

# ISRAEL AND THE GAZA WAR-AN ISRAELI INTERIM BALANCE SHEET

By Josef Olmert, PH.D.

What is officially known in Israel as the "swords of iron" war is not yet close [written on 31 December] to its end. In fact, we may be close to the end of the beginning only, but it is not too early to come up with an interim assessment of what has unfolded since 7 October.

6& 7 October will forever remain as defining dates in the history of the State of Israel. The first was in 1973, the beginning of the Yom Kippur War, and the second was in 2023, the beginning of the "Swords of Iron" war. Israel is a state that has had the misfortune of fighting for its very existence from day one of its establishment in 1948, so it is no surprise that wars mark turning points in its history. After 1973, Israel underwent a major change which was formalized in 1977 but was rooted in the events of October 1973-that was the transfer from Labor-dominated Israel to the Likud-Era, which, with some interruptions, lasted until October 2023, and in its last 15 years can be defined as the Netanyahu era. This paper's main argument is that it is not too early to define the events unfolding in Israel from 7 October 2023 as the end of an era. Not too early to predict this, while it may be too early to predict the new one, beyond some very broad references to changes both in domestic politics and in Israel's regional and global affairs.

There will be two more papers, one about Palestinian and Arab reactions and one about world reactions at large, giving us the fullest picture of the war and its implications.

## 7 OCTOBER -THE END OF AN ERA

What happened on this fateful day can be described as an unfortunate intelligence failure that led to the mass killing of civilians and death in the battle of soldiers, a very regrettable event yet one which can happen even in strong countries, not least in the US, with Pearl Harbor and 9/11 in mind. Looking at the events from that perspective totally misses the real meaning of the day. It is so because, in this day, the failure of intelligence was the outcome of much bigger failures, failure of policy, failure of military doctrine, failure of cultural perception, failure of political leadership, put in sum, a multi-systemic structural failure.

We should start this discussion with a reference to the comparison made by many Israelis between the events of the day and the Holocaust. The comparison is misplaced for many reasons, but it was genuinely made by many Israelis, and it shows the traumatic impact of the day as well as explaining what happened after this day. For years, many Israelis, especially the youth, tried to think of Israeli existence in terms different from the legacy of historic antisemitism that climaxed with the Holocaust. 7 October may have reversed this train of thought, and it may prove highly significant. Moreover, 7 October strengthened the Jewish element in the overall sense of Israeli collective identity.

The intelligence failure focuses on two keywords: HUBRIS and CONCEPT. Hubris is when an intelligence service, in that case, both the Military intelligence and the General Security Service of Israel, believed that they knew everything about Hamas as well as about other enemies of Israel. While it is the case that they did know and still do know a lot, they should never believe that they know

EVERYTHING. This was exactly the frame of mind before 6 October 1973. A feeling such as that contributes to the adoption of a concept such as the one existing in Israel on 6 October 2023, and it was very simple: Hamas cannot and does not want to attack Israel.

Intelligence services commit a classic mistake when they fall in love with their concept based on their sense of hubris. All the more so when intelligence assessments match the political leadership's expectations and are designed to please this leadership.

That brings us to the total failure of the Israeli political leadership on the morning of 7 October. In fact, we talk here about the failure of BINYAMIN NETANYAHU, the undisputed leader of Likud and the Right Wing, a man who built his political career on being MR. SECURITY, an expert in dealing with terrorism, an expert in international relations, particularly insofar as Israel's relations with the US were concerned. It is not an exaggeration, therefore, to say that Netanyahu was his own Foreign and Defense minister, a leader surrounded by a group of low-level Likud politicians after he got rid of everyone who dared having even remote leadership aspirations.

Among his partners, he was also surrounded by ultra-orthodox parties whose quid pro quo with him was concessions on matters important to them, such as a sweeping exemption of Yeshiva students from military service in return for their non-intervention in security and foreign affairs issues. After the last elections in 2022, the two parties of Otzma Yehudit and Religious Zionism joined the government. While they continued to support the concessions to the ultra-orthodox, they also emphasized the centrality of the settlements and security issues connected with them at the expense of dealing with Hamas in the South and Hizballah in the North.

These parties had a good, accommodating partner -no other than PM NETANYAHU.

NETANYAHU SECURITY CONCEPT ;2009-2023;

Netanyahu came to office when, in both the South and North, it was obvious that Hamas and Hizballah were into bad things, not just theoretically but also in actions. Ahead of his accession to power, Netanyahu specifically declared that he would completely destroy Hamas, but soon it became clear that words aside, actions were totally different. Netanyahu adopted a pattern of activity whereby when there was a flare-up with Hamas, the IDF was instructed to inflict symbolic strikes on Hamas, never intending to inflict real damage on them, and he rushed into premature cease-fire with them whenever he could argue that they were severely beaten. Consequently, Israel achieved a balance of deterrence with them. He capitulated to them with the Shalit prisoner exchange when over 1000 dangerous terrorists were released in exchange for Gilad Shalit. Among them was one called Yahia Sinwar, the current leader of Hamas and the architect of the 7 October massacres. Netanyahu went further and collaborated with Qatar, the main, almost only Arab supporter of Hamas, to fund Hamas in order to make them feel that they have enough to cater to the Gaza populace. It amounted to hundreds of dollars of aid to Hamas. Now we know what many cautioned about before – the money went to two targets first, building the impressive military power of Hamas, which now we see its strength, as well as building the unprecedented underground fortress. The second target was the pockets of the Hamas leaders who got richer and richer living in Qatar.

While doing this, Netanyahu claimed that Gaza is under effective IDF siege, which precludes Hamas from doing exactly what, in reality, they did while enabling the civilian population to exist reasonably well. On the ground, it was all the opposite, and despite warnings by some politicians and military commanders, Netanyahu

continued relentlessly with his disastrous policies. WHY? Why did the young anti-terror theoretician of the 1970s and 1980s become THE APPEASER OF TERRORISM in the 21st century? Two possible explanations – One was political expediency. The repeated skirmishes with Hamas did not lead to an electoral challenge to him, and for a survivalist politician like him, that was SO important. The second reason is the strategy espoused by him openly, which he developed into an unchallenged political message-strengthening Hamas, which is NOT a real security threat to Israel, would drive a wedge between them and the Palestinian Authority [ PA] and with that, kill the idea of a Palestinian state. It was unchallenged by his Right Wing partners because, for them, the fate of Judea and Samaria IS THE most important issue, and their PM seemed to play to their tune about that, something which he bragged about after signing the Abraham Accords in which there was no concession of land and the Palestinian issue seemed to be pushed outside of the main political agenda of the Middle East.” You see”, declared the self-gratifying PM, ”Land for Peace is dead”.

Other Israeli political observers and former military people had another explanation for the signing of the Abraham Accords and the reported secret negotiations with Saudi Arabia about Normalization – It was one word – IRAN.

Let us be honest about it-Netanyahu has made Iran and its nuclear program his main goal and challenge as PM. He specifically declared on numerous occasions in Israel, in the UN, and elsewhere that his life mission is to stop IRAN from becoming a nuclear state. He definitely can be credited as the leader who put IRAN and its genocidal policies against Israel among the very important global issues. Here is the problem – He talked a lot, sometimes very dramatically, sometimes melodramatically, but his actions were lacking. IRAN has consistently inched forward to the bomb, and Netanyahu has had no answer other than more ringing, meaningless statements. When he conducted a campaign against what would become the US-sponsored Iran nuclear deal, he failed to offer a serious

alternative to the Obama-led international effort to reach an agreement with IRAN. In fact, he caved into Obama's threats to take action against Israel, where the former made good on implicit Netanyahu threats to publish Israeli-possessed information showing how IRAN was deceiving the US about its real intentions. The fear of Obama led the American president, by no means a friend of Israel, to relate to Netanyahu as chicken sh-t ...

All this seemed to be changing with the election of Trump in 2016 due to his well-known opposition to the IRAN nuclear deal, which he later withdrew the US from. Still, Netanyahu

Failed to offer even Trump an alternative to the deal of Obama and the only policy continued to be based on some successful Mossad operations which showed its ability to penetrate IRAN being helped by local anti-regime elements. Still, regardless of these operations, the IRAN march toward the bomb never stopped. In fact, it increased in intensity.

So, how is all that connected with Gaza? Here is the connection: Netanyahu justified his appeasement policies towards Hamas also, sometimes mainly, by the need to focus on the number one danger to Israel-IRAN. Hamas, he kept saying, is only a diversion, a small manageable problem, and focusing on her would weaken the efforts against the real enemy to the Northeast. It sounds logical IF Hamas was really deterred by Israel as claimed by Netanyahu, and at the same time, effective steps were taken against Iran AND its Lebanese forward army, aka HIZBALLAH. The problem is that it was a stated policy, but Netanyahu did not back it up in actions.

From 2009 he enacted towards HIZBALLAH the same policy he took against HAMAS. He watched passively the relentless effort by IRAN to turn HIZBALLAH from a local terror organization into an army well equipped with weapons, mainly

ballistic precise missiles, which constitute a strategic threat for Israel. Netanyahu did authorize the IDF through the air force to attack Iranian and HIZBALLAH targets in Syria, but while these attacks achieved local success, they failed to stop the flow of sophisticated arms to the Lebanese IRAN army.

The entire Netanyahu strategy collapsed on 7 OCTOBER-Hamas attacked, HIZBALLAH attacked, IRAN is closest than ever to the bomb, and by using also the Houthis in Yemen.

It threatens Israel's shipping through the Bab Al Mandeb Straits. IRAN IS NOT UNDER SIEGE-ISRAEL IS. NETANYAHU'S STRATEGY PROVED TO BE IN SHAMBLES.

Putting Netanyahu in the center of everything that went wrong on 7 OCTOBER is right, but does not give us the full picture. There is also a problem that provides more explanation for the failures of intelligence and political leadership. This is the CULTURAL GAP between a mostly Western-oriented society as Israel is, and the ISLAMIC HAMAS, JIHAD, HIZBALLAH, and all the rest. We in the West refuse or simply cannot put ourselves in the shoes of our enemies, trying to get to the bottom of their fundamental thinking and not accepting them, but understanding their foundations and possible consequences. We talk mostly with a big smile about the belief in the 72 virgins waiting for the martyrs in paradise. So here is the problem: On the other side, many believe in it; moreover, many there believe that honorable death is preferable over meaningless life as, of course, they see it practiced in the West. We like to quote the late Golda Meir, who said that "peace will come when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us," which made sense ONLY to Westerners but NOT to many, perhaps too many Arabs. For them, loving their children and encouraging them simultaneously to sacrifice themselves is one and the same. We are not different in Israel than most Western societies are in developing the attitude of BENIGN PATERNALISM towards people of the other

side. It is a crucial mistake, exactly as a similar attitude by the US towards Japan prior to Pearl Harbor or the attitude towards Al Qa'ida prior to 9/11 blinded the ability to read the enemy correctly. Here is THE problem: We do not want to believe our enemies when what they say seems so much against our core cultural values, and the result is disastrous most of the time.

Israel did not want to believe Hamas and also Hizballah, and the price was so tragically exacted from us on 7 OCTOBER. Israel, surely Netanyahu repeatedly says that we have to believe IRAN, but judging by our actions, the question is -do we really?

Connecting all this to intelligence, the link is obvious. Israeli intelligence is good at assembling information, particularly by using very advanced technology, but like other Western intelligence services, failed miserably to get into the minds of the enemy. 7 OCTOBER WAS THE RESULT.

The use of advanced technology has become the main engine of what can be referred to as the Israeli economic miracle. Surely, the start-up nation had to introduce as much technology as possible also to the IDF; in fact, an inseparable connection was created as the needs of the IDF to develop military technology were based on and led to the development of the civilian hi-tech industry. The problem is that the IDF went much further than necessary and became subjected to technology and its advantages as a key element in developing its military doctrines. That led to the consistent reduction in the order of battle troops of the IDF. The cyber unit 8200 is the largest single unit of the IDF, and here I am not indulging in an attempt to offer alternative doctrines to the IDF; this is NOT my field of expertise, but I can pinpoint to two obvious results of the IDF infatuation with technology, and for that one does not need to be a military expert. One is that the enemies are also working on their technological advancement, and therefore, the Israeli superiority in this field is not absolute. IRAN provides an example of that,



and to a lesser extent, even Hamas showed impressive achievements in the current war, as well as HIZBALLAH in the North. Second, the huge investment in technology led to a dangerous reduction of investment in ground fighting units, and the IDF BECAME TOO SMALL COMPARED WITH THE NEEDS OF MULTI-ARENA FIGHTING, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING SINCE 7 OCTOBER! Without enough ground forces, the IDF cannot fight a full-scale war simultaneously in the South and North, and in the latter, there is also the possibility of opening a new front with Syria in the Golan Heights. There were those who warned about the inability of the IDF to conduct a full-scale war on more than one front, but here again, HUBRIS and CONCEPT determined the responses of the military and political leadership in the last 14-15 years, the Netanyahu years.

AFTER 7 OCTOBER-THE WAR IN GAZA;

This is NOT going to be a detailed description of the course of the war, rather a reference to the connection between the points raised above and what is happening on the ground in Gaza.

The war found the IDF totally unprepared, and the Commission of Inquiry to be established after the war is over will have to find out not only the reasons for the initial surprise but, even more importantly, the reasons for the slowness of the response. I will refer here to what happened after the initial shocking surprise.

The call for the reservists to enroll was amazingly successful and showed what would become SO associated with the war-the supreme level of motivation. Gone were the dire predictions that due to the legal reform of the Netanyahu government and the deep split of the public over it, a call for service, EVEN in an emergency, would not be heeded by many. The opposite happened, and it will remain a familiar feature of the war -the level of motivation is beyond anything that happened before in Israel's wars, surely since the 1967 war.

Another important feature is the fact that the motivation reflected a genuine sense of shock that the other side behaved the way they did on 7 OCTOBER, and that particular point is of significance since many people viewed the behavior of the Hamas murderers as something that defied their former attitude towards Hamas and the Palestinians in general which was based on the Western-oriented sense of "but they are like us... they cannot do that". So many former Left Wingers have expressed themselves since 7 OCTOBER in exactly such terms, describing the move from belief in the possibility and necessity of achieving peace with the Palestinians, including also with Hamas, to a sense of despair and total disbelief in achieving that.

The level of motivation had nothing to do with anything like belief in or support of the political leadership. Even in the darkest days of the 1973 war in which I participated as a reservist, the then political leadership, while being strongly criticized by the soldiers on the ground, was not even closely viewed with the level of contempt shown by soldiers now towards the political leadership with Netanyahu being vilified and treated with total disbelief. In fact, the entire government seems to be ineffective in an unprecedented way. Instead of a functioning government, there is something else strong, viable civic society, a spontaneous and formidable level of volunteerism not organized by the government. It is a phenomenon to be included in political science textbooks- the ability of a democratic state to conduct a war with such an incredible level of national motivation while being formally led by an extremely unpopular democratically elected government and PM.

The lack of an effectively functioning government is greatly on display in the field of PR/HASBARA. For Netanyahu, PR/HASBARA means only his own media appearances and who cares about the others, but luckily enough, here too, civic society in Israel and great professional and devoted service by individuals and organizations outside of Israel fill to an extent, not enough though, the void left by

the inaction of the government. Altogether, however, Israel is losing in the battle over narratives.

The evacuation of nearly 200000 Israelis from their homes may be seen as a victory to the enemies in the South and North, surely an unprecedented number in the history of Israel's wars, but it is better to have this happening rather than to see a large number of civilians killed. Yet, it should never be forgotten that many Jewish Kibbutzim in the South were occupied though for hours only by the enemy. That has never happened since 1948.

The IDF remains the most popular, trusted social organization in Israeli society. However, the leadership of the army is viewed as being accomplices in the 7 OCTOBER disaster and will have to be removed when the war is over. The IDF continues to be viewed as the peoples' army, and there is even voluntary enlistment of ultra-orthodox youngsters, but NOT as big as it should be. Most of the ultra-orthodox society shows support for the war effort. The Israeli Arab society reacts VERY differently than in previous conflicts with Hamas. Polls, as well as other indicators of public opinion, show that well over half of this population identifies with Israel as their state. While there were a few hundred cases of people showing public support for Hamas, the overall reaction is muted and definitely encouraging. The political representatives of the Arab population in the Knesset also reacted in a way that showed splits in public opinion about the war. This is a new phenomenon and a positive one.

Needless to mention that the Druze community is totally mobilized to the war effort despite the grievances that still exist about the Nationality Law.

Altogether, the Israeli population shows a strong sense of national unity; in fact, a wave of nationalism has swept the country as of 7 OCTOBER, and while it is not universal, it is almost so. Extreme Left Wingers are active, but they are so few and

isolated. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES HAVE NOT NOR WILL DISAPPEAR. More about it later in the paper.

Now, I turn to some of the main features of the military campaign;

First, it is clear that the IDF is conducting the campaign in a way designed to minimize the number of Israeli casualties, and this is a very blessed goal. The loss of every soldier is the loss of an entire world, and there is no way to refer to the number of casualties in terms of "it could be worse", as Israel already lost over 500 soldiers on top of the over 1200 civilians killed on 7 OCTOBER. In American terms, it is nearly 60000 casualties. Clearly, it is a huge number. Predictions by Israeli experts before the ground campaign started referred to thousands of killed soldiers. We have to add up a few thousand injured soldiers.

The pressures from the Biden Administration on Netanyahu to reduce the intensity of the fighting constitute an operational problem and can be regarded as an added reason for the number of Israeli casualties. Still, Netanyahu caved here to pressures, arguing that US support in the overall war effort requires him to listen to US requests, which by all accounts are blatant pressures.

The campaign, as conducted by the IDF, also shows the adverse implications of a flawed intelligence. Sadly enough, the Israeli intelligence community neglected the effort to go after Hamas, and that explains not only the catastrophe of 7 OCTOBER but also the inability to find the point of gravity in Gaza where a successful attack on Hamas will lead to its collapse. Hamas built itself in a way where there may not be such a location. Still, the Israeli intelligence community had us believe it existed underneath Shifa Hospital. It did not, and possibly also in Khan Yunis, and to this moment, it was not found there either. Israeli intelligence also missed the extent of the underground tunnel effort of Hamas, and the lack of

specific targets whose destruction could lead to a Hamas quicker collapse can also explain the large number of casualties in Gaza, some of whom at least were victims of the huge number of targets attacked from the air which in the grand schemes of things were not really important targets. Clearly, Hamas is responsible for the vast majority of casualties because of its policy of using civilians as human shields. I have to make it very clear in this context-Israel had no choice. The war was forced upon Israel, and in the choice between war, even with this large number of casualties in Gaza, or responding to 7 OCTOBER with one more of the counter-attacks on Hamas as was the case until now, the decision to go all out is morally, politically and strategically wholly justified.

We should not rejoice at the number of killed Gazans, as we should not look at the war as a war against the Palestinian population at large but rather against Hamas. Not all Gazans are active Hamas soldiers, and many of those killed are not, but over half of the casualties are active Hamas soldiers, and many others are those whose lives were sacrificed by Hamas itself.

The military campaign progresses slowly on the ground and in the air also because it is not clear what exactly it is that the Netanyahu government wants to achieve in Gaza. Total military destruction of Hamas? The capture of its main military leaders like Sinwar? Neutralizing the majority of the Hamas military power? These are questions without a clear answer, but there is no question that overall, the IDF performs greatly, the soldiers are fully motivated, the morale is high, and the Defense forces of the state of Israel do not disappoint the people of Israel.

Hamas is badly beaten, much more than what its leadership may have expected, but Hamas IS NOT FINISHED MILITARILY, AND ISRAEL HAS NO UNLIMITED TIME AFFORDED TO HER TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL OF TOTAL HAMAS DESTRUCTION.

Let me end this section of the paper by repeating what they used to say in Israel  
-KOL HAKAVOD LEZAHAL! [All the Honor to the IDF].

#### ISRAEL IN THE DAY AFTER;

After 1973, it took some months, and the Agranat Commission of Inquiry and Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, and David Elazar were out. The same will happen with the Netanyahu government, himself, and the military top brass sometime in the spring-summer of 2024. Netanyahu is, to a large extent, a dead man walking, a political corpse, and the complimentary polls give Likud under him maybe half of what they have now in the Knesset. Likud will have to elect new leadership, but most importantly, Likud will have to decide whether it wants to drift to the far-right margins of Israeli politics or move back to a Center-Right position. In the Far-Right, there are the likes of Ben Gvir, Smotrich, and Yariv Levin, whereas more in the Center Right, there are Bennett, who will come back, Sa'ar, and Lieberman, all of whom are more credible and respected politicians than the current Likud team. Yes, there is also the charismatic former head of Mossad Yossi Cohen, but he may be advised to combine forces with any or all the others mentioned above. Benny Gantz and Lapid will lead the Center, and as things look now, Gantz has the edge over Lapid. The real question about the Center is whether the protest movement against Netanyahu's legal reform will be able and willing to establish a new party that will be fighting over the big electorate of the Center with Gantz and Lapid. And what about the Left Wing? Well, the political horizon for them looks very bleak indeed. The Labor Party belongs to the past; what a tragedy to the party of Ben Gurion, but Meretz to the left of Labor may still survive somehow; altogether, 5 or 6 seats is the top that the Left can expect to collect.

The Arab parties are expected to maintain their current power.

It is not so simple to predict election results in Israel. If the Right Wing and Center Right are split, then Benny Gantz or Yair Lapid will be the next PM, but the possibility of Bennett, for example, becoming one is not to be ruled out. It will be important, however, to exclude extremes from both Right and Left from participating in a new coalition, AND it will be important to include an Arab party. Mansour Abbas and his Islamic party are very legitimate possible partners.

This is about the party-political map, but what about the political agendas of the parties in the aftermath of the war? The first immediate and testing issue will be the future of Gaza. IF Hamas is indeed totally out, then, whether Israel likes it or not, the PA will have to have a role, not its overall leadership like in the West Bank but being a party to the ruling body of Gaza. Politically, this ruling body will have to include Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, the EU, and the US. Qatar should be out, punished for its destructive role until the war and during it. The Arab countries mentioned will have to participate with the other countries in the economic and financial reconstruction of the Strip. Egypt should be induced with a very generous financial grant to absorb a few hundred thousand Gazans in the Sinai, and maybe some other Arab countries will do the same, while Western countries will be asked to participate as well. Israel will have, however, to play an important role in the security arrangements in the Strip, and the Israelis will have to decide what form of a role they want to have in this context. REALISTIC? YES, LIKELY? NOT SO... as the experience in the Middle East is that as wide range the arrangement is, the harder it is to achieve it. Coming back to Israel, the Right Wing will cry out loud against any of this, calling for the reconstruction of the deserted Gush Katif-Will not happen and should not under any circumstances, but a presence of security forces in the Strip will be essential in agreement. Mainly with Egypt, the PA, and, of course, the US. On this, NO government in Israel will be able to give up.

The new Israeli government will have, again, whether the Right Wing likes it or not, to reassert its support for the two states solution, but will certainly stiffen its

security demands. It will have to strengthen the relations with Egypt and the Gulf countries, Morocco and Sudan, and, if possible, with Saudi Arabia. For that to happen, they will have to resume dialogue with the PA in the West Bank and take actions, such as putting in check the militant elements in the settlements and curtailing any new building there. But before any of this will happen, all these Arab countries will have to be convinced that Hamas was indeed finished militarily or close to it, hence also politically. For them, it would mean a defeat for Iran and a vindication of their belief that led in the first place to their agreements with Israel that the latter is indeed a strong, determined military and political power. Israel will have to insist on a new security arrangement in the North. Still, the chances of doing that are slim so long as HIZBALLAH is not badly beaten militarily, and that is not happening now and may not happen even after the establishment of a new government in Jerusalem. The issue of HIZBALLAH was not discussed in great detail in this paper and will have to be dealt with separately in the context of the situation concerning Iran. The Israelis will have no choice but to search actively in cooperation with the US for a last-minute effort to prevent Iran from having the bomb. IF Israel can do it by herself, then so be it, but experience of so many years shows that it may be impossible. With regard to the US, the new government will have to initiate bold steps to repair relations with the Democratic party, as well as the need to try and improve relations with some European countries. A tall order under normal circumstances, surely in the aftermath of such a war, which will continue to haunt Israel's diplomatic standing in the UN, the International Court of Justice, and other international bodies.

That said, the biggest, most important challenges of the post-Likud government will be in the domestic arena. There is so much to be done, but everything will have to be based on the assumption proved certainty on 7 OCTOBER that security remains the number 1 priority, and therefore, a massive effort has to take place to correct the mistakes detailed here which contributed to the disastrous beginning of



this war. Doing that alongside an effort to reform the declining public service, which was badly damaged by Likud corruption, and accommodating the needs and aspirations of people in the South and North, Jews, Arabs, and Druze, will prove a mammoth challenge and will require as broad a coalition as could be. Likud should not be forbidden from participating, but NOT with its current leadership. So goes for Shas and Torah Judaism parties but with concessions by them. The overall spirit of the political discourse should be one of reconciliation and compromise. Can it be achieved? MAYBE, but it HAS to be achieved.

7 OCTOBER will never be forgotten but remembering it should become the beginning of a period of reform and change, which will position Israel in its rightful place in the world.

*Dr. Josef Olmert is a Senior Fellow at the Palm Beach Center for Democracy and Policy Research and an adjunct professor of Political Science at the University of South Carolina*