Aspects of the Formation of Israel's National Security Doctrine

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Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies

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Introduction

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The development of the current conflict necessitates a deep examination of the foundations and principles of Israel's national security. The military components of the national security concept — Deterrence, Early Warning, Operational Decision, and Defense — are present in our daily operations, from political directives in official documents to patterns of force deployment.

In order to critically analyze these components, including a discussion of whether and how they contribute to our current security and political needs, we must first rely on a solid theoretical foundation. Through a comprehensive review of primary documents and the extensive literature written on the subject over the past decades, this document, authored by Major Kim Bar from the Dado Center, presents several surprising insights. Among other points, the document indicates that the familiar military components reflect military-security thinking from the 1980s and were not originally formulated as foundational elements of the security concept. Recognizing their relative modernity and that they are the result of a unique historical context provides us with greater flexibility in questioning their relevance. If the characteristics of Israel's security environment—and Israel itself—have significantly changed since then, should we not also question the validity and potential contribution of these components to our current security concept?

This document is also of great importance for readers not directly involved in national security discussions at this time. The knowledge contained in it, in our view, is an integral part of the theoretical toolkit for every officer in the Israel Defense Forces, especially considering the events of October 7, 2023, and the "Swords of Iron" war.

Wishing you a productive reading,

BG Dr. Eyal Pecht
Head of the Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies
IDF Operations Directorate (J3)

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The Development of Israel's Security Concept

1. Israel's security concept is an idea that has developed over many years, with parts of it being formulated during those years. It reflects how the State of Israel and the Jewish people articulate the foundations of national security for the state's existence, prosperity, and growth.

2. The security concept that is generally relied upon today is based on the one presented by the Meridor Committee in 2006, with its various developments. At its core is the "security triangle," which includes Deterrence, Early Warning, and Operational Decision, with the addition of Civil and Military Defense. Since then, there have been attempts to validate it by several entities (the National Security Council, Chiefs of Staff), and they have also addressed its military implications, including IDF's strategy and General Staff doctrines).

3. Considering "Operation Swords of Iron" and the recognition that a reassessment of the security concept is necessary, alongside the creation of a comprehensive document that addresses Israel's security issues, a process of reflection has begun at the Dado Center and the Strategic Division. For this purpose, the development of the security concept over the years has been examined, starting from before the establishment of the state to the present day.

4. Many of the issues that were on the agenda during the early days of security concept thinking have returned to prominence today, requiring in-depth consideration and attention from both the political and security leadership.

5. This document is based on primary documents of the various security concepts, on documents developed by the IDF following these concepts, and on secondary works, such as papers written on the subject both within and outside the IDF.

6. The document outlines the ideological development of Israel's written and revealed security concept over five periods. The division into periods is based on strategic shifts and the characteristics of each period:

   A. Preliminary Period – Until 1948 – Pre-Statehood

   B. First Period – 1948–1967 – Establishment and Stabilization of the State

C. Second Period – 1967–1985 – Expansion of Borders and Creation of Physical and Strategic Depth

D. Third Period – 1985–2000 – Shift to Different Warfare – Terror Organizations – The Threatened Homefront Becomes an Additional Front

E. Fourth Period – 2000–2023 – Emergence of the Radical Axis and Great Power Competition (GPC)

7. To ensure continuity and enable comparison between these periods, I will examine the security concept according to the following five categories, which appear to varying degrees in the different committee documents:

A. **Strategic Context** – The circumstances under which the concept or associated documents were written.

B. **Initiators of the Concept** – The key figures who led the process and the actual writing.

C. **Approval of the Concept** – The entities that approved the written concept or its related documents.

D. **Central Principles of the Concept** – The main ideas and concepts expressed in the division of major topics. This division is based on the author's classification according to topics appearing in the committee documents or those emerging from engagement with these issues, such as: maintaining a Jewish majority and strengthening settlement; economic self-reliance; international cooperation and assistance; education and values; enhancing qualitative superiority; the defense system; the IDF.

E. **Military Implications** – The significance of these issues for the IDF.

8. **Key Points Emerging from the Development of the Concept:**

A. The security concept is essentially an ideological development of various thoughts and conceptual documents written by the political leadership and senior military officials. The factors shaping the security concept are the strategic context and the circumstances of the period, which can be characterized by several categories that unify similar ideas. For instance, security issues dominate all concepts, while the focus on topics such as maintaining a Jewish majority and settlement shifts between periods.

B. Tere is a distinction between the security concept (often referred to as the national security concept) and the military strategy for its implementation. However, there is a noticeable gap between the security concept and military strategy—namely, the absence of a coherent security strategy derived from the security concept. There is no structured process by which a unified security strategy is developed for all relevant entities, guided by national logic.

C. An examination of the development of the security concept refutes certain assumptions commonly held today:

    1) The first assumption is the issue of the "security triangle"—Deterrence, Early Warning, and Operational Decision—which is often believed to have originated in Ben-Gurion's thinking. A review of foundational documents shows that these three ideas are not explicitly stated but only hinted at, and they only begin to appear in political and military thought towards the late 1960s. While elements of this idea can be found in Ben-Gurion's writings, they are not explicitly stated, and it is clear that the concept is not limited to these three principles.

    2) It is commonly believed that Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" concept reflects the idea of deterrence that appears in later security concepts. However, deterrence is not mentioned, either by name or as a concept, in Jabotinsky's writings or in other writings from that period (nor in the IDF until around the 1960s). The "Iron Wall" refers more to the despair of the opposing side and their understanding that there is no point in continuing the fight against Israel because it is stable and resilient over time, and will not break even under repeated attacks. This is largely defensive attrition, rather than a deterrent threat through the use of force.

D. Once the "Security Triangle" concept became established around the 1980s, it became the reference point for all other concepts, with an emphasis on military strategies and doctrines. This is reflected in military documents issued in its wake, particularly in multi-year plans.

E. The only component that remained stable throughout the various shifts in security concepts over the years is Defense. It appears in Ben-Gurion's thinking and has been a necessary and fundamental element of Israel's resilience

against its enemies. It serves as a foundation for all other principles, and when it fails, the other security components must act. Its logic is also tied to the "Iron Wall" concept, as steadfastness and defense of the settlements are part of the rationale behind the futility of the enemy's continued fighting. Despite its centrality, defense is not included in the "Security Triangle" and, to some extent, has been marginalized in military thought on the subject.

F. Elements that were central to Ben-Gurion's concept, such as values, maintaining a Jewish majority, and strengthening settlement, are largely absent from later concepts. The security concept focuses heavily on its military components, especially when addressed exclusively by the security-military echelon. When the political echelon or its representatives (e.g., the Meridor Committee) address the issue, they return to broader topics.

G. The political echelon's involvement in the security concept decreased during the second period, increased in the third period, primarily by defense ministers, and in the fourth period, where we are today, prime ministers have returned to engage with it. However, the only security concept approved by the government is the comprehensive one by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in 1953, known as the 18-point document.

H. The military's interpretation of the security concept has been narrowed to the military components, but the full concept is broader and includes topics with national and social impacts. The military must draw conclusions from these topics since it is both influenced by and influences them. The discussions in the IDF regarding the military components affect, de facto, force-building processes and their implementation, making them crucial to the broader understanding of the overall security concept.

I. In the absence of clear guidance from the political leadership, the military creates its own framework and compass for action. These are not necessarily aligned with existing political objectives, which themselves are often undefined. Over the years, several strategies have been written to implement the logic of the security concept (by Chiefs of Staff such as Lt. General Shaul Mofaz, Lt. General Gadi Eisenkot, and others), and these strategies sometimes became conceptual frameworks in their own right.

J.   There is a written concept, as expressed in documents approved at various levels and in draft documents formulated over the years, but there is also a visible concept, reflecting processes that occur in practice. These processes align with different ideas in the concept, are influenced by it, and in turn, influence it. In other words, even without an official written concept, documents are created that are shaped by its logic.

K.   The only concept officially approved by the government over the years is Ben-Gurion's concept. All other concepts, if approved, were sanctioned at lower levels, either by the defense minister or solely by the military hierarchy.

Wishing you a productive reading,

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Pre-Statehood Period – Until 1948

1. **Strategic Context:**

   The pre-state period was marked by an ongoing conflict between Jewish and Arab residents of the land, with numerous violent uprisings by Arabs against Jews. The Jewish people did not have a state of their own, and the Holocaust was unfolding in Europe, with the Jewish community in Israel hearing about it and later witnessing the arrival of survivors. Jewish settlement in the land consisted of settlement blocs, urban and rural settlements, and pioneering frontier communities.

2. **Initiators of the Concept:**

   During this period, there was no formal writing of a security concept, nor was there a specific direction for it. Primarily, there were ideas and philosophies from leaders of the Jewish community, the most prominent of whom was Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Moshe Beilinson, who also wrote on the subject, is another well-known figure.

3. **Core Principles of the Concept:**

   Steadfastness in the face of the Arab enemy, refusal to relinquish land or settlement, and the defense of the Jewish community.

4. **Notes:**

   Jabotinsky's writings are often associated with the concept of deterrence. However, the term "Iron Wall" more accurately refers to influencing the other side not merely through a credible threat (the goal of deterrence) but by making their attack appear futile—both in terms of the unbreakable Jewish spirit and the Jewish people's willingness to fight to the last drop of blood in self-defense. While deterrence could be one way to achieve this, it is not explicitly mentioned.

5. **Selected Quotes:**

> *"But a voluntary agreement with them is impossible as long as the Arabs have even a glimmer of hope of getting rid of us. They will not abandon this hope in exchange for sweet words, nor for nutritious sandwiches. And this is precisely because they are not a rabble, but a living people, albeit a backward one. A group of living people makes concessions on critical, existential questions only when they have no hope left, when not even a crack is visible in the iron wall."*
>
> —Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *On the Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)*, 1923
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> *"How long [will we fight]? Until Israel's strength in its land dooms any enemy attack to failure, wherever it may come from; until the most enthusiastic and boldest among all enemy camps, wherever they may be, knows that there is no means of breaking Israel's strength in its land, for the necessity of life and the truth of life are with it, and there is no other choice but to make peace with it. This is the meaning of the struggle."*
>
> —Moshe Beilinson, *The Meaning of the Struggle*, 1936

First Period – 1948–1967 – Establishment and Stabilization of the State

1. **Strategic Context:**

   The documents addressing the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) security concept during the first 20 years of Israel's existence were written against the backdrop of the War of Independence and other military confrontations, such as Operation Kadesh, which posed existential threats. Israel was politically and militarily isolated, fighting on multiple fronts without early warning systems or strategic depth. This period was marked by a persistent threat to the Zionist idea and the civilian Homefront, with wars exacting a heavy toll in human lives and resources. The state partially relied on powers like France, particularly regarding military buildup. This era also coincided with the global East-West confrontation during the Cold War, with the Middle East and Israel becoming another frontline. Moreover, there was an emerging understanding that the military alone could not ensure national security, necessitating an integrated approach.

2. **Initiators of the Concept:**

   In this early period, the political leadership was deeply engaged in security issues, with extensive writings accompanying this focus. David Ben-Gurion, as both Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, authored several foundational documents on Israel's national security, including: *"Problems of Security"* (February 3, 1948), *"The Defense Service Law"* (August 15, 1949), *"Matters of Security"* (June 20, 1950), *"On the Problem of Security"* (1950), *"Problems of Society and Security"* (March 27, 1953), and perhaps the most influential document, *"Army and State"* (also known as the "18 Points Document"), which was presented and approved in a government meeting on October 19, 1953. Other public figures, such as Yigal Allon, contributed to the discourse, with his book *"A Curtain of Sand."*
   b. On the military side, IDF Chief of Staff Yigal Yadin and, under his direction, Yuval Ne'eman, Head of the Planning Division, were key figures in shaping the security concept. Their ideas were translated into operational orders and subsequently

formalized in what were known as the *Nevo* and *Lavi* files, as well as the IDF's security doctrine, all prepared for the military echelon.

3. **Approval of the Concept:**

As mentioned, Ben-Gurion's concept was officially approved by the government as part of discussions on the relationship between the army and the state. It was later validated during the transition of the prime-ministership from Ben-Gurion to Levi Eshkol in 1963. The military documents based on this concept were approved by Defense Minister Ben-Gurion until the end of his tenure.

4. **Core Principles of the Concept:**

   A. Ben-Gurion's writings addressed a wide range of national security-related topics, which can be divided into subcategories that recur over time, though their components have evolved:

   B. **Jewish Majority and Strengthening Settlement:** Significant immigration to Israel; balanced distribution of the population across the country; strengthening border regions (especially the Negev – the south part of Israel) and border settlements; creating interconnected settlement blocs. b. **Economy and Self-Reliance:** Independence from external food supplies and a preference for domestic production of armaments; economic self-sufficiency; a strong industrial base.

   C. **International Cooperation and Assistance:** Expanding trade and transportation ties, including sea and air routes; foreign policy centered on peace and fostering friendly relations with all nations; reliance on self-sufficiency while strengthening ties with major powers and other nations, particularly for military buildup.

   D. **Education and Values:** Developing a pioneering, fighting, and agricultural youth; education; the army as a melting pot; discipline; ethics, values, and spirit.

   E. **Enhancing Qualitative Superiority:** Intellectual development, especially in scientific fields; recruitment of women; high human capital.

   F. **Security System:** Victory at all costs; defense of the inhabitants of the land; protection of Jews worldwide.

G. **IDF:** Starting point of a war that begins defensively, with the IDF launching an offensive afterward; a military force based on reserves.

5. **Military Implications:**

The principles outlined by Ben-Gurion and the various military documents discuss the need to halt enemy attacks, recognizing that there would be no early warning for a strike. They also address the need for rapid reserve mobilization, counterattacks, and shifting the battle to enemy territory due to the lack of strategic depth. Additionally, there were discussions about the different types of wars that could be encountered, such as surprise or non-surprise attacks on the security system and the IDF, as well as preemptive or preventive wars, which were common topics until 1967.

6. **Notes:**

In this foundational period, the concept known later as the "security triangle"—Deterrence, Early Warning, and Operational Decision—was notably absent. The ideas included in the triangle appear indirectly in the documents but not explicitly. The only consistently recurring element is defense.

7. **Selected Quotes:**

> *"What caused me such great concern in this examination are the non-military factors of our security: the economy, settlement, immigration—excessive greed, contracting in civilian work and industry [...] and the dangerous concentration of population in a small area, around Tel Aviv, exposed to a sudden enemy attack."*
>
> —David Ben-Gurion, *Army and State*, 1953

Second Period – 1967–1985 – Expansion of Borders and Creation of Strategic Depth

1. **Strategic Context:**

   The second period begins just before the Six-Day War, when Israel still perceived itself as having narrow security margins and lacking strategic depth. There was also an understanding that the Arabs had an advantage in the balance of power and that a "preemptive strike" (not just defense) was necessary to offset this. After the war, Israel's borders expanded, leading to a sense of political and public satisfaction, often referred to as "complacency" ("*Mabsutism*" in Hebrew). At this stage, Israel still relied primarily on itself, especially following France's distancing from Israel. Israel sought to establish ties with new countries such as Iran and Turkey, and this was also the beginning of its cooperation with the United States. After the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Israel faced a profound national crisis and had to confront the reality that it could not stand alone against its enemies. Increasing dependence on the U.S. emerged, following its military and security support during and after the war. The "special relationship" Israel established with the U.S. became a significant factor in strategic political thinking. During this period, Israel faced limited resources and new regional dangers, such as the rise of pan-Arabism, the threat of nuclear proliferation in the region, and the understanding that multi-front warfare was always a possibility. At the same time, this period saw the beginning of security arrangements, culminating in the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt. Politically, a major shift occurred in the 1977 elections when the right-wing Likud party rose to power. The period ended with the 1982 Lebanon War (Operation "Peace for Galilee"), which provided Israel with additional strategic depth in the form of a continuous security presence in the north and increased public pressure.

8. **Initiators of the Concept:**

   During this period, the military leadership primarily dealt with the security concept. General Avraham Tamir held several key positions starting in the 1960s, including Head of Operations, Head of Planning, and eventually Head of the

National Security Division. Two important documents were written during this time: a document outlining security principles prior to the Six-Day War, and the three volumes of *National Security*, which were published in 1980 after several years of work by the Ministry of Defense.

9. **Approval of the Concept:**

   The concept developed before the Six-Day War was approved internally within the IDF but did not receive government approval in time. The *National Security* concept was approved by the Minister of Defense and submitted to the government, though it remained unofficially sanctioned at that level.

10. **Core Principles of the Concept:**

    The various documents, and the military writings that followed them (mainly the multi-year plans), partially continued the direction set by Ben-Gurion. The key components addressed were:

    A. **Jewish Majority and Strengthening Settlement:** Population distribution and settlement; diaspora Jewry; pioneering spirit.

    B. **Economy and Self-Reliance:** Strong economy; infrastructure development; state resources.

    C. **International Cooperation and Assistance:** Agreements with nations; establishing and strengthening the special relationship with the U.S.; military buildup and arms acquisition.

    D. **Education and Values:** [No reference.]

    E. **Enhancing Qualitative Superiority:** Technological, educational, and human capital superiority; development of weaponry and force buildup; readiness of regular and reserve forces.

    F. **Security System:** Territorial defense; internal security; civil defense; deterrence against the use of nuclear weapons (no general deterrence mentioned); a "fighting nation"; organized command and control (C2).

    G. **IDF:** Deterrence; containment; preemptive strike; counterattack on at least one front; countering terrorism; military centers of gravity (platforms).

11. **Military Implications:**

    Although the military echelon primarily dealt with the security concept, its implications were aimed at the national level rather than the military alone. The

military aspects of the concept were reflected in various multi-year plans, where the components of what later became known as the "Security Triangle" began to appear. For example, the *Maccabi* multi-year plan (1966–1967) mentioned the need for comprehensive deterrence, a primary effort on one land front, a strategic operational decision on at least one front (independent of nuclear weapons), increased strategic depth, no preemptive strike, and containment capabilities.

12. **Notes:**

   A. References to the "Security Triangle" appear in IDF writings during this period. Documentation suggests that this concept was later referenced in multi-year plans and in certain sections of the *National Security* documents.

   B. It is evident that the components of education and values do not appear in the newer concepts, although they are still somewhat present in the national discourse.

13. **Selected Quotes:**

> *"The above-mentioned areas of activity require the existence of constant systems to ensure national security: A. through diplomatic means; B. through military means; C. through economic means; D. through the civilian population; E. through physical infrastructure."*
>
> —*National Security, Part B – The Foundations of Israel's National Security*, 1981, 14.

Third Period – 1985–2000 – The Shift to Different Warfare – Terror Organizations – The Threatened Homefront Becomes an Additional Front

1. **Strategic Context:**

   The third period marks a shift from a desire to alter the status quo, primarily through territorial conquests and the creation of strategic depth, to a focus on securing Israel's safety and that of its citizens without seeking additional territorial gains. The Arab nations' motivation for war remained high and did not diminish over time. This period saw the continuation of peace agreements, with new accords being signed and efforts to promote settlements (e.g., the peace agreement with Jordan, the Oslo Accords, and talks with Syria and the Palestinians). Ben-Gurion's assertion that the conflict between Israel and the Arabs could not be resolved through military means was internalized, with hopes that the enemy would also understand this and turn to diplomatic solutions. Arab states recognized Israel's vulnerabilities and prepared to exploit them, both through military buildup and forming Arab coalitions. Additionally, there was an increase in hostile terrorist activities, including terrorism and long-range attacks. The Homefront became a significant target, especially after the withdrawal to the security zone in Lebanon and the two Intifadas. The first signs of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) appeared in the strategic thinking of the political echelon.

2. **Initiators of the Concept:**

   During this period, the political echelon resumed discussions on security concepts, with political and military committees formed to update the discourse. However, it should be noted that the highest-ranking government official involved was the Minister of Defense, and, as far as is known, the topic did not engage the Prime Minister or other government ministers. The first Meridor Committee—Subcommittee on Security Concept and its Implementation—was established during this period.

3. **Approval of the Concept:**

   The various concepts and documents written during this time were approved at the military level by the Chief of Staff and later by the Minister of Defense. Some were even presented to the government, though they were not formally approved.

4. **Core Principles of the Concept:**

   A. **Jewish Majority and Strengthening Settlement:** [No reference]

   B. **Economy and Self-Reliance:** Research and development; technological education.

   C. **International Cooperation and Assistance:** Pursuit of peace; special relationships.

   D. **Education and Values:** Fostering a sense of mission among the youth; educating and nurturing leadership in the IDF to take initiative and adopt a stance.

   E. **Enhancing Qualitative Superiority:** High-quality personnel in the IDF; technological superiority; promoting motivation for military service.

   F. **Security System:** Defensive strategic concept (defense, deterrence); offensive operational concept (operational decision—achieved at a low cost and in a short time); strategic endurance (the ability to sustain prolonged combat with few constraints on decision-making); preemptive strike; delaying war—restoring deterrence; imposing a heavy cost on the enemy.

   G. **IDF:** Defense, attack, breakthrough, and delivering a heavy blow to the enemy; defensive-preventative strategy with the option of a preemptive strike; minimal attrition of Israeli forces; preventive operations; operational decision (nullifying the enemy's will to continue fighting).

5. **Military Implications:**

   The IDF prepared for Chief of Staff discussions on the security concept, and Major General Avihu Ben-Nun, Head of the Planning Directorate, published a document titled *Security Concept – Platform for General Staff Discussion* in 1985. Initially, the IDF's approach to the security concept was based on this document, and later, in the absence of a structured IDF strategy, the main expression of conceptual ideas was found in various multi-year plans. In the multi-year plans of the 1980s and

early 1990s, references can be found to deterrence, a primary effort on one land front and at least one other front, a comprehensive strategic operational decision (independent of nuclear weapons), increased strategic depth, no preemptive strike, and containment. The *Shahar* multi-year plan also addressed qualitative buildup.

6. **Notes:**

While the 1990s witnessed significant immigration from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia, and despite political discourse on settlement (Judea and Samaria, and star-shaped settlements), there is no reference in the security concept documents to the issue of a Jewish majority, the Jewish diaspora, immigration, or settlement. The focus was primarily on security and military issues.

7. **Selected Quotes:**

"The State of Israel does not have a doctrinal security concept determined by the political echelon and delivered to the IDF as binding policy. The security concept has developed collectively over the years, sometimes in response to specific circumstances, formulated by the IDF and approved by the political echelon. At times, the security concept or changes to the existing concept were formulated by defense ministers (David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Arik Sharon), not always as a comprehensive vision [...] The existing security concept was formulated by the General Staff in 1980 as part of discussions on the 'Shahar' plan and presented to the government in its entirety [...] At the core of the security concept, it was determined that operational decision would be achieved on land by swiftly transferring the war to enemy territory."

—Major General Avihu Ben-Nun, *Security Concept – Platform for General Staff Discussion*, 1985

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"IDF capabilities required in light of the concept: deterrence—maintaining deterrence to prevent war, or at least delay it and reduce its scale and the number of participants; [...] early warning—providing reliable and timely warning of war; operational decision—maintaining the ability to achieve operational decision (including the option of executing a preemptive counterattack), requiring: defense capability [...] offensive capability [...] strategic endurance—a prerequisite for maintaining other capabilities."

—*Israel's Security Concept (in preparation for the "Misgav" multi-year plan), 1989*

Fourth Period – 2000–2023 – Emergence of the Radical Axis and Global Multi-Polar Organization (GPC)

1. **Strategic Context:**

   The fourth period is characterized by changing nature of conflicts, with a focus on the rise of fundamentalist Islam and the intensification of terror attacks both at Israel's borders and within its territory (and globally, as in the 9/11 attacks in 2001). The U.S. aimed to reshape the Middle East and promote democratization. There was a shift towards asymmetric and sub-conventional conflicts, with an increasing risk of unconventional conflicts. Combat moved into densely populated areas, with the media becoming another battleground. Meanwhile, the Palestinian issue remained unresolved, nuclear proliferation (especially in Iran) became a concern, and the "radical axis" formed. There was a growing likelihood of state-level wars, alongside the collapse and rebuilding of regimes in several Arab nations (such as Syria, Libya, and Egypt). This period also saw a renewed push for diplomatic arrangements, marked by the signing of the Abraham Accords and efforts to expand them, providing potential for regional stability with moderate Arab states. Israel sought to bolster its security position, maintained its "special relationship" with the U.S., and developed broader international cooperation. Domestically, security was influenced by deep civil-military tensions, political instability, repeated clashes on the Gaza front, an increasing threat from Lebanon, and growing complexity in Judea and Samaria area and internal security. Simultaneously, significant technological advancements—such as precision-guided munitions and unmanned capabilities—changed the rules of engagement, affecting international law and military operations.

2. **Initiators of the Concept:**

   During this period, there was renewed political involvement in the security concept. Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz appointed Knesset member Dan Meridor to revisit the concept, followed by Defense Minister Avigdor

Lieberman, who tasked Major General Yair Golan with drafting a new security concept while still in active service. Prime Ministers Benjamin Netanyahu and Naftali Bennett indirectly addressed national security principles. The subject was also discussed within the IDF and embodied in documents such as "The IDF Strategy" and operational concepts developed in 2002 (under Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz), 2006 (Chief of Staff Dan Halutz), 2015–2018 (Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot), and 2019 (Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi).

3. **Approval of the Concept:**

   The concepts developed during this period remained in draft form and were not officially approved, even if presented to the government.

4. **Core Principles of the Concept:**

   A. **Jewish Majority and Strengthening Settlement:** [No reference]

   B. **Economy and Self-Reliance:** Ensuring economic resilience; developing independent capabilities.

   C. **International Cooperation and Assistance:** Strengthening the special relationship with the U.S.; developing ties with additional key players in the region; bolstering peace agreements and realizing potential for cooperation, while maintaining the understanding that Israel must rely on its own capabilities.

   D. **Education and Values:** "The people's army" as a source of spiritual strength; a Jewish and democratic state.

   E. **Enhancing Qualitative Superiority:** Nurturing human capital; maximizing technological opportunities.

   F. **Security System:** National consensus on security matters; efforts to counter political, military, and covert threats; deterrence, defense of the Homefront and citizens, and offensive actions; use of force based on political considerations and legitimacy; defense; alternative operational decision—managing conflict and political agreements; awareness of the "political hourglass" in domestic, international, and regional contexts.

   G. **IDF:** Shift from emphasizing extensive ground maneuvers in enemy territory to precise stand-off fire (as much as possible from within Israeli territory) and limited ground maneuvers; simultaneous and integrated force

deployment; initially, attempts to build generic capabilities, later shifting to "boutique" capabilities tailored to specific threats; building unmanned capabilities; strengthening PGMs; maintaining air superiority; developing urban combat capabilities; developing land-based command and control systems; creating specialized weaponry for limited conflicts; building remote monitoring capabilities; improving low-signature operations; focusing on threats from rocket and missile attacks (TMS—Trajectory-Based Systems); enhancing intelligence for counter-terrorism and operations in distant theaters; developing soft power efforts—information, psychological, and media warfare; maintaining a small regular army and a large reserve force; changes in command and control concepts (e.g., the commander of the campaign: The command's commander or the Chief of Staff?).

5. **Military Implications:**

   The IDF Strategy, developed during the 2000s (in 2002, 2006, 2015, and 2018), is the military expression of the security concept that evolved over this period. Its foundation includes an offensive military concept, strategic cooperation, strengthening Israel's regional position, maintaining qualitative superiority, achieving long periods of calm, deterrence and intelligence, rapid threat removal, defense across multiple fronts, fighting on multiple fronts, achieving victory and operational decision, limited conflicts or conflicts aimed at operational decision, broad conflict areas (front, depth, secondary, tertiary, and internal), strategic endurance, and non-lethal weapons (to address domestic and security concerns).

6. **Notes:**

   A. A fourth component—civilian and military defense—was added to the traditional security triangle, emphasizing the protection of the home front from rocket and terrorist threats (Meridor Committee).

   B. Discussions around operational decision focused on "alternative operational decision," which is not necessarily military, echoing Ben-Gurion's and others' ideas that conflict cannot be resolved solely through military means.

C. The IDF Strategy from 2002 efficiently organizes these concepts, including national security doctrine, national security concept national security policy and military security policy, and clarifies the distinctions between them. These concepts need to be reassessed to create a shared language for the new security concept.

D. A recurring tension in all the concepts is between self-reliance without external dependence and international partnerships and assistance. While there is a recognition of the need for partnerships, the ideal of self-reliance and suspicion of international actors remain ingrained in the various concepts.

7. **Selected Quotes:**

> *"At the core of the traditional security concept stands the 'security triangle,' anchoring three fundamental concepts—deterrence to prevent war, sufficient intelligence warning before war, and operational decision in an offensive campaign for a quick and decisive end to the war [...] Changes in the strategic environment and the shifting center of gravity of conflicts from the conventional battlefield to asymmetric arenas necessitate a reevaluation of the foundational components of the 'security triangle' and highlight the need to add a fourth element of defense, given the growing threat to the Homefront from military, terrorist, and non-conventional weapons."*
> —The Committee for Formulating Israel's Security Concept, 2006
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>
> *"Substitutes for operational decision focus on 'managing conflict' until its resolution, if at all; 'decision' in the context of a political agreement (managing and concluding conflict with a state we do not have a peace agreement with); and 'arrangement' in the face of terror and non-conventional threats, requiring a different type of 'decision,' meaning the creation of a mechanism for a temporary cessation of violence and the establishment of a reasonable strategic reality, even in the absence of a clear operational decision on the battlefield."*
> —The Committee for Formulating Israel's Security Concept, 2006

"We must deter or decisively defeat any enemy that threatens to inflict deadly harm on us or destroy us [...] We must consistently cultivate four strengths: security strength, economic strength, political strength, and above all, spiritual strength [...] When failing to achieve operational decision does not exact too high a cost, the conflict can end without a decisive victory. In other words, in conflicts where the required political outcome does not demand the defeat of the enemy, we can adopt a limited response."

—Benjamin Netanyahu, *Prime Minister's Security Doctrine – Draft No. 3*, 2023

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