

# MARITIME STRATEGIC EVALUATION FOR ISRAEL 2017/18

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## A Model and Methodology for a Grand Maritime Strategy for Israel

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Over the course of the last decade, we have witnessed a rise in the level of engagement with issues of maritime policy and strategy in many countries around the world. The motives for this have been global processes that magnify the importance of the seas and oceans as a common domain that has strategic importance for the world's states and that is related to all issues of global trade, economy, energy, and the movement of goods and people from one end of the world to another.

In addition to these processes, there has been a major improvement in the ability of technologies to track, develop, and exploit natural resources that lie deep within the ocean and underground, including in areas that were once difficult to access.

The global maritime arena has seen new challenges develop alongside geostrategic changes among the powers following the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the conversion of the United States into a sole superpower. In the last decade, local powers such as China and India have developed global strategies, whereas in the past, they made due with wielding local influence. These changes stem from the fact that their needs obligate them to look at the global arena as part of their playing field. The Russian Federation has also returned to the maritime playing field as the third most powerful sea power.

Smaller countries need to shape their strategies in such a way that will enable them to integrate with the global system and deal with the challenges and changes in this dynamic global environment.

Israel requires a grand maritime strategy that suits its unique needs and sensitive geostrategic-security situation in the eastern Mediterranean. Israel's strategic location between continents and between seas has created a special role for it in the history of the nations of the world. Israel's location has not changed, but the geostrategic environment has greatly changed over the years. It is now in a state of instability regarding the countries around Israel's borders, particularly Syria and Lebanon, which are experiencing internal wars; a lack of governance in substantial areas; a lack of clarity regarding the stability of Egypt; and a high potential for instability in Jordan.

The State of Israel does not have a defined grand policy and strategy, and this is also the case regarding a grand maritime strategy that will provide a solution to the challenges in the maritime domain in a manner that takes into account all of the national needs and interests for a period of years and that creates sustainability for future generations through a long-term vision. This gap can be felt in all matters linked to the building of naval

power, which occurs opportunistically instead of being done in an organized manner and in a way that is linked to a fundamental approach.

In addition, the lack of a suitable maritime strategy affects decision-making in the field of energy and gas in the maritime arena, as well as all matters tied to the construction of advanced ports, an Israeli trading ship fleet that will provide a response to the challenges facing the country, and the issue of sea-based infrastructure, which includes, among others, the issue of artificial islands. If Israel wishes to be a significant player in global development, and in the maritime domain specifically, the state should define a grand maritime strategy and develop the maritime domain in all of its aspects, using a wide and long-term perspective.

All of these, together with continuous friction with the Palestinians and with Iran and its nuclear program waiting in the background for the window of opportunity to burst forward toward activation, obligate Israel to weigh its steps carefully and to act to strengthen Israel's national security and economy. An assessment of Israel's situation finds that the model for a grand maritime strategy that is suitable for it is the engagement model, but that under certain circumstances, Israel will have to use the denial strategy.

This methodology is designed to enable Israel to define a grand maritime strategy that will lead to economic growth and prosperity for Israel, which would be nourished from the maritime domain and all of its aspects. There is a need to set out on this path now because Israel could find itself in a position in which it has no influence and cannot utilize the maritime domain, a development that would harm its future at a time when countries and powers around it are designing strategies and acting to realize them. They could be doing this without taking Israeli interests into consideration, or they may even be acting contrary to them.

An analysis of the environment and challenges that emerge in the annual assessment of the Haifa Center for Maritime Strategy and Policy for 2017 clearly shows that the scope of challenges requires a great deal of cooperation with regional countries and with influential powers in the region.

The United States reduced its presence in the Mediterranean following the initiative of President Obama, known as the "Pivot to East Asia." It is important to stress in talks with the new US administration that this policy should change.

At the same time, the United States continues to have interests in the Middle East. Russia is increasing its involvement in all matters that are linked to Syria. It is involved in the internal war in Syria and Iraq against opposition groups and ISIS, together with Hezbollah, with Iranian support.

China is actively maintaining a strategy of prevention, and to a great extent it is taking over ports in the eastern Mediterranean Sea to consolidate and ensure continuous

sea trade on behalf of the Chinese economy. China markets its products to the West, particularly to Europe and the United States.

Between all of these is Israel, located at an important geographic and geopolitical intersection.

From the vantage point of international relations and non-Israeli players, Israel should choose a strategy of engagement as a leading strategy, though in pinpoint events and specific issues, it has the power to operate in line with a strategy of prevention, for example, regarding Israel's maritime border with Lebanon or the sea sector in Gaza. But usually, the use of a strategy of prevention places Israel in the path of a political and sometimes legal and international dialogue that extracts a price and requires a response, and therefore, a cooperative approach is preferable, so long as national interests remain unharmed.

In addition to threats, it is important to stress opportunities that stem from inter-power cooperation, such as occurred in the disarmament of chemical materials in Syria, in which the United States, Russia, and other European countries took part.

Israel should know how to respond correctly in such situations, out of national long-term interests and a defined grand strategy. From a regional perspective vis-à-vis its sea neighbors, Israel has a variety of relationships. On the one hand, regarding Lebanon, Syria, and sectors in the Red Sea, we face a security threat, and, since this is a sea domain, distant threats can also approach us, such as the patrol by Iranian ships in the eastern Mediterranean on their way to visit Syria.

On the other hand, Israel enjoys close relations with Cyprus, China, European countries on the Mediterranean, and improving relations with Turkey. Israel lives in peace with Egypt and Jordan, and holds security coordination in the maritime domain. At the same time, there is no institutionalized or organized cooperation in the area that allows for the creation of a regional strategy in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and it is difficult to expect one to take shape in the near future. As a result, Israel must choose a model of engagement strategy, out of a view of, and integration with, the global strategies of the United States, Europe, and China, and out of an ongoing examination of the influence of India and Russia. The strategy should be built in a way that will allow for future regional cooperation. A model that takes the local arena into account, and tries to safeguard global and regional cooperation, necessitates a cooperative approach.

The methodology and entire process need to be built along three central and integrated channels that support one another: government support, a maritime cluster, and a research academic body.

The first course of action is to lead a process at the government level, from the top down. In line with the current structure that exists today, it seems right for this process to be led

by the National Security Council. Other government ministries that must supply input for building a strategy are: the Ministries of Energy, Transport – Administration of Shipping, Foreign Affairs, Environmental Protection, Agriculture (fishing and sea farming), Tourism, Defense, Finance, and Strategic Affairs.

The second course of action is the creation of a maritime cluster that will house most of the interested parties and that will create the dialogue and the most updated assessment on the maritime arena. This can lead to an expectation of high quality awareness that will enable decision-making based on professional and updated information and cumulative knowledge.

The third path to action is to set up a supporting research body that will deal with the field of maritime strategy, which will accompany and support academic research for all those engaging the issue. In light of the existence of the Mediterranean Sea Research Center of Israel at the University of Haifa, which houses the Haifa Research Center for Maritime Policy and Strategy, setting it as the research body would be the right thing to do.

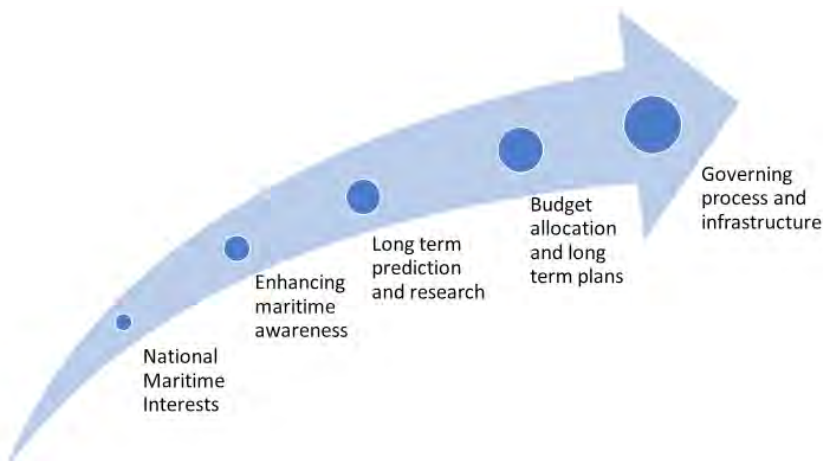


Figure 1 – Methodology and Process for Building a Grand Marine Strategy

The required methodology to reach a high level of external cooperation vis-à-vis international elements is built on a number of stages:

1. Israel must define its interests for the maritime domain as an anchor for planning – every strategy depends on the infrastructure of national interests, and the country's target audiences. Without an orderly and agreed upon definition at the level of government regarding these interests, we will continue to maintain solutions to problems without direction and guidance. It is better to begin with the national general interests, but even in their absence (in the lack of other option), it is right and

necessary to define the interests in the maritime domain, and from there, to continue building a grand maritime strategy for Israel

2. A sturdy internal infrastructure should be built, but only after gathering updated information and knowledge. Then it will be possible to deal with the range of internal needs and interests of every sector that touches upon the maritime domain. Furthermore, it will be possible to deal with conflicting interests, or those that make conditions difficult, such as the development of a port by China, during a time when there is an Israeli interest for the Americans to view Haifa Port as an American home port, which strengthens and tightens the United States' ties and commitments to Israel. Or, for example, the tension that exists between the wish to develop islands into national infrastructure and the desire to maintain an open fishing area or large-scale maritime infrastructure. To that end, a need arises to set up a maritime cluster, which will assemble together all of the various interested parties and enable an open professional dialogue among the bodies and the government, to create an infrastructure of common and deep knowledge for taking decisions, and setting the priorities of the interests for the maritime domain.
3. There is a need to build an analytic system and long-term analytic tool, since the pace of change in the world is fast, and the maritime domain is also changing with relative speed. International law influences the ability of states to act to secure shipping lanes vis-à-vis piracy, and vis-à-vis maritime terrorism, and therefore there is a need to create an ability to have long-term influence from a legal perspective, and to be in partnership with the states of the world on this issue. In addition, technological development on all matters is gaining momentum, such as the navigation systems and automation of ships, advanced communication systems, cyber in the maritime domain, the structure of ports and pace of activity in them, local and global command and control systems (see the automatic identification system), etc. All of these are expected to influence the Israeli maritime arena in different ways, to the point of breaching the ability to realize the chosen strategy and achieve Israel's interests. Therefore, a long-term forecast and analysis ability must exist for these and other fields that influence Israel's grand strategy, allowing for repairs in time, and to prevent wasting future resources by choosing appropriate responses, to the extent that this is possible.
4. A need exists to direct resources and define priorities. After national interests are well defined for the maritime domain, information can be assembled and knowledge embedded, for the creation of a clear picture of challenges and priorities, including a long-range analysis on the basis of a professional forecast. Decisions can subsequently be taken regarding the allocation of needed resources for realizing the strategy.
5. Finally, a process for building organizational inter-ministerial processes needs to be developed, which will allow efficiency and an optimal utilization of processes. This allows for a supervised process of realizing the strategy, and ensuring that there

is correct exploitation of the resources made available on the one hand, and on the other, it enables a process of ongoing updates in line with the information that continues to accumulate during the process.

An overall structure for such a strategy is offered in Figure 2.

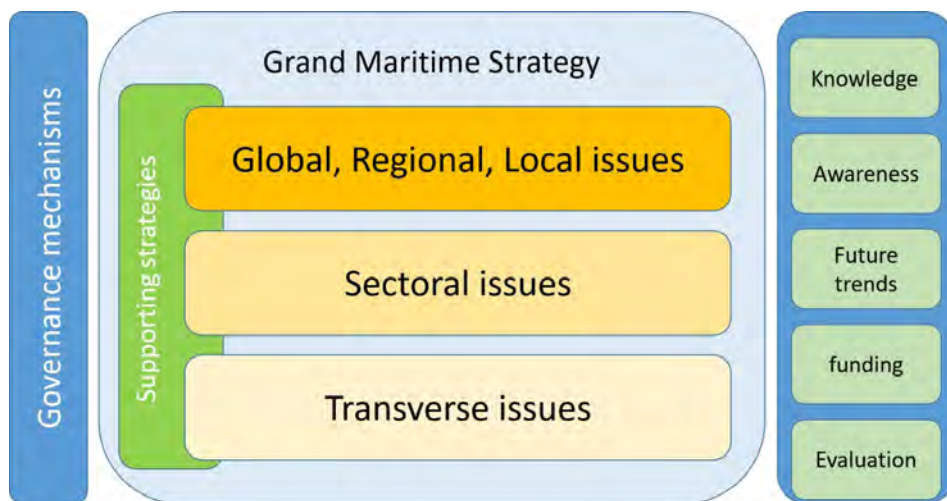


Figure 2 – Comprehensive structure for a grand marine strategy

The proposed structure is divided into three main parts:

1. A grand strategy and supporting strategies with an additional division according to topics:
  - Geographic – The strategic response must look at three different sectors that interface with one another in the maritime domain. The first is the global view and an examination of cooperation and points of possible friction vis-à-vis the maritime strategies of countries in powers in our region. The second relates to a regional perspective of neighboring states and creating cooperation or prevention in points where interests do not line up. Finally, there is a local internal perspective, in terms of taking advantage of Israel's location between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and between Israel's different ports, each one in its location, environment, and influence on the coastal region, and areas of potential artificial islands, etc.
  - Broadside issues – These secondary strategies influence previous divisions simultaneously. Central topics for this division are the security aspect for the maritime domain, regulations and guidelines, international law, the way in which these are interpreted, etc.
2. Government mechanisms and managing processes – This issue is a critical component in every methodology, as building a strategy of this type, with a multiplicity

of interested parties, creates an obligation for an integrative process that requires determination and commitment at the phase of defining national interests for the maritime arena and continues to the buildup of knowledge and ongoing awareness, which allow for the setting of targets and the realization of a grand strategy.

3. **Broadside tools** – These include mechanisms for building up information on the maritime domain from research studies and gathering statistics on all topics tied to this area. In addition, tools are needed to gain a broad maritime awareness that allows for updates, and a rapid ability to deal with the processes or targets in any secondary strategy. An ability to forecast and analyze developments is required, which will allow for general updates to the grand strategy, together with optimal adjustments to the defined interests. Finally, resources need to be directed to the budget, and should be used to create a tool for supervision and results assessment.

The preferred model for a grand maritime strategy, therefore, is the engagement strategy model, with a methodology of international cooperation. This calls for the setting up of a maritime cluster in Israel under the leadership of the government and other bodies, which will provide the knowledge development components, and an increase in general awareness of all matters linked to the maritime domain.

This is the derivative of a national maritime vision, which will allow Israel to invest correctly in industries and in ties with bodies and states in the region and beyond it. By doing so, it will take advantage of its geographical location to improve its political geostrategic situation, while creating regional and international cooperation to strengthen economic fortitude and the ability to influence its distant future.

## **Recommendations**

Drawing up a national strategy is a complex matter, which demands professional and authoritative leadership by the government and the institutions responsible for the maritime sector. In order to build a strategy that is adjusted to these needs, there is a need to collect information and knowledge, to study, in an in-depth manner, the challenges of the maritime domain, and only after that, to set the strategy.

Gathering information and knowledge requires cooperation between many organizations that compose Israel's maritime cluster, and those of countries in its region. Setting up a maritime cluster as part of the process of building an infrastructure of maritime information is advisable.

This cluster must be set up (as in the case of Portugal) by a government or a party under it, and be a source of mutual influence on the institutions of the players in the cluster. It must be repeatedly nourished by the government and by the players, thereby creating an obligation for a joint process for managing strategy that is forward-looking in the maritime arena.



The University of Haifa's Center for Maritime Policy and Strategy forms a source of knowledge and an academic resource that can partner with institutions in Israel in the process of calculating and analyzing the possibilities, as well as managing the methodology for building the strategy, in line with the proposed model.