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# The shift to defence in Israel's hybrid military strategy

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**ABSTRACT**
This paper traces the significant change that has occurred in the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy in recent decades. Relying on fresh materials concerning the organizational, doctrinal, and procurement processes of Israel's military, we identify a shift from offense towards defence as the preferred way to protect Israel in the face of new security threats. We also show that due to rapidly changing security challenges, limited resources, and the military's organizational culture, this change has been gradual, incremental, improvised, and largely informal. We propose that similar changes may characterize other states facing new security challenges.

## Introduction

In February 2016, during a visit to Israel's border with Jordan, with which Israel signed a peace treaty in 1994, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a 'multi-year plan to surround Israel with security fences to protect ourselves in the current and projected Middle East.' Describing the need to build massive barriers around Israel, PM Netanyahu stated, 'In our neighbourhood, we need to protect ourselves from wild beasts. At the end of the day ... there will be a fence like this one surrounding Israel entirely.'[1]

PM Netanyahu's portrayal of Israel's surroundings as inherently hostile and his emphasis on self-reliance as the cornerstone of the state's national security policy were not new. However, the stress he placed on *defensive* measures as the best way to address threats to Israel's security was revealing. Traditionally, Israel adhered to a military strategy that, although composed of both defensive and offensive elements – referred to herein as a 'hybrid'

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[1]*The Guardian*, 'Netanyahu Plans Fence around Israel to Protect It from "Wild Beasts"', 10 February 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/10/netanyahu-plans-fence-around-israel-to-protect-it-from-wild-beasts>.

military strategy – nonetheless emphasized *offensive* means. The main goal of this 'hybrid' military strategy was to deter or defeat Israel's Arab neighbours, the major threat to Israel's security, and it was implemented in several wars and military operations.

However, in recent decades, and especially since the Gulf War of 1991, the balance between the offensive and defensive components in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy began to shift towards *defence*. Relying on fresh data, this paper provides a systematic and up-to-date analysis of this significant change, which previous studies have identified but not discussed in a detailed and comprehensive manner.[2]

As the paper suggests, the shift in the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy has been gradual, incremental, improvised, and largely informal. Moreover, its end-result is not a defensive military strategy per se but rather a new type of 'hybrid' military strategy, one that is characterized by an emphasis on *defence* yet retains some *offensive* elements. The main goal of this 'hybrid' military strategy is to maintain the security status quo rather than changing it by military means. This paper suggests that these findings may be relevant to other states facing similar new security challenges.

Before pinpointing the change in Israel's military strategy, it is important to clarify the principal concepts used throughout the paper. The term 'military strategy'[3] (or military doctrine[4]) differs from 'grand strategy,' the latter being the responsibility of the political leadership.[5] As such, a military strategy, which is 'the subcomponent of grand strategy that deals explicitly with military means,'[6] should 'ideally … be formulated within the parameters established by a grand strategy so the objectives and priorities of each can be rationalized.' However, in practice military strategy 'sometimes drives grand strategy or simply operates independently of it.'[7]

Barry Posen distinguishes between offensive strategies that 'aim to *disarm* an adversary – to destroy his armed forces'; defensive strategies that 'aim to *deny* an adversary the objective that he seeks'; and deterrent strategies that

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[2]Aharon Levran, *Israeli Strategy after Desert Storm* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Uri Bar-Joseph (ed.), *Israel National Security Towards the 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Efraim Inbar, *Israel's National Security* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Itai Brun and Itamar Rabinovich, *Israel Facing a New Middle East* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2017); Charles D. Freilich, *Israeli National Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[3]Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Michael Handel, 'The Evolution of Israeli Strategy: The Psychology of Insecurity and the Quest for Absolute Security', in Williamson Murray, Macgregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 534–578.

[4]Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Military Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

[5]Ibid., 3. Cf. Paul M. Kennedy (ed.) *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[6]Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 13.

[7]Echevarria, *Military Strategy*, 4.

'aim to *punish* an aggressor – to raise his costs without reference to reducing one's own.'[8] Thus, for example, France adopted a defensive strategy in the interwar period; Nazi Germany invented an offensive strategy in the 1930s, which combined 'tanks, motorized infantry, and combat aircraft to achieve rapid victory'; and Switzerland adopted a deterrent strategy that made invasion and occupation of the country too costly.[9]

At the same time, some scholars have identified 'hybrid' military strategies that combine defensive, offensive, and deterrent elements, both in the present day and in earlier periods. Thus, Amr Nasr El-Din has argued that in the 1990s Iran adhered to a 'hybrid military strategy' comprised of two pillars, 'soft deterrence' and a 'confrontation-based strategy,' as reflected in the state's arms purchases in this period.[10] A more distant example is the 'hybrid military strategy' adopted by the Chinese Ming dynasty towards the Mongols in the 15th century, which included both defensive and offensive measures.[11]

Our analysis of the Israeli case, both in the past and in recent decades, suggests that its military strategy included both offensive and defensive elements, in addition to deterrence.[12] However, the *balance* between them shifted in different periods, especially since 1991. Hence, in our analysis of Israel we apply the term 'hybrid' military strategy and attempt to identify continuity and change in the balance between its offensive and defensive components.

## The making of Israel's military strategy

In order to comprehend the shift in the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy in recent decades, let us discuss its earlier military strategy.

After Israel gained its independence in 1948, the country's political and military leaders, as well as large segments of its public, felt a constant sense of threat from its Arab neighbours. Specifically, Israeli leaders feared a 'second round'[13] of fighting with the Arab states, believing that the latter were determined to reverse the outcome of the First Arab-Israeli War. To cope

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[8]Posen, *Sources*, 14–15. Italics in the original.
[9]Ibid., 14; Elizabeth Kier, 'Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars', *International Security*, 19/4 (1995), 65–93.
[10]Amr Nasr El-Din, 'Soft Deterrence: Iran, Its Military Strategy and the New Middle Eastern Security Environment, 1979–2007, n.d., <https://www.academia.edu/3567264/Soft_Deterrence_Iran_its_Military_Strategy_and_the_New_Middle_Eastern_Security_Environment_1979-2007>.
[11]Kai Filipiak, 'The Effects of Civil Officials Handling Military Affairs in Ming Times', *Ming Studies*, 66 (2012), 3.
[12]In Israel, the distinction between deterrence and pre-emption has often been blurred. Thus, we mainly differentiate between *offensive* and *defensive* means, though we relate to deterrence when relevant. See Uri Bar-Joseph, 'Variations on a Theme: The Conceptualization of Deterrence in Israeli Strategic Thinking', *Security Studies*, 7/3 (1998), 145–181; Amir Lupovici, *The Power of Deterrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[13]In Hebrew: *Ha-Sivuv Ha-Sheni*. See Mordechai Bar-On, *Smoking Borders* (Jerusalem and Sede Boker: Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi Press and Ben-Gurion University Press, 2001), 137 [Hebrew]; Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 103.

with this threat, Israel built a large and powerful military – the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) – accompanied by other security agencies, including the Mossad and the Israel Security Agency (ISA or Shin-Bet).[14] It also allegedly developed an independent nuclear capacity.[15]

Faced with an inherent imbalance with the Arab militaries in terms of quantity, Israel focused on advancing the quality of the IDF's equipment and manpower. In addition, in the early 1950s, Israeli leaders adopted a military strategy that included both offensive *and* defensive elements. The fact that this military strategy and the decision-making process that preceded it were not publicised until much later led to differing interpretations of its exact nature, with some scholars emphasizing its *offensive* components[16] and others highlighting its *defensive* ones.[17] Thus, while we argue below that, at least initially, the balance in Israel's military strategy leaned toward offence – Major General Israel Tal, who was Deputy Chief of Staff of the IDF and one of Israel's foremost military thinkers, argued that the IDF is 'Israel's Defence Force in its mission and the Army of Offense in its essence'[18] – we refer to it as a 'hybrid' military strategy.

Part of the ambiguity surrounding Israel's military strategy stemmed from the fact that it was designed to meet two types of security challenges.[19] The first challenge, referred to as 'fundamental (or basic) security,'[20] was the prospect of another major (or even total) war with the Arab militaries and necessitated the development of *offensive* means. The second challenge, referred to as 'routine security,'[21] entailed day-to-day operations 'geared to maintain and entrench the post-1948 territorial and demographic status quo,'[22] including fending off attacks ('infiltrations') by armed non-state actors,

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[14]For details, see Amiram Oren, Oren Barak, and Assaf Shapira, '"How the Mouse Got His Roar": The Shift to an "Offensive-Defensive" Military Strategy in Israel in 1953 and Its Implications', *International History Review*, 35/2 (2013), 356–376.

[15]Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[16]Ariel Levite, *Offense and Defense in Israeli Military Doctrine* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 27–33; Dan Horowitz, 'The Israeli Concept of National Security,' in Avner Yaniv (ed.) *National Security and Democracy in Israel* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 11–53; Israel Tal, *National Security* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1996), 11–12 [Hebrew]; Van Creveld, *The Sword*, 105–106; Oren, Barak, and Shapira, 'How the Mouse'; Guy Laron, 'The Domestic Sources of Israel's Decision to Launch the 1956 Sinai Campaign', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 42/2 (2015), 200–218; Isaac Ben-Israel, *Israel Defence Doctrine* (Ben-Shemen: Modan, 2013), 59–61 [Hebrew]; Yoram Fried, 'Strike First or Wait Defensively: The Formulation of the IDF's Fighting Strategy after Israel's War of Independence', *International Journal of Military History and Historiography*, 38/1 (2018), 67–91.

[17]Inbar, *Israel's National Security*; Zeev Elron, *Bracing for the Second Round* (Ben-Shemen: Modan, 2016) [Hebrew]; Brun and Rabinovich, *Israel Facing*, 7–8.

[18]I. Tal, *National Security*, 52. See also: Van Creveld, *The Sword*, 103. On the preference for offensive military thinking before 1948, see Yigal Shefi, *Officer's Badge* (Tel Aviv: MoD & Galili Center, 1991) [Hebrew].

[19]David Tal, 'Israel's Road to the 1956 War', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28/1 (1996), 59–81; Eado Hecht and Eitan Shamir, 'The Case for Israeli Ground Forces', *Survival* 58/5 (2016), 124–125.

[20]In Hebrew: *Bitachon Yesodi*.

[21]In Hebrew: *Bitachon Shotef*.

[22]D. Tal, 'Israel's Road,' 60; Hecht and Shamir, 'The Case,' 123.

some of whom had the backing of neighbouring states, and it required *defensive* measures, at least initially.

The structure of the IDF reflected Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy. It was to have a modern air force; an armoured corps; commando units; and a large intelligence community including a Military Intelligence Corps and other security agencies that would provide Israel with early warnings. These units, which were designed to implement the military strategy's *offensive* elements, were given priority in terms of funds and manpower.[23] The *defensive* units of the IDF, in turn, were to include the Territorial Defence[24] – "a system of fortified settlements located on possible invasion routes, meant to stop or delay the enemy"[25] – and the Border Guard, a military unit designed to safeguard Israel's borders. However, when the IDF failed to establish the latter, responsibility for it was passed on to the police. The resulting force was a sort of gendarmerie under the command of the police, and regular IDF units took on its primary mission, safeguarding Israel's borders.[26]

In the 1950s, Israel initially employed defensive means against 'infiltrations' from its Arab neighbours (especially Jordan, Syria, and Egypt), although it eventually shifted towards cross-border 'retaliatory raids' in response to attacks against its border settlements.[27] In 1956, Israel (together with Britain and France) launched a pre-emptive war against Egypt, tipping the balance between defence and offense further towards the latter.[28] The IDF's emphasis on offensive means became most pronounced in the 1967 war, when it defeated its Arab rivals within six days, conquering territories that tripled Israel's size.[29]

In the wake of the conflict, Israeli troops were positioned on the banks of the Suez Canal, the Jordan River, and in the Golan – all occupied Arab territories – thus limiting the use of further offensive measures. However, these limits, which became apparent during the War of Attrition, did not lead to a major shift towards defence. The situation reached a critical point in October 1973, when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israeli positions in the Sinai and Golan, respectively. Although Israeli leaders were briefed before the attack, they did not order a pre-emptive strike because, in the absence of a clear threat, Israel was liable to be labelled an aggressor and

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[23]I. Tal, *National Security*, 42.
[24]In Hebrew: *Hagana Merchavit*. See ibid. 69–70; Levite, *Offense and Defence*, 51; Laron, 'Domestic Sources'; Van Creveld, *The Sword*, 107.
[25]Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 11.
[26]In Hebrew: *Mishmar Ha-Gevul*. See Tal Misgav, 'The Border Guard before and during the Sinai War – Between a Military and a Police Force', in Haggai Golan and Shaul Shay (eds.), *When the Engines Roared* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2006), 201–225 [Hebrew].
[27]Bar-On, *Smoking Borders*, 166–199; Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[28]Levite, *Offense and Defence*, 51; Laron, 'Domestic Sources'; Motti Golani, *There Will Be War Next Summer* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1997), 98–100 [Hebrew].
[29]Ami Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70.

risked losing US support. Israel's relative neglect of defence meant that its positions were vulnerable to attack, as became evident in the first days of the war.[30]

As a result, during the period immediately after the 1973 War, Israel's leaders placed an emphasis on strengthening its defensive posture, and this was manifested in border fortifications and a renewed emphasis on Territorial Defence.[31] Later, however, the balance again shifted back towards offense, when Israel launched the Litani Operation (1978) and, most notably, the Lebanon War (1982).[32] However, the latter, which many Israelis regarded as a 'war of choice,' led to a decline in public support for offensive operations, and defensive means again gained prominence. Israel's efforts to prevent its neighbours from developing an independent nuclear capability (in 1981 it destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor) also attest to its preference for offense in this period.[33]

## Changing threats and threat perceptions

Underpinning the shift in the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy in recent decades are changes in the threats to Israel's security and, inter-connectedly, its leaders' threat perception.

Traditionally, Israeli military leaders have tended to differentiate between various types of threats to the state's security based on proximity to its civilian centre, a distinction that they sometimes presented as 'circles of threats.' In the early years of statehood, 'first-circle threats' stemmed mainly from Israel's neighbours (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon), although non-bordering states (especially Iraq), which presented 'second-circle threats,' were expected to intervene in the event of war. Accordingly, the IDF was organized into three regional commands (north, centre, and south) that presided over Israel's borders. As noted earlier, in this period Israel pursued a 'hybrid' military strategy that included *defensive* means to safeguard its borders and *offensive* means to defeat its rivals in the event of war.

However, following the Gulf War (1991), Israel's leaders identified new security threats, leading to significant changes in their threat perception. Consequently, 'first-circle' threats were seen as emanating from groups and individuals committing terror attacks; 'second-circle' threats originated from bordering states and armed non-state actors; and 'third-circle' threats

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[30]Protocol of Meeting of the Israeli Government, 6 October 1973, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/images/yk%206%2010%208%205%20.pdf> [Hebrew]; Levite, *Offense and Defence*, 64; Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 6.

[31]Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 4–13.

[32]Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 13–21. Israel's use of 'targeted killings' also indicates its emphasis on offense.

[33]Maoz, *Defending*, 351–353; Avi Shilon, *Menachem Begin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 345; Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 224.

stemmed from non-bordering states.[34] Importantly, this new threat perception has guided the IDF's processes of weapons procurement and force build-up.[35] It has also been reflected in Israeli strategic and intelligence assessments and, consequently, in the IDF's operational planning.

## 'First-circle' threats

In 1987, the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories (OT) launched a popular uprising, the Intifada, in defiance of Israel's rule. Israel had no early warning, its security services failed to deter rioters, and its offensive capacities were of limited use.[36] The failure to quash the Intifada, as well as sporadic waves of violence that occurred in the OT in the early 1990s, prompted Israel to negotiate with the PLO, culminating in the Oslo Agreement (1993). Later, the IDF cooperated with forces belonging to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the OT, but other Palestinian factions, especially Hamas, continued to threaten Israel's security.

The situation deteriorated after the collapse of the peace process and the outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000), when Palestinian suicide bombings caused the highest number of Israeli civilian casualties in decades.[37] This new 'first-circle' threat compelled Israel's security agencies – especially the IDF, which in the 1990s had reoriented itself to focus on non-bordering states with non-conventional abilities (see below) – to concentrate on counterinsurgency. This was evident when the IDF launched 'Operation Defensive Shield' (2002) in response to deadly Palestinian attacks, re-occupying major cities in the OT that had been transferred to PA control.[38]

Increasingly fighting in densely populated areas, the IDF encountered new challenges characteristic of a 'war amongst the people'[39] or 'hybrid warfare.'[40] Confrontations with both civilian armed factions and the PA's semi-military forces necessitated the use of light infantry units due to the ineffectiveness of the IDF's advanced technological weapons in these conditions. Such units, in turn, depended heavily on counterinsurgency intelligence, which in the past

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[34]Bar-Joseph, *Israel National Security*, 148. IDF CoS Gadi Eisenkot described a 'fourth-circle' of threats in the cyber domain. Idem, 'Cyberspace and the Israel Defense Forces', *Cyber, Intelligence, and Security*, 2/3 (2018), 99–104.

[35]Office of CoS of the IDF, *The IDF's Strategy* (Tel Aviv: 2015), 25–32 [Hebrew], <https://www.idf.il/media/5679/%D7%90%D7%A1%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%98%D7%92%D7%99%D7%99%D7%AA-%D7%A6%D7%94%D7%9C.pdf>. For an English version, see: <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/IDF%20doctrine%20translation%20-%20web%20final2.pdf>.

[36]Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989); Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 39–54.

[37]Jonathan Schachter, 'The End of the Second Intifada', *Strategic Assessment*, 13/3 (2010), 63–70.

[38]Ibid. 64.

[39]Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

[40]'Hybrid warfare' is the use of military forces together with irregular warfare methods, cyber, terror attacks and civil protest. See Russel W. Glenn, 'Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict', *Small Wars Journal*, 13 (2009), 1–8.

had largely been the responsibility of the ISA. The result was a joint effort to merge intelligence with operational capabilities,[41] removing organizational bureaucratic barriers to shorten the time needed to transform information into targets.[42] Some regard these efforts, including 'targeted killings' of Palestinian operatives, as one of the main factors that led to a decrease in Palestinian attacks.[43] Another factor, also stemming from Israel's inability to halt Palestinian attacks, was the construction of a massive 700-kilometer long 'Separation Barrier,' mostly within the OT.[44]

Politically, Israeli leaders failed to gain sufficient internal legitimacy and international support to advance a long-term political change in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, causing them to shift from 'conflict resolution' to 'conflict management.'[45] However, this shift was much more than a change of policy; it signalled a change in these leaders' strategic mind-set. Rather than focusing on a political process designed to achieve defined goals (e.g., peace, separation), they concentrated on the process itself, purposely not setting a defined end goal. This led to a policy of 'security maintenance,' which, in turn, acknowledged the IDF's inability to contribute to a decisive political end, if such an end was indeed desired.

## 'Second-circle' threats

As the 'traditional' threat of a state-based military invasion of Israel's territory declined,[46] a major challenge, which increased in the 1990s, was the guerrilla warfare waged by Hizbullah, the Lebanese armed group, against Israel's 'Security Zone' in Lebanon. Again, Israel's military superiority did not deter its adversary from attacking its positions, military operations in 1993 and 1996 failed to eliminate the threat, and Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.[47]

Afterwards, Hizbullah continued to launch limited attacks against Israel. In 2006, however, following a deadly Hizbullah ambush, Israel responded with a massive attack on its adversary. The fact that a limited attack by an armed non-state actor sparked a full-scale military confrontation accords with the concept of 'hybrid warfare.' Indeed, this concept characterized the entire conflict.[48] Faced with a non-state actor equipped with advanced military

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[41]Kobi Michael, David Siman-Tov and Oren Yoeli, 'The Development of the Jointness Concept in Intelligence Organizations', in Yossi Kuperwasser and David Siman-Tov, *Intelligence in Theory and in Practice* (Herzliya: Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2017), 10–12.

[42]Amir Bohbot, 'Intelligence Officer: The Development of Targeted Killings', *Walla News*, 28 December 2012 [Hebrew] <https://news.walla.co.il/item/2601434>.

[43]Schachter 'The End', 65–66.

[44]B'Tselem, 'The Separation Barrier', 11 November 2017, <www.btselem.org/separation_barrier>.

[45]Yaakov Bar-Siman-Tov, 'Adaptation and Learning in Conflict Management, Reduction, and Resolution', *Journal of Peace Studies*, 8/1 (2003), 19–37.

[46]*The IDF's Strategy* (2015), 3, 32.

[47]Moshe Tamir, *Undeclared War* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2005) [Hebrew].

[48]Alex Deep, 'Hybrid War: Old Concept, New Techniques', *Small Wars Journal*, 2 (2015), 2–5.

capabilities that exceeded those of most Middle Eastern militaries, which was not constrained by international norms, and which combined guerrilla warfare with regional politics, Israel sought to achieve political, military, and symbolic gains.[49] However, Hizbullah proved to be a difficult opponent: it launched 3,970 missiles and rockets (of which 900 hit urban centres), killing 43 civilians (and 117 soldiers), injuring 4,200, and causing the displacement of 300,000.[50] The vulnerability of Israel's civilian rear was evidenced by the decline of public morale and economic losses in its north.[51]

During the conflict, Israel tried to use its advanced technological capabilities to carry out the precision standoff air strikes that its military leaders, especially from the Israeli Air Force (IAF), considered the optimal solution to the threat posed by Hizbullah.[52] However, such measures failed to dissuade Hizbullah from firing short-range rockets at Israel.[53] This led to a decline in Israeli public morale, which was later augmented by the perception, common among Israeli soldiers and civilians alike, that the IDF's ground forces were failing to accomplish their mission.[54] Public protest encouraged Israel's leaders to pursue a different path: three weeks after the beginning of the war, the IDF launched a ground manoeuvre to remove the rocket threat, combined with an aerial attack on Hizbullah's civilian infrastructure in Beirut. These moves were also designed to provide Israel with a visible narrative that would restore both internal legitimacy and deterrence.[55]

The rapid decrease in valuable targets for aerial attacks led the IDF to search for ways to transform the visual intelligence gathered by its advance drones into actionable Time-Sensitive-Targets (TST).[56] This made it possible to destroy some of Hizbullah's rocket launchers shortly after they launched, eventually decreasing the number of rockets fired, However, this failed to dissuade Hizbullah from continuing its assault.[57] Consequently, Israel was forced to ask the US for an emergency resupply of precision-guided-munitions.[58] The IDF's ground forces, in turn, were criticized for following ever-changing plans with no clear operational objectives, plans that were not adjusted to the challenges posed by Hizbullah's guerrilla warfare and its use

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[49]Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days* (New York: St. Martin's, 2008).
[50]Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Second Lebanon War', n.d., <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Hizbullah/Pages/Hizbullah%20attack%20in%20northern%20Israel%20and%20Israels%20response%2012-Jul-2006.aspx>.
[51]Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Operations in Israel's War against Hezbollah* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2011), 146.
[52]Ibid., 36–37.
[53]Uzi Rubin, *The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan U, 2007), 1–49.
[54]Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 177.
[55]Gabi Siboni, 'Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War', *INSS Insight*, 74 (2008). <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/disproportionate-force-israels-concept-of-response-in-light-of-the-second-lebanon-war/>
[56]Lambeth, *Air Operations*, 145.
[57]Ben-Israel, *Israel Defence*, 118–120.
[58]Cathy Sultan, *Tragedy in South Lebanon* (Minneapolis: Scarletta, 2008), 39.

of anti-tank missiles, improvised explosive devices, and underground military infrastructures. It was also argued that the IDF's operational planning mainly focused on obtaining a symbolic achievement,[59] again due to the inability to achieve a clear operational or political goal.

A further example of a 'second-circle' threat to Israel's security is the Palestinian armed group Hamas. After Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and Hamas's takeover of this area, the relations between Israel, which imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip, and both Hamas and other Palestinian factions there (especially the Islamic Jihad) have been characterized by constant friction. This resulted in several 'rounds of fighting'[60] that involved IDF aerial and ground operations on the one hand, and the firing of rockets and missiles by Hamas against Israel on the other. Such 'rounds' occurred in 2008–9 ('Operation Cast Lead'), 2012 ('Operation Pillar of Defence'), and 2014 ('Operation Protective Edge').[61]

The 'rounds of fighting' between Israel and these Lebanese and Palestinian armed factions all followed a similar pattern: armed actions and force build-up by non-state actors prompted Israel to respond militarily, leading to rocket barrages against Israel's civilian centres, which in turn served as incentives to launch IDF operations. Such operations usually began with an aerial attack and in some cases escalated into a limited ground manoeuvre.

Israel's repeated military operations reflected its changing threat perceptions: the (perceived) narrowing of the distance between Israel's urban centres and the border zone, due to the mass launching of rockets,[62] and a growing sense of proximity between tactical changes in the fighting zones and the civilian rear, whether due to attacks against civilians or psychological warfare.[63] Another threat emanated from non-state actors' attempts to overcome their technological inferiority by shifting their military efforts to the 'sub-terrain' dimension using tunnels,[64] and by employing low-

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[59]Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 176.

[60]In Hebrew: *Svavey Lechima* (pl. of *Sevev Lechima*). This term is reminiscent of the term 'second round' (*Ha-Sivuv Ha-Sheni*; see above), but is also different both semantically (*Sevev Lechima* instead of *Sivuv*) and in its meaning: whereas the 'second round' connoted *one* major interstate confrontation that could entail massive material and human losses and have a strategic-political outcome (although it did not preclude future 'rounds'), 'rounds of fighting' are short, limited, and recurring military confrontations involving state and non-state actors, which are underpinned by leaders' disbelief in their ability to achieve strategic change by military means.

[61]For the IDF's narrative, see 'Israel and Gaza: How Did We Get Here?', 6 August 2018, <https://www.idf.il/en/articles/hamas/israel-and-gaza-how-did-we-get-here>; State of Israel, *The 2014 Gaza Conflict*, May 2015, <https://mfa.gov.il/ProtectiveEdge/Documents/2014GazaConflictFullReport.pdf>.

[62]For official figures, see Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, n.d. <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/terrorism/palestinian/pages/missile%20fire%20from%20gaza%20on%20israeli%20civilian%20targets%20aug%202007.aspx>.

[63]Gadi Eisenkot, 'A Changed Threat? The Response on the Northern Arena', *Military and Strategic Affairs*, 2/1 (2010), 37.

[64]'The Gaza Tunnel Industry', n.d., IDF website, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/hamas/hamas/the-gaza-tunnel-industry>.

tech means such as balloons, kites, and multi-rotor drones against Israel's territory.[65] The combination of tactical innovations and psychological warfare that these actors employed had a profound effect on Israelis' sense of insecurity, especially near the borders.[66]

As in Lebanon, the IDF's offensive actions against Hamas encountered legitimacy problems both domestically, resulting from the limited political goal set by the government and the IDF's inability to defeat its adversary, and internationally, due to the political, legal, and operational complexity of the conflict. Consequently, the IDF set modest operational goals: it no longer sought to defeat Hamas or occupy the Gaza Strip. Rather, it endeavoured to restore stability and a 'sense of security' to the Israeli public[67] by decreasing rocket and other cross-border attacks and achieving tactical gains that would serve as political leverage vis-à-vis Hamas.[68]

The third 'second-circle' threat stemmed from the regional turmoil (2010–11), challenging some of Israel's basic assumptions regarding the decreasing probability of a military conflict with neighbouring states. In this case, Israel responded by avoiding direct involvement in what it argued were internal conflicts. Yet simultaneously, Israel increased its military, intelligence, and other security cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, cultivated a trilateral relationship with the US and Jordan in the face of the escalating Syrian conflict,[69] and improved tacit relations with Gulf states.[70] Later, when the Syrian regime weakened, and after Iran, Russia, and Hizbullah intervened therein, Israel's involvement there also intensified: it cultivated covert relations with rebel forces and provided humanitarian aid to civilians in the border area.[71]

### 'Third-circle' threats

The First Gulf War was an important milestone in the shift towards defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy. During this war, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at urban and strategic locations in Israel.[72] This attack, and Israeli apprehensions that Iraq might use chemical weapons against it,[73] engendered a new

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[65]Erica Chernofsky, How Kites and Balloons Became Militant Weapons', BBC, 12 July 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-44743813/how-kites-and-balloons-became-militant-weapons>.
[66]IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, *IDF Radio*, 14 January 2019.
[67]Ibid.
[68]Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, 'Mowing the Grass in Gaza', *Jerusalem Post*, 22 July 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Mowing-the-grass-in-Gaza-368516>.
[69]Yitzhak Gal, 'Fruit of Israeli-Jordanian Peace Still on the Tree', *Ynet*, 30 March 2018, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5209464,00.html>.
[70]Brun and Rabinovich, *Israel Facing*, 106.
[71]Elizabeth Tsurkov, 'Inside Israel's Secret Program to Back Syrian Rebels', *Foreign Policy*, 6 September 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/06/in-secret-program-israel-armed-and-funded-rebel-groups-in-southern-syria≥.
[72]Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Gulf War', n.d., <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/history/pages/the%20gulf%20war%20-%201991.aspx>.
[73]John F. Burns, 'Iraqi President Renews Threat to Attack Israel', *New York Times*, 10 October 1990.

perception of an 'existential' threat in Israel. However, unlike traditional security threats to Israel, which were liable to result from ground assaults by its close neighbours, with possible support from their more distant allies, the threat now stemmed primarily from a non-bordering state that used long-range missiles to inflict mass casualties and disrupt Israel's economy. Israel was also unprepared for its adversary's ability to shorten to a few minutes the warning time before an attack. Indeed, not only did Israel fail to deter Iraq from attacking, but Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy, which relied on advance warnings, appeared to be obsolete. Israel's inability to respond due to US pressure underscored Israel's predicament.[74]

After the removal of the Iraqi threat in 1991 and 2003, Israel turned its attention to Iran as the major 'third-circle' threat. This perception stemmed from the possibility that Iran would arm its long-range missiles with non-conventional, even nuclear, warheads. In addition, Iran's 'fingerprints' were identified in Israel's 'under the threshold' struggles with 'second-circle' non-state actors (Hizbullah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad).

There is no single event that explains the growing tension in Israel's relations with Iran, although some identify the years 2011–12 as its peak. In this period, Israel realized that it lacked both the 'hard' and 'soft' power necessary to prevent Iran from bringing its nuclear project to a stage of proximate operability. The former type of power required the development of both offensive and defensive military means that exceeded Israel's capacities. The latter, in turn, necessitated that Israel persuade international powers to pressure Iran, via political and economic means, to restrain its military aspirations, for example by halting all legal Iranian monetary transactions.[75]

## A defensive turn in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy

Considering the changes in the perception of threats to Israel's security and the limitations of its military, the IDF, as described above, this section identifies five main shifts towards *defence* in the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy. Four shifts are practical: from deterrence and retaliation to increased emphasis on civil defence and long-range precision attack capabilities to protect Israel's rear; from protecting Israel's territorial integrity and a limited effort to defend its borders to an emphasis on border defence; from large-scale military operations designed to transform Israel's threat environment to shorter 'rounds of fighting'; and from 'eliminating terrorism,' even as a rhetorical goal, to counterterrorism. The fifth

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[74]Brun and Rabinovich, *Israel Facing*, 38.
[75]Daniel Sobelman, 'Restraining an Ally: Israel, the United States, and Iran's Nuclear Program, 2011–2012, *Texas National Security Review*, 1/4 (2018),1.

shift, which is connected to all the other four shifts, serves as the cultural basis for Israel's new 'hybrid' military strategy.

## From deterrence to increased emphasis on civil defence and precision attacks

Before the Gulf War (1991), Israel held that the optimal way to protect its civilian rear, should deterrence fail, was to retaliate in a way that would compel its adversaries to yield. However, when deterrence failed and removing the Iraqi threat by force was likewise impossible, due to US pressures, Israel established a 'Home Front Command' designed to protect its civilian rear.[76] Significantly, this unit was not civilian but rather part of the IDF, and its name conformed to its organizational culture. Further developments, which were also related to the same organizational culture, although in a different way, included an emphasis on short-term solutions to changing threats, that is, improvisation, and a 'positivist' view of technological innovation as a possible solution to security problems. This was evident in the boost given to Israel's satellite program, which launched its first visual reconnaissance satellite ('Ofek 3') in 1995.[77]

Importantly, many of these solutions consisted of passive or active *defence* (see below), seeking to persuade the adversary to rethink its intended goal. Thus, over the years Israel developed missile defence systems, including the 'Arrow 2' and 'Arrow 3,' in response to threats of long-range missiles from Iran,[78] and the 'Iron Dome' defence system, which was designed to intercept low altitude projectiles such as rockets and mortars from the Gaza Strip. In both cases, Israel drew on its innovative engineering capacity (low-tech threats were also addressed via similar technological efforts[79]) combined with extensive US aid and cooperation. Thus, for example, the 'Iron Dome' was manufactured with the aid of US foreign military funds, and in 2019 the US military announced its intention to purchase two 'Iron Dome' batteries.[80]

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[76]See Home Front Command website, <https://www.oref.org.il/894-en/pakar.aspx>.

[77]See Israel Ministry of Defence website, <http://www.mod.gov.il/Defence-and-Security/Pages/aero space.aspx>; interview with Chaim Ashad, head of Israel's satellite program, in *Hayadan*, 6 April 2015 [Hebrew], < https://www.hayadan.org.il/20-years-to-ofek-3-lounch-0604158>.

[78]'Boeing and Israel Aerospace Industries Arrow 3 Interceptor Successfully Completes 2nd Flight Test', 7 January 2014 <https://boeing.mediaroom.com/Boeing-and-Israel-Aerospace-Industries-Arrow -3-Interceptor-Successfully-Completes-2nd-Flight-Test>.

[79]Eli Tzipori, 'A Mini-Hackathon Transformed into a Mass-funding Campaign: Trying to Fight the Terror Caused by Kites', *Globes*, 8 October 2018 [Hebrew], <https://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did= 1001255589>.

[80]Cassandra Gomez-Hochberg, 'US Army Acquires Two Iron-Dome Batteries', *Jerusalem Post*, 16 January 2019 <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Report-US-Army-acquires-two-Iron-Dome-batteries-577600>. Annual arms sales figures for 2018 indicate the defensive characteristic of most Israeli arms sales. Yaniv Kubovich, 'MOD Reported an Annual Record of Arms Sales in 2018, *Haaretz*, 17 April 2019 [Hebrew], <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.7136787>.

Also in the context of the Iranian threat, and for the first time, Israel agreed to a constant deployment of foreign military forces in its territory to defend it against potential threats.[81] This included the incorporation of US AEGIS missile ships[82] and the X-band AN/TPY-2 radar as a vital part of Israel's ballistic missiles defence architecture,[83] in addition to the connection of Israeli aerial control sensors and control centres to the US Shared Early Warning (SEW) satellite missile system.[84]

Furthermore, Israel enhanced its aerial and special operations capabilities to support the launching of long-distance precision attacks.[85] This included relying on an ability to merge intelligence sources ('Jointers') and shorten the time needed to transform tactical information into accurate targets.[86] It was also evident in the re-organization of manoeuvring forces into technologically enhanced 'Combat-Teams' – assigned to battalions or brigades[87] – that were tasked with destroying important targets, instead of the regular brigades and battalions designed to seize control over specific territories.[88]

Simultaneously, Israel acquired *offensive* capabilities that provided the ability to attack under the threshold of war, via weapons platforms that can provide long-distance force projection with high survivability, thus allowing for a 'second strike ability,' such as the US-built F-35 stealth warplanes and German-made submarines reportedly capable of carrying missiles with nuclear warheads.[89] Israel's attempt to slow down Iran's nuclear and missile projects also included offensive actions, such as the use of STUXNET malware, as part of the combined US and Israel 'Olympic Games' cyber-attack operation against Iran's uranium enrichment facilities, and covert operations, such as damaging the supply chain for Iran's nuclear project and assassinating nuclear scientists.[90]

The focus on special operations, especially to defuse 'third-circle' threats (and closer ones), had a noticeable effect on the development and expansion

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[81]Karl Vic and Aaron J. Klein, 'How a U.S. Radar Station in the Negev Affects a Potential Israel-Iran Clash', *Time Magazine*, 30 May 2012, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2115955,00.html>.

[82]'US Navy Ships Form a First Line of Missile Defense', *Times of Israel*, 30 May 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/navy-ships-form-first-line-of-missile-defense>.

[83]'US Deploys Antimissile Radar to Israel', *Ynet*, 28 September 2008, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3602951,00.html>.

[84]Jeremy M. Sharp, 'US Foreign Aid to Israel', *Congressional Research Service Report*, 16 September 2010, 8, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20100916_RL33222_c1f917458b1b58dd0fa3ea177e655817c8cad13a.pdf>.

[85]*The IDF's Strategy* (2015), 32.

[86]See a report in the IDF Artillery website concerning the changes in its organization to 'Accurate Fire Brigades', n.d. [Hebrew] <http://www.beithatothan.org.il/node/1755>.

[87]In Hebrew: *Tzevet Krav*.

[88]Ami Rochkes-Damba, 'The Ground Forces Revealed Brigade-Combat-Team Gideon', *Israel Defense*, 12 August 2018 [Hebrew], <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/he/node/35248>.

[89]'The Dolphin Submarine Could Carry Nuclear Missiles', *Channel 2 Online*, 3 June 2012, <https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/security/Article-0451161a61fa731018.htm>.

[90]Jon Lindsay, 'Stuxnet and the Limits of Cyber Warfare', *Security Studies*, 22/3 (2013), 365–404.

of the IDF's special operations units.[91] These include the Operation Division[92] in the IDF's military intelligence directorate (the Israel Defence Intelligence – IDI), a staff body responsible for operating IDI units and integrating them into operational missions of the general staff and the main operational headquarters[93]; the Depth Command, an operational command tasked with carrying out long-distance operations[94]; and the Commando Brigade[95] to better coordinate commando warfare tactics with military manoeuvres.[96]

Parallel changes took place in the IAF. Long and costly procurement processes were initiated, mostly focused on purchasing aerial platforms capable of conducting long-distance attacks while crossing dense lines of anti-aircraft defence and radar control. These include F-15I warplanes, considered the IAF's 'strategic arm' due to their long-range and munitions carrying abilities,[97] and new F-35 stealth warplanes.[98] A potentially more revolutionary change was the IAF's development and operational use of a fleet of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). These were originally employed for visual intelligence gathering and later, after improving their ability to fly long distances and operate for hours without being refuelled, also for attacks. Currently, the IAF's UAVs account for almost the same percentage of flight hours as its manned aerial vessels.[99]

## *From protecting Israel's territorial integrity to increased emphasis on border defence*

Before 1991, Israel's main security concern was military invasion by its neighbours, and the IDF's primary mission was to protect the country's territorial integrity. Israel's lack of strategic depth stipulated the swift move of the battlefield into the enemy's territory.[100] This required intelligence gathering that would allow the IDF sufficient time to mobilize the reserve forces. Although after 1973 more emphasis was accorded to the fortification of Israel's borders (see above), 'border defence' was still viewed as a secondary military objective. Consequently, and unlike other states (e.g., the US) that

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[91]Eitan Shamir and Eyal Ben-Ari, 'The Rise of Special Operations Forces: Generalized Specialization, Boundary Spanning and Military Autonomy', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41/3 (2018), 335–371.

[92]In Hebrew: *Hativat Ha-Hafa'ala*.

[93]IDF website, <https://www.idf.il/7532>.

[94]Anshel Peffer, 'Israel Announces New "Depth" Command for Long-range Military Operations', *Haaretz*, 15 December 2011, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5219777>.

[95]Jonathan Beck, 'IDF to Set Up Special Commando Brigade', *Times of Israel*, 7 July 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-to-set-up-special-commando-brigade/>.

[96]Roei Levi, 'Killing Romel', *Ma'arachot* 480–481 (2018), 52–57 [Hebrew].

[97]Shahar Tzurani. The "Thunder" (F15I) Will Remain the Strategic Airplane', IAF website, 16 January 2016 [Hebrew], <http://www.iaf.org.il/4443-46114-he/IAF.aspx>.

[98]Carmel Stern and Eitam Almadon, 'The First F-35 Operational Strike', IAF website, 22 May 2018, <http://www.iaf.org.il/4473-50208-en/IAF.aspx>.

[99]'The [Air] Force's Squadrons', IAF website, n.d. [Hebrew], <http://iaf.org.il/254-he/IAF.aspx>.

[100]Levran, *Israeli Strategy*, 155–156.

rely on designated border defence security forces, Israel's Border Guard engaged in policing (see above), and regular offensive units of the IDF protected Israel's borders in rotating border patrol assignments.

Following the 1967 War, Israel's leaders spoke of the need for 'defensible borders' and sought to create 'buffer zones' in the territories it had occupied. Later, Israel strove to do the same in Lebanon. After the Oslo Agreement, Israel cooperated with PA forces in the OT. Israel's peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan also led to cooperation in securing Israel's borders. However, the old doctrine of 'buffer zones' was not abandoned. For example, Israel exploited the relative chaos in the Syrian-Lebanese border area to draw 'red lines' for the deployment of strategic capabilities by Hizbullah and Iran, which Israel considered a threat to its security, in addition to launching attacks against Iranian targets in Syria.[101]

However, the changing nature of global security threats, such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and cyber-attacks, on the one hand, and the declining prices of trans-border weapons systems (rockets, missiles, drones, sub-terrain, cyber tools), on the other, have made borders more pregnable and at the same time increased their importance. Consequently, the dynamic concept of border defence in Israel gradually changed into a rather static notion, according to which all the state's borders should be fortified and protected from threats that include terrorism, illegal immigration, and the smuggling of goods, arms, and drugs. Accordingly, border defence became an end in itself, and consequently Israel allocated more resources to developing an overarching national border defence strategy that encompasses both passive defence – barriers and other fortifications – and active defence – conducted by dedicated forces and intelligence gathering abilities.

The 'Separation Barrier' that Israel built in the OT was mentioned above. However, this was only the first of several massive barriers constructed around Israel in recent years. After Israel's confrontation with Hamas (2014), and especially due to the latter's use of cross-border tunnels, it was reported that a 65-kilometer long barrier would be built on the border with the Gaza Strip. This barrier, specifically designed to defend Israel against cross-border tunnels, 'combines an underground wall, an above-ground fence and a complex system of sensors and monitoring devices.'[102] It followed the construction of another barrier, more than three times longer (220 kilometres), on the Israeli-Egyptian border, which was designed to prevent armed attacks and the influx of illegal immigrants and refugees.[103] Indeed,

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[101]Isabel Kershner, 'Israel Confirms Attacks on Iranian Targets in Syria', New York Times, 20 January 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/20/world/middleeast/israel-attack-syria-iran.html>.

[102]Amos Harel, 'A New Underground Reality Is Taking Shape along the Gaza-Israel Border', Haaretz, 12 May 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/a-new-reality-is-taking-shape-along-the-gaza-israel-border-1.5471381>.

[103]Ministry of Defence, 'Sha'on Chol', n.d. [Hebrew], <http://www.mod.gov.il/building/projects/Pages/shaon-hol.aspx>.

according to reports in May 2017, only one refugee had managed to cross this border in the preceding year.[104] Another barrier was erected on Israel's de facto border with Syria following the outbreak of the Syrian conflict. Furthermore, in 2017 it was reported that Israel planned to construct a 30-kilometre-long wall along its border with Jordan due to apprehensions regarding infiltrations by 'Global Jihadists'.[105] Later, parts of the Israeli-Lebanese border were also fortified. As was noted earlier, Israel's massive fortification efforts motivated its adversaries not only to resort to mortars, rockets, and tunnels but also to low-tech means, encouraging the IDF to adapt itself to these new threats.[106]

Several organizational and operational changes in the IDF also reflected the growing emphasis on border defence. First, the Field Intelligence Corps was transferred (in 2000) from the Military Intelligence Corps to the operational Ground Forces Headquarters. This unit, which is responsible 'for collecting visual information on the battlefield and rapidly transferring it to other forces,'[107] uses surveillance systems controlled by operators from afar or installed on manned and unmanned armed vehicles. Second, several military units were reorganized (in 2017) into the Border Defence Unit,[108] a new military command, control, and force-build-up unit that includes four light infantry battalions and specialized tracker units.[109] Third, several manoeuvring divisions were converted into regional divisions. These include the new Golan Heights regional division (Division 210), entrusted with tackling instability on the Syrian border, which, quite tellingly, was separated from the manoeuvring division (Division 36) that had been in charge of securing the Syrian border since 1973.[110]

On 4 December 2018, PM Netanyahu and IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot announced the launch of 'Operation Northern Shield' against the tunnels Hizbullah had constructed under Israel's border with Lebanon.[111] The

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[104]Ilan Lior, 'Only One Asylum Seeker Illegally Entered Israel via Egypt in the Past Year', *Haaretz*, 23 May 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-only-one-asylum-seeker-entered-israel-via-egypt-in-the-past-year-1.5475573>.

[105]Gili Cohen, 'This Is Israel's Fence against ISIS: One Small Sign and a Very Big Gap', *Haaretz*, 4 April 2017, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.780998>.

[106]Shabtai Shoval, 'Israel's National Security Strategy for 2030, *Israel Defense*, 11 September 2018, <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/35633>.

[107]IDF website, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/field-intelligence>.

[108]In Hebrew: *Ma'arach Haganat Ha-Gevulot.*

[109]'Get to Know the Border Defence Unit', IDF website, 16 February 2017, <https://www.idf.il/%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D/%D7%96%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A2-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%91%D7%A9%D7%94/%D7%9E%D7%96%D7%99%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%9A-%D7%94%D7%92%D7%A0%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%92%D7%91%D7%95%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%AA/>.

[110]Amir Oren, 'The Thinking Man Will Win', *Walla News*, 29 March 2018 [Hebrew], <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3146153>.

[111]Loveday Morris and Ruth Eglash, 'Israel Announces Operation to Destroy Hezbollah Tunnels under its Northern Border', *Washington Post*, 4 December 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-announces-operation-to-destroy-hezbollah-tunnels-in-its-territory/2018/12/04/f9e74058-f7cb-11e8-8642-c9718a256cbd_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3a805de53cbb>.

operation concluded about one month later, having discovered the sixth cross-border tunnel.[112] Unlike previous military operations that Israel had launched in Lebanon – most notably 'Operation Peace for Galilee' in 1982 – this operation was conducted *within* Israel's territory, and its main protagonist was its Combat Engineering Corps, which uncovered and destroyed Hizbullah's tunnels.[113] This episode further underscored Israel's shift to defence, if not in word then in practice.

### From decisive military operations to 'rounds of fighting'

Israel's bitter experience in the military operations that it launched in Lebanon and the OT led to a gradual shift in the main focus of the IDF's contingency preparations, force build-up, and strategic planning: from 'decisive,' large-scale military operations designed to transform Israel's threat environment to 'rounds of fighting.' This shift is based on the premise that security threats will arise and that war is inevitable, but they can be postponed by military action short of a direct confrontation, especially since the latter may not benefit Israel.[114] Hence, the IDF adopted the notion of a 'Campaign Between Wars' (CBW): an *ongoing* campaign[115] that constantly challenges potential adversaries, decreasing their ability to inflict harm upon Israel in the next 'round of fighting'[116] yet does not strive to achieve a political end goal.

This new approach accords with the above-mentioned perception, common among Israeli leaders, that the surrounding region is turbulent. However, in contrast to earlier periods, when Israel sought to transform this reality through war (in 1956, 1967, and 1982) or peace (in 1979 and the 1990s), it now believes that it cannot change the surrounding environment. This belief further supports the preference for CBW, which helps avoid costly, all-out military confrontations while responding, with covert operations, aerial attacks, and other means, to the threat posed by adversaries armed with advanced military technologies.[117] Importantly, this new approach fits the IDF's offensive organizational culture and also responds to the increasing unwillingness of Israeli society to put soldiers and civilians at risk (see below).

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[112]Yoav Zitun, 'IDF Declares End of Operation Northern Shield with Finding of 6th Tunnel', *Ynet*, 13 January 2019, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5,445,732,00.html>.

[113]'Operation Northern Shield Comes to an End', IDF website, <https://www.idf.il/en/articles/hezbollah/operation-northern-shield-comes-to-an-end>.

[114]Ben Caspit, 'Top Secret: Israel's Special Operations Unit's First Interview', *Maariv*, 4 February 2017 [Hebrew], <http://www.maariv.co.il/news/military/Article-573485>.

[115]In Hebrew: *Ha-Ma'aracha She-Bein Ha-Milhamot* (*MABAM*).

[116]Shai Shabtai, 'The Doctrine of Campaign between Campaigns', *Ma'arachot* 445 (2012), 24 [Hebrew]; Freilich, *Israeli National Security*, 225; Gadi Eisenkot and Gabi Siboni, *The Campaign Between Wars* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2019).

[117]Amos Harel, Gili Cohen, and Jackie Huri, 'Report in Lebanon: The Israeli Air Force Attacked the Border Area with Syria', *Haaretz*, 25 February 2014 [Hebrew], <https://www.haaretz.co.il/1.2253273>.

One of the most noticeable effects of the shift from decisive military operations to 'rounds of fighting' and CBW is that the cyber realm has become a further arena of force deployment. Although attempts to merge cyber-attacks as part of kinetic attacks (i.e., those involving actual warfare) have been on the rise for some time, the de-territorial nature of cyber-attacks and the technological and legal constraints that states face when trying to attribute such actions to a specific attacker made them a suitable weapon for Low-Intensity Conflicts (LICs), providing attackers with denial-ability that prevents them from crossing the threshold of war. The IDF acknowledged its use of cyber operations in 'thwarting initiatives by Israel's enemies to undermine the IDF's and Israel's operational freedom in a wide variety of conflicts,'[118] describing it as part of the CBW. In 2009, it even established a cyber headquarters,[119] which in 2015 became a Cyber Defence Division under the IDF's C4I and Cyber Defence Directorate.[120] However, offensive and intelligence cyber capabilities remain the responsibility of Israel's SIGINT National Unit (ISNU or Unit 8200).[121]

## From 'eliminating terrorism' to counterterrorism

At certain points in its history, Israeli leaders spoke of the need to 'eliminate terrorism,' albeit sometimes merely as a rhetorical goal.[122] However, even at the apex of Israel's military power, and despite concrete efforts (especially during the 1982 War), this goal proved unattainable. The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US and the wave of uncoordinated individual attacks by Palestinians in 2015–6 (the 'Knives Intifada') further underscored the limits of states' military power in dealing with this threat.

The unpredictable nature of terrorist attacks on Israel – which do not emanate from a certain territorial entity but from within the OT, from bordering states, and from the international arena – highlighted the scarcity of relevant intelligence information, thereby challenging the IDF's ability to provide early warnings – one of the pillars of Israel's military strategy. This compelled Israel's security agencies to shift their focus to generating intelligence in order to restore their early warning abilities.

This shift was subsequently implemented not only domestically but also by enhancing international cooperation, specifically in counterterrorism

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[118]Yaacov Katz, 'IDF Admits to Using Cyber Space to Attack Enemies', *Jerusalem Post*, 6 March 2012, <https://www.jpost.com/Defense/IDF-admits-to-using-cyber-space-to-attack-enemies>.
[119]Nati Cohen, 'The 5th Domain: IDF Preparation for a Vast Cyber-Attack', *Ma'arachot*, 452 (2013), 13 [Hebrew].
[120]Website of C4I and Cyber Defence Directorate, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/c4i-and-cyber-defense-directorate>.
[121]Lior Tabansky and Isaac Ben-Israel, *Cybersecurity in Israel* (New York: Springer, 2015), 64.
[122]See Ariel Sharon's speech to the Likud Party in February 1990. Quoted in Tova Lazaroff, 'Sharon: The Life of a Lion', *Jerusalem Post*, 12 January 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors /Sharon-The-life-of-a-lion-337867>.

intelligence and joint special operations with like-minded states,[123] and as part of the US SOCOM 'Global SOF Network'.[124] Since Israel realized that a 'counterterrorist' agenda was a (relatively) undisputed issue, and because Israel has garnered significant experience and expertise in this area, it could also cooperate with states outside its traditional allies, enhancing the level of fidelity between organizations and states.[125]

In this respect, procurement, research, and development efforts faced two main goals: first, to shorten decision-making time variables, due to the fact that terrorist threats are imminent and do not permit lengthy assessment and organization; second, to improve the ability to conduct precise, limited attacks that are suited to heavily populated urban terrain and incur minor collateral damage. This was achieved by developing prediction abilities, building on advanced computation and artificial intelligence (AI), which automatically detect warning signals based on the fusion of information from phone calls, text messages, email, and social-media communications together with visual intelligence and geospatial information, and later increasing the optimization of existing intelligence data using 'machine learning' tools (also an AI capability).[126] Again, the net result of these efforts was the shift from attempts to forcibly eliminate security threats to focusing on reducing the adversary's lethality and defusing immediate challenges.

Additionally, and due to its limited resources, Israel chose to cope with security challenges (e.g., from Hamas) by encouraging the development of new risk assessment mechanisms and operational design. These aim to decrease the numbers of casualties and prevent the abduction of soldiers,[127] and at the same time increase accurate attacks against time-sensitive targets (TST), including individuals and tactical infrastructures (weapons stockpiles, rocket launchers, etc.). Such attacks were facilitated by the adoption of technical and computerized improvements that enabled the fusion of intelligence information from different sources ('Jointness Intelligence') and fire abilities.[128]

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[123]See, e.g., Karthika Sasikumar, 'State Agency in the Time of the Global War on Terror: India and the Counter-terrorism Regime,' *Review of International Studies*, 36/3 (2010), 615–638; 'NATO Commander: We Will Enhance Intelligence Relations with Israel,' *Ynet*, 11 November 2004, <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3005985,00.html>.

[124]Christopher Lamb, 'Global SOF and Interagency Collaboration', *Journal of Strategic Security*, 7/2 (2014), 3.

[125]Seth J. Frantzman, 'Looking at the IDF Relations with Foreign Armies', *Jerusalem Post*, 1 February 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Magazine/FRIENDLY-LIAISONS-Looking-at-the-IDFs-relations-with-foreign-armies-542653>.

[126]See the exposure of Unit 3060 of the Israel National SIGINT Unit. Hagar Bohbot, 'IDF Unit 3060 is Leading the Revolution in Intelligence Information', *Ynet*, 30 September 2018 [Hebrew], <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5361168,00.html>.

[127]Ehud Barak, *My Country My Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018), 438–439.

[128]Yossi Malman, 'Operation Cast Lead: The Intelligence Achievements Are Due to Unprecedented Cooperation between ISA and IDI', *Haaretz*, 8 January 2009 [Hebrew], <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1239840>.

## Cultural shifts

The structural and organizational changes outlined above were accompanied by important cultural shifts[129] that also affected Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy: first, the change in the value attributed to soldiers' lives and in the definition of combat units and roles; second, the emergence of an Israeli hi-tech culture that praises innovative solutions based on technological abilities; and third, the erosion of the ethos of self-reliance. Together, all these changes can be perceived as different outcomes of the rise of postmodern values in Israel, the result of rising socio-economical levels and the increasing prominence of western capitalist values and narratives. At the same time, some cultural elements remain unchanged: the IDF maintains its *offensive* ethos, at least partially, and preserves the organizational culture of improvisation, even integrating and intensifying it into the new emphasis on technology.

The first and most significant cultural change concerns the perception of the IDF's soldiers. In recent decades, Israelis have demonstrated increasing unwillingness to sacrifice the lives of soldiers.[130] One of the markers of this change is the emergence of a popular narrative that considers soldiers 'children' rather than 'men,' thereby holding the state responsible for their protection, rather than the opposite.[131] This trend became apparent in the 1990s, when the 'Four Mothers' movement, which called for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, defied Israel's leaders and eventually affected the IDF's operational planning and procurement processes.[132] Subsequent military actions are often designed to limit actual fighting by soldiers on the ground. The use of advanced technological unmanned weapons systems, *defensive* capabilities, and improved standoff weapons systems is intended to increase the distance between attacker and defender.

Another change, relating to general shifts in the nature of warfare, is the declining social prestige attributed to traditional combatant roles (especially infantry, artillery, and the armoured corps, but not the IAF and commando units), and the growing prestige accorded to advanced technological roles, which are becoming increasingly central given Israel's current security challenges. This process is reflected in, and possibly reinforced by, the fact that the IDF expanded its definition of 'combat soldiers' to include military roles which entail less risk to soldiers' lives, such as search and rescue units; border patrol and reconnaissance units; drones and ballistic missile defence

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[129]By cultural shifts we mean changes in social narratives and values, not in 'strategic culture'. On the latter, see Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Handel, 'Evolution'; Avi Kober and Tzvi Ofer, *Quality and Quantity* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1985) [Hebrew].

[130]Avi Kober, 'From Heroic to Post-Heroic Warfare: Israel's Way of War in Asymmetrical Conflicts', *Armed Forces & Society*, 41/1 (2015), 96–122.

[131]Yagil Levy, *Israel's Death Hierarchy* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[132]Deborah Sontag, 'Israel Honors Mothers of Lebanon Withdrawal,' *New York Times*, 3 June 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/03/world/israel-honors-mothers-of-lebanon-withdrawal.html>.

operators; and advanced technological units such as cyber, signal, and visual intelligence.[133]

Another factor that bestows prestige on cyber, computation, and other advanced technological units is their close connection with the growing civilian industry in Israel in this field. Consequently, military service in such technological units is seen not only as crucial to Israel's security but also as a springboard for a hi-tech career.[134] Indeed, this is among the reasons that the IDF has encountered difficulties in manning traditional military career tracks, leading, in turn, to new definitions of combat roles (e.g., 'Spearhead Fighter') that offer both symbolic and material incentives.[135]

One of the main consequences of the IDF's efforts to refrain from ground manoeuvres is the growing reliance on technological solutions. Traditionally, Israel regarded technology as one of the factors that could counterbalance its neighbours' numerical superiority in terms of soldiers and arms.[136] Indeed, over the years technological advancement was a key factor underpinning Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy.[137] However, technological advancements have recently become not only a rational solution to security challenges but also a cultural factor that affects decision-making mechanisms and strategy formation.[138]

The effect of this reliance on rapid technological innovation on the IDF's organizational culture is manifest in the assimilation of a 'start-up company culture' into Israel's military thinking.[139] This includes, for example, rapid advancement of creative ideas without operability tests, subsequently relying on external support for their execution. The professional tools and management style associated with Israel's hi-tech industry, which are praised as a much-needed 'battlefield quality,'[140] also contribute to the perception that new security threats can be mitigated mainly by employing the IDF's technological abilities, and by exposing the early development of new weapons systems as a part of strategic communication efforts (research, tests, and initial operational ability) to gain both internal and international legitimacy

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[133]Amos Harel, *The Face of the New IDF* (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2013), 227–235 [Hebrew].

[134]Ibid., 334.

[135]Shmuel Even, 'New Rewards for IDF "Spearhead Fighters" in Mandatory Military Service', *INSS Insight*, No. 977, 1 October 1 2017, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/new-rewards-idf-spearhead-fighters-mandatory-military-service/>. See also IDF website report regarding new 'Spearhead Fighters' badges aimed at 'strengthening social standard and ethos'. 18 June 2016 [Hebrew], < https://www.idf.il/61912/>.

[136]Ben-Israel, *Israel Defence*.

[137]Ari Barell, *King – Engineer* (Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion Institute, 2014) [Hebrew].

[138]For criticism, see Avi Kober, 'Iron Dome: Has the Euphoria Been Justified?' *BESA Center Perspectives Paper*, 2013, 199; Hecht and Shamir, 'The Case,' 124–125.

[139]This also led to organizational changes, such as forming an 'innovation division' in the IDF's general staff. Yoav Zitun, 'For a Lethal Manoeuvre the IDF is Establishing a Joint Unit', *Ynet*, 18 April 2019 [Hebrew], <https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5496192,00.html>.

[140]Yaakov Katz and Amir Buchbut, *The Weapons Wizards* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017), 153.

and to enhance deterrence. This is evident in both the actual R&D plans and the rapid processes of assimilating new, innovative weapons systems as part of the operational doctrine of force projection and crisis management.[141] Indeed, the accelerated pace of transferring ideas for technological solutions 'from the sketch-board to the production line' and of their operational integration into regular military units during periods of crisis has been perfected into a calculated risk that the IDF is willing to take.[142]

A noticeable result of these changes in perception is the erosion of Israel's ethos of self-reliance, formerly a cornerstone of Israel's foreign policy. This ethos collapsed during the 1991 War,[143] when the US forces deployed in Israel were perceived as its defenders, thereby replacing the IDF.[144] It was further eroded in later years, as awareness of new security challenges cultivated an understanding that Israel's lack of resources prevents it from tackling them alone.

The realisation that coping with adversaries such as global terrorist networks and cyber-attacks requires international cooperation, and that the growing demand for advanced weapons systems cannot be met alone, led Israel to consider international military cooperation, specifically US military aid, as a basic tenet of its military planning.[145] This cooperation is facilitated by the IDF's International Cooperation Unit (established in 1999),[146] and it was enhanced by pro-Israeli US legislation in 2009, which institutionalized the pre-existing US commitment to preserve Israel's Quality Military Edge (QME).[147]

This emerging 'culture of reliance' poses some challenges for Israel. First, in some instances (e.g., during 'Operation Pillar of Defence'), the US used it to exert political pressure on Israel: for instance, fulfilling Israel's request for further arms was made contingent on the termination of hostilities.[148] Second, the advanced weapons systems acquired by Israel are, by their nature, far more information-dependent than their predecessors and are connected with international military communication channels (i.e., NATO 'Link 16')[149] and other international sensors and foreign military platforms. Another factor underpinning the IDF's increasing international cooperation is

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[141]*The IDF's Strategy* (2015), 25–26.
[142]As in the case of the 'Iron Dome.' See Katz and Bohbot, *Weapons Wizards*, 153–157.
[143]Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 97–102.
[144]For criticism, see Moshe Arens, 'The Patriot Did Not Intercept Any Missile' (filmed interview), *Israel Defense*, 4 February 2018, <http://www.israeldefense.co.il/he/node/32928>.
[145]For example, the 2012 joint US-Israel military exercise codenamed *Austere Challenge 12*.
[146]Frantzman, 'Looking at the IDF'.
[147]The Naval Vessel Transfer Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110–429, 122 Stat. 4842 (2008).
[148]Sudarsan Raghaven and Ruth Eglash, 'In Deaths of Civilians in Gaza, U.S. Weapons Sales to Israel Come Under Scrutiny', *Washington Post*, 24 August 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-deaths-of-civilians-in-gaza-us-weapons-sales-to-israel-come-under-scrutiny/2014/08/23/4f6565e7-da0f-4ecb-b005-5b2202463d1f_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.97b93a624a7e>.
[149]Air Land Sea Application Center, *Introduction to Tactical Digital Information Link J and Quick Reference Guide*, June 2000, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/6-24-8/tadilj.pdf>.

the growing international criticism of military operations that have caused mass casualties among civilians.[150]

The cultural trends described above manifest in the restraints imposed on ground manoeuvres and the preference for 'surgical' aerial strikes as opposed to full-scale ground operations, which, perhaps by definition, are more costly in terms of casualties. These factors, moreover, are a crucial element in the growing complexity of military strategic planning and the inability to establish clear political goals that can be achieved by military means. However, we see them as a further shift, together with the others described above, which evolved and contributed to the increased emphasis on *defence* in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy.

## Discussion and conclusion

In recent decades, the balance between offense and defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy has gradually shifted towards *defence*, resulting in a new type of 'hybrid' military strategy that is largely *defensive* yet retains some *offensive* elements. The current paper has demonstrated that this shift results from changes in Israel's security challenges and the actions taken to mitigate them. The paper has delineated this process of change, focusing on the four main areas in which it is evident: civil defence, border defence, rounds of fighting, and counterterrorism. It also highlighted rational, structural, and cultural factors underpinning this change.

As we have shown, Israel has dealt with new security challenges by adopting both defensive *and* offensive measures: it developed mainly defensive but also (mostly standoff) offensive capabilities to deal with Iran's missile threat; it fortified its borders while drawing 'red lines' within Syria's and Lebanon's territories; and it tried to avoid costly, all-out confrontations and pre-emptive wars, while conducting limited operations or aerial attacks against specific, time-sensitive targets. In addition, while various cultural trends resulted in a strong aversion to offensive ground manoeuvres, some elements of the IDF's traditional offensive ethos have survived, as is evidenced by the expansion of the definition of combat roles to include cyberwarfare, Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), and search and rescue operations.

Many of the defensive measures adopted by Israel seem to reflect typical cases of improvisation, providing 'immediate answers to unexpected situations under conditions of uncertainty.'[151] Examples are the 'Iron Dome' defence system, designed to deal with rockets fired from Gaza Strip; the

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[150]Barak Ravid, 'ICC Delegation Arrived for a Visit to Israel', *Haaretz*, 5 October 2016 [Hebrew], <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.3087396>.

[151]Itzhak Galnoor, *Public Management in Israel* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 46. See also Ken Kamoche, Miguel Pina E. Cunha, and João Vieira da Cunha, 'Towards a Theory of Organizational Improvisation: Looking beyond the Jazz Metaphor', *Journal of Management Studies*, 40/8 (2003), 2023–2051.

'Separation Barrier' built to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers from entering Israel; and the development of prediction abilities based on advanced computation and artificial intelligence to deal with the 'Knives Intifada.' Interestingly, the circumstances that lead, according to the theoretical and comparative literature, to choosing improvisation as the main technique for solving problems also characterize Israel: uncertainty combined with a complex and rapidly-changing reality, limited resources, and a supportive organizational culture.[152] Indeed, it has been argued that improvisation is perhaps the most characteristic way of Israeli policy making in the military as well as a variety of other decision-making areas.[153]

From a different angle, the shift in Israel's military strategy has taken the form of 'layering': new, mostly defensive features were introduced into Israel's military strategy alongside the existing offensive ones, resulting in the current 'hybrid' military strategy. Yet, in contrast to the common pattern of layering, in Israel it is difficult to discern specific actors who intentionally promoted a defensive strategy yet were forced to compromise due to harsh resistance; rather, the shift in the balance towards defence was the unintentional product of a long-standing accumulation of many ad hoc, improvised solutions to specific problems.[154]

Another striking feature of the change in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy is the fact that until 2015 it was not published in any official document.[155] Moreover, many Israeli political and military leaders do not necessarily view these changes as signalling a shift from offense to defence. Instead, they mention a transformation from 'symmetric' to 'asymmetric,' even 'hybrid,' warfare, and from relying on 'hard' power to combining 'hard' and 'soft' power.[156] This is not to suggest that these leaders did not understand the need to adapt Israel's military strategy in the face of new security threats and challenges, including the material costs this might entail.[157] Such notions were the incentive for the establishment (in 2006) of a parliamentary committee, headed by MK Dan Meridor, which was tasked with examining Israel's

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[152]Ira Sharkansky and Yair Zalmanovitch, 'Improvisation in Public Administration and Policy Making in Israel', *Public Administration Review*, 6/4 (2000), 327.

[153]Galnoor, *Public Management*, 45; Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch, Improvisation'; Charles D. Freilich, 'National Security Decision-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths,' *Middle East Journal*, 60/4 (2006), 635–663.

[154]Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen, eds., *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jeroen Van der Heijden, 'Institutional Layering: A Review of the Use of the Concept', *Politics*, 31/1 (2011), 9–18.

[155]The IDF did produce *internal* military strategy documents as part of its routine 5-year force build-up plans.

[156]See the discussion between former senior IDF officers, Udi Dekel, Moshe Kaplinski, Yair Naveh, and Giora Eiland, 'Conversation among Commanders', *Strategic Assessment for Israel*, 1 February 2018 [Hebrew], <http://www.inss.org.il/conversation-among-commanders>.

[157]Yaniv Kubovich, 'The Treasury Demands Shortening Military Service to Two Years and Opposes Extra Funds for Operations', *Haaretz*, 4 June 2019 [Hebrew], <https://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/.premium-1.7329745>.

military strategy. Importantly, the committee suggested that 'defence' was one of the main pillars of Israel's security. Its recommendations were published later, but they were never ratified.[158]

Since 2015, official documents have addressed Israel's military strategy. Among these are *The IDF's Strategy* (in 2015[159] and 2018[160]), the first documents of this kind, and a plan entitled 'Security Concept 2030,' presented by PM Netanyahu to the cabinet.[161] The strategy has also been debated by retired security officials and experts.[162] Importantly, while *The IDF's Strategy* (2015) acknowledges the 'centrality of defence,' it suggests that Israel has *not* abandoned its offensive military strategy.[163] This further emphasizes the 'hybrid' nature of Israel's military strategy.

Our paper suggests that changes in military strategy can be gradual, incremental, improvised, and largely informal in nature. Is this finding relevant to other cases besides Israel? In recent decades, Israel has experienced cultural changes concerning the value attributed to soldiers' lives, the emergence of a hi-tech culture, and the erosion of the ethos of self-reliance. However, these changes, as well as the new security threats that Israel faces – emanating from states, armed non-state actors, and 'hybrid warfare' – combined with the state's limited resources, are not unique. Thus, our findings may improve our understanding of the changes underway in other modern militaries that are facing rapidly changing threats. The rise in decentralized, transnational security challenges, the increasing similarities among the organizational structures and decision-making processes of western militaries, and the ascent of military and political leaders who focus on maintaining the security status quo and acknowledge their inability to change it by military force[164] – all these factors suggest that studying Israel may prove useful in exploring other cases.

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[158]Dan Meridor and Ron Eldadi, *Israel's Security Concept* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2018), 9–12 [Hebrew]. The Hebrew term used in the committee's report was *Hitgonenut*. It stated: 'The defensive dimension mainly includes the areas of active and passive defence, border defence (including the security barrier), and securing sensitive sites, population concentrations, personalities and information'. 20–21. See also Brun and Rabinovich, *Israel Facing*, 59–62.

[159]*The IDF's Strategy* (2015).

[160]Office of CoS of the IDF, *The IDF's Strategy* (Tel Aviv: 2018) [Hebrew], <https://www.idf.il/media/34416/strategy.pdf>.

[161]Prime Minister's Office, 'Prime Minister Netanyahu Presented to the Cabinet the 'Security Concept 2030', 15 August 2018, [Hebrew], <https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/news/spoke_security150818>. The IDF is working on a similar plan for 2030. See Ami Rohkes Domba, 'IDF 2020: Small, Effective, and Deadly', *Israel Defense*, 16 November 2017, <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/he/node/31779>.

[162]See, e.g., Meir Elran, Gabi Siboni and Kobi Michael, eds., *IDF Strategy in the Perspective of National Security* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2016) [Hebrew]. The widening debate concerning the shift to defence in Israel's 'hybrid' military strategy is outside the scope of the current paper.

[163]*The IDF's Strategy* (2015), 27.

[164]Cf. Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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