in the failed attempts to produce it.

Then, it was once again proved that the third historical concept, decision, is no longer relevant. In no war did we actually defeat our enemies: not in the War of Independence, not in the Sinai Operation, not in the Six Day War, despite the impressive victory, not in the War of Attrition and not in the Yom Kippur War. There is a big difference between "victory" (given the various interpretations it's meaning), and defeat, in a total sense. And here, the asymmetric conflict, that is, the need to fight with varying intensity against sub-state organizations, only added another challenge: the two intifadas did not lead to the defeat of the terrorist organizations plaguing Israel, nor did the two wars in Lebanon (the first against the PLO in 1982, and the second against Hezbollah in 2006). Those who expect Hamas would be defeated and "eliminated" in the current operation only deluded themselves. It may be possible to crush it, but like crabgrass, but it will grow back, because an ideology, and certainly a religious ideology, cannot be completely defeated.

There are voices which claim that even today, the foundations of the Concept of National Security, however shaky and fractured they may be, are still valid, and all that is needed is to update and renovate them in the spirit of the times and its challenges, and put the concept back on its feet. My position is that we need a tripod with renewed legs, if not really new ones. That is worth a discussion focusing on what is most important:

One leg, the last to be added, is *defense*. When we watch the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of civilians from the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip and along the northern border and the massive and ongoing abandonment of Israeli sovereign territories ("defense zones" saturated with military forces within our own territory), we can definitely call it not only protection, but defense.

The second leg is attack. The IDF, Israel's Defense Army, has always been, first of all, an army of offense, of attack. Thus, it was in all of Israel's conventional wars (the War of Independence, the retaliatory actions, the Sinai operation, the Six Day War, the transition to offense in the Yom Kippur War on both fronts, and the two wars in Lebanon), and thus it is in the day-to-day, non-stop counterterrorism activities. So it has been in the face of the unconventional threat (attacks on the nuclear reactors in Iraq and Syria, and, as reported in the foreign media, a series of attacks on important individuals and nuclear facilities in Iran). It is exactly what the IDF is doing today against Hamas in the Gaza Strip and against Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and its proxies in Lebanon and Syria. It goes without saying - heaven forefend that capability is lost or diminished.

The third leg required for the stability of the tripod, the one that is becoming more and more important, certainly these days, is *moderation*. It is very important for strengthening the national-social cohesion and resilience in the domestic arena to reinforce national unity, which almost completely collapsed and is being rebuilt (or so one would like to hope...). It is also required for the patience of civilians and the economic capabilities required for prolonged

fighting, and it is essential in the regional and international political arena that cries out for "proportionality," given the tens of thousands of victims and the enormous physical destruction in the Gaza Strip. If moderation also makes it possible to reach political settlements and agreements with those who remain our enemies, a consummation devoutly to be wished, in the meantime that will be enough. Strive for more peace agreements? Definitely; but the likelihood of seeing this as a realistic, short-term objective, is unfortunately, quite low.

This, then, is the new National Security Concept tripod now required for Israel, three modern goals to replace the three archaic ones, which are currently far less relevant.



Hamas attack on October 7
(Photos: networks according to section 27a)