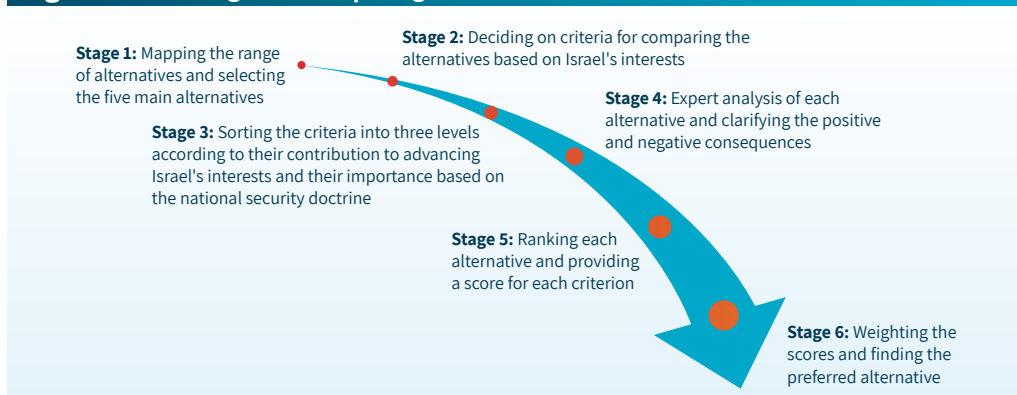


## PART 2: METHODOLOGY OF COMPARING THE ALTERNATIVES

In the first stage, in order to address the strategic dilemma, we conducted a comparative assessment of the various alternatives that Israel could pursue vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip. These are alternatives that match the different logics, meet diplomatic and defense interests, and have a broad base of public support. In order to take into account the mood of the Israeli public, the researchers used findings from public opinion polls conducted by the INSS and published as part of the National Security Index. In the second stage, the alternatives were assessed vis-à-vis the challenges in the Gaza Strip in accordance with possible developments, Israel's interest, and the ability to implement them.

**Figure 5. The stages of comparing the alternatives**



**The first stage** involves mapping the various alternatives and selecting the four main alternatives that are within the control of the Israeli government and one alternative that is not within Israel's control, yet which Israel can influence and has some degree of feasibility, justifying its examination. The five alternatives are as follows:

1. **Managing the conflict** in accordance with the logic of adjustment and deterrence. Implementing this alternative means strengthening and maintaining deterrence as a tool for exerting ongoing pressure on Hamas in order to weaken it and achieve calm.
2. **Extended ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ("tahadiya")** according to the logic of an arrangement. Choosing this alternative means recognizing Hamas as the sole body responsible for Gaza.

3. **Completely disconnecting the Gaza Strip from Israel and from the West Bank** according to the logic of disengagement. Choosing this alternative means closing crossings between Gaza and Israel and enabling Gaza a sea outlet and access to the Sinai Peninsula.
4. **Military operation to overthrow Hamas's military wing** according to the logic of military victory. Choosing this alternative requires follow-up steps with the aim of influencing and stabilizing the Gaza Strip. This alternative can also be a platform for advancing another alternative, such as maintaining Hamas's rule but in a very weakened state, or creating the conditions for returning the PA to Gaza and making it the responsible body there, or establishing an international trusteeship in Gaza (an option whose likelihood is very slim).
5. **Creating conditions for intra-Palestinian reconciliation and supporting steps in this direction** according to the logic of an arrangement; in this alternative, the PA is the only body that represents the Palestinian camp.

**In the second stage**, uniform criteria were defined for comparing between the alternatives based on the interests of the State of Israel. The criteria reflected Israel's national security doctrine: maintaining the character of the state (Jewish and democratic); achieving military stability and calm over time; avoiding escalation into a large-scale war; shaping internationally recognized borders; and maintaining Israel's levers of influence, aside from military might.

**In the third stage**, criteria were sorted into three levels according to their contribution to advancing Israel's interests and based on their importance according to the national security doctrine:

1. **The highest essential level, with the greatest priority**
  - A. Improving the stability in the West Bank and strengthening the PA's status and functionality;
  - B. Demise of the alternative will not make the situation worse than the current reality;
  - C. Designating a single responsible, functioning authority in the Gaza Strip.
2. **The intermediate important level, with medium priority**
  - A. Maintaining the strategic relations with Egypt and with Jordan;
  - B. Preventing Hamas's military buildup;
  - C. Maintaining a variety of tools of influence in Israel's hands;

- D. The alternative does not close the door for the possibility of a comprehensive diplomatic settlement in the future.

**1. The lowest desirable level, with low priority**

- A. Having the ability to recruit external aid for the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip;
- B. Having the feasibility of implementing the alternative within the Israeli political system;
- C. Preventing the humanitarian collapse in the Gaza Strip;
- D. Strengthening Israel's international and regional standing;
- E. Reducing Israel's responsibility for the Gaza Strip.

**In the fourth stage**, each alternative was analyzed. The analysis was conducted by an expert in the field, and it focused on clarifying the positive and negative consequences of each alternative.

**In the fifth stage**, the alternatives were ranked based on the analysis, and each criterion was given a score from 1 to 5. This tested their sensitivity; that is, whether there is a gap between the results of the qualitative analysis, which was done in the research group, and the quantitative results received by each researcher individually.

**In the sixth stage**, the scores provided for each alternative were weighted, and the alternatives were ranked.

**Figure 6. The map of the alternatives: Logics and feasibility**

<b>Managing the conflict</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This alternative fits the logic of accommodation and deterrence</li> <li>▪ Enables continued Israeli influence with a "carrot and stick" policy (easing or intensifying the closure)</li> <li>▪ Israel remains the responsible party in the eyes of the international community</li> <li>▪ Enables continued strengthening of Iranian influence</li> <li>▪ Creates a dynamic atmosphere of alternating periods of calm and escalation</li> </ul>
<b>Unilaterally disconnecting Gaza from Israel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This alternative complements the logic of the disengagement</li> <li>▪ Requires closing the crossings into Israel and ensuring Gaza's maritime access and to the Sinai Peninsula</li> <li>▪ Total disconnection has many implementation challenges; it would be a lengthy process that would involve a lot of friction with the local population</li> <li>▪ Creates fertile ground for increased Iranian influence via economic aid</li> <li>▪ Increases the danger of hostile groups gaining strength</li> <li>▪ Enables Hamas's continued military buildup and the consolidation of its sovereignty</li> </ul>
<b>Creating the conditions for intra-Palestinian reconciliation and supporting it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This is the preferred way to return the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip</li> <li>▪ The implementation of this alternative is not in Israel's hands</li> <li>▪ This does not address the problem of the existence of Hamas's military wing and its continued buildup</li> <li>▪ This alternative depends on the existence of an armed restraining mechanism that would be subject to the Palestinian Authority</li> <li>▪ This alternative could complement—with low probability—the alternative of disconnection or military victory</li> </ul>
<b>Extended ceasefire arrangement in return for significantly easing the closure of Gaza</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fits the logic of reaching a settlement with Hamas</li> <li>▪ Provides legitimacy to Hamas as the sole body responsible for Gaza—which could be considered de facto recognition by Israel</li> <li>▪ Does not prevent Hamas's continued military buildup</li> <li>▪ Igniting the process is difficult to achieve and subsequently to maintain it</li> <li>▪ Could weaken the Palestinian Authority—a development that could have negative consequences in the West Bank</li> </ul>
<b>Defeating Hamas militarily in a large-scale operation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fits the logic of military victory, needs to be complemented by stabilization and the shaping of Gaza</li> <li>▪ Creates a platform for a very weakened Hamas government</li> <li>▪ Alternatively, creates the conditions for the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip (low probability), or for the establishment of an international trusteeship (very slim probability)</li> <li>▪ The campaign itself has a high feasibility, but each of the subsequent processes have a low feasibility</li> <li>▪ This is the only alternative that prevents Hamas's military buildup</li> </ul>