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The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority: An Intellectual Challenge in the Reality of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

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ABSTRACT The changes in the nature of warfare and its transformation toward Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) intrastate conflict have challenged the patterns of interaction between the political and the military echelons in Israel. It seems that the political echelon's superiority is maintained at the institutional and formal levels, but on the substantive level, which demands relying on knowledge and systematic staff work, the political echelon's position is weakened and loses its validity.

Introducing the military echelon in Israel as an epistemic authority regarding the violent confrontation and the main outlines of the military knowledge development process might clarify why the absence of the required dialogue between the echelons and the weakness of the intellectual effort increased the military's influence over the shaping of Israeli conflict-management strategy. The argument's validity and its explanatory power can be found relevant for other countries whose militaries are deeply involved in the management of LIC.

KEY WORDS: Israel, civil-military-relations, civil control, epistemic-authority, knowledge, lic, influence

New World of Warfare and its Implications over Civil-Military Relations

Until the last two decades, war was mostly characterized by armed conflict between state entities. Those conflicts can be described as High Intensity Conflicts (HIC) or *interstate conflicts*. This nature of warfare has changed dramatically after the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. Since then, most violent conflicts have been characterized as ethno-national and communal conflicts. These conflicts can be

described as Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) or *intrastate conflicts*, with major components of terror and guerilla warfare.¹

Accordingly, General Sir Rupert Smith states, in his seminal book *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*², that the old form of war has been changed and a new paradigm has emerged. Smith introduces correctly the central challenge for statesmen and generals and wonders about the right (wise) way of using armed force as a required means to achieve a desired and stable political goal.

Smith defines the new form of war as 'war amongst the people'. It is no longer about organized state armies engaging on defined battlefields, but mostly a warfare between non-state actors, guerrilla or insurgent, against state armies where the battlefield involves non-combatant populations. Therefore, victory in a 'war among people' is 'the need to win "hearts and minds" of the local population'.³

The Israeli-Palestinian violent confrontation since September 2000 is such a war. The strategic purpose of this war should be defined by political terms and by the political echelon but maybe due to this reason exactly, it remains blurred. The Israeli political echelon faces difficulties in translating its political strategic purpose into the use of military force and operations. Therefore, the military establishment finds itself in a state of 'conceptual confusion' resulted from the 'strategic helplessness' demonstrated by the political echelon.

The way to clarify the conceptual confusion is by establishing a new kind of dialogue between the echelons. General (ret.) Giora Eiland, the former head of the Israeli National Security Council, claims that this is the most important challenge in this regard and says that such a dialogue is not only a matter of style but 'mainly a need for a new language that provides the required capability to understand the new reality'.⁴ But, if during the era of the 'old wars' the dialogue was relatively simple, the 'new wars' (LIC) demand a more sophisticated language.

Sophisticated language is the reflection of accumulated and relevant knowledge that should be created systematically by all the partners to this dialogue. Knowledge becomes an essential resource for such a

¹A.G. Sens, 'From Peace-keeping to Peace-building: The United Nations and the Challenge of Intrastate War,' in Richard M. Price and Mark W. Zacher (eds.), *The United Nations and Global Security* (New York: Palgrave 2004), 141–60; Martin van Creveld, 'The Transformation of War Revisited', in Robert J. Bunker (ed.), *Non-State Threats and Future Wars* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass 2003).

²Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

³Smith, *Utility of Force*, 278.

⁴Haim Fass (ed.), *The Battle of the 21st Century: Democracy Fighting Terror – Discussion Forum* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute 2006), 310.

dialogue which should be considered as an intellectual encounter between the echelons. But the Israeli case indicates that the intellectual encounter is invalid and imbalanced because knowledge is generated mainly by and in the military establishment.

The Israeli political culture can be defined as 'reactive strategy' and not as 'proactive strategy': 'during the last four years the cabinet conducted only one discussion that could be considered as a strategic discussion'.⁵ The result is that other organizations, mainly the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as a well established organization used to professional staff work and strategic planning, takes control over the political discourse.⁶

The dominant presence of the military establishment is in the public discourse as well and it influences public opinion due to its prestigious status within Jewish society. 'When military officers appear at television and explain the reasons and the logic behind the military operations... they conduct a direct dialogue with the public... and the political echelon does not exist... the public likes them and trust them contrary to the mistrust demonstrated toward the politicians'.⁷ In such circumstances the military echelon becomes the expert and reliable interpreter regarding the conflict for the public and therefore and not surprisingly, becomes an epistemic authority.⁸

The military's expertise becomes a political power that influences the political attitude toward the conflict and even shapes the policy and decision-making process in this regard. The political echelon cannot ignore the military's position and with no civilian competitors regarding the conflict environment, its knowledge becomes the most influential factor in the political echelon's considerations.

The LIC as a Unique Intellectual Challenge and the Knowledge Gap between the Echelons

The unique LIC⁹ Israel has been facing with the Palestinians since September 2000 became a new challenge for the military establishment and forced the military echelon to develop the relevant and required

⁵Eiland in Fass, *Battle of the 21st Century*, 330.

⁶Eiland in Fass, *Battle of the 21st Century*, 331.

⁷Eiland in Fass, *Battle of the 21st Century*, 328.

⁸The term was first coined in 1989 by Kruglanski and will be explained in the next section.

⁹Detailed descriptions and analysis regarding LIC can be found in Shmuel Nir, 'The Nature of the Limited Conflict', 19–44 and Ido Hecht, 'The Limited Conflict – Some General Characteristics of Unique Warfare', 45–68. Both of them in Hagay Golan and Shaul Shay (eds.), *The Limited Conflict*, (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 2004, Hebrew).

knowledge infrastructure. Due to the comprehensive nature of such a conflict, the new knowledge developed systematically by the military goes far beyond the traditional fields of military professionalism and places the military echelon as an important and critical actor in the conflict theater. This developed knowledge became an asset of the military establishment, enhancing its centrality in shaping the strategy and managing the conflict and leading toward a 'functional expansion'.¹⁰

In the absence of both similar processes of knowledge development among civilian institutions and the lack of a permanent, professional staff in the Israeli government, the knowledge gap between the military and the political echelons was broadened. The discourse between the echelons became an 'unequal dialogue', but contrary to the inequality claimed by Cohen which is based on the superiority of the political echelon.¹¹ The interaction between the echelons in Israel was characterized by asymmetry in favor of the military echelon and by the latter's domination over the 'discourse space' between the echelons.¹²

¹⁰Uri Ben-Eliezer, 'Do the Generals Rule in Israel? Military-Political Integration and the Legitimacy for War in the Nation in Arms', in Hana Hertzog (ed.), *Society in the Mirror* (Ramat: Tel Aviv UP 2000).

¹¹A. Eliot A. Cohen, 'The Unequal Dialogue: The Theory and Reality of Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force', in Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (eds.), *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2001).

¹²The discourse space is the organizing concept used in order to describe the interaction between the political and the military echelons. The concept was first introduced by Kobi Michael, 'The Military's Influence on the Transition Process from War to Peace – the Israeli Case – Focused Comparison: The Peace Process with Egypt and Oslo Process', PhD Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004b; Kobi Michael, 'The Dialectic Interaction between the Military and the Political Echelons During the Israeli-Palestinian Violent Conflict', in Yaacov Bar Siman-Tov (ed.), *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Peace Process to Violent Confrontation 2000–2005* (The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies 2005) and its essence is the exchange of information, knowledge, and insights between the echelons concerning a specific subject. The influence exercised by the echelons is a function of the inputs that each of them contributes to the discourse space.

The nature and character of the discourse can be described as having *two dimensions*, the dimension of content and the dimension of the political directive. These dimensions create a matrix of four main types of discourse spaces (A, B, C, D) and are determined by three independent variables: inputs of the political echelon, inputs of the military echelon and the gradients of interaction between the echelons. The interaction that takes place between the echelons in the discourse space is actually the meeting between statesmanship and military strategy and reflects the relative power of each one of the echelons and its influence on the examined context.

The article attempts to prove the importance of knowledge as an essential input for the new required dialogue, the intellectual encounter (that does not necessarily exist) between the echelons. If conducting the new warfare requires mainly intellectual efforts, then the military echelon in Israel gains the advantage due to its being the knowledgeable actor in the conflict arena. Military knowledge might be irrelevant or wrong in some aspects, but it is still the only one that exists. It fills the vacuum created by the political echelon. This vacuum leads the military toward an increasing 'conceptual distress' and forces it to develop an alternative and more sophisticated 'conceptual system' and 'knowledge infrastructure'.

It is interesting to mention in this regard one of the latest observation made by Colonel (Ret.) Otniel Shneler a member of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee in the Knesset. He explained the failure in the Second Lebanon War (July–August 2006) as a direct result of the 'academic-civilian expressions adopted by the IDF' that tried systematically to bridge over the political-military anomaly by 'a new dictionary of terms that reflects the mixture between politics and militarism'. He termed the new dialogue between the echelons as the 'Tower of Babel'.¹³

The article begins by presenting the main arguments. Then it elaborates on the theoretical literature about epistemic authority. It continues by describing the development of Israeli military knowledge since 1998 and clarifying the meaning of the process as a conceptual revolution in the military's organization. The article concludes by explaining how the knowledge gap between the military and political echelons weakens the quality of the intellectual encounter between the two and therefore civilian control's efficiency (in terms of conceptualizing the strategic purpose by the political echelon) and leads toward an increasing military influence over Israeli conflict-management strategy.

The Main Arguments

The changes in the nature of warfare and its transformation toward intrastate conflict, have challenged the patterns of interaction between the political and the military echelons in general and in Israel, through the protracted reality of such a conflict, in particular. It seems that the political echelon's superiority is maintained at the institutional and formal levels, but on the substantive level, which demands relying on knowledge and systematic staff work, the political echelon's position is weakened and loses its validity.

¹³*Ma'ariv* <<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/533/421.html>>, 01222007.

Introducing the military echelon in Israel as an epistemic authority regarding the violent confrontation might clarify why the absence of the required dialogue between the echelons and the weakness of the intellectual effort increased the military's influence over the shaping of Israeli conflict-management strategy. The argument's validity and its explanatory power can be found relevant for other countries whose militaries are deeply involved in the management of LIC.

The military echelon was forced to develop new knowledge and sophisticated conceptual systems due to conceptual distress caused by the absence of clear and distinctive political directives.¹⁴ This knowledge was used by the military establishment in arranging the discourse space with the political echelon and affecting the way it was conducted. In addition, the military echelon influenced security and public discourse in Israel and even arranged and shaped ('burned' in IDF jargon) the Israeli public consciousness.

The IDF's social status and the trust it earns in the eyes of Israeli public (to distinguish from the mistrust the political echelon earns)¹⁵ leads the Israeli public to appraise the military echelon as a certified knowledge source, professional, reliable and impartial. Most of the Jewish public in Israel tends to adopt the military echelon's views. In other words, military knowledge increases the military's argumentation¹⁶ qualities and affects societal judgment regarding the core issues of the violent confrontation's management. This trend, in its turn, necessarily influences the political echelon which began referring to the military echelon as a knowledge authority in this regard as well.

¹⁴Former Central Command Commander, Maj. Gen. Itzhak Eitan said, 'We have never gotten a clear mission [from the political echelon] and things required interpretations and trials in order to understand the mission' (*Ma'ariv*, 29 March 2002).

CGS (Chief of General Staff) Ya'alon said, 'To demand the political echelon give the military echelon a clear political directive is naivety' (in a seminar at the Operational Theory Research Institute, MALTAM, about civil-military relations in the reality of LIC, 24 Feb. 2003).

Additional examples are detailed in Michael Kobi, PhD Dissertation, 2004b.

¹⁵A. Arian, D. Nachmias, D. Navot and D. Shani, 2003 *Democracy Index* (Jerusalem: The Israeli Institute for Democracy 2003). E. Ya'ar and T. Hermann, *The Peace Index* (Feb. 2005): 'IDF is the entity which earns the highest trust among the Israeli Public and the common appraisal is that its influence on national policy making is appropriate. . . . The data indicates that the military earns the highest trust of the Jewish population: 73 percent feel full trust and 21 percent trust, total of 94 percent' – translated from Hebrew.

¹⁶Dauber elaborates on the importance of argumentation and the advantages the military holds in this regard in the US. For further details see Cori Dauber, 'The Practice of Argument: Reading the Condition of Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 24/3 (Spring 1998), 435–46.

The military is a rational entity that acts toward defined goals and cannot operate in a vacuum.¹⁷ Although it can be argued that on some occasions the military echelon prefers the blurred political directive or even its absence, it does not change the basic and required order in this regard. The political echelon should understand the problematic implications of such a scenario and take into account that in such an occasion the military echelon as rational entity will define the blurred directives following its understanding. Therefore, it is the political echelon's responsibility to prevent it by providing clear directives and controlling the military properly.

Eventually, due to the blurred political directive or its absence and in order to ensure the efficiency of military force, the military echelon was forced to interpret the political echelon's intentions and directives and to create the political context for the violent confrontation by developing and elaborating relevant knowledge.¹⁸ Those military operations that were exercised according to the military's interpretation of political intentions shaped the violent conflict environment and were perceived as justified by the political echelon as well as by most of the public.¹⁹ Actually, this is the ultimate expression of the military's influence over the conflict's management. The military's hegemonic performance in the conflict theater and its explicit influence are both a result and an indication of a breakdown in political thought. This weakness is a threat to the substantive superiority of the civilian level and its ability to delimit the military's influence over the political process.

What is Epistemic Authority?

The source of the concept 'epistemic authority' is found in social psychology. Kruglanski presented it first in 1989 as a unique

¹⁷Former minister of strategic affairs Dan Meridor said: 'sometimes the military echelon has to fill the space left by the political echelon. In most cases, the political echelon doesn't determine a position or has no position and it prefers to spend time moving from one milestone to another, thinking it is good for Israel to leave the current situation as it is' (personal interview, 27 May 2003).

¹⁸*Ha'aretz* military commentator Amir Oren wrote: 'the politicians avoid direct and compelling formulation of their political platform and avoid using civilian tools like the National Security Council. As a consequence the IDF is pushed to decode the political echelon's intentions. In the Pentagon they first get a presidential document, "The National Security Strategy", the MOD defines accordingly their document, "The Defense Strategy" which is passed to the military headquarters where they define the "Military Strategy". In the IDF the process works upside down; it begins in the IDF and then it goes up for the approval of the political echelon' (translation from Hebrew, *Ha'aretz*, 15 July 2005).

¹⁹Ya'ar and Hermann, *Peace Index* (Feb. 2005).

perspective that can be used in order to assess the implications of social judgment. He attributes supreme importance to the information sources that are adopted by the individual and influence his positions and judgment regarding different issues. Kruglanski defines epistemic authority as the information source that the individual relies on while he tries to acquire and to internalize knowledge about specific and defined issues.²⁰ It seems that a certain overlap can be found between Kruglanski's premise and Foucault's argument that social discourse is composed of propositions that function as a means for defining the truth. Mills, who wrote about Foucault, writes in this respect: 'not everyone can produce propositions and not everyone's propositions will earn serious attitude. Some propositions are more authoritative than others in the sense that they are related with those who hold institutional position of power'.²¹

The foundations of the epistemic authority paradigm can be found in the early research of Hovland,²² based on the learning theory, which sought to explain how attitudes are changed. According to this approach, the communicators' (information resources) characteristics like expertise, reliability or empathy (toward the communicator) function as incentives for the information receivers and influence their motivation and willingness to understand the message and to absorb it.²³ Individuals tend to believe that experts are right because they are experts. Consequently, individuals tend to appraise expert views as valid and reliable.

The individual's dependence on information sources is a critical aspect of human social function and it affects society's functionality. An interesting example regarding such implications can be found in Putnam's research about the dangers of a decrease in public trust in governmental information sources in the United States and the ramifications of this phenomenon regarding the social functioning of American society.²⁴

²⁰A.W. Kruglanski, *Lay Epistemic and Human Knowledge: Cognitive and Motivational Bases* (New York: Plenum 1989).

²¹Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (ed.), Libido Translation Series, trans. Ohad Zehavi (Tel Aviv: RESLING Publishing 2005), 91.

²²C.I. Hovland, I.L. Janis and H.H. Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion: Psychological Studies of Opinion Change* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP 1953).

²³W.J. McGuire, 'The Nature of Attitudes and Attitude Change', in G. and E. Aronson Lindzey (ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley 1969).

²⁴R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2000).

The epistemic authority's influence will increase when it functions as what Kruglanski calls a 'stopping mechanism'.²⁵ This mechanism affects the individual's cognition; individuals tend to freeze their quest for information and information sources in order to solidify their attitude regarding an issue. They prefer relying on what they perceive as an epistemic authority.

Epistemic authority affects public opinion and therefore has a unique importance regarding social implications in democratic societies that face violent conflict and social and security crises. The importance increases when individuals and groups suffer from cognitive and mental difficulties from being exposed to diverse and contradicting information. In such situations the epistemic authority can block individuals from accessing alternative information and create an 'informational dependence', leaving the individual dependent on the epistemic authority as the only reliable source of information. Therefore, epistemic authority explicitly influences the individual's information and decision-making processes. The dependence creates a psychological convenience that leads to positions and behavior consistent with the recommendations of the epistemic authority.²⁶

Trying to find the political implications of the concept, Bar-Tal²⁷ and Kruglanski²⁸ pointed to similar findings regarding the tendency of right-wing voters and self-defined conservatives to rely on epistemic authorities. Their findings indicate a tendency for decreased critical appraisal of the epistemic authority as well as an increase in 'closure'. The implication of these findings is that epistemic authority can be seen as an advantage in mapping the potential of informational influence and the ways in which it influences in actuality. This is the reason why Kruglanski and others attribute significance and even meta-cognitive importance to epistemic authority as an information source and as a convincing factor.

An interesting conceptual development was added by Halperin and Bar-Tal,²⁹ who analyzed the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's

²⁵A.W. Kruglanski, A. Raviv, D. Bar-Tal, A. Raviv, K. Sharvit, S. Ellis, R. Bar, A. Pierro and L. Mannetti, 'Says Who? Epistemic Authority Effects in Social Judgment', in M.P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press 2005).

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Daniel Bar-Tal, A. Raviv and A. Raviv, 'The Concept of Epistemic Authority in the Process of Political Knowledge Acquisition', *Representative Research in Social Psychology* 19 (1991), 1–14.

²⁸A.W. Kruglanski, 'Motivated Social Cognition: Principles of the Interface', in *Social Psychology: A Handbook of Basic Principles* (New York: Guilford 1996), 493–520.

²⁹D. Bar-Tal and E. Halperin, 'The Fall of the Peace Camp in Israel: The Influence of Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Israeli Public Opinion, July 2000–February 2001', *Megamot* (Hebrew) (2005).

influence over public opinion and the peace camp in Israel. They clarify the influence of 'major events' on public opinion but conclude that this is not enough for generating dramatic changes, or 'psychological earthquakes' in their terminology. In order to generate such changes in public opinion, there is a need for a communicator who is estimated by the public as reliable and can be considered as an epistemic authority regarding the information and its interpretation and implications. They conclude that Prime Minister Barak was perceived by the public in Israel as such an authority and that is the reason that he was able to engender a turnaround in Israeli perceptions toward the Oslo process. The Likud Party, on the other hand, did not succeed in creating an equivalent opposite impression, despite three years of incumbency (1996–99).

Ehud Barak was able to enjoy a positive public perception because of, *inter alia*, his military service and his former position as the IDF Chief of General Staff (CGS). Furthermore, his strict position and explanations about Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's refusal of his generous offers at Camp David were robustly backed by the military echelon, at least until the beginning of 2003.³⁰

The military echelon in Israel benefits from a good public reputation. It is perceived by most of the public as professional, expert, reliable and impartial regarding partisan interests. Its involvement in political processes is perceived by the public as legitimized and even required.³¹ In other words and in the terms of the epistemic authority concept, it can be deduced that the military echelon in Israel is perceived by the public as an epistemic authority regarding violent conflict. The political echelon acknowledges this fact and even relies on the military echelon as a knowledge authority in decision-making processes.

Dauber claims that argumentation is one of the most important factors that influence the nature of civil-military relations with regard to national security issues. She explains the increasing influence of the military establishment in the USA by proving the inherent advantage the military holds regarding argumentation due to the fact that the standards of the argumentation are purely militaristic.³² Argumentation and its standards are well connected to knowledge and the way that knowledge is perceived by the public. Therefore, it is well understood why the military as an epistemic authority gains a major advantage for its argumentation vis-à-vis the political echelon's argumentation regarding topics that are related to the conflict-management

³⁰Yaacov Bar Siman-Tov (ed.), *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Peace Process to Violent Confrontation 2000–2005* (The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies 2005).

³¹Ya'ar and Hermann, *Peace Index* (Feb. 2005).

³²Dauber, 'The Practice of Argument'.

strategy in the Israeli case. This orientation and the continued weakness of civilian institutions in this context double the military echelon's informative influence. In many cases the political echelon is actually dependent on the military knowledge infrastructure.

Military Knowledge Development since 1998 and the Characteristics of its Methodology³³

The buds of military knowledge development in the context of LIC can be found at the end of 1998 in the IDF's Central Command. The process began as a result of severe conceptual distress. In 1998, Major General Moshe Ya'alon became Central Command Commander (later to become Deputy CGS and finally CGS) after commanding the IDF's Judea and Samaria Division (1992–93) and serving as Head of the IDF Intelligence Directorate. He understood that the EOS ('Estimation of the Situation' in military terminology) process, which should have been the most important component in knowledge creation for the decision-making process, was irrelevant:

Even in the days I served as the Judea and Samaria Division Commander, I felt that the regular EOS processes we used to teach did not provide us with relevant tools to cope with problems and challenges we used to face in the years 1992–93. I felt that we were missing tools; I felt that the discourses in Central Command as well as in other places were not deep enough. They dealt with foam on water... I felt it was wrong... as I began my duty as the Central Command Commander I understood that we had to build a different process of EOS.³⁴

Ya'alon felt that the irrelevancy of the EOS processes was related mainly to knowledge. He internalized the idea that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict does not occur in a vacuum, but in a political and

³³Lt. Gen. Ya'alon has a major role in this process and therefore the description in this article is mostly based on comprehensive personal interview taken on 10 July 2005. Furthermore, this article is based on the personal experience of the author who was a member in the mentioned think tank and on some other references published in the IDF periodical *Ma'arachot*. The theoretical conception of the process can be found in S. Nave, 'Asymmetric Conflicts Operative Critic of Hegemonic Strategies', in H. and Shai Golan (eds.), *The Limited Conflict* (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 2004). It is important to emphasize that the process described in this section and the outcomes do not ensure that the new knowledge was necessarily right or relevant but there is no doubt that it was used as the conceptual platform during Ya'alon's years in IDF Headquarters.

³⁴Ya'alon, personal interview.

international context. Therefore, there is a need to focus efforts and examine phenomena that are not necessarily related to a tactical dimension but that signify trends and occurrences in broader cycles that eventually lead toward violent eruption.

In an independent process, almost subversive (in the sense of swimming against the tide), without direction or initiative from IDF Headquarters, Ya'alon decided to begin developing methodology and tools for a different kind of EOS, which would later be found to be revolutionary. Ya'alon chose to be assisted in this regard by the Campaign Methodology Research Institute (MALTAM) led by Dr Brigadier General (Res.) Shimon Nave and assisted by Brigadier General (Res.) Dovic Tamari together with Dr Zvi Lanir from the Praxis Institute.³⁵

Ya'alon established a think tank composed of some senior officers from the Central Command Headquarters as well as from the subordinated field divisions' headquarters and began training them to acquire the new methodology and tools, actually a new language and concepts. In its first stages, the process was conducted in parallel to the regular EOS processes in the Central Command, but after some months, the newly established think tank began leading the EOS process.

The EOS process was characterized as a knowledge generation and analysis process, based on brain storming. Effort was devoted to clarifying, interpreting and conceptualizing the changing reality on ground. Its declared objective was to: 'look for phenomena that are not seen by the binoculars and are not connected to the tactical dimension, but in the end cause violent outbreak'.³⁶ The assumption was that if it is possible to locate these phenomena and conceptualize them, they could be used as indicating signs and even as an intelligence alert. Once alerted, the IDF would use mitigating actions and responses to events in the theater in order to prevent violent outbreak.

The thinking process led towards the development of an understanding about the nature and the characteristics of different phenomena in the conflict theater and to classifying them into two major groups: 'phenomena that influence events and can be influenced (by the IDF) were designated inside *campaign boundaries*, while phenomena that influence events but cannot be influenced were designated as phenomena in the *system boundaries*'. Actually, the traditional borders between the military and the political spheres became more permeable by defining the system boundaries as a relevant parameter for the estimation of the situation: 'in the level of a warlord in the position of a Command Commander or CGS you should make

³⁵About Praxis and the methodology it develops see <www.praxis.co.il>.

³⁶Ya'alon, personal interview.

these classifications and clarifications, knowing that essentially this process is a knowledge generation process'.³⁷ From this stage, the elections in the US, the European Union (EU) positions regarding the Palestinian Authority and international political and economic trends become relevant inputs in the military EOS processes at all levels starting with the territorial command units.

It should be mentioned that during the first year of the process the political echelon, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was not aware of the process and the political-military discourse of those days was based on the old traditional form. On the other hand, Netanyahu who was aware of the influential involvement of the military establishment in the political process and the political power that his political adversary Minister of Defense, Yitzhak Mordechai, gained, advocated the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC). But the NSC has suffered from structural and functional weakness since its first day. Although in the first stage the IDF did not encourage the initiative and was not too cooperative, the main reasons for the failure of the NSC lie in the political yard.³⁸

The knowledge generation procedures facilitated the conceptualization of phenomena in the conflict arena. The conceptualization process compelled continuing brain storming released from the military's organizational hierarchy chains as well as from the traditional military approach to the EOS processes.

The brain storming process took place in regular gatherings of the think tank once every few days and in exceptional times once a day or several times a day. This dynamic led to the development of a rich and impressive conceptual system. The system facilitated the development of deep insights regarding the reality of a political process in the shadow of a conflict and led Ya'alon to distinguish capabilities that could significantly impact the state of affairs. From this stage on, each military operation in the Territorial Command level (and later on in the General Headquarters) consisted of three stages: 'The first stage is Design, the second Planning and the third Execution, the stage of commanding the campaign.'³⁹ The first two stages were based on the new EOS process and included the military references to a diversity of dimensions, many of them far beyond the military's traditional responsibilities.

The new thinking and EOS processes were bequeathed gradually to the territorial divisions and brigade levels throughout Central

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸The details in this regard can be found in the Israeli State Comptroller special report about the NSC published in Sept. 2006 <<http://www.mevaker.gov.il/>>.

³⁹Ya'alon, personal interview.

Command. It was done through advanced studies, special guiding and training events and by developing the Command discourse framework and unique language. Sometimes there was a sense that the Command conventions for senior officers were conducted and characterized as academic events. The ideas and the concepts were presented as 'knowledge maps', a sophisticated graphic expression, sometimes too complicated and unclear for the unskilled reader. The knowledge maps included complex systems of signs and colors which represented linkages and relations between different concepts which composed the system rationales, translated to operational directives, orders and patterns of action.

The process's content expert at the time and Ya'alon's right-hand man was the Command Intelligence Officer Colonel Yossi Kuperwasser (later the head of the research division of the intelligence directorate). Kuperwasser transformed the intelligence department *modus operandi* to conform to the new ways of thinking and EOS processes. Concepts developed in the EOS processes were found with increasing frequency in the intelligence documents, and intelligence assessments related implicitly to these new concepts and ideas. Kuperwasser became the process's central axis, making key contributions during the brain storming process as well as in the translation of process outcomes to formal documents. The EOSs became, in a way, a complementary element to intelligence assessments.⁴⁰

In its new form, the EOS engendered the systematic development of knowledge and anchored fundamental concepts in military language and training methodologies. The process, says Ya'alon, 'began exclusively in the Central Command then moved gradually to the Southern Command'. When Ya'alon began his duty as the Deputy CGS, he turned the process into 'the main axis of the General Headquarters' EOS'. After his nomination as the IDF CGS, Ya'alon decided to create a new role in his bureau: the CGS Assistant for Analytic Processes. Together they acted vigorously to diffuse the new EOS methodology to all the General Headquarters' levels, 'not only regarding force operation dimensions but force building processes as well'.⁴¹ One of the salient outcomes of the process was a mandatory methodology-training booklet published by the General Headquarters' Training Division.

⁴⁰The difference between EOS and intelligence assessments is that EOS is an analysis of the situation with an emphasis on the operational moves available to the actor performing the analysis, while intelligence assessments examine current information in light of the enemy's moves. That the two operations began to complement each other is proof of the diffusion of new EOS techniques and methodology into military intelligence.

⁴¹Ya'alon, personal interview.

The EOSs and their outcomes evoked harsh criticism. Many in the Central Command and the larger IDF perceived the new language as arrogant, meaningless and even irrelevant. EOS documents that were written in the new language and that relied on the new conceptual frameworks were found obtuse and esoteric. One of the more outspoken critics of the methodology, Colonel (Res.) Yehuda Vagman, warned about the dangers of the new language and its resulting faulty operational patterns. He deemed it a strategic failure that would endanger the IDF's deterrence ability and its capability to decide the campaign against Palestinian terror:

The most prominent expression of the [new] systematic training of the IDF officers was not in their operational success against terror, but mostly in their ability to use the concepts of the Central Command in particular and those of the IDF in general... This language enabled manipulations in presenting the reality according to the needs of the presenter and to stage false presentations of success... the professional language disappeared and was replaced by private ideas. The more those ideas were blurred, incomprehensible and non-implementable, the more creative they were considered, and accordingly, the more they enhanced their producer's status in the organization.⁴²

Ya'alon was aware of the criticism but viewed the process as a conceptual and organizational revolution, which drastically improved the IDF's performance in LIC. He agrees that the language was sometimes esoteric and that, 'language should be understood, and there is no need to invent new words if there are words that can be used for the same purpose'.⁴³

Ya'alon stresses that systematic thought has always existed, 'Among warlords throughout history, but it was intuitive and undisciplined; it was not an organizational asset, it remained the individual's asset.' He claims that he did not find other avenues of imparting the knowledge to subordinate levels (of which he counts nine). According to Ya'alon, the characteristics of LIC compel an understanding of the broader context. Military operations on the tactical level have strategic implications. Under the conditions of LIC, 'even the soldier at the roadblock is a strategic soldier. If he doesn't understand the context, he might make a tactical mistake that will become a strategic problem. We have had such events.' Thus, it was necessary to expand the new knowledge

⁴²Y. Vagman, 'The "Limited Conflict" – The Failure', in Shaul H. and Shay S. Golan (eds.), *The Limited Conflict* (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 2004), 252–3.

⁴³Ya'alon, personal interview.

generation process to all levels: 'I expect that the brigade commander will provide the division commander and I with relevant knowledge in order to enable us make the right decisions, therefore the knowledge generation is in every level.'⁴⁴

Whether the revolution led by Ya'alon will last, remains to be seen, but it seems that there is no doubt that he made a strong impact on the military establishment in Israel. This influence is visible in procedural outcomes (concepts, insights, language, and knowledge) as well as in the discourse spaces with the political echelon and the public in Israel. The military's knowledge infrastructure, developed during the years of violent confrontation, has been a unique input that deepened the knowledge gaps between the echelons and between the military establishment and civilian institutions. On the other hand, the political echelon has not succeeded in developing a comprehensive strategy regarding the violent conflict and its management and has demonstrated 'strategic helplessness'.⁴⁵ The intellectual vacuum left by the political echelon was filled by the systematic knowledge the military has developed. This process has established the military echelon as an epistemic authority and deepened its involvement in the political process in parallel to the increasing weakness and dependency of the political echelon on military knowledge.

When the military echelon approaches the discourse with the political echelon with both professional and psychological advantages it generates *information dependence* within the political echelon. In such circumstances, the boundaries between the civilian and the military spheres tend to become more blurred. Williams warned about the danger of the professional military strategy domination over the designation of national interests and objectives. Such boundary blurring can easily lead to the intervention of the military echelon in civilian spheres and to a weakening of the latter's authority. In extreme cases such conditions may even precipitate political regime change.⁴⁶

If civil control is a process that can be seen as a dialogue, albeit an unequal one,⁴⁷ or as an intellectual encounter between the echelons in the sense that statesmen take part in the military's policy formulation process and 'contribute substantial inputs in thought and directive',⁴⁸

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Michael, 'The Military's Influence on the Transition Process from War to Peace'; Michael, 'The Dialectic Interaction between the Military and the Political Echelons During the Israeli-Palestinian Violent Conflict'.

⁴⁶John Allen Williams, 'The Military and Modern Society: Civilian-Military Relations in Post-Cold War', *America, World and I* 14/9 (1999), 306.

⁴⁷Cohen, 'The Unequal Dialogue'.

⁴⁸Yehoshaf Harkabi, *War and Strategy*, 4th ed. (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 1994), 526.

then we can conclude that in this case civil control was weak and ineffective. If the political echelon did not contribute significant intellectual inputs to the dialogue and the dialogue was biased towards the military knowledge, then we face insufficient intellectual effort and the result should be invalid strategy and failure conducting the conflict as a whole.

The Military's Knowledge Impacts over the Interaction between the Echelons

Since the country's establishment, the interaction between Israel's echelons has been characterized by permeable borders. It is common for senior officers to enter the political arena after retiring from military service which in practice makes it sometimes difficult to discern just who belongs to which group.⁴⁹ Due to Israel's governance culture, its lack of a tradition of staff work at the political level the continuing weakness of the NSC and the absence of professional civilian staff beside the government, a reversal of the normal order occurs; the military echelon, with detailed preparations for the possible political-security contexts in hand, precedes the political echelon. The military echelon tries to understand and interpret the political echelon's intentions and directives and in some cases, the political directives only become clear as the political echelon relates to the military echelon's plans.

Such an order shapes the discourse space between the echelons and releases the political echelon from the obligation to develop knowledge infrastructures of its own as alternatives to the military's and mainly to free itself from responsibility. The unbalanced encounter between the echelons leads to military domination over the discourse space and perpetuation of an 'intellectual vacuum':

When I generate this knowledge and reach insights, I, of course, bring them to the political level, and I have done this several times. . . . The political level will not do it by itself. It is not familiar with this knowledge, and I have to provide the knowledge. . . . *what I found there was a vacuum and, therefore, the things I brought dominated the discourse* . . . eventually, my recommendations were accepted. *I dominated the discourse.*⁵⁰

The developed military knowledge infrastructure includes information and knowledge about dimensions and domains that *prima facie* are

⁴⁹Bar-Tal and Halperin, 'The Fall of the Peace Camp in Israel'; Ben-Eliezer, 'Do the Generals Rule in Israel?'

⁵⁰Ya'alon, personal interview.

perceived as external to the military's professional realm. The military echelon takes into consideration political, media, economic and societal concerns as it relates to the spectrum of options for military operations in the conflict arena. Trying to understand the broad context of the violent conflict, the military echelon is pushed to introduce plans and recommendations that contain salient political elements. As it does so, the military becomes the political echelon's partner or antagonist, rather than its instrument, and the discourse space becomes one with characteristics that deviate from the military's traditional realm of responsibility:

At the highest political-military levels, there were disputes, and Ya'alon's recommendations were not always accepted. Ya'alon supported more openness during Abbas's term as Palestinian Prime Minister. He objected to the attack on the Muqata'a... he suggested trying the negotiation track with the Syrians and was rejected by Sharon. He rejected Sharon's suggestion regarding shelling the Gaza Strip and succeeded in influencing the Prime Minister. Ya'alon didn't reject the disengagement plan but the way it was conducted. He claimed that by negotiating correctly we could get a return for such a move.⁵¹

The CGS is a respected public figure in Israel who often appears in civilian, public forums. He uses these occasions to introduce assessments and express professional positions. These appearances are also another kind of discourse, external and parallel to the political-military discourse but with indirect influence on it. This other discourse space becomes, in some occasions, a ramming tool used by the military echelon to pressure and influence the political echelon. By influencing and even shaping the public consciousness, the CGS generates public pressure that undoubtedly influences the political level: 'In a short piece that was leaked from his speech at the Institute for Democracy, Ya'alon stung those who see the disengagement as "Messiah Now"... Ya'alon doesn't see any prospect for permanent agreement but only a potential for interim agreement, but [thinks] that even such an outcome should be promoted.'⁵²

In the discourse between the military echelon and the public in Israel, the former defined the violent confrontation of the Second Intifada as

⁵¹Zeev Schiff, *Ha'aretz*, 13 May 2005. Similar examples about Ya'alon's moderate positions can be found in: Alex Fishman, Interview with Ya'alon, *Yediot Ahronoth*, 25 Dec. 2003, Ben Caspit, *Ma'ariv* 14 Nov. 2003, Amos Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 22 April 2005.

⁵²A. Harel, *Ha'aretz*, 22 April 2005.

the continuation of the War of Independence,⁵³ the Palestinian Authority as a terrorist entity,⁵⁴ the need to 'burn' the Palestinian consciousness and the need to ensure the hardening of Israeli society as a necessary key for resisting Palestinian terrorism. In such a reality, with the Israeli public experiencing fear and threat, the internalization of such an interpretation became easier, especially coming from a source perceived by the public as an epistemic authority. In this sense the public developed informational dependence on the military echelon, and such a dependency influenced the political echelon, causing it to perceive the military echelon as an epistemic authority as well. And indeed, the military echelon, by its argumentation, succeeded in generating informative influence and facilitating the 'burning' of the Israeli consciousness: portraying terror as an existential threat⁵⁵ and the confrontation as an inescapable but just war, and a continuation of the War of Independence. It seems that the military echelon had more success in 'burning' the Israeli consciousness than the Palestinian one.

Some senior civilians severely criticized the salient presence of the military echelon in this discourse and argued that civilian institutions should be more involved in the political process. Ya'alon tends to accept this criticism and adds that there exists a shortcoming in this regard, 'Such strong centers of knowledge should be everywhere: the NSC, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and all of those who complain that the military is too strong, let them strengthen themselves.' He adds that with the absence of additional centers of knowledge, government and Cabinet discussions remain at the operational level, lacking sufficient depth. 'Is this the way that a discussion should be held in the government, in the Cabinet? Are they approving an operation or not? This is a tactical discussion... they come to the discussions without insights, without basis.'⁵⁶

⁵³'I have no doubt that with historical perspective, people will say that the War of Independence was the most important event in our national history, and this war was the second most important one.... The Palestinians returned us to the War of Independence.' Ari Shavit, Interview with the CGS, *Ha'aretz*, 29 Aug. 2002.

⁵⁴The updated IDF premises claimed that Arafat does not accept the existence of Israel as a Jewish state; that he perceives the violent confrontation as the main means to promote his political goals; that he is a terrorist, that the PA is a terrorist entity and the conflict is the 'war for a home'. For additional details see Yaacov Bar Siman-Tov, *As the Generals See It*.

⁵⁵'The key point here is the Israeli society's hardening... this is what the campaign is about. Because here it is a matter of existential threat.' Ari Shavit, Interview with the CGS, *Ha'aretz*, 29 Aug. 2002.

⁵⁶Ya'alon, personal interview.

The encounter between the echelons, which should be a modified dialogue conducted as an intellectual discourse characterized by the merging of different ideas, becomes an encounter in which the military echelon presents its 'knowledge map', with inlaid interpretations of the political echelon's intentions and its directives formulated through inference: 'The politicians avoid direct, clear and compelling wording... the IDF is pushed to decode the political echelon's intentions by guesswork and information garnered from media interviews and indirect citations in newspaper articles.'⁵⁷

Although Ya'alon accepts this description explaining that 'there is no doubt that there are such cases [where] the political echelon avoids clear wording and taking responsibility', he perceives this reality as given and even natural: 'we have to assume that in a democratic state, we will not hear from the political echelon, especially in the Israeli reality, clear wording. I term it *creative fuzziness*'. Ya'alon thinks that fuzziness is a political tool that affords the political echelon flexibility: 'once you say something clear it is done. *When you leave it open it is in flux.*' Ya'alon thinks that sometimes 'there is a need to only signal direction and not an objective because you cannot be sure that you can achieve it. *This is the reason we call it political directive*, and I can accept it.'⁵⁸ But the Israeli case shows that there are many instances in which:

the directive is not there. Sometimes they hold the cards so close to their chests that even they don't know what cards they hold. Sometimes [the military echelon] has to press the political echelon to get the political directive, trying to understand it from the things that have been said as well from those that haven't been said, or from the things that were said or written on behalf of the politicians. Yes, we even have to look there; we read about the Disengagement in the newspaper.⁵⁹

In Ya'alon's view the discourse between the echelons is the means to clarify what should be done. He assumes that even if the political echelon decides that something should be done, it does not necessarily know if the military can do it 'because it doesn't really know the military's capabilities'. The responsibility of the military echelon in this regard is to present the political echelon with the possible implications of the military operations that are required to implement its objectives.

⁵⁷ Amir Oren, *Ha'aretz*, 15 July 2005.

⁵⁸ Ya'alon, personal interview.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Military knowledge should combine with civilian knowledge, and the outcome should be new knowledge:

[The combination] generates knowledge by itself, and this is a fertilizing process. This is what I term 'creative fuzziness'. While everyone contributes their own knowledge, it creates a new knowledge that enables the political echelon to reach an understanding about what is achievable and what is not. Then we can reach an agreement on objectives.⁶⁰

This definition shows that Ya'alon tends toward the 'shared responsibility' approach.⁶¹ Ya'alon, much like Harkabi,⁶² expects the active participation of the political echelon in formulating thought and directive. However, his remarks leave a definite impression of a flawed partnership between the echelons; the political echelon is not deeply involved in formulation of thoughts and directives. It seems that in the absence of an alternative to military knowledge, the discourse space shrinks to operational dimensions, and the burden of defining objectives inside the conflict falls squarely on the IDF's shoulders.

Ya'alon agrees that the political echelon is in a state of 'strategic helplessness', a term used to denote a situation brought about by a conflict stalemate in which an actor simply does not know what to do and how to react in order to create desired change.⁶³ This situation, according to Ya'alon is exacerbated by the absence of civilian knowledge centers. The General criticizes the political echelon for failing to provide real partners in the intellectual running and, therefore, finds it difficult to define the discourse between the echelons as an intellectual encounter:

When you come with this knowledge, with reasoned insights, to someone who feels helpless, and *many times I met helpless members of the political echelon...* with such *strategic helplessness*, the political echelon is happy to buy what you offer it. Then you look for partners that will do it together with you, that will challenge you intellectually, and you don't find them.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Douglas L. Bland, 'A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 26/1 (Fall 1999), 7–25.

⁶²Harkabi, *War and Strategy*.

⁶³Kobi Michael, 'The End of the Deterministic Distinction – the Low Intensity War Era as a Paradigmatic Challenge for Civil-Military Relations in the Democratic State', in Shaul Hagay and Shay Golan (eds.), *The Limited Conflict* (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 2004a), 226.

To call the encounter between the echelons an 'intellectual encounter' is too pretentious.⁶⁴

The discourse space between the echelons is conducted without a 'discourse culture'. There is a need for a richer and broader discourse that is not focused only on the operational level. Such a discourse cannot be conducted with delineations of the boundaries of responsibility between the civil and the military spheres that are too sharp and focused. 'The discourse must be much broader... Eventually, you cannot discuss only military issues without taking into account their political aspects and context.'⁶⁵

The result is that the military echelon introduces political ideas and recommendations.⁶⁶ The political echelon in this situation tends to accept these recommendations, mostly without reservations regarding the military's involvement in the political process. Sometimes the administration does have reservations, but usually they are not significant. Ya'alon himself does not feel comfortable with such a discourse. He thinks it is too much militaristic by its content and should have been more civilian: 'I think it is bad that there are too many participants in these discussions who wear military uniforms, and I definitely think that in many cases the discussions were too military-oriented, immediately going to the force operation. It should be more civilian [in its contents].'⁶⁷

In reality since 2003, the military echelon has been a restraining force, understanding that the military option alone cannot remain the only means, nor even the major means, of managing the conflict: 'These things require answers other than using force. Using force should be the last alternative', says Ya'alon. This point of view leads the military echelon to embark upon 'political operations': 'I, as the CGS, conducted many political operations together with the Foreign Affairs Ministry. I thought that including Hizballah on the terror list was worth more than a thousand attacks in Lebanon. This is a political operation, not a military one.'⁶⁸

⁶⁴Ya'alon, personal interview. Similar things were said by Maj. Gen. Eiland, the Head of the Strategic Planning Directorate in the MALTAM conference 24 Feb. 2003. For additional details see Michael, 'The End of the Deterministic Distinction', 226.

⁶⁵Ya'alon, personal interview.

⁶⁶'officers speak about the crucial importance of international legitimacy.... Washington, said a senior officer is maybe the most important actor in the disengagement operation. Indeed, the IDF in 2005 has flanked the Foreign Affairs Ministry from the left, trying to strengthen Abu-Mazen and the internal Hamas'. Amir Oren, *Ha'aretz*, 15 July 2005.

⁶⁷Ya'alon, personal interview.

⁶⁸Ibid.

The political operations mentioned by Ya'alon are an outcome of thought processes conducted by the military that include such inputs as the influence of US elections, US moves in Iraq and the EU's position toward Israel. All of those issues became relevant for the military EOS. The EOS resulted in unique knowledge and insights that were introduced by the military echelon in front of the political echelon as part of what the former perceived as its professional duty: 'I should know to come to my superiors, to the political level, and to explain to them how the elections in the States might influence military aspects in the conflict theater.'⁶⁹ The salient hegemony of military knowledge and the weakness of civilian knowledge institutionalized reversal of the 'normal order'. The military was forced to expand its domain of interests and developed ideas and alternatives for the conflict's management.

The evidence indicates the nature of the interaction between the echelons. The interaction is characterized mainly as an invalid dialogue, by military conceptualization and blurred and undetermined political directives. These findings indicate deep involvement of the military establishment in the political process. Actually the military echelon shaped in most cases the nature of the conflict environment by using its broad and rich knowledge that was created systematically due to the political echelon's strategic helplessness. The deep and influential military involvement is actually the reflection of the substantive civil control's weakness and the absence of civilian political responsibility.

Conclusions

The unique characteristics of the violent confrontation with the Palestinians demand a new type of dialogue between the echelons. The dialogue should provide the required intellectual platform that should be used as the main means for shaping the strategy for conducting this LIC. The absence of such a dialogue led the military echelon toward an understanding about the importance and necessity of developing a multi-dimensional knowledge, one that reaches beyond the traditional sphere of military professionalism.

Due to the political echelon's reluctance regarding clear political directives, the military echelon concluded that without developed and relevant knowledge, military operations conducted to implement political objectives would be found ineffective. Subsequently, the process and methodology of generating military knowledge became much more sophisticated. The outcome of this process was a conceptual revolution in the military establishment, but not only there.

⁶⁹Ibid.

Following the continued weakness of the civilian institutions in Israel, the military echelon's revolution created a significant advantage over the political echelon in generating the required knowledge for managing the violent confrontation. The fact that the military establishment earned the appreciation of the public in Israel, facilitated the transformation of the military echelon to an epistemic authority in the eyes of the public as well as in the eyes of politicians and created an information dependency on the military echelon.

The military echelon's advantages were clearly reflected in the way the Israeli conflict management was conducted until 2003. The Israeli unilateral disengagement strategy declared by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in December 2003 surprised the military echelon and signaled a new era in the relationship between the echelons; the political echelon preferred to act without consulting the military establishment. But, many agree that this shift in the political echelon's approach was caused due to other reasons, external to civil-military relations in Israel and related mainly to the political and personal problems that Prime Minister Sharon faced in those days.

The military's status as an epistemic authority enhanced the military echelon's ability to shape the discourse space with the political echelon by dominating it with military conceptualization and enabling the military echelon to 'burn' Israeli public consciousness regarding the way the violent conflict should be managed. These are the ultimate expressions of the military's influence over the political process, and such an influence enhances, in its turn, the existing functional arrangement in which the military echelon is responsible for conceptualizing strategy, planning and executing all matters related to the management of the violent confrontation. It is true that all of the military's activities are done with the permission and the authorization of the political level, but in most cases, the political directives are derived from the military knowledge infrastructure, hegemonic knowledge that has almost no competition.⁷⁰

The conceptual framework invites another glance at Foucault's works on discourse and the interaction between knowledge and power. In Foucault's terms the military echelon becomes the truth and lie agent regarding information and knowledge. In every society institutions

⁷⁰In Dec. 2004, following the Rubenstein Committee's recommendations regarding the improvement of civil control over the military in Israel, Member of the Knesset Yossi Sarid said, 'Indeed, the implementation of the committee's recommendations will improve the current control of the Knesset over the military, but even these recommendations will not prevent the Knesset from being carried away by the security consensus... the recommendations do not ensure that the Knesset will hear alternative positions'. Gidon Alon, *Ha'aretz*, 29 Dec. 2004.

have practices that internalize among the society members what they perceive as 'truth' and use other practices to exclude from the discourse the propositions they perceive as untrue.⁷¹ Knowledge, according to Foucault, is a kind of social 'truth regime', which enables the domination of some people or institutions over themselves and others. The social discourse is a reflection of the knowledge structure, and the knowledge structure is a reflection of the power structure because it is impossible to operate knowledge without power and because knowledge necessarily generates power.⁷²

Prime Minister Sharon's decision about unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and North West Bank ended the military influence. The military echelon led by CGS Ya'alon rejected the unilateralism rationale and advocated coordinated disengagement that would strengthen the moderate Palestinian leadership. The perceptual gap between the echelons was increased dramatically and enhanced the personal tension between Sharon and Ya'alon. Prime Minister Sharon preferred dismissing Ya'alon by refusing to extend his tenure for the fourth year and appointing a CGS that will be more supportive toward the new political approach and less critical and involved. The revolution that Ya'alon led brought him to the inevitable conflict with his superiors and eventually to the end of an era.

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⁷¹Mills, Michel Foucault, 83.

⁷²Michel Foucault, 'Prison Talk', in C. Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester 1980d), 52.

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