

SECURITY FIRST 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FALL 2025



**CIVIL SEPARATION:
A STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE
DEESCALATION, SECURITY AND
REGIONAL STABILITY**



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Introduction: A Strategic Decision Point

Following the events of October 7, Israel stands at a historic crossroads, requiring a clear decision between two opposing visions for its future. The choice made will influence its character and fate for generations, as it affects the face and stability of the entire region for years.

The choice is between two mutually exclusive paths: one pursues the Zionist vision of Israel as a strong, prosperous democracy, with a solid Jewish majority, integrated into a regional coalition framework. The other involves a continued slide towards a binational state, leading to an apartheid reality, regional and international isolation, marking the end of the Zionist vision, and destabilizing the region. The latter vision is the inevitable outcome of current government policies, as outlined in Minister Smotrich's "Decisive Plan."

Fortuitously, the visions and plans advanced by previous US administrations and the current one, align with the first path and reject all notions of annexation – the key component of the slide to a binational apartheid state.

The "Security First 2026" initiative proposed by *Commanders for Israel's Security* (CIS), offers a practical strategic framework. It combines diplomacy with military strength for realizing the Zionist vision and ensuring the security and resilience of the state. The initiative stems from a sober analysis of the main threats requiring an immediate strategic shift coupled with an awareness of unprecedented opportunities.

Major Threats to National Security

CIS is focused on four mutually reinforcing threats to Israel's security, resilience, and future.

First, the **internal threat** to national solidarity and resilience. It erupted with the government initiative to castrate the judiciary. It has intensified due to its resolve to permanently do away with conscription equality. And it has peaked with political leadership's assault on the IDF and its refusal to shoulder responsibility for the debacle of October 7.

The second is the failure to make progress on the **Palestinian issue** and to effectively renounce its " Hamas is an asset " strategy, which exploded in Israel's face on October 7, continues to generate violence and instability, and fuels regional and international isolation.

The third is manifest in the erosion of **Israel's legitimacy**, damage to the strategic and bipartisan alliance with the US, and exclusion from vital regional processes.

Lastly, these trends hamper Israel's response to the fourth threat, the three-pronged **Iranian hostile effort**: its nuclear program, regional proxies encircling Israel in a "ring of fire," and advanced missile capabilities.

Two Strategic Alternatives: Choosing Between Opportunity and Disaster

The choice facing policymakers involves two fundamentally opposing practical paths, whose outcomes will shape Israel's security and diplomatic reality for years to come.

The destructive alternative: continuing current policies

The current Israeli government pursues a strategy of "endless war," leading to creeping West Bank annexation, open-ended Gaza occupation, and increasing regional and global isolation. Its main components include:

- Refusal to take steps necessary for a sustainable ceasefire and progress in Gaza, inter alia by vetoing the involvement of the Palestinian

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Authority (PA), without which no third party is prepared to contribute troops or funds to stabilize and reconstruct the Strip,

- Accelerating de facto annexation in the West Bank, parliamentary declarations of sovereignty there, illegal settlement expansion (including in the strategic E1 area), and tolerance – if not encouragement – of settler violence,
- Enabling and promoting escalating Jewish settlement activities in East Jerusalem and Jewish provocations that erode the status quo on Temple Mount,
- Deliberate weakening of the Palestinian Authority to the verge of collapse.

The consequences of these destructive policies:

- Internally, this conduct contributes to the erosion of national solidarity and resilience.
- Externally, it has yielded unprecedented international isolation, and to likely missing the historic opportunity for normalization with Saudi Arabia and integration in a regional security coalition.

The constructive alternative: an opportunity for regional cooperation and integration

The Israeli government faces an alternative path, advanced by numerous Arab, Muslim and key Western countries, under US leadership (currently reflected in President Trump's Twenty-Point Plan). This alternative offers:

- **Interim Gaza Governance and Security:**
A willingness by several moderate Arab states to assume responsibility for governance and security in the Gaza Strip during an interim period in support of the Palestinian Authority (PA), until – once reformed -- it is able to take over that responsibility.
- **Demilitarization of the Strip:**
Disarming Hamas and dismantling its military and governing capabilities.
- **Funding and Reconstruction:**
A commitment by Gulf states to contribute to the reconstruction of the Strip and to strengthen the Palestinian Authority.

- **Normalization and Regional Integration:**

An offer of full normalization of relations with Saudi Arabia and integration into a strong regional strategic coalition that would contain Iran and its proxies and stabilize hot spots such as Syria and Lebanon.

Israeli government opposition to PA involvement in Gaza, to a commitment to a future two-state solution, and to an eventual complete withdrawal from Gaza – three regional prerequisites for engaging – stands in the way of this historic opportunity to significantly upgrade Israel's security, while contributing to the long-term stability of the region.

The Strategic Framework proposed by CIS: "Civil Separation"

The CIS "Civil Separation" initiative proposes an Israeli strategy aimed at reversing the current slide toward a bleeding one-state reality while taking measures to enable an eventual two-state solution that do not compromise Israeli security.

Unlike the unilateral 2005 Gaza Disengagement, which left behind no security arrangements, Civil Separation preserves overall security responsibility with Israel until an agreement with the Palestinians usher in alternative robust security arrangements. Likewise, Civil Separation envisions no dismantling of major Israeli settlements until a permanent agreement is reached.

Principles of the Civil Separation Plan

Per the plan, the Israeli government will

- **Change its stance towards the Palestinian Authority** from enemy to partner, aligning its economic, diplomatic, and security actions with this approach, enabling its development and reform (as demanded by donor countries and others), and viewing it as a partner for future negotiations,
- Enable PA civil control in Areas A and B and re-designate portions of C as A and/or B, in order to enhance contiguity and the free movement

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of Palestinians among them, including through infrastructure (roads) and policy (minimizing roadblocks),

- Cooperate with, and help enhance the capacity of, the Palestinian security forces,
- **Renew permission for security-vetted Palestinians employment in Israel,**
- Release Palestinian funds heretofore withheld by Israel,
- **Evacuate all illegal outposts and farms** established in recent years, which pose security burdens and points of friction,
- **Restrict construction outside settlement blocs, while avoiding the evacuation of existing approved settlements** until a permanent agreement is reached,
- **Pursue a no-tolerance policy towards Jewish and Palestinian violence,** All while maintaining full and overall security control until circumstances allow for change.

Implementing this plan is the first and essential step in changing Israel's strategic reality and securing its future.

Summary and Recommendation

October 7 proved most painfully that strengthening Palestinian extremists while undermining moderates and avoidance of diplomatic initiative lead Israel into increasingly perilous situations.

The central message of the "Security First 2026" initiative is clear and unequivocal: adopting a model of civil separation - while maintaining security control - and committing to a diplomatic horizon of a future demilitarized Palestinian state are essential conditions for translating impressive military achievements into long-term diplomatic successes. These steps will enable:

- **Ending the war** in Gaza and establishing conditions that ensure Israel's security going forward.
- **Capitalizing on the historic opportunity for normalization** with Saudi Arabia and integration into a regional strategic coalition, thereby vastly improving Israel's security and regional stability.

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The Israeli government must abandon its creeping annexation policies and adopt the principles of the "Civil Separation" plan as the basis for a new national strategy. This is the only way to secure Israel's future as Jewish, democratic, prosperous, and secure.

[For the full "Security First 2026" document \(Hebrew\) - click here](#)



"Commanders for Israel's Security" is a non-partisan movement of former senior officers and officials from the IDF, Shin Bet, Mossad, Israel Police and Foreign Service, committed to the Zionist vision of a strong, democratic Israel with a solid Jewish majority for generations, in the spirit of the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

CIS' hundreds of members share the view that achieving this ultimate national goal requires separation from millions of Palestinians through a negotiated 'two states for two peoples' agreement and its implementation within a regional framework.

In the absence of conditions for such an agreement and resolution at this time, CIS presents decision-makers and the Israeli public with plans that address current challenges in the West Bank and Gaza, creating and ensuring conditions for a future settlement.

Membership in CIS reflect a commitment to Israel's security, as manifest through decades of service in all security and diplomatic agencies, with no personal or partisan interests involved.