**The Political-Security Unit Campaign**

**Security for Israel, or dangerous messianism – which side are you on?**

**Narrative background**

October 7 was proof that the doctrine of “managing the conflict” that had dominated Israeli policy and public consciousness for over a decade does not lead to security for Israelis – and neither does it guarantee our future. Right now, the State of Israel is at a crossroads, and must choose between two paths – eternal war, global isolation, and the establishment of settlements in Gaza and southern Lebanon, or a political settlement with an international defense umbrella and regional guarantees.

For years, Israeli society has grown accustomed to thinking that the political left are idealists deluded by illusions, while the rightwing camp is about security. According to this narrative, it was the left’s trust in the Arabs that resulted in Oslo and the Disengagement. Therefore, the lesson of October 7 is that Israelis need to wake up from the naïve approach of the left and adopt the worldview of the far-right instead. Now more than ever, Israelis are fearful. They want security – which has shifted from a theoretical issue into a burning, immediate need – and they will choose whatever and whomever will provide it for them. To break the narrative according to which only the right knows how to provide security, a new axis must be developed for Israeli politics, and a new question must be posed to Israelis. How they answer that question will determine their position on the new axis.

**Work plan**

The Political-Security Unit’s public campaign seeks to reframe Israel’s public debate about the need to choose between two approaches – the security-pragmatic approach that calls for a political settlement, and the extreme messianic approach that undermines the possibility of any political settlement, and thus of establishing any kind of sustainable security. This is a choice between the approach adopted by the leaders of Israel’s security establishment, and that of the handful of extreme right-wingers who have seized control of the centers of power and who are working to promote Bezalel Smotrich’s decisive plan. Which side are you on?

This is a consistent, ongoing narrative campaign that posits a choice between these two paradigms, but changes in terms of the specific issues it focuses on in line with the public and political agenda. Therefore, the campaign will make use of quotations that present the messianic right’s concept of security alongside that of past and current senior security officials, as well as data on key security issues. These will include:

Banners/Billboards/Newspaper ads – with the framing “Israel’s security or dangerous messianism – which side are you on?” The content of the campaign will change according to the security and political discourse.

Landing page and videos – questions and answers on political and security issues, framed by “Security or dangerous messianism,” which will be led by top security figures and experts from the Political-Security Unit.

The public-facing work of the joint unit will comprise a complementary strand to the Unit’s other work (promoting policy and briefings for center-left parties and senior media figures). The aim is to create an ecosystem that will enable the media and civil society to further disseminate and advance the narrative and the policy, and for politicians and professionals to adopt and promote them as well.

**Budget**

The minimum budget required to launch the project is about $350,000, of which the Berl Katznelson Foundation will provide about $150,000. The ideal budget is $550,000, of which the Berl Katznelson Foundation will provide at least $200,000.

**The Darkenu Campaign – Commanders for Israel’s Security and the Day After the War Forum**

**Narrative background**

The narrative according to which Israel’s interest lies in a regional security alliance enables a new way of thinking about the war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beyond the binary “yes or no” debate over a Palestinian state. It shifts the perspective from the local to the regional. It posits a consolidated worldview, according to which Israel must both join the moderate bloc of states that are united in their opposition to the Iranian-jihadi bloc, and also work to connect the Palestinians to this same bloc. The effectiveness of this narrative has been demonstrated, among other things, through surveys by aChord and the Day After the War Forum (in collaboration with Darkenu).

**Goals**

1. To convince the government and key political parties to adopt the regional alliance as a key solution.

2. To increase public awareness of the importance of a regional alliance for Israel’s national security and the security of its residents.

3. To change the discourse of “for and against” a Palestinian state, and integrate the regional alliance solution into the heart of public discourse.

4. To present the regional solution as a transition from “managing the conflict” to a political settlement, which will ensure security at a local and regional level.

**Target communities**

The Israeli government – in particular ministers with a security background.

Members of Knesset – emphasis on party leaders, media people, and influencers.

The political center – emphasis on segments of the liberal right and the center-left camp.

**Partners**

* Darkenu – on the ground, campaigning, scaling up, digital, DemocraTV, and storytelling.
* Day After the War Forum – training, research, assessment, and speaker training.
* Commanders for Israel’s Security – to be speakers on media broadcasts as authorities on security.

**Work program**

* Develop messages and creative – the use of negative and emotional teasers, reclaiming the concept of victory, building a dedicated website containing all information and content about the regional alliance. The website will provide the opportunity to sign a petition and express support.
* Media campaign – out-of-home advertising in central cities and areas with a high concentration of potential target audiences, digital advertising on social media, news sites, etc.
* Evidence-based video campaign – filmed interviews with security and policy officials, members of the coalition of organizations, residents of the Gaza Envelope and the north, dedicated content on this subject.
* Training politicians and public figures as media spokespersons for the regional alliance.
* A public relations campaign and an influencer campaign, the use of media and generation of organic content for social media alongside a dedicated network program on DemocraTV and the creation of podcasts and audio content.
* On-the-ground and guerilla activities, integrating messages in demonstrations and protests, collaborating with social movements and organizations, training and supplying equipment, and organizing protests.
* Community meetings –meetings in people’s homes, panels, and public debates, conferences, and events that will connect experts, politicians, and citizens, as well as public debates to refine messages.
* Cooperation with other organizations that share the same goals and values, creating a broad support network that will include a variety of civil, social, and political bodies.
* Creating a structured conflict – between hard-right and center-right politicians, highlighting the differences between the approaches of the hard-right and center-right through interviews, articles, and publications.

**Success metrics**

* Entering into political negotiations, or changing the composition of the coalition.
* A shift in public opinion – a 10 percent increase in support for the regional solution.
* Impressions and engagement – at least 1.5 million impressions on digital and media channels.
* Support signatures – at least 20,000 signatures in support of the program.

**Budget**

$350,000 will enable a three-month campaign, including on-the-ground activity to raise awareness and activate volunteers, dissemination of discourses through advertising primarily on digital and social media, advertising on Telegram channels, activating influencers, promoting dedicated policies, producing dedicated content through the three organizations involved, including a program about the regional initiative on DemocraTV, ambassador training activities, and wide-ranging house meetings. The project will be supported by aChord surveys, and research and evaluation by the Day After the War initiative.

$500,000 will enable the campaign to be expanded to five months of activity, an increase in digital budgets, additional newspaper advertising, and twice the number of house meetings. $815,000 will enable the expansion of print and digital advertising, a significant out-of-home advertising campaign, the production of a series on the DemocraTV network, a significant expansion of the influencer campaign, the creation of two types of professional events, an expansion of language research and surveys, and doubling the number of staff involved in the ambassador program and house meetings, which are expected to expand to over 100. $1 million would allow the addition of a conference in the International Convention Center in Jerusalem at a cost of around $300,000, which would be a special event for Israeli public discourse around the “day after,” and would involve key political and security figures. The out-of-home and print budget would also be increased to serve the conference.

**The “Have You Seen the Horizon” Campaign**

**Associating support for a political settlement as an integral part of liberal-democratic identity**

**Narrative background**

On October 7, the Israeli public experienced a traumatic earthquake on a historic scale, which was almost without precedent. Several of the most important and sensitive core issues of Israeli existence – such as the limitations of the IDF, and military service for the country’s ultra-Orthodox population – which had lain dormant for years due to an inability find a resolution to them, returned in force. This is perhaps true most of all of the danger that, if it is ignored, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will become an existential threat.

However, the Israeli public is confused, experiencing constant trauma, feeling anxiety about the hostages, mourning the dead, fearing for its soldiers, and facing severe economic problems and internal conflicts. Israelis feel powerless to influence reality – unlike during the protests against the “regime coup.” As a result, there is a lack of any clear public decision on a multitude of urgent issues, chiefly the future of the conflict. A vacuum has been created in which extreme rightwing factions can rewrite history and shape the narrative.

After more than 15 years of political stagnation, and 30 years of nonstop propaganda from Netanyahu and his partners in the settler and Kahanist right against the Oslo Accords, the disengagement from Gaza, terms such as “occupation” and “Palestinian state,” and political agreements with the Palestinians in general – the majority of the Israeli public are not open to listening to messages on policy issues. This is especially true in light of the fact that not a single voice in Israel’s political mainstream has presented the public with a vision, even a long-term one, of a solution to the conflict.

**Strategy**

The strategy driving the campaign is to address a broad spectrum of issues on which the majority of the Israeli public has a clear stance – liberal and democratic issues for which there is clear majority support – and to include within this a mix of prominent political issues as part of an overall package. In doing so, there will be a focus on the pressing issues facing Israeli society – including, of course, the political issue. This will motivate the public to take action, when the basic action is to make a choice – to choose what is right for the country, and to choose correctly at the ballot box.

The concept behind the campaign is that, as part of a whole package of values (learning core curricula subjects, not extending military service to 4 years, etc.), it will be easier for the public to identify with the simple truth that an end to war is preferable to an endless war, or that a regional alliance is better than a regional war, and so on. In this way, the political issue will be included in a “basket” of values that together form the identity of Israel’s liberal-democratic camp.

In order for the campaign to work optimally, there should be several recurring themes, and as many topics as possible should be tailored to more specific target audiences. For example, a young person who is about to be conscripted into the IDF, and his or her parents, will be targeted more for messages about the issue of three years of compulsory military service, rather than four.

**Goals**

* A clear outline of the policy alternatives that are on the agenda.
* Associating support for a political settlement with an integral part of liberal-democratic identity,
* Defining the main issues around which the elections will be held.
* To remind the public that without elections, and without a change of government, there will be no real change.

**Target audiences**

The campaign is focused on individuals who define themselves as liberal and democratic and who do not want extremists to drag them into a messianic state. Studies have shown that such individuals comprise about 65 percent of the Israeli public.

**Work program**

The campaign will focus first and foremost on billboard advertising, and on as much significant coverage as possible – aiming to cover the whole country. Alongside out-of-home advertising, there will be a massive digital and print campaign, with a question mark regarding radio advertising.

The media mix, subject to fundraising, will consist of a package of key signage on the Ayalon highway, alongside signage in Israel’s ten main towns with populations of moderate center-left voters + a package of signage at bus stations + on major bridges in Israel.

The campaign could be a platform for conveying messages in line with key developments (statements by Biden, speeches by Gallant, the hostage deal, and of course election announcements). It is estimated that the campaign will develop into additional stages, and it will be possible to build on the existing platform to respond quickly to events and influence the emerging narrative.

**Creative – examples**

A maximum of 3 years in the army

Or a minimum of 4?

**It’s time to choose.**

A regional political settlement

Or a regional war?

**It’s time to choose.**

Defend the borders

Or defend the settlements?

**It’s time to choose.**

End the war

Or endless war?

**It’s time to choose.**

Resettle the Gaza Envelope

Or resettle Gaza?

**It’s time to choose.**

**Budget**

The campaign’s complete media plan is estimated to cost about $1 million, while the budget target for the launch is about $500,000.

**The Civil Headquarters Campaign**

**Political responsibility – to instill the need for a political settlement into the identity of Israel’s liberal-democratic camp.**

**Narrative background**

Prior to October 6, 2023, many Jewish Israelis took part in the protests against the “regime coup” but avoided dealing with or focusing on the connection between the government behind the coup and legislative initiatives with political-security issues: settler violence, the annexation of the West Bank, the expansion of the occupation, and the perpetuation of the conflict. The concept of “managing the conflict” had become the norm within the Jewish Israeli mainstream. The events of October 7 and the war in Gaza have precipitated a fundamental shift in the sense of urgency over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The anti-government protests, which have been rekindled and which now include demonstrations in support of returning the hostages, have thus far steered clear of expressing any clear political voice. This has created an opportunity to instill the new identity category that emerged during the 2023 protests – the liberal democratic camp – with concrete political and ideological content that emphasizes the need for a political settlement with the Palestinians.

Alongside this opportunity, there are threats – new political actors, such as Yossi Cohen and Naftali Bennett, could emerge in the next set of elections, and in the form of the position of the opposition vis-à-vis the government, as adopted by Yoav Galant, Gideon Sa’ar, and Avigdor Lieberman. All this provides the potential for those involved in the protests to drift significantly in the next elections toward parties and candidates from the hard and deep right. These parties and candidates masquerade as the “moderate,” “statist,” and “liberal” right but support the expansion of the occupation and oppose any kind of political settlement.

**Goals**

* Establishing and strengthening a political discourse about the need to strive for a regional agreement that includes the Palestinians among centrist voters, with an emphasis on those who participate in the protests.
* The branding of the center-left as a political camp with realistic, long-term solutions for Israel’s safety and security.
* The positioning of rightwing candidates among those attending the protests (Cohen, Bennett, Lieberman, and Sa’ar) as co-conspirators in the doctrine of “managing the conflict” that led to October 7.

**Four-month strategy and work program**

A sophisticated public campaign initiative aimed at leveraging the opportunity to strengthen effective public discourse within the camp. This will reduce voter drift to the right, and allow key representatives of the camp to position themselves as having a political vision and plan, and answers to the new urgent need to lead strategic regional political initiatives that will ensure security and quality of life for Israeli citizens.

The project will incorporate a multifaceted approach encompassing disclosed and undisclosed, organic, and funded on-the-ground activities, media, and digital efforts to introduce political concepts and political discourse into the protest movement’s mainstream. It will be based on the development and cultivation of partnerships, including with messengers and actors who have legitimacy and credibility among the defined target audiences – mainstream protesters, members of the Jewish Israeli public who identify as part of the broader liberal-democratic camp but not necessarily with the “left” identity label.

The Civilian Headquarters decided not to develop a single centralized campaign initiative. Instead, it plans to launch an initiative that will operate across several narrative strands at once – from moderate and “soft” to more radical, “hard-hitting” narratives. The initiative will also have several different partners, with the aim of encouraging as many players as possible within the broader camp to adopt various points, terms, concepts, and political narratives. The various strands will be subject to ongoing measurement and evaluation, based, among other things, on digital impressions and engagement indicators, and discourse analysis insights. This will help examine the strategic impact of each narrative strand, in order to make the best use of resources, and, if necessary, to strengthen certain initiatives and minimize others.

In the next step, based on political developments and partnership building, and guided by the narrative research data that will be gathered throughout the proposed work stages of this current plan, consideration will be given to developing a central campaign to appeal to the same target audiences. This will involve a mix of digital, out-of-home, and on-the-ground advertising.

**Possible narrative strands**

“Decision time” – products that will emphasize citizens’ experiences and a connection to the element of decision-making – “either we are part of the democratic and advanced Western world, or we are another backward, dictatorial state.

“Regional alliance” – a political discourse that links initiatives vis-à-vis the Palestinians with a regional perspective of Israeli interests that includes the moderate Arab states and the axis of international stability.

“Security and Safe Lives” – a semantic connection between national security and the welfare state, in the shadow of the failures of October 7.

“Israeli initiative” – the establishment of the need for political responsibility and courageous political leadership, while branding the right as a “pyromaniac,” and emphasizing its lack of initiative and the futility of the current government’s dithering over policies and its lack of vision.

“The co-conspirators” – making the connection between the rightwing candidates and Netanyahu and the Netanyahu governments with an emphasis on “managing the conflict,” strengthening Hamas, and avoiding political initiatives.

* Addressing and paying attention to settler violence, with an emphasis on the damage this causes to Israel from a security and political perspective, and the sense of shame that studies show this evokes in centrist voters, as a way to also talk about the damage that the settlements cause to Israel in these areas.

Introducing the concepts of political responsibility, pragmatism, long-term; positioning the center-left camp as rational, moderate, coherent, direct, and pragmatic, as compared with the wacky, extreme, and messianic rightwing camp.

**Activities**

Partnership building – creating permanent working links with various actors, including the main protest organizers such as Matte Hamavak and Brothers in Arms, with whom initial talks have already begun. Civil Headquarters will offer partners support in generating outputs, weekly content targeting, surveys, and research, as well as funding for targeted initiatives to advance political discourse.

Public opinion research and message/terminology testing – the program has been written on the basis on data from the aChord Institute, which carried out research into formulating and validating a political narrative based on statements, as well as on a biweekly set of surveys run by Agam, which produces a developing picture of the position of the Jewish public regarding regional political initiatives, including the establishment of a Palestinian state versus the annexation of Gaza and its residents. Civil Headquarters has begun to develop a “brank book: how to talk about a political settlement with mainstream audiences. The book will include a “dictionary” of concepts, terms, and sentiments, alongside narrative recommendations for “dos and don’ts.” Civil Headquarters would like to validate these concepts and narratives in a research study as part of supplementary research, in order to produce work tools that can be used by various partners within the camp.

Digital campaign – producing content and digital outputs for the narrative strands, and disseminating these widely through partners and via the platforms of the Civil Headquarters’ organizations. Further, there will be work with celebrities and users of X (formerly Twitter) who have a wide range of exposure. Tailored outputs will be created for them that will resonate with broad audiences. A funded awareness campaign will be launched – both official and unofficial – using “reinforcement” assets for the secondary amplification of outputs. Given the resources, promotions budgets will be transferred to partners. A series of webinars will be held with experts, media professionals, and public figures.

Media – Identifying 3-7 speakers from the partners and developing them as key figures in the interface between the protests and the promotion of political solutions. Each key figure will receive media support to secure media items and promotion on media networks.

On-the-ground activity for disseminating political messages in the various protests – producing placards, stickers, banners, and out-of-home signage that is both disclosed and undisclosed.

**Requirements**:

* Public opinion research and supplementary messaging.
* Project coordinator.
* Production and work with suppliers – video editors, graphic designers, etc.
* Outputs production budget – digital and print – placards, banners, stickers, posters, videos.
* Medium scale media purchasing – with an emphasis on sponsored promotions.
* PR services to promote speaker presence on panels.
* Monitoring – gathering material for outputs and monitoring networks and media to gather impact.

\*Speakers, creative, digital, and management will be provided by Civil Headquarters staff out of its existing budget.

**Metrics**

* Penetration of political discourse into the protest mainstream – measured through statement analysis of the protest leaders’ networks.
* Mentions in speeches at demonstrations, integration into campaigns.
* 5 appearances per month in the mainstream media by speakers promoted by the project.
* Quarterly measurement of public discourse in online target audiences of concepts advanced by the project, which demonstrates an increase in concept use and a positive change in sentiment.
* 15 digital outputs per month – posters, quote posters, videos.
* 5 physical outputs to be distributed at demonstrations per month – stickers, placards, banners.
* 500,000 impressions per month of the project’s content on Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok – based on the organization’s digital assets, alongside the reamplification of disclosed and undisclosed “reinforcement” assets.

Budget – the minimum that will enable the project to be launched is about $100,000, which does not include supplementary research. The ideal budget is about $300,000 for four months of activity.