Towards a Paradigm Shift in Israel’s National Security Conception

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The concept of ‘national security’ refers, traditionally, to the protection of the territorial and political integrity of the state and its national interests from the use of force by an adversary. The national security conception\(^1\) of any state is the product of the given reality of external environment and internal resources (the ‘operational milieu’) as perceived and processed in the minds of her political and military elite (the ‘psychological milieu’). Consequently, revisions in national security conception can be the result of changes in the operational milieu, the psychological milieu, or both.\(^2\)

Zionism was born without any national security conception. It started to formulate such a theory only in the 1920s, following the first military clashes between the pre-state Yishuv and the Arab community in Palestine, and this crystallized into (what I will later term as) the Zionist national security paradigm, during the 1930s and 1940s.

Since then no fundamental changes have taken place in the psychological milieu of Israel’s national security. Its operational milieu went through one radical shift, in 1948, when the conflict ceased to be a local struggle between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and became a conflict between the Israeli state and the Arab world.

Consequently, Israel’s present national security conception is, to a large extent, the product of the psychological and operational milieus of the Jewish Yishuv and the war of 1948. During the last decade, however, certain cracks have appeared in these two environments. This essay discusses these changes and their implications for Israel’s national security conception.

Two arguments stand at the core of this essay: (a) that Israel is nearing the stage where its present national security conception will become obsolete because of radical changes in its operational milieu; (b) recent changes in Israel’s national security’s psychological milieu

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facilitate the build-up of a new theory which will better suit the new strategic environment. Consequently, the first part of this essay, which focuses on the operational milieu, briefly describes the existing national security conception and then elaborates on the main shifts in Israel’s strategic environment which call into question the validity of the present theory. The second part starts with a description of the dominant beliefs which make up the core of the psychological milieu and then analyses how they have changed in recent years. Finally I will outline possible implications, the most important of which is the likely transformation of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) from a conscript to a professional all-volunteer army.

THE OPERATIONAL MILIEU OF ISRAEL’S NATIONAL SECURITY CONCEPTION

The Traditional Conception

The following elements are at the core of the Israeli national security conception, and have been since the early 1950s:3

1. The massive disproportion between Israeli and Arab national resources (chiefly in terms of territory, manpower and gross national product (GNP)) prevents Israel from ending the conflict by military means, while allowing the Arabs to do so. Consequently, Israel is a territorial and political status quo power and the only goal of the IDF, as implied by its name, is to defend the country against an aggressive Arab world.4

2. The most fundamental and dangerous threat to Israel’s existence is an all-out co-ordinated Arab surprise attack. Hence, Israel should always maintain the ability to defend itself under the conditions of such a worst-case scenario, known as mikreh ha-kol (the all-out case).

3. As derived from the above, Israeli national security doctrine rests on three pillars: deterrence (as implied by the defensive goals of its national security conception); strategic warning (on any development which might endanger its national existence); and decision (the military ability to win a decisive victory if deterrence fails).

There are two primary operational implications of this doctrine. First, the build-up of the capability needed to provide a high-quality strategic warning and a quick response to external threats. This explains why the Military Intelligence branch (DMI), the Air Force (IAF) and the Navy are regular forces while the ground forces are based on reserve manpower. Second, a capability to maintain operational initiative in war scenarios and in the battlefield, in order to be able to win a decisive victory within a short period of time.
The Changes in the International System and its Implications

The cracks in the operational setting of the Israeli national security conception are, primarily, the product of political changes at the international and regional levels. In addition, it is influenced by certain developments in military technology and the proliferation of non-conventional weapon systems to the region.

The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the transition of the international system from a bipolar to a unipolar system under American hegemony, have changed significantly the operational milieu of Israel’s national security. After 1955, when the USSR became an active participant in the Arab–Israeli conflict, Arab military ability to launch a war against Israel increased significantly, and a political solution to the conflict became far more difficult.

The disappearance of the USSR from the scene has had the following implications for Israel’s national security: first, the superpower political and military umbrella, under which Soviet regional clients could have sheltered from the risks involved in initiating a crisis and even a war with Israel, has disappeared. Indeed, from 1956 the Soviets had acted to limit Israel’s freedom of action – either through verbal warnings or by actual military intervention in their client’s favour – in each of the Arab–Israeli wars.  

This is most true of Syria, the Soviets’ closest regional ally since the mid-1960s. Without the Soviet safety net any Syrian military move against Israel will involve considerable threats to Syrian strategic assets, first and foremost, the capital Damascus which is within Israeli military reach. Hence, Syrian ability to initiate such a war against Israel has decreased significantly since the end of the Soviet Union.

Secondly, from 1955, for almost four decades, the USSR was the main supplier of arms and military instruction and advice to Israel’s chief enemies. The collapse of the Soviet Union does not mean an immediate cease of arms transfers to the Arabs. However, because of increasing economic constraints, the Russian military–industrial complex is constantly losing its ability to develop and produce the next generation’s weapon systems. Consequently, traditional Soviet clients, and Syria is the most important case from the Israeli perspective, will have to choose in coming years between one of three options: (a) to continue to rely on outdated Russian or Chinese military supplies and thus to increase further their technological inferiority vis-à-vis the IDF; (b) to make a transformation to sophisticated (and expensive) Western, primarily American weapons, with the political concessions involved and the risk of being militarily vulnerable during the transition period which may last more than a decade; and (c) to give up the conventional military build-up and concentrate on the development of a non-
conventional capability as a means to deter Israel.

Notably, each of these options will leave former regional clients of the USSR conventionally far weaker than Israel in the foreseeable future as Arab clients sum up the lost political, diplomatic, economic and scientific support which enabled them to bear the cost involved in their enduring rivalry with Israel.

**Regional Changes and their Implications**

Since 1990 the Middle East has experienced two main developments which are, to some extent, the product of the systemic changes discussed earlier. The first development was the 1991 Gulf War. The second is the Arab–Israeli peace process which has yielded, so far, a Jordanian–Israeli peace agreement, a number of Palestinian–Israeli partial agreements, the beginning of formal Syrian–Israeli negotiations, and a major improvement in Israel’s relationship with most other Arab states.

The main implications of these developments for Israeli national security have been:

- A sharp decrease in the magnitude of the Iraqi conventional threat, because of Iraq’s (for the time being unrecoverable) military losses in the war; the peace treaty with Jordan which hampers advancement of Iraqi forces towards Israel; and Iraqi apprehension of rising threats from its own neighbours, primarily Iran, which decreases the likelihood of an Iraqi military initiative against Israel in the foreseeable future.

- A decrease in other Arab states’ motivation to initiate a war against Israel, primarily because the political option provides them with a more realistic alternative to attain an acceptable status quo. Notably, Israel’s strategic deterrence, its ability to persuade the opponent to avoid launching a war, have failed only twice throughout the conflict with the Arabs: in 1969 with the Egyptian initiation of the War of Attrition and in 1973 at the start of the Yom Kippur War. Since in both cases the balance of forces was clearly in favour of Israel, while the balance of interests favoured the Arabs, one can conclude that an acceptable political solution makes Israeli deterrence more likely to work than a relative increase in its military power.

- A growing Arab willingness to accept Israel as a legitimate actor in regional politics is another new factor. Though Israel was an important actor in the regional arena since its birth, it had always had to act latently since no Arab state was ready to be its open ally. This norm was broken to some extent during the Gulf War, when Saudi fighters participated in Israel’s defence against Scud attacks, and other traditional enemies such as Syria joined a coalition in which Israel was a latent participator.
As Israel has normalized its relationship with a growing number of Arab states in recent years this process has gained momentum. Though the Arabs, primarily Egypt, have made it clear that they will reject Israeli attempts to become the dominant regional actor, they have also left the impression that they accept an Israeli role as legitimate not only in the regional economic arena but also in the political and military spheres as well.

Modern Military Technology and the Proliferation of Non-conventional Weapons

Two developments concerning arms, which have occurred in recent decades, are also significant. The first involves the military technology revolution (the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)) and the introduction of sophisticated conventional weapon systems into the region. The second is the rapid proliferation of non-conventional weapons by regional actors, especially in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

From the military technology perspective, sophisticated conventional wars of the future will rely, primarily, on 'the combination and integration of high-quality target intelligence and acquisition methods, on effective and rapid command and control, and on high-kill probability precision fire power capable of destroying targets, on land, at sea or in the air, either by day or at night'.

One example of the impact of this technological revolution on the way wars of the future may be conducted is the complete destruction of Syrian air defence batteries in the Beqa valley during the June 1982 war in Lebanon, without any losses to the IAF. Another is the Gulf War, where the Iraqi ground forces enjoyed a numerical superiority but the US-led coalition forces had superb air, ground and naval weapon systems. The combination of this technological and human superiority led to an unprecedented, in terms of loss ratio, Iraqi defeat.

The rapid proliferation of non-conventional weaponry in the region revolves, primarily, around the Syrian acquisition of ballistic missiles armed with conventional and chemical warheads, Iranian nuclear efforts, and Iraq's attempts to maintain its non-conventional capabilities despite American and international pressures. As indicated, such efforts show that these regional powers seem to believe that the next war in the Middle East will not be a classic conventional confrontation between large-scale ground forces supported by air power. Instead they consider non-conventional weapons as the most effective answer to the dire strategic situation in which they have found themselves in the wake of the collapse of the USSR, the second Gulf War and the Arab-Israeli peace process.

The development of such capabilities makes the recurrence of large-scale conventional wars far less likely. And while it is probably true that
the main goal of this non-conventional potential is to deter Israel from exploiting its strategic superiority if war erupts, it is important to note that such acquisitions will limit Israel’s freedom of manoeuvrability in any future conflict, as they can be used for offensive purposes as well.

**Implications for Israeli Security**

From Israel’s perspective there are three main conclusions to be derived from the discussion so far:

1. Because of the global and regional changes of the last decade, the Arab political motivation and military capability to launch a conventional war against Israel has diminished significantly. Consequently, the traditional threat to Israel’s existence – the ‘all-out case’ of co-ordinated surprise attack by the neighbouring Arab countries, which dominated Israeli strategic thinking from the early 1950s – has almost disappeared.

2. The source of the main threat to Israel’s existence in the foreseeable future will be the non-conventional arsenals held by regional powers that do not participate in the peace process. If one of these states succeeds in obtaining an operational nuclear capability, Israel will face, for the first time since 1948, the threat of annihilation.

3. The source of the main threat to Israel’s existence in the future will not come from Egypt and Syria, its traditional enemies, but from the second-circle Arab states (primarily Iraq and Libya) or third-circle states (Iran and, perhaps, Sudan).

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MILIEU: THE ZIONIST NATIONAL SECURITY PARADIGM**

*The Zionist National Security Paradigm*  

The realization that the fulfilment of the Zionist goals involved dealing with individual and collective security challenges began during the Second Aliya and gained momentum after the British occupation of Palestine, primarily during the 1921–22 clashes between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine. The practical response was the establishment of the Hagana, which, combined with British assistance, was aimed at providing Jews protection against Arab violence.

More interesting, in the context of this essay, is the psychological milieu of Jewish national security in Palestine which crystallized in response to rising security threats. The consolidation of a set of beliefs on Jewish security in Palestine gained momentum during the 1936–39 ‘disturbances’ and matured during the three decades that follow, reaching its most explicit and extreme (‘ideal type’) form between 1967 and 1973.
At the centre of this psychological milieu stand three fundamental beliefs.

**The Primacy of Security**

This belief, which became especially dominant after the establishment of Israel, holds that almost every national problem is a security problem, or at least involves security aspects. Its prime proponent was Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. For Ben-Gurion, immigration absorption and the build-up of settlements were security issues, so too was his famous aspiration that Israel should become ‘a light unto the nations’. As he explained it, besides its moralistic value, Israel as a beacon for other nations had an important security function, providing as it did external support which was so essential to ensure its existence.¹⁰

Such subordination of all private and collective aspects of life to security demands bordered on ‘security Bolshevism’ and is typical of the Second Aliya generation. Nevertheless, since Ben-Gurion was well aware that moral, economic or social values were very important in ensuring Israel’s existence, he did automatically rank values of physical security above other values.

Consequently, when security considerations collided with the rule of law principle (for example, the Tobiansky affair), Ben-Gurion supported the latter.¹¹ Similarly, despite being so identified with Israel’s security demands, under Ben-Gurion the defence budget almost never exceeded ten per cent of Israel’s GNP. Only after he was replaced by Levi Eshkol did the defence budget rise above this level.¹²

Another aspect of the tendency to view every national challenge through the security prism is the inclination to focus on the security dimension of every problem as the prime justification to solve it. A typical example is the ‘integration of the exiles’ – one of the most basic and desired goals of the Zionist ethos. Already in the 1940s, security frameworks were used to promote this goal when socially and economically weak youngsters of Sephardic origin were recruited to serve with elitist Ashkenazi youth in the Palmach.

Similarly, in the 1950s the justification for compulsory service relied not only on security needs but also on the belief that the army was the most effective vehicle to integrate new immigrants with longer-established Israelis.¹³

**Resort to Force as a Panacea to Security Problems**

Some sections of the Zionist movement were always aware that military solutions had their own limitations. Other ideological streams – especially the activist ones on the right and the left – tended to view the use of force as almost the only means to solve all sorts of security problems.

The belief that force is a panacea, and that the use of brute force
alone could and should solve all security problems was dominant especially in the early 1950s and after the 1967 War, and coincided with the belief in ‘self-help’ (see below). A typical example of this way of thinking, and its outcome, can be seen in the case known as ‘the Unfortunate Business’.

In 1954 Britain and Egypt reached an agreement on the evacuation of the British army from its camps in the Suez Canal zone. The accord reflected the realities of the post-1945 international system and was one stage in an historical process that resulted in the dismantling of the British Empire. Since it was perceived to weaken Israel’s balance of forces vis-à-vis Egypt, Benyamin Givli, the chief of Military Intelligence (with post factum approval from the Defence Minister Pinhas Lavon), decided to conduct sabotage acts in Egypt to halt this process of withdrawal.

The result was the total fiasco that later came to be known as the Lavon affair. The important point, in terms of this essay, is the absurd way of thinking which brought about such a fiasco. As Yehoshafat Harkabi, who became the chief of Military Intelligence in the aftermath of this failure, wrote, ‘the gap between the network [ability] and the mission it was to achieve was shuddering ... The two were in two different levels, without any linkage between them’.

Others, such as Prime Minister Moshe Sharett thought so too. But since Givli’s frame of mind focused only on active ways to stop the British evacuation he opted for action despite its poor chance of success.

The technological panacea is also another aspect of this way of thinking as the rise of new threats, such as the introduction of ballistic missiles armed with non-conventional warheads, result in the demand to use new military technologies. The Arrow (Hetz) anti-ballistic-missile defence system is a good example of a technological answer to a major new challenge.

In contrast, the Katyusha threat to northern Israel constitutes a typical terrorist challenge, namely a minimal military threat with a maximum psychological effect. But in the name of the drive for total security (see below), Israel has developed, with American aid, highly sophisticated and costly weapon systems which will shoot down Katyushas on their way to Israel. Most experts agree that the solution to Israel’s security problems in the north is political – a comprehensive agreement with Syria which will also include Lebanon. But such a solution (assuming that Syria is serious about peace in the first place) involves difficult political decisions, including the handing of the Golan Heights to Syria. Hence, looking under the ‘technological light’ is a far more convenient (though probably ineffective) solution, especially if one believes that security problems can be solved by military means alone.
Self-Help

The principle of ‘self-help’ stands at the centre of the realist and neo-realist school in international relations. The premise underlying this approach is that in an anarchic international system, where there is no formal power that can ensure the state’s existence, states will tend to rely on their own military power rather than on external guarantees such as peace agreements, defence pacts or arms control regimes, to ensure their survival. Such a tendency leads, however, to the ‘security dilemma’; that is, the condition in which states, unsure of one another’s intentions, arm for the sake of insecurity and in doing so set a vicious circle in motion. Having armed for the sake of security, states feel less secure and buy more arms because the means to anyone’s security is a threat to someone else who in turn responds by arming.15

Although the tendency towards ‘self-help’ is of universal nature, it became extremely dominant in the Zionist national security paradigm. A thousand years of Jewish traumatic history in the Diaspora, culminating in the Nazi Holocaust, created a siege mentality and a fundamental mistrust of Gentiles. During its short history of existence, Israel had gone through a number of traumatic events including the Arab invasion of 1948, the May–June 1967 crisis, and the 1973 Yom Kippur surprise, which magnified further this sense of insecurity.16 As Henry Kissinger has noted,

Israel’s margin of survival is so narrow that its leaders distrust the great gesture or the stunning diplomatic departure; they identify survival with precise calculation, which can appear to outsiders (and sometimes is) pettifogging obstinacy. Even when Israeli leaders accept a peace proposal, they resist fiercely, which serves the purpose of showing that they are not pushovers and thereby discourages further demands for Israeli concessions. And their acceptance is usually accompanied by endless requests for reassurances, memoranda of understanding, and secret explanations – all designed to limit the freedom of action of a rather volatile ally five thousand miles away that supplies its arms, sustains its economy, shelters its diplomacy, and has a seemingly limitless compulsion to offer peace plans.17

The suspicion of others has had a major impact on the Israeli reluctance to give up territories deemed essential for the state’s security, so long as the Arabs were not seen to have abandoned their aim of subverting the Jewish state. Under these circumstances, ending the conflict on the basis of the ‘territories for peace formula’, which became increasingly feasible after 1967, turned out to be far more difficult. An additional 25 years of conflict and violence were needed to convince
most Israelis that peace, even at the cost of relinquishing elements of ‘self-help’ is a more effective way to get out of the ‘security dilemma’.

THE IMPACT OF THE ZIONIST REVOLUTION CONTEXT

The three beliefs discussed above are heightened by the classic characteristic of every revolution, that ranks the collective rather than the individual’s good at the centre of the individual and collective being. Zionism, as a revolutionary national movement, had never argued (as the nineteenth-century national–romantic European movements did) that the individual’s ultimate fulfilment is through sacrificing himself to promote national goals. But as a national movement which faced existential threats it adopted elements of self-sacrifice, as expressed by Yossef Trumpeldor’s last words – ‘it is good to die for our country’ on which generations of youngsters were educated. And in this ideological atmosphere the tendency to stick to the three beliefs that constitute the core of the Zionist national security paradigm was enhanced.

The Changes in the Collective Belief System

Although the Zionist revolution is not yet over, there are many indications that Israel is nearing the third stage in the history of the Zionist enterprise, a stage termed by some as the post-Zionist era. The goal of the first stage of the Zionist enterprise – to build a Jewish state – was achieved in 1948. The goal of the second stage was to ensure the safety of that state. After five decades of conflict with the Arab world, a peace agreement with Syria, which is possible in the foreseeable future, will bring the second stage of the Zionist revolution to a successful conclusion as well.

This will mean the opening of the third stage of Israel’s history, which will be characterized by a significant reduction in external threats and a normalization of relations between Israel and most Arab states.

We have already discussed the main changes in the operational milieu of Israel’s national security which indicate the probable emergence of the third stage. Now it is time to discuss the changes which announce its coming in the psychological milieu.

The Primacy of Security

It will be recalled that the primacy of security in Israeli life has stood at the centre of the traditional national security paradigm. This belief has gone through considerable changes during the last two decades. Though still dominant, security demands are considered today as one – and not automatically superior – of a number of societal values.

One dimension of this change is the creation, through a number of Supreme Court rulings, of a new balance in the triangular relationship
between security needs, the rule of law and the public’s right for information. The principal decision which established the new balance was taken in 1988 when the Supreme Court overruled the banning of a newspaper article which criticized the director of the Mossad.\textsuperscript{19}

This precedent lessened the military censor’s tendency to use his authority to ban the publication of similar information.\textsuperscript{20} The new balance of forces between the censors and the media was officially recognized in May 1996, when the two signed a new, and far more liberal agreement, in which the censor gave up some of its draconian powers, including its right to close down a paper, and the media gained the right to appeal to the Supreme Court to overrule censorial decisions.\textsuperscript{21}

Another dimension is the opening of security organs to external oversight. A good example is the recent change in the status of the General Security Service (SHABAK). Until the mid-1980s SHABAK’s supervision was, almost exclusively, in the hands of the Prime Minister’s Office. Since then, the legislative and judicial branches have become far more active in its supervision and so have the media and human rights organizations. The Law of the SHABAK, which was presented to the public in early 1996,\textsuperscript{22} will frame the service’s legal status, subordination and activities, within a well-defined legal setting.

Despite these changes, it is important to note that polls show that the majority of the Israeli public,\textsuperscript{23} and large segments of the political elite,\textsuperscript{24} still believe in the primacy of security. But with a peace process which is expected to decrease the security burden, and if the new balance between security demands and other societal values proves to benefit both security and society, it is quite probable that public belief in the primacy of security will also change.

\textit{Resort to Force as a Panacea for Security Problems}

In the quarter of a century since their brilliant victory in the Six Day War, Israelis have undergone the traumatic experiences of the Yom Kippur War and the Lebanon War, the failure to stop the \textit{intifada} by military means or the Iraqi Scuds from landing during the Gulf War. These events have certainly taught Israelis the limits of military power in solving security problems.

A good expression of this are the public opinion polls which show a growing popular support for political solutions to Israel’s most fundamental security problems. In 1986, 30 per cent of Israelis believed that Israel should give up the territories as long as Israel’s security was provided for. In 1991, 51 per cent favoured this solution, and in 1993 the figure was 54 per cent.

At the same time, the percentage of Israelis who supported the annexation of the territories fell from 34 per cent in 1986 to 15 per cent
in 1993. Similarly, in 1987, 33 per cent of the Israeli public favoured negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) while 66 per cent were opposed. In 1994, 60 per cent were in favour of such negotiations and only 40 per cent were against. Finally, in 1987, 53 per cent of Israelis supported the idea of an international peace conference, while 48 per cent were opposed. In 1993, 89 per cent supported this idea, while only 11 per cent were against.25

The reduction in the belief that the use of force is a panacea for security problems is also evidenced in Israel’s security policy. For example, in contrast to past practice where the objective of Israeli force was to coerce the Arab side to return to the previous ceasefire regime, Israel’s political goals in the struggle against Hizbullah in Lebanon are far less ambitious and are aimed at limiting the war to Lebanese territory and preventing further escalation. Given the losses Israel has suffered, even in attempting to achieve these limited goals, a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon has become the most feasible option. Similarly, restraint has been shown by both Labour and Likud governments in their responses to Palestinian provocation since 1992–93.

Self-Help
Along with the growing awareness that military force is not a panacea for security problems, and as a logical result of this view, the Israeli public have begun to change their views on the relationship between Israel and the rest of the world. The belief that the whole world opposed Israel began to fade away with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This view gained momentum following the 1993 and 1995 accords with the PLO, when a number of Arab states initiated diplomatic, economic and tourist connections with Israel, thus minimizing Israel’s sense of isolation in the region.

A typical expression of the public’s change of mind was given in a poll which showed that, in 1991, 49 per cent of Israelis believed that the Arabs’ final goal was to destroy Israel and its Jewish population. In 1996 this constituency had fallen to 28 per cent.26 Another indication is public attitude towards the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories. In 1987 only about 21 per cent supported such a solution.27 In 1996, before the May elections, 48 per cent supported it.

The End of the Zionist Revolution
The last, and perhaps most important, change involves Israel’s new order of priorities, which reflects the notion that the Israeli public is becoming ready for the post-Zionist stage in the nation’s life. At the centre of this change is the relationship between the collective and the individual. The days when the individual was subordinate to the collective are over. Instead, there is a growing tendency in Israeli society
to rank the good of the individual higher than that of the collective. The main implication of this change is the increasing reluctance to serve in the army, especially in frontline units.

This tendency is expressed in a number of ways. The 1996 annual report by the State Comptroller assessed the indicators for motivation for service in regular and reserve army units. It revealed that there was an increase in the number of recruitment refusals; a decrease in the readiness of individuals to volunteer for frontline units; a change in the sources of motivation to serve in elite units – away from patriotism and towards an individuals desire for self-fulfilment; and a general decrease in reservists motivation to serve.28

This change in priorities finds a vivid expression also in current security policy. Shortly after Moshe Dayan became Chief-of-Staff in 1953 he issued an order that any commander whose unit failed to reach its operational goal without suffering at least 50 per cent casualties was likely to see his military career come to an end.29 In contrast, the emphasis in IDF operational activities in Southern Lebanon in recent years was on loss avoidance, even at the cost of a failure to obtain operational goals.

Similarly, the ‘Grapes of Wrath’ operation of spring 1996 did not start with a brilliant military move in the best Israeli tradition, but rather with an orderly evacuation of the civilian population from the Upper Galilee. This care for the individual stands in clear contrast to the classic Zionist ethos which opposed the evacuation of settlements in combat zones even when under physical attack (for example, Gush Etzion and Jewish settlements in the Negev in 1948).

IMPLICATIONS

Shortly before he died in 1980, Moshe Dayan suggested a new conception for Israeli national security: a decrease in the conflict’s intensity (through territorial concessions) added to a valid deterrence against a decisive war (namely a nuclear capability) plus conventional forces sufficient to fight a limited conventional war. This, Dayan argued, would provide reasonable security at a reasonable cost.30 Adding to this formula one more factor – an American-Israeli defence pact – gives a fair indication of the probable conception of Israeli national security after it achieves peace agreements with Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

The completion of the peace process with all neighbouring states will create a new operational milieu for Israel’s national security. There are likely to be two main changes. The first will be a total disappearance of the classic conventional threat – a massive, Arab attack against the Jewish state. This change will be the outcome of a reduction in Arab
motivation to initiate war against Israel (as a result of a new and accepted status quo following the signing of peace treaties); an effective Israeli deterrent which will rely on a perceived (perhaps even an open) nuclear arsenal; a defence pact with the United States; and an Arab inability to surprise Israel strategically because of demilitarized zones in Egypt (Sinai) and between the Syrian and Israeli armies.

The second factor will be the continuation, perhaps even escalation, of non-conventional threats from second- and third-circle states which, at present, include Iraq, Iran and Libya. If the present trend continues, at least one of these states will be able to threaten Israel with an effective arsenal of ballistic missiles armed with non-conventional (in the case of Iraq and Iran probably nuclear) warheads, within the next decade.

The changes in the operational milieu necessitate a paradigm shift in Israel's national security conception. The changes in her psychological milieu make the adaptation to these new realities possible. Consequently, the combination of the two is likely to yield a paradigm shift, the first of its kind, in the Zionist national security conception.

The most radical element in this shift will probably be the transformation of the IDF from a conscript army to a volunteer professional army. The logic behind such a change is compelling as Israel’s present military forces (artillery, tanks, soldiers) constitute a formidable and costly body that is prepared to fight conventional threats that are ceasing to exist.31 These resources can be diverted into Israel’s economy to make it stronger, but are quite useless against the menace of ballistic missiles carrying non-conventional warheads. As such, a smaller, more sophisticated and more professional army is the prerequisite for successfully meeting the new challenges of the future.

NOTES

1. I prefer to use the term ‘conception’ here since it encompasses a wider view of what national security is all about. Alternative terminology routinely used in this connection, such as ‘strategy’ (which refers mainly to the military aspects of national security), or ‘doctrine’ (which refers to a number of principles which stand at the core of national security), is too narrow and technical for this purpose.


4. The only major exception to this rule is Israel’s 1982 initiative in Lebanon. As is clear today, the strategic results of this initiative make it far less likely that a similar undertaking will occur in the future.


8. A paradigm is ‘a set of rules, standards, and examples of scientific practice which is shared by a coherent group of scientists, the commitment to which and consensus produced by it being prerequisites to the genesis and continuation of a research tradition’. See Christopher Lloyd, *Explanation in Social History*, Oxford, 1986, p.75. In the context of this paper this term refers to a set of principal beliefs on Israeli national security. While it is true that this set is less coherent and crystallized than a paradigm in the hard sciences, I nevertheless prefer its use here for three reasons: (a) it encompasses the beliefs, historical lessons and rules of behaviour shared by all those who define themselves as Zionists; (b) it is a necessary condition for the construction of a collective and consensual conception of national security; and (c) changes in Israel’s national security operational and psychological milieu cast doubt, very much like Kuhn’s ‘puzzles’, on the validity of the existing paradigm and indicate the rise of a new one, i.e., a paradigm shift. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, 1970.

Two more points are appropriate here. First, I use the term ‘Zionist’ rather than ‘Israeli’ national security paradigm since the set under discussion was born before 1948. Second, the beliefs I introduce below are presented in a sort of a Clausewitzian ‘ideal type’ mode. In reality, of course, there are may nuances to each of these beliefs. Presenting them in a rather simplistic and abstract form, however, will make the discussion of the changes in these beliefs far more clearly explicit. For a discussion of the use of this methodology by Clausewitz, see Michael Handel, *Masters of War: Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini*, London, 1992, pp.25–6.


