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ARTICLES

Who Really Dictates What an Existential Threat Is? The Israeli Experience

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ABSTRACT National security conception or securitization theory frames threats and conceptualizes the responses towards them. But in many cases, and especially in the Israeli context, there is a tendency to blur the nature and essence of different threats; security threats become strategic threats and then existential threats. In the Israeli context, because the broad concept of security is perceived, in most cases, as equivalent to military security, the meaning of the strategic threat will be framed, mostly, militarily, derived from military thought.

The article examines the nature of existential threats in the Israeli context and seeks to find the implications of securitization theory in this regard by analyzing the unique role of the military establishment and the influence of the military thought on strategic thought in Israel. The article also deals with the centrality of 'military wisdom' in the Israeli ethos and the sense of insecurity embedded in the Israeli narrative that leads to an 'intellectual symbiosis' between the political and the military echelons and finds this phenomenon as one of the major explanations for the influence of the military establishment on defining the nature of security threats as well as on the crucial decision to launch wars.

KEY WORDS: Existential Threats, Israel, Civil-Military Relations, National Security, Securitization, Military Wisdom, Intellectual Symbiosis

The purpose and foremost responsibility of political leadership in a state is to ensure national security, defined as the 'defense of the nation's existence and its vital interests'.¹

¹Israel Tal, *National Security – The Few Against The Many* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir 1996) (Hebrew).

Therefore, the concept of existential threat in the context of states and nations is necessarily related to the world of national security. Threats to the nation's and state's existence have both physical and political meanings; while threats to the state's security are threats to the safety of its citizens, its entirety and sovereignty, threats to the nation's security are threats to its national identity and the legitimacy of its existence as a national entity.

On the other hand, national security is 'with no doubt a clear social problem'.² Therefore, national security becomes an umbrella concept for a broad spectrum of threats and challenges where military threat is only one among many. In cases where one particular threat has an added value or importance, or is perceived as such, we might anticipate that the institution responsible for tackling this threat will be more influential with regard to shaping the security conception. Under particular circumstances it might actually dictate what threats are. Therefore, one of the challenging questions in this regard is who actually dictates what an existential threat is.

Existential threat is a subjective political concept that reflects the conceptualization of a collective sense of security or insecurity in a hostile environment. But due to the fact that national security is a socially guided concept, it cannot remain disconnected from ideologies and cultural characteristics and, therefore, 'national security doctrines often include regulations and norms that totally contradict the substantive interests of national security's goals'.³ And indeed, policy-makers frame threats by using their political ideology's lens, which shapes the manner in which they perceive the other and explain the threat. Ido Oren demonstrated this phenomenon in his article about policymakers in the United States.⁴ According to Oren, US policy-makers were influenced by their democratic ideology and recognized democratic states as friends and non-democratic states as enemies or rivals. Therefore, understanding how political ideology is shaped and what conceptual frameworks it leans on is necessary for answering the question of who really interprets the essence of the strategic environment and the threats to national security and dictates what an existential threat is and what should be the responses towards such threats and challenges. It is reasonable to assume compatibility between the characterization of the threat and the way it should be handled as it

²Baruch Kimmerling, 'The Social Construction of Israel's "National Security"', *Democratic Culture*, Vol. 4-5 (Jan. 2001), 270.

³*Ibid.*, 272.

⁴Ido Oren, 'The Subjectivity of the "Democratic" Peace: Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany', *International Security* 20/2 (Fall 1995), 147-84.

is reasonable to assume that surgical diagnosis will not lead to homeopathic prognosis.

Actually, national security conception, or securitization theory as conceptualized by Weaver,⁵ frames threats and conceptualizes the responses towards them. But in many cases, and especially in the Israeli context, there is a tendency to blur the nature and essence of different threats; security threats become strategic threats and then existential threats. In the Israeli context, because the broad concept of security is perceived, in most cases, as equivalent to military security, the meaning of the strategic threat will be framed, mostly, militarily, derived from military thought. The distinction between different types of threats is crucial in general, and in the Israeli case in particular, because of its unique characteristics as a Western democracy threatened by a hostile environment. Defining threats as existential ones creates legitimacy for using extreme means that, in turn, might lead to further escalation and the empowerment of existing threats.

The article examines the nature of existential threats in the Israeli context and seeks to find the implications of securitization theory in this regard by analyzing the unique role of the military establishment and the influence of the military thought on strategic thought in Israel. The article also deals with the centrality of 'military wisdom' in the Israeli ethos and the sense of insecurity embedded in the Israeli narrative that leads to an 'intellectual symbiosis' between the political and the military echelons and finds this phenomenon as one of the major explanations for the influence of the military establishment on defining the nature of security threats as well as on the crucial decision to launch wars.

Existential Threat in the Israeli Context

In the Israeli context, existential threat can be defined as a trend, process or development that substantially endangers the existence of the state of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people. Analysis of the geo-strategic reality in which Israel is situated indicates three main categories of existential threat: demographic, political and security. The first category of threats is demographic in nature and relates to a loss of the Jewish majority in the State of Israel. The second category is political and relates to the loss of international legitimacy for the State of Israel's right to exist as the state of the Jewish people. The third category relates to security and includes a wide spectrum of conventional and non-conventional threats ranging from Iranian

⁵Ole Weaver, 'Security, Insecurity and Asecurity in the West-European Non-War Community', in Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1998), 69–118.

nuclear bombs to local terrorism. The tangibility and severity of the third category has been increased dramatically by several factors: the escalation and stalemate in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the Second Lebanon War and the resurgence of Hizballah, the tension on the northern border with Syria, and acceleration of Iran’s nuclear program.

The first two categories, despite their severity, are perceived by the majority of the Jewish public in Israel as marginally threatening. The third category is perceived by the Jewish majority as more substantial and tangible, and the military is perceived as the most professional and reliable actor for tackling the threat.

Historically, the unique status of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in Israel overshadows the political echelon in a way that forces the latter to comply with the military echelon’s recommendations: ‘in the dispute between the system’s leaders, the CGS (Chief of General Staff) is still the most powerful [actor] in comparison to the Head of the Mossad, Head of GSS [General Security Service] and even [the] minister of defense and prime minister – because nobody dares to decide against his position’.⁶

The military echelon in Israel is the ultimate knowledge authority on the definition of security threats and shaping the responses for tackling them. The Israeli reality creates a situation in which ‘the delegated experts for managing violence’ are mostly seniors from the military establishment whether in active military service and whether in reserve’.⁷ And indeed, the status of the military as an ‘epistemic authority’ increased the dependency of the political echelon on it and its developed knowledge infrastructures⁸ and led to the shaping of political militarism⁹ in the sense of exercising military power in order to resolve political problems. The military expertise has been developed into what Sergio Catignani terms the IDF’s ‘*bitsuist* ethos’,¹⁰ which in turn led to a pragmatist military approach with an operational and combat tendency that lacks broad intellectual depth.

Given such conditions it can be expected that the military echelon will influence, in the most significant way possible, the definition of existential threats. But wars and violent conflicts are complex systems, and the military dimension is only one of many other dimensions.

⁶Amir Oren, *Haaretz*, 24 Jan. 2008.

⁷Kimmerling, ‘The Social Construction of the Concept “National Security” of Israel’, 271.

⁸Kobi Michael, ‘The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority: An Intellectual Challenge in the Reality of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30/3 (June 2007), 421–46.

⁹Kimmerling, ‘The Social Construction of the Concept “National Security” of Israel’.

¹⁰Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (London: Routledge 2008).

In reality we deal with complex systems that obligate a broad knowledge of social sciences. As David Last puts it, 'trying to understand why conflicts and threats are developed, we have to return to the roots and to understand how people behave'.¹¹ Therefore, defining an existential threat obliges a deep understanding of the essence of conflict and human nature. The task is actually an intellectual challenge that should be based on developed knowledge infrastructures.

National Security and Existential Threat Framing in the Mirror of the Political and Military Echelons' Encounter

National security is the clear domain of political leadership. Therefore, the responsibility for defining existential threats and their appropriate responses is the political leadership's responsibility. The meaning of this responsibility is the supremacy of the political thought from which grand strategy is derived. This strategy has to refer to threats and opportunities in the broadest possible context. The political thought should contain the scope of constraints and enable weighing risks against opportunities in a way that will ensure the supremacy of national goals over any other goals.¹²

In order to ensure the supremacy of national goals as defined by conceptual systems from the world of political thought, the political echelon should first define the national strategy from which the security strategy is derived. Last, the security strategy forms the basis from which military strategy is shaped. The order of shaping strategies will necessarily influence the way that threats and opportunities are defined. We can therefore assume that when military strategy becomes hegemonic, existential threats will be defined on the basis of conceptual systems from the world of military thought, whose weaknesses are a bias towards conservative realism,¹³ anti-intellectualism,¹⁴ and worst-case scenarios.¹⁵

¹¹David Last, 'Transformation or Back to Basics? Counter-Insurgency Pugilism and Peacebuilding Judo', in Kobi Michael, David Kellen and Eyal Ben-Ari (eds.), *The Transformation of the World of War and Peace Support Operations* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International 2009).

¹²Kobi Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness', *Politika* [the Israeli journal of political science and international relations] 17, (Winter 2008), 131–54 (Hebrew).

¹³Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP 1957).

¹⁴Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* [1976] (republished in Hebrew by Ministry of Defense Publications, Tel Aviv 1979).

¹⁵Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority'; Yehoshfat Harkabi, *War and Strategy*, 4th ed. (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot 1994).

Shaping the order of strategies is an outcome of the characteristics of the encounter between the military and political echelons, which is influenced by, among other factors, the military's status as a societal and political actor. It is important to stress that the conceptual system used for framing threats is mostly the same one used for designing the response to those threats. Therefore, and as mentioned earlier, it is reasonable to assume that the surgeon's diagnosis will not lead to a homeopathic prognosis.

The echelons' encounter can be defined as an encounter between competitive strategies, and its essence is basically intellectual. Therefore, this author recognizes the encounter between the echelons as an intellectual encounter where substantive civilian control is the mechanism that should ensure the supremacy of political thought over military thought. As long as the supremacy of political thought is not ensured, military thought will shape the conceptualization of threats, and its influence on the definition of existential threats will remain decisive. With the absence of national and security strategies, the military strategy will fill the place of both, and the generals will have to guess the politicians' intentions.¹⁶

The Israeli experience shows this to be the case in many instances of encounter between the echelons, but IDF generals are usually uncomfortable taking the burden of national strategy on their shoulders. Indeed, 'officers in the IDF are jealous of their American colleagues: they have "national strategy" documents from the president and "security strategy" published by the minister of defense as a basis for "military strategy" formulated in the Combined Forces. In Israel, [the] government neglects [this task] and does not direct the people and the military where to go. The military has to guess [the political directives]'.¹⁷

The reality of intractable and protracted conflicts¹⁸ in which Israel exists exacerbates the asymmetrical dimension of the encounter between the political and military echelons. The asymmetry in favor

¹⁶Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority'; Kobi Michael, 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations: The "Discourse Space" Model and the Israeli Case During the Oslo Process', *Armed Forces & Society* 33/4 (Summer 2007), 518–46.

¹⁷Amir Oren, *Haaretz*, 24 Jan. 2008.

¹⁸For further reading about the nature of intractable and protracted conflicts and their implications in the Israeli context see Nadim Rouhana and Daniel Bar-Tal, 'Psychological dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts: The Israeli-Palestinian Case', *American Psychologist* 53 (1998), 761–70; Louis Kriesberg, 'The Development of the Conflict Resolution Field', in I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, *Peacemaking in International Conflict* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press 1997).

of the military echelon, derived from the weakness of the political thought versus the military one, inhibits the development and shaping of the national security conception. In the reality on an era of the 'democratization of the war'¹⁹ characterized by the political echelon's high sensitivity to the critical public voice and a decreased willingness for 'body scarifying', the political echelon is forced to accelerate the decision-making process in its response to what is perceived as a threat or severe provocation (like the events that led to the eruption of the Second Lebanon War).

In an accelerated decision-making process, the importance of strategic knowledge in its broadest meaning increases. Under the conditions of asymmetry characterized by the weakness of political thought and its knowledge infrastructure in comparison to their military counterparts, it is reasonable to assume the occurrence of increased military influence on decision-making processes, including an increased tendency to recognize threats and provocations as military in nature and deserving of a military response. This trend has significant implications in the era of transformation in the world of warfare, where the boundaries between the military and political spheres are blurred and permeable.

The Transformation in the World of Warfare and its Implications on the Encounter between the Echelons

The world of warfare has been transformed dramatically in the last decades and most violent conflicts over the globe are now asymmetric, fought mainly between state entities and non-state actors such as terror and guerrilla groups. Frank Hoffman defines modern wars as 'Hybrid Wars', which are characterized by multiple different kinds of wars.²⁰

In such wars the tension between abstract strategic logics and the physical operation of fighting forces is stressed and becomes the main weakness as argued by the famous Israeli Brigadier General (retired) Dov Tamari, who emphasizes that this tensioned encounter 'has become a repetitive failure of most militaries in the world over the past 200 years'.²¹ Therefore, the significant challenge of statesmen and military leaders is in transforming abstract logics and ideas into the

¹⁹Yagil Levy, 'How Democratization Encourages Warfare – the Second Lebanon War', *Politika* (the Israeli journal of political science and international relations) 17 (Winter 2008), 111–30 (Hebrew).

²⁰Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies Dec. 2007).

²¹Dov Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', *Ma'arachot* (the journal of the IDF), Vol. 415 (Nov. 2007), 33 (Hebrew).

physical operation of fighting forces in a way that serves those abstract political logics.

Modern wars intensify the tension between the political echelon's logic and that of the military because the more asymmetric a conflict is, the more the physical meaning of the war's goals decreases. In asymmetric wars there is a need for transformation from physics to consciousness. Relevancy in the sense of recognizing the core problems, their main causes and the effective response, becomes necessary in these conditions due to the dynamic nature of such theaters. Relevancy obliges fluent contact with events on the ground, and under such conditions, the military might acquire a better understanding of the conflict arena. However, this understanding, with all of its importance, remains limited to the world of military content and, therefore, the discourse between the echelons must be elaborated in order to allow the political echelon to shape policy in a better and more relevant manner.²² Without an elaborated discourse between the echelons, the probability of transforming existing paradigms is decreased and old paradigms that belong to the industrial war era might remain the conceptual platform in use for asymmetrical wars, or 'wars amongst the people' as General Sir Rupert Smith calls them.²³

Indeed, the uniqueness of modern wars is in their complexity and blurred distinctions between the military and the political spheres. Tamari relates to the Israeli context arguing that 'the CGS is a statesman as well although he is in uniform ... the CGS is in the medium between statesmen and soldiers, in his essence he is not only a military man, the CGS is a political man due to his military role',²⁴ and therefore he has to contribute to political thought and participate in war planning. Precisely in this encounter between the echelons, intellectual and political leadership are necessary. Such leadership has to neutralize military thought's weaknesses, most importantly the one that has been developed in the modern era based on Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) principles.

Intelligence and Military Thought's Characteristics in the RMA Era and Their Implications – The Israeli Case

Military thought in the RMA era leans on the importance of precision fire and the required technological effort for acquiring targets (including human targets for targeted killing) and improving precision

²²Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority'.

²³Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane 2005).

²⁴Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', 30–1.

fire's effectiveness in order to destroy these targets. Effectiveness improvement can be reached by, among other things, improving cooperation between the forces and intelligence. But the intelligence necessary for this context is not necessarily similar to the intelligence needed for understanding the fundamental causes of security problems derived from conflicts and translated to threats. Deep understanding of conflicts and violence and sophisticated framing of security problems obliges a deep understanding of human nature²⁵ and the behavior of nations and states. Such understanding should draw on social science and not only on technology or military doctrines.

An interesting example is demonstrated by the Israeli policy on targeted killings in the Gaza Strip and Israel's policy towards the Gaza Strip as a whole. Targeted killing is meant to be used on 'ticking bombs', and the definition of who or what is a 'ticking bomb' frames potential threat perceptions that oblige immediate treatment. The definition is derived from military intelligence (including the GSS') and the response pattern is mostly military.

Recently, the definition of a 'ticking bomb' was expanded, and targeted killing became one of the main preventive means used by Israel against terror. Contemporary experience demonstrates that this response pattern does not succeed in significantly decreasing terror attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israel. The events of February–March 2008 indicate that targeted killing led to a severe escalation in the violent conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Could a different threat-framing have led to different response patterns? Probably yes, but the logic of the Israeli response pattern in Gaza is derived from military thought and reflects the militaristic discourse that supports resolving political problems by using force. The political discourse lacks serious and open discussion of other political options like negotiating with Hamas, either directly or indirectly (not only for tactical and short-term purposes).

An additional example can be demonstrated by the Israeli policy of closing access to the Gaza Strip, which led at the end of the day to Palestinians breaking through the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. The breakthrough became a political achievement for Hamas and significantly strengthened its status among the local population.

The idea of 'shaping consciousness' is typical of an RMA way of thinking and led to the idea that pressuring the local population would generate criticism against Hamas, an idea that proved terribly wrong. Israel chose to use this operational pattern despite the fact that similar

²⁵Last, 'Transformation or Back to Basics? Counter-Insurgency Pugilism and Peace-building Judo'.

operational patterns failed in 1993 and 1996 in South Lebanon as well as during the Second Lebanon War. It seems that returning to one's roots, by using the same failed methods, is derived from the rationale of military thought and once again reflects the idea of using force to resolve political problems.

In both examples we find the influence of military intelligence evaluation on policy shaping as well as a lack of reference to the socio-economic and political dimensions that shape the Palestinian *modus operandi*. Both cases demonstrate the weakness of the political thought and its failure to use the broad knowledge of social science. Military thought, more than anything else, dictated the way that the threat was recognized and framed as well as the way it was handled.

The importance of intelligence in the asymmetrical conflicts era is more significant than identifying and acquiring military targets or defending military forces from different threats. Despite the importance of intelligence at the tactical level for effectively completing specific missions on the ground and at the operational level in helping military commanders to understand the context of the conflict theater, intelligence should first serve grand strategy. Its main importance is for shaping strategy, understanding the broadest nature of threats and conceptualizing the context. Such strategic intelligence can be defined as 'cultural intelligence',²⁶ which mandates a deep understanding of all the dimensions of the adversary's arena. Cultural intelligence cannot be developed without a broad social science knowledge infrastructure.²⁷ Without a deep understanding of the context, the prospect of biased perceptions or misperceptions derived from the worst case scenario will be increased. Under such circumstances security problems and threats might easily be framed and interpreted as existential threats.

In the Israeli context, the responsibility for national intelligence estimation (NIE) falls on the intelligence directorate of the IDF and, therefore, evinces a tendency to emphasize the military component of intelligence evaluation. Military intelligence demonstrates inherent

²⁶For further details about the concept of cultural intelligence see Kobi Michael, 'Doing the Right Thing the Right Way; The Challenges of Military Mission Effectiveness in Peace Support Operations in a "War Amongst the People" Theater', in Cees M. Coops and Tibor Szvircsev Tresch (eds.), *Cultural Challenges in Military Operations* (Rome: NATO Defense College Research Division 2007), 254–63; Kobi Michael and David Kellen, 'Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations in the New Era of Warfare', in Kobi Michael, David Kellen and Eyal Ben-Ari (eds.), *The Transformations of the World of War and Peace Support Operations* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International 2009), 157–72.

²⁷Michael, 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations'; Last, 'Transformation or Back to Basics? Counter-Insurgency Pugilism and Peace-building Judo'.

weakness with regard to cultural aspects that might be relevant and even necessary for shaping the NIE and defining the nature of different threats.

Due to the fact that 'in Israel there is no security conception that can be used as the organizing conceptual system for statesmen and soldiers, the relevant knowledge regarding expected crises and security matters has not been developed in the governments of Israel',²⁸ the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as other threats are framed by security policy that is neither updated nor well-developed. Therefore, on many occasions, security and threat-framing are mostly disconnected from the broader contexts of international security. Israel tends to distrust the international community and, therefore, many threats tend to be exaggerated and existential, and tackling them becomes more complicated. Such a conception, which is derived from the military thought, will necessarily influence the way security problems are analyzed in the analytical framework known as securitization.

The Encounter between Military Thought and Securitization Theory

Securitization theory should provide analytical tools for analyzing security problems. Its main purpose is answering the basic question: what does security do?²⁹ The main idea in security studies is defining security problems by using conceptual patterns that are formulated as security problems that oblige treatment.³⁰ Actually, the essence of security problems is an outcome of security thought, or, as Cori Dauber puts it, an outcome of argumentation.³¹ The argumentation's criteria will dictate its results, and when the criteria for security argumentation are militarily in their essence, security problems and threats will be defined by military parameters. Therefore, when military thought, defined by Huntington as 'conservative realism',³² significantly influences securitization, the tendency to perceive threats in a manner that suits a worst-case scenario conception will increase.

Critics of securitization theory claim that this conceptual framework lacks obligating moral standards and values. This is because politicians and generals tend to manipulate reality by empowering threats and framing them as existential in order to broaden public support for

²⁸Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', 30–1.

²⁹Rita Taureck, 'Securitization Theory and Securitization Studies', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9 (2006), 53–61.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Cori Dauber, 'The Practice of Argument: Reading the Condition of Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 24/3 (Spring 1998), 435–46.

³²Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*.

specific policies. Claudia Aradau argues that governments use security to ensure control over their citizens by frightening them and attributes this tendency to the Hobbesian nature of the state.

Governments stage existential threats in a way that evokes fear among their citizens of violent death³³ and necessarily increases both their dependence on the state and the state's control over its citizens. Such an example was recently demonstrated in the Israeli context when Member of the Knesset (MK) Yuval Steinitz, former head of the Security and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), compared Israel's hesitance to invade the Gaza Strip to committing suicide; 'we enable Iran to establish [itself] in the heart of the land [as] a base for launching long distance rockets and if we accept it, our existence is in danger.'³⁴

Aradau's approach is reminiscent of Yagil Levy's approach to the republican equation in the democratic state.³⁵ Levy claims that protection or security is the main product or service that the state should provide its citizens, but this product is not supplied for free. Security is provided by an exchange between the state and its citizens; the state provides security for the citizens' participation in the military effort through military service or taxes for funding the military and its operations. The state tends to demand a high price for its services in order to create added value, which means increasing control, whereas citizens look for the lowest possible cost.

The republican equation is the mechanism that determines the exchange process between the state and its citizens, where the state's leading strategy for exploiting this equation is increasing the sense of external and existential threats in a manner that legitimizes citizens' participation in the military effort through service or funding.³⁶ If this strategy fails, the state exercises an alternative strategy: increasing the

³³Claudia Aradau, 'Beyond Good and Evil: Ethics and Securitization/Desecuritization Techniques', *Rubikon: International Forum of Electronic Publications* (Dec. 2001), available at <<http://venus.ci.uw.edu.pl/Brubikon/forum/claudia2.htm>> (accessed 15 Dec. 2005).

³⁴As quoted in Yoel Marcus, *Ha'aretz*, 11 March 2008. Another example can be found in the Minister of Justice Haim Ramon's testimony in front of Winograd investigation committee explaining his view about Hizballah Attack: 'in my view, whoever tries to harm the sovereign State of Israel within the 1967 borders, wants to destroy the State of Israel ... and it will eventually be translated into an existential threat' (Winograd initial report, 32).

³⁵Yagil Levy, 'The War of the Peripheries: A Social Mapping of IDF Casualties in the Al-Aqsa Intifada', *Social Identities* 12 (2006), 309–24; Levy, 'How Democratization Encourages Warfare – the Second Lebanon War'.

³⁶For further details see Yagil Levy and Shlomo Mizrahi, 'Alternative Politics and the Transformation of Society-Military Relations: The Israeli Experience', *Administration*

social and economic rewards for citizens who carry the military burden.³⁷

Other critics of securitization theory claim that when security problems are dealt with as military problems, security becomes something negative because its conceptualization reflects the failure to discuss political problems by using normal political conceptual systems.³⁸ Buzan argues that presenting a threat as existential is like saying that 'if we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant because we will not be here or be free to deal with it in our way'.³⁹ This saying demonstrates the subjective meaning of security. Defining a subject as a security matter makes it a potential threat and facilitates exercising excessive and unusual means by the security actor who asks to defend the threatened object.⁴⁰ From here, the means for defining security threats as existential threats becomes shorter. Defining security threats as existential threats might cause leaders, especially in places where the military has significant influence on decision-making processes, to launch a war in order to tackle a security threat in a violent manner.

Who in Israel Decides When a War Should be Launched? The Second Lebanon War as an Outstanding Example

War is one of the most complex and dangerous challenges that the political echelon in a democratic state faces. 'Managing modern war is a very complex profession that requires broad theoretical scientific knowledge'.⁴¹ At the same time, war is the ultimate expression of military professionalism, where the military is required to fulfill its first functional imperative and to win in order to defend the nation and its vital interests from external threats.⁴² However, even at this moment, the military is still a tool in the hands of the political

↻ *Society* 40/1 (2008), 25–53; Levy, 'The War of the Peripheries: A Social Mapping of IDF Casualties in the Al-Aqsa Intifada'.

³⁷For further details see D. Lake, 'Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War', *American Political Science Review* 86 (1992), 24–37; C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell 1992).

³⁸Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 1998), 29.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁰Ole Weaver, 'Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen: New Schools in Security Theory and the Origins between Core and Periphery', International Studies Association Conference, Montreal, Canada, March 2004, 13.

⁴¹Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', 40.

⁴²Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*; Richard H. Kohn, 'How Democracies Control?', *Journal of Democracy* 8/4 (1997), 140–53.

echelon and the military campaign should be a means that serves a political goal.⁴³

This logic necessarily dictates the political echelon's supremacy over the military. Such supremacy is not only constitutional or hierarchical in a way that ensures the obedience of the military echelon to the political echelon; the political echelon's supremacy means supremacy of political thought over military thought. Such supremacy obliges intellectual and strategic leadership and a broad understanding of the implications of the military operation on the political arena. Failure to understand the complex world of war, peace and international politics, and the absence of strategic thought can lead the political echelon to wrongly define threats and war goals, or to adopt the military's definitions by reversing the dependence order between the echelons.⁴⁴

Since national security is a social problem in its essence, it exists in a social context and cannot be created 'in a bubble'.⁴⁵ Security conceptions reflect the hegemonic set of beliefs and ideologies in the society, and in Israel the military establishment and military thought have a shaping influence on these conceptions. This influence was significantly demonstrated by some major events in the history of the State of Israel.

The Six-Day War of June 1967 was an outstanding example of the military echelon's influence over the political one when the military echelon forced Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to nominate Lieutenant General Moshe Dayan as Minister of Defense. Eventually, Dayan's militant and aggressive approach supported by the military echelon facilitated the eruption of the war.⁴⁶ The Yom Kippur War (October 1973) was an example of a case in which the military echelon succeeded in 'putting the political echelon to sleep' and blunting Prime Minister Golda Meir's instincts, thus preventing a preemptive military attack against the massing Egyptian and Syrian armies. The military echelon's assessment regarding the Egyptian intentions was wrong and biased due to overemphasis by the intelligence evaluation on

⁴³Further details about the weakness of civil control on the military and the military's influence on the decision-making process regarding the launching of Second Lebanon War and its management see: Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness', 131–54.

⁴⁴Michael, 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations'.

⁴⁵Kimmerling, 'The Social Construction of the Concept "National Security" of Israel', 299.

⁴⁶Ami Gloska, *Eshkol, Give An Order* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publication 2004).

military criteria and standards and marginalization of political and cultural criteria.⁴⁷

The Second Lebanon War and the Winograd Committee's report⁴⁸ indicate that defining the strategic goal of the war, its management and mainly its final moves, represent (once again and much like many other cases in the history of the State of Israel) the supremacy of military thought over political thought. Furthermore, given the total dependency of the political echelon on the military, its knowledge infrastructure, and its conceptual systems for understanding the conflict arena and threat characteristics, 'the political echelon in Israel remains dependent on the professional echelon [the military] and [is] left with a short [political] horizon'.⁴⁹ It seems that CGS Lieutenant General Dan Halutz's testimony in front of the Winograd Committee supports this claim. General Halutz described the political echelon's weakness with regard to the relevant knowledge infrastructures, professional staff work and decision-making process. He stated that, 'the military dictates the strategic purpose [of the war] which is its political purpose in a sense and blurs between military and political ... why? Not because it is an inherent task of the military but because it is a pattern developed in Israel'.⁵⁰

Actually, it is an operational pattern created due to the weakness of the political echelon's strategic and intellectual leadership and the absence of alternative knowledge infrastructures to military ones. Such weakness expresses 'the military mentality and culture (often defined as cultural militarism) that invaded and absorbed a major part of the Israeli civilian culture and it is almost impossible differentiating between them'.⁵¹

To quote a conference analysis: 'The decision to launch war obliges maximum experience and attention. The security dilemma in Israel is crucial and existential. When you launch a war, you have to be sure that there is no alternative. You have to define the goal on behalf of which the boys are sent to kill and to be killed, and you have to clarify if this goal is achievable'.⁵²

⁴⁷Arye Shalev, *Failure and Success in Warning* (Tel Aviv: Defense Ministry Press 2006).

⁴⁸Winograd Investigation Committee Initial Report, <www.vaadatwino.org.il/reports.html#null>.

⁴⁹See in this regard the report about Prof. Ruth Gabison's (one of the Winograd committee's members) public lecture, Ruth Gabison, 'Criticism of the Political Echelon', Tel Aviv Univ., 4 March 2008, <www.ynet.co.il/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-3515002,00.html>.

⁵⁰Winograd Initial Report, 56.

⁵¹Kimmerling, 'The Social Construction of the Concept "National Security" of Israel', 299.

⁵²Dan Meridor, The 8th Herzlia Conference, Jan. 2008, <www.herzliyaconference.org/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=2662&CategoryID=325>.

Indeed, war is the last means that a government should choose in order to tackle a threat. Choosing war obliges that the government be capable of defining and interpreting the threat characteristics it faces. In order to do so, the government needs a knowledge infrastructure that can be used as a conceptual framework for understanding the strategic threats and challenges it faces. The government is sovereign and can make the decision to go to war, but if that decision is entirely or mainly based on the military knowledge infrastructure, then the military becomes the one who defines the threat's essence and the required response towards it. This would be a salient failure of substantive civil control.

'Unfortunately, all of these [moves] were not done [by the government] and the government and its ministers did not behave carefully when they made their decision to launch the war; the Winograd investigation committee has concluded the same.'⁵³ Indeed, the failure indicates a very concerning problem: a reality in which few, if any at all, thought differently than the military.

Due to the fact that the main challenge and effort in this context is intellectual, it is obvious that capable people who are able to develop and elaborate their intellectual capabilities by consistent learning, supported by external knowledge and professionalism should be in the government. 'There is a need to be assisted by knowledge, professionalism and experience that the government does not have....Private companies hire consultants in order to ensure better decisions ... [unfortunately] in the political decision-making process, this is not always done'.⁵⁴

'Military people are those who influence political decisions today' says Tzipi Livni, the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁵ Is the military's influence on political decisions a new phenomenon, or is it an inherent phenomenon in the Israeli context? It seems that the Minister of Foreign Affairs provides the answer in her testimony when she says, 'because the military is the sovereign in the [Palestinian] territories, the Palestinian issue influences any political process on a daily level, [and] the key is [in the hands of] the military'.⁵⁶

The military's eminent position and its influence on the political decision-making process is the pattern of Israeli statesmanship at least since the eve of the Six-Day War in June 1967, and maybe even before then. The military's powerful position is built on the centrality of security, and mainly military security, in the public and political

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Winograd Initial Report, 46.

⁵⁶Ibid.

discourses in Israel, as well as frequent wars that have created a perception of continuous existential threat. Those shaped an asymmetric structure of organizational capabilities and knowledge in favor of the military echelon, which in turn led to the increased dependency of the political echelon on the 'wisdom' of the military echelon.

The Second Lebanon War became one of the ultimate examples of the centrality of 'military wisdom' in the Israeli ethos as well as in the political echelon's decision-making process regarding the ways threats should be handled. The glorification of 'military wisdom' weakened political thought in Israel and biased it towards a security attitude that supports political militarism in the sense of using military force in order to solve political problems.

The 'Military Wisdom' and its Saliency in the Israeli Ethos since 1967

The military echelon's salient position and influence on the political decision-making process have been established due to the centrality of security and mainly military security (due to serious military threats) in the Israeli ethos and public discourse as well as the historical context and circumstances derived from a sense of existential threat and frequent wars. The 'religion of security'⁵⁷ has shaped structural asymmetry in favor of the military establishment's organizational capabilities and knowledge and this asymmetry, in turn, increased the political echelon's dependency on 'military wisdom'.

'Military wisdom', a weakness of the governmental structure and political culture in Israel, which is based on a coalitional regime, paralyze the government's capability and will to develop a strategic vision and an alternative knowledge infrastructure. Political acts and, more seriously, political thought, are subordinated to military thought. One of the salient examples of this phenomenon was the formative years of the Oslo process.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Daniel Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict* (Jerusalem: Carmel Press 2007).

⁵⁸Kobi 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 Univ. of Jerusalem, 2004; Michael, 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations'; Yoram Peri, 'The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy from Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada', *Peaceworks* No. 47 (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace 2002); Yoram Peri, 'The Political-Military Complex: The IDF Influence over Policy Towards the Palestinians since 1987', *Israel Affairs* 11/2 (April 2005), 324–44; Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room – How Military Shapes Israeli Policy* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace 2006).

With the absence of the required knowledge infrastructure, the prospect of military threats causing political misperception is increased. In such conditions political considerations can lead political leaders to manipulate the public by increasing the sense of threat in order to gain political support and control. Such an example can be found in Israel where the Iranian threat, which is perceived by most Israelis as the country's most tangible and existential threat, is expanded to different fronts when Israeli politicians warn of an Iranian presence in the Gaza Strip⁵⁹ and argue against withdrawing from the Golan Heights because it will enable Iranian presence there as well.⁶⁰

When the political echelon has difficulties providing a suitable response to national security challenges and demonstrates poor leadership and 'strategic helplessness',⁶¹ a vacuum is created and the public looks for the military's professional advice. Under such circumstances, the military is perceived by the public and the political echelon as a professional authority that can provide the required solutions.⁶² Such circumstances in the interaction between the echelons create what the author has termed the 'intellectual-cultural symbiosis' whose main social and ideological characteristics were described broadly by Baruch Kimmerling.⁶³

The Winograd Committee describes in its initial report the strength of the asymmetry of the Israeli reality, claiming that 'in political-security issues ... the dominant professional actor in Israel is the IDF'.⁶⁴ The report identifies the problem as a structural problem in its essence, derived from the 'relative power of planning apparatuses, headquarters intelligence and evaluation in the military versus salient weakness of similar apparatuses in the political level'.⁶⁵ On the other hand, the report ignores the historical and cultural contexts that shape the Israeli ethos.

In another article⁶⁶ this author claimed that one of the salient characteristics of this ethos is the centrality of the military in the public consciousness and the confidence the Jewish public has in the military, compared to a lack of confidence in the political echelon. This finding is

⁵⁹MK Yuval Stienmitz in *Haaretz* daily newspaper, 11 March 2008.

⁶⁰Transportation Minister and former minister of defense, Shaul Mofaz in YNET, <www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3537162,00.html>.

⁶¹Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority', 441.

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Kimmerling, 'The Social Construction of the Concept "National Security" of Israel'.

⁶⁴Winograd Initial Report, 110

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁶Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness'.

demonstrated in many surveys, nowhere more so than in the Democratic Index and Peace Index.⁶⁷ An interesting finding is found in the Peace Index of May 2007, published after the initial Winograd Report. The public in Israel expressed 'a deep lack of confidence in the political echelon, significantly salient in comparison to the substantial confidence in the military leadership: 80 percent said they do not trust the political leadership and do not believe that it will find the right way to handle the security problems caused by the Kassam [Palestinian] rockets. Against this finding, 66 percent trust the military command and believe it eventually will find the solution to the problem.'⁶⁸

Following these findings, the authors are not surprised that the majority of the public thinks that 'the decision about what to do in order to stop the Kassam rocket launching should be given to the senior command of the IDF and not to the political leadership'.⁶⁹

In most cases, the military has no real competitors. Its staff's capabilities make it the leading and almost only professional staff of the government. The Winograd Committee went so far as to say that 'besides the IDF, we have not found any other professional element that really estimated the situation, checked alternatives and discussed them with the government ... it was the IDF only that served as professional staff for the government'.⁷⁰ Furthermore, this structural advantage becomes an essential advantage when the military echelon is the most influential actor in the decision-making process, while the civilian elements are marginalized. 'Generally speaking, we can say that although they [the civilian elements] were independent and voiced other opinions, their contribution to decision making was marginal.'⁷¹ Eventually, the asymmetric characteristic of the discourse between the echelons becomes absurd when the military echelon defines the strategic purpose of the war and its goals for the political echelon as mentioned before by General Halutz.

The reality as described by the Winograd Committee reflects the freedom that the political echelon took by giving up the responsibility for analyzing the strategic environment and threats and conceptualizing them in a way that could be clearly translated to political goals and directives for the military echelon. In the conditions of an 'intellectual

⁶⁷Asher Arian *et al.*, *Democracy Index 2003* (Jerusalem: Israeli Democratic Institution 2003). Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Herman, *Peace Index February 2005*: 'IDF is the institution with the highest trust and the common evaluation is that its influence on shaping national policy is suitable, not too strong and not too weak'.

⁶⁸Peace Index – May 2007, <<http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>>.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Winograd Initial Report, 123.

⁷¹Ibid., 128.

vacuum' among statesmen, the military goes in with its elaborated argumentation capability, and the basis of its arguments is mainly military.

The problem is aggravated when the military, led by a charismatic general, takes control of this vacuum. Such a leader paralyzes the political echelon with his personality and leadership. A charismatic general, perceived by the political leadership as brilliant and militarily knowledgeable, might convince the political echelon to adopt his recommendations as well as his definitions of the nature of the threats the nation faces and the way these threats should be tackled.⁷² And indeed in the case of Second Lebanon War 'the CGS personally played a very central role, almost exclusive, leading the initiative for launching the military campaign ...'.⁷³ His role was so central and crucial that even senior ministers remained silent; 'it was not bon ton [good form] to vote against [the decision to launch the war] at that stage', says Livni, Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁴

The political echelon in Israel (willingly) lacks civil institutional capabilities for generating knowledge that enables the development of competitive alternatives to military knowledge regarding violent conflicts and their management.⁷⁵ Therefore, even in cases where the political echelon has reservations regarding the military's interpretations, it lacks the capability to create a better alternative. Military knowledge is translated into sophisticated conceptual systems and becomes the common knowledge basis for both echelons⁷⁶ and actually, the most relevant and significant knowledge used in order to define security threats and evaluate them: 'dealing with important issues related to the military like the annual estimation of the situation (EOS) or security policy, the deliberation does not exceed the military's presentation and questions about it. The military's capability to introduce a nice and convincing presentation gives it in advance the advantage'.⁷⁷ The consequences can be even worse where the knowledge of the senior officers is not sufficiently developed and when the knowledge authority lacks sufficient knowledge.

⁷²Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness'.

⁷³Winograd Initial Report, 141.

⁷⁴Livni's testimony, Winograd Initial Report, 12.

⁷⁵For details regarding the lack of knowledge and its implications see Aviezer Ya'ari, *Civil Control on the Military in Israel*, Memorandum 72 (Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies: Tel Aviv Univ. Oct. 2004), 23, 25, 28, 30, 32, 34–5.

⁷⁶Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority'.

⁷⁷Ya'ari, *Civil Control on the Military in Israel*, 31.

Does the Knowledge Authority in Israel Lack Sufficient Knowledge?

Due to the fact that Israel lacks a security conception that can serve as an organizing conceptual system for statesmen and soldiers,⁷⁸ the military remains the hegemonic knowledge authority. Yet most of the military echelon actually lacks necessary components of knowledge. Worse than that, the National Defense College (NDC), which educates senior officers and state officials on how to manage national security, remains in the hands of the IDF, as if military security and national security are the same. The result is a NDC that over the years has become a military institution instead of a national institution.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, claims Brigadier General Tamari, the NDC's standards are low; 'the NDC ... is less good in comparison to other similar colleges in the world'.⁸⁰

Tamari, one of the founders and intellectual leaders of the Military Institute of Campaign Doctrine (MALTAM in Hebrew), who trained many senior officers in the institute over the past 12 years, claims that the weak capabilities shown by the IDF senior command during the Second Lebanon War were not unique to that war. He argues that these weak capabilities were demonstrated before the war and after.⁸¹ Tamari claims that the senior officers' class was molded to a tactical environment, not an operational one, and this is the reason behind the lack of innovation in military thought.⁸² Tamari recognizes the main weakness in the superior command and lack of training and professional education: 'there is no high military education in the IDF ... it is important to stress: it is not a problem of bad training and education but a total lack of it'.⁸³

If the quality of officers and military thought is low, then the encounter between the echelons and their discourse, which is intellectual in essence, will be shallow. Shallow discourse cannot produce intellectual assets and insights that are useful in correctly defining threats and security challenges and deeply understanding their essence. Such an intellectual weakness might easily facilitate the transformation of security threats into military threats that require a military response best delivered by the military establishment. Such a

⁷⁸Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', 31.

⁷⁹State Comptroller, *Annual Report* 57A, Sept. 2006 (Hebrew), <www.mevaker.gov.il/serve/contentTree.asp?bookid=473&cid=186&contentid=&parentcid=undefined&sw=1440&hw=830>.

⁸⁰Tamari, 'Can the IDF Become Different Following the Second Lebanon War?', 40.

⁸¹Ibid., 27.

⁸²Ibid., 28.

⁸³Ibid., 49.

reality perpetuates the circular course whereby social-security reality leads to shaping security doctrines, militarily by their nature, that perpetuate security threats defined mainly as military threats that perpetuate, in turn, protracted violent conflict that empowers the existing security doctrines that determine the social order.⁸⁴

The Intellectual Basis for the Encounter between the Echelons and Their Partnership

If the essence of the interaction between the echelons is the depth of their intellectual discourse and its quality, then the interaction should be defined as an intellectual encounter between different knowledge structures, between statesmanship and militarism. The purpose of such an encounter is to elaborate existing knowledge in order to maximize the synchronization between military and political efforts, ensuring the effectiveness of the military campaign for the political purpose of war.⁸⁵ But in the reality of salient asymmetry in favor of the military knowledge, where the political echelon lacks knowledge and its thought is militarily biased, the military echelon becomes an 'epistemic authority'. This authority, in turn causes 'informational dependency' of the political echelon on the military and 'informational closure' of the political echelon in place of alternative knowledge resources.⁸⁶ The consequence is military control over the discourse space between the echelons and an almost complete loss of substantive civil control. The political echelon remains helpless in the face of the military echelon's knowledge and argumentation capabilities.

One of the most interesting and challenging examinations of the influence of argumentation capabilities in the encounter between the echelons was carried out by Cori Dauber, who analyzes the crisis in civil-military relations in the United States.⁸⁷ Her approach is based on Argumentation Theory, and she uses it in order to characterize the military's influence on national security issues. Dauber's assumption is that even when it seems that political goals are defined, it is still not clear if the defined goals are the right ones. The reason is that statesmen operate in an uncertain environment and, therefore, have to act on the

⁸⁴A very similar principle was introduced by Charles Tilly in his seminal essay 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1985), 169–91 (1985).

⁸⁵Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness'.

⁸⁶Michael, 'The Israel Defense Forces as an Epistemic Authority'.

⁸⁷Dauber, 'The Practice of Argument'.

basis of rules of probability. The main tool in this regard is argumentation and its standards. Since the establishment of the Weinberger Doctrine in 1984, the criteria that dictate US intervention in conflict arenas are mostly military in their essence. Therefore, the standards have become militarized (short terms of operation, minimal casualties and rapid military decisions), and the military has the advantage in argumentation.⁸⁸

Dauber emphasizes the importance of public discourse and actors' capability to influence that discourse by their arguments' quality. In this sense she is the closest to deal with the influence dilemma.⁸⁹ The model she offers clarifies the way that the military echelon does not exceed its responsibility and authority as defined by the political echelon and does not shirk⁹⁰ from the political directive, but dramatically influences the national security decision-making process.

The same model and principles are relevant for evaluating threats and existential threats. Actually, the military's argumentation shapes the reference to the threats' nature and influences the political and public discourse in this regard. Its influence only increases when the political echelon demonstrates intellectual and leadership weaknesses in the discourse between the echelons.

Because open military-political discourse has superior importance for war and peace, the expectation is not to limit the senior officers' freedom of thought during their deliberations with the political echelon because 'the border between the military and political echelons runs along the scopes of authority and responsibility and not in the districts of spirit and thought'.⁹¹ But in an asymmetric reality that favors military knowledge, the psychological advantage the military gains might blur the borders between the echelons' scopes of authority and responsibility. In such conditions the military strategic thought might take control over the definition of national and political goals and interests including defining threats and their essence, and that might be dangerous.⁹² Such a blurred situation undermines the authority of the political echelon, and in extreme cases might lead to political regime change.

The intellectual basis for the encounter between the echelons is derived from the political culture, and in the case of Israel, it must be

⁸⁸Dauber, 'The Practice of Argument', 435–46.

⁸⁹Michael, 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations'.

⁹⁰D. Peter Feaver, *Armed Servant: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2003).

⁹¹Tal, *National Security*, 104.

⁹²John Allen Williams, 'The Military and Modern Society: Civilian-Military Relations in Post-Cold War', *America, World and I* 14/ 9 (1999).

changed because it does not enable effective functioning. Kori Schake has argued that 'there is no replacement for good leadership, but experience does not necessarily define a good leader'.⁹³ Good leadership leans on intellectual capability and relevant and developed knowledge, and good leadership is intellectual in its essence.

Possible Recommendations for Improving the Current Reality

One of the ways to tackle obstacles in the encounter between the echelons is elaborating and improving the discourse space quality. This author defined the concept of 'discourse space' as an exchange of information, knowledge and insights between the echelons with regard to specific issues. Each one of the echelons contributes its unique inputs to the discourse space where mutual influence is created. The knowledge generated in the discourse space becomes the conceptual framework for interpreting and conceptualizing the strategic environment, defining threats, risks and opportunities and then, shaping the strategy required for tackling those.⁹⁴ Therefore, we can assume that the actor that brings to the discourse space superior knowledge and better argumentation, will wield greater influence on the conceptualization process and, therefore, on the decision-making process.

Structured and continuous discourse between the echelons enables a broadening of the knowledge infrastructures of both echelons. Furthermore, it enables elaborating knowledge by generating new common knowledge. The new common knowledge becomes, in turn, the required infrastructure for 'shared responsibility'.⁹⁵ Such responsibility facilitates optimization of the military operation in favor of the political goal. In other words, military strategy is subordinated to grand strategy. Such discourse space facilitates the supremacy of political thought over military thought, and this is the effectiveness of substantial civil control as characterized by Yagil Levy.⁹⁶

Therefore, this author defines civil control as the mechanism that assures the compatibility between the military effort and the political goal. Such compatibility ensures the supremacy of broad political

⁹³Kori Schake, The 8th Herzlia Conference, Israel, Jan. 2008, <www.herzliya.conference.org/Eng/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=2027&CategoryID=248>.

⁹⁴Michael, 'The Military's Influence on the Transition Process from War to Peace' and 'The Dilemma Behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil-Military Relations'.

⁹⁵Douglas L. Bland, 'A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society* 26/1 (Fall 1999), 7–26.

⁹⁶Yagil Levy, *The Other Army of Israel: Materialist Militarism in Israel* (Tapuah, Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot/ Sifray Hemed 2003).

interests over the military's professional interests.⁹⁷ In order to ensure the efficiency of such civil control, the political echelon is obliged to deeply understand the conflict environment and its characteristics, exercise systematic staff work and integrate different knowledge resources in order to generate new relevant knowledge.

This knowledge should enable fulfilling the political goal while understanding the advantages and constraints of military operations. In these conditions it will become possible to cautiously, and in a responsible manner, define the essence of threats to national security, and it is reasonable to assume that under these circumstances, not all threats perceived as serious and even strategic in their essence will become existential threats.

The military echelon should understand in-depth the political reality in which it operates, and the political echelon should fully understand the influence of military operations on the political reality. The traditional civil control mechanisms are not necessarily relevant anymore. Civil control should be developed from the continuous discourse between the echelons. More than ever it should demonstrate the statesmen's intellectual leadership. Balanced discourse will decrease misperceptions and biases derived from the conservative realism of the military thought and enable analyzing national security challenges as social problems in *the broadest meaning*.

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⁹⁷Michael, 'The Second Lebanon War in the Mirror of the Civil Control's and Strategic-Intellectual Leadership's Weakness'.

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