

The IDF and the Road to a More Professional Military

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Introduction

The Second Lebanon War revealed a string of failures in the way that the Israeli military operated against Hizbollah, with the result that the IDF was unable to achieve its objectives fully. The results of the war obligated the IDF to undertake a deep, thorough examination and draw conclusions for practical assimilation and implementation in a long, ongoing process. The Winograd Commission established by the government to investigate the failures of the war found “fundamental flaws in the preparation and execution of the war” and determined that “the army in its entirety, especially through its senior command posts and ground forces, failed in providing an adequate military response to the challenge it faced in executing the war in Lebanon and did not supply the political echelon with a proper military basis for political action.”¹

The “missed opportunity” of the Second Lebanon War did not occur out of the blue. To a large extent it was a continuation of the sense of the IDF's inability to achieve any decisive victory in the confrontations of recent years. Often this feeling has led to public criticism and even a sense of disappointment; these reached new heights after the Second Lebanon War.

There is no doubt that since the Yom Kippur War fundamental transformations have taken place in the nature of the confrontations involving Israel, and hence the IDF. At the core lies the shift from classical (force-on-force) wars where one army confronts another army, to confrontations with non-state organizations using terrorism and

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guerilla warfare that involve intensive psychological warfare alongside the fighting on the ground among civilian populations. This was true for suicide terrorism in Judea and Samaria; Qassam terrorism from the Gaza Strip; Hizbollah operations in the Second Lebanon War; and it is true of Syria's preparations for the next war. These changes have forced the IDF to adapt to the developing reality and be better prepared for the security challenges facing the State of Israel.

As a result, recent years have seen the evolution of a debate on the right way to implement these changes. Many have called for the end of the IDF as a people's army and its replacement with a professional volunteer army specifically geared to the IDF's current theaters and challenges. Others have suggested a comprehensive organizational reform in the IDF in order to improve its function and therefore its effectiveness, i.e., an internal reorganization of the existing model. Still others have argued that "the nature of war has changed" and that the IDF is in the midst of a conceptual crisis; as such, a paradigm shift is needed in terms of an innovative doctrine of operations, one that is not necessarily based on the longstanding principles of traditional IDF doctrine.

The discussion in recent years has thus focused on the question of the change the IDF has to make, on the assumption by almost everyone that such a change is necessary. The gamut of opinions has run from those who have called for a revolution, i.e., declared the end of the IDF as a people's army and urged its reconstruction as a volunteer army, to those who have retained the concept of a people's army (whether for reasons linked to shared values, functionality, or others) amended with changes and updates, especially on the organizational and technological levels (the "small and smart" approach, for example) or conceptual changes.

Presenting a different point of view, this essay contends that it is possible to turn the IDF into a more professional army adapted to the challenges it must face within the model of a people's army, which remains crucial in light of the threats against Israel and its geo-strategic situation. It is possible and necessary to do so not only on the basis of organizational changes or technological improvements, but also – and principally – on the basis of a full adaptation of all the components, chiefly the professionalism of the command core, to the reality in which the IDF operates and the challenges it will face.

Professional, Quality Command: The Key to the Challenges of Tomorrow

The Winograd Commission recommended:

The military profession is extremely demanding: it involves command and management, knowledge of technical issues and the operation of technological systems, and at the end of the day, the ultimate test of commanding soldiers who are risking their lives under stressful situation by the commanders whose lives are also at stake. Investment in quality training of commanders and soldiers is sometimes more important than investment in the quality of the equipment at their disposal, and is critical in order to make optimal use of the sophisticated equipment.²

It seems that no one doubts that the quality of the command core determines the outcome of IDF missions. This quality is determined essentially by four major variables: the selection of commanders; the training of officers in both the regular and reserve armies; the number of officers and the numerical ratio between officers and soldiers; and finally, the career development of the officers both in terms of mandatory retirement age and in terms of their various positions during their years of service. The comprehensive quality of the command structure is thus a product of the multiple variables, i.e., all the variables are indispensable and one significant weakness in any of the four is capable of damaging the quality as a whole. The question of how to improve the chain of command given the constraints on the IDF, including constraints of resources, the society, the government, and the legislative body, and how to adapt commanders to the complex challenges facing them is thus one of the key questions capable of affecting the comprehensive power of the IDF.

Selecting Potential Officers

Selecting a pool of potential commanders and choosing the most suitable candidates is the first necessary stage in defining the officer cadre. Belonging to this group is a precondition, though not the sole criterion, to the development of an officer. In the IDF, this selection takes place in two primary stages: the first occurs before enlistment when the potential serviceperson's quality rating and officer suitability are determined. This

process establishes whether the soldier is part of the potential officer cadre or not.

The second stage takes place during service. Here, unlike most armed forces, the IDF selects its officer from among the ranks,³ i.e., from the units in which the potential cadre of officers are serving as soldiers. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to identify those who were already identified by previous testing as the most suitable ones on the basis of their performance in practice. In other words, unlike most armies in which the officers are chosen primarily on the basis of theoretical testing, the IDF has the advantage of seeing them function as soldiers and even as junior commanders before it decides to turn them into officers, and this lends the selection more weight. Assuming that the potential officer cadre, as defined in the initial stage of selection, is uniformly and equally distributed in all units, this approach has enormous advantages in creating the possibility for identifying the most suitable commanders from this potential group. In practice, this is not so.

The IDF runs a meticulous and very effective pre-recruitment selection system whose purpose is to cull those suited to special and elite volunteer units from among the potential conscripts.⁴ These units are given the opportunity to test and choose the most suitable recruits from among the identified potential.⁵ In practice, most of those included as potential for the officer cadre are also identified as potential for the elite volunteer units, and therefore a situation is created in which almost all potential candidates for the officer cadre in operational units go through the "sieve" of physical selection processes (called "retreats" or *gibushim* in Hebrew) before their placement, and the top⁶ among them will find their way to the elite volunteer units.⁷ Those who do not earn high marks in the selection process are placed in operational units (the operational brigades and battalions) representing the mass of the IDF combat force. On the other hand, of those selected for the volunteer units, only a relatively small number of potential commanders will actually advance to the command cadre.

In short, the current selection method, which gives preference to placement in the volunteer elite units, creates a situation in which on the one hand the most capable personnel, i.e., those placed in these units, will not be tapped for officer purposes, not necessarily even as junior officers, while on the other hand, the quality of the potential pool remaining for

the officer cadre of the operational units, from which the future core of commanders develops, is of necessity made up of less qualified recruits. The paradox is that the more sophisticated and efficient the selection system becomes, the fewer outstanding candidates in practice it will miss. In other words, the IDF, on the basis of its own free will, perpetuates a situation in which the most qualified candidates are not the ones who become potential officers in the operational units.

The present system is ill conceived not only because it prefers the very last soldier in a volunteer unit to the first officer in the Golani and Givati Brigades, but also because it is wasteful with the most highly qualified human resource available to the IDF. Moreover, it reinforces the ethos that gives clear preference to service in a commando unit rather than to volunteering to lead.

The Good – to Elite Units; the Best – to Officer Training

The only yardstick the army is required to use when testing operational or administrative subjects is the contribution (direct or indirect) to overall IDF operational effectiveness. In this sense there is no doubt that a highly qualified command core, at all echelons of command, makes an immeasurably greater contribution to the comprehensive effectiveness of the IDF than that made by the elite units, no matter how great, bold, or heroic. It is true that in the past the volunteer and special units were a platform used by the IDF to set high standards for the military as a whole, and as such were also the primary greenhouse for the highly qualified officer cadre of the entire IDF.⁸ However, for years this is no longer the case, as the current practice is that every unit develops the core of future commanders from within its own ranks (and rightly so).

The conclusion is twofold: first, the IDF must ensure that its selection process is geared towards identifying potential future officers, and, second, it has to ensure that this potential is steered towards units in a way that provides a sound basis for the development of future officers from within the ranks in the units.⁹ At the first stage, the IDF must reduce to a minimum the number of units allowed to engage in a pre-recruitment selection process in order to prevent the current situation whereby the “obvious choice” of the most qualified recruits determines their placement in the IDF rather than the army’s real manpower requirements.

At a later stage, the IDF must find the right equilibrium between steering potential officers to field units and steering them to the volunteer units. One of the ways to ensure a balance between the need for excellent officers and the need for excellent soldiers for the volunteer units is to stand the current selection system on its head, i.e., to select the potential for officer training in a preliminary selection process, and to select the soldiers for the special units from within the ranks. The recruitment of soldiers (and not potential conscripts) to special units was done in the past. It was only because of the long period of training compared to the short time in service that the IDF preferred to make the selection at the beginning of the service period. In most armies in the world, special forces soldiers are selected from within the ranks and serve in these units as standing servicemen. Both in terms of mentality and maturity and in terms of effectiveness between training time and service time, it would be right to adopt the universal model. A good example of this model is implemented in the Special Police Unit ("Yamam"), which recruits its service personnel after their release and trains them for combat roles they will fulfill as fighters in the standing force. To a large extent, Yamam succeeds in preserving a very high level of qualified personnel compared with parallel IDF units, which have relatively less qualified manpower, since the forces' maturity, training, and experience outweigh the basic manpower qualifications.

Number of Officers

In their book *Crisis in Command*,¹⁰ Gabriel and Savage analyze the reasons for the failure of the American command in Vietnam, which they identify as the primary reason for the American failure in that war. One of the main factors they identify is the overly large number of officers, which relates to two central negative phenomena: the lower quality of the officers and the lower requirements and standards as the number of officers rises. Both phenomena lead to no less than damage to unit cohesion – one of the most significant foundations for the quality of an operational unit.

The quality of the officers declines as their quantity increases. This almost axiomatic statement in developing an officer cadre in modern militaries stems from two major reasons. One is that the selection pool narrows as the system feeding the officer cadre is required to fill more positions, a situation in which compromises will necessarily be made

with regard to standards and quality, if only to fill the ranks. The second reason stems from the quality of the training given to the officers: when it is necessary to train more officers, the level and quality of training inevitably drops. Every year the IDF trains thousands of officers¹¹ in courses lasting five to six months, after which the officers are placed in their positions in the units, including operational positions. The vast majority of officers will fill only one or two positions before leaving the service.¹² This situation stems from a model that became fixed over the years whereby the duration of compulsory standing army service for junior officers was just one year, which put the entire military into a state of “hyperventilation,”¹³ with a continuous race to train officers and fill positions.

One senior IDF commander once noted correctly that the rank of second lieutenant is not an officer rank¹⁴ but a rank bestowed in the first year of the officer’s service, a year that is actually a hands-on year-in-training. In practice, from day one these officers are in the thick of operational activity, a direct product of the short period of time they will fill officer functions before completing their army service.¹⁵ It is clear that in this reality, the IDF finds itself consistently compromising on the quality of those designated for officer training as well as on the standards one could possibly insist on given such mass training. This reality necessarily generates two ancillary problems: the inability to tap this vast number in the reserves,¹⁶ and the destructive effect on the possibility of developing the remaining potential of a junior command core of squad commanders and sergeants,¹⁷ which is, as in any professional army, supposed to be the basic layer on which the entire command structure is constructed and anchored. An essential weakness at this level causes the entire chain of command to be sucked downwards in an attempt to cover the gap with directives, procedures, and mentoring to control this inherent weakness.

Less is More

The recommendation on this point is almost trivial: the IDF must drastically reduce the number of officers serving in its ranks, both in the regular and the standing army. Here too the military leaders must strive for a change in the ethos that took root in the IDF, whereby anyone who can and wants to must become an officer.¹⁸ The IDF must strive to establish an ethos that endorses high quality and high standards for the

officer cadre as dominant values, and establish the officer cadre as the “club” that admits only the very few who can demonstrate their ability to meet high professional standards over the long term (as in the pilot training course and in elite units).

In order to effect such a situation, the IDF must reduce the number of officers. This reduction is possible through the following three steps:

- a. *Civilian systems.* In recent years the IDF has undergone a major outsourcing process and in doing so has privatized entire systems that were in the past manned by IDF soldiers and officers, such as the catering system, the motor vehicle pool, and others. The IDF must continue in this direction, guaranteeing three primary criteria: one, the system is not part of the routine or emergency operational system; two, there is long term economic benefit; and three, the level of service given to the IDF is at the very least not adversely affected.¹⁹
- b. *A solid, revitalized system of NCOs and civilians employed by the army.* This is a basis that provides the skeleton for the professional system and in some cases even for the operational system as well in armies around the world. The advantage of this approach lies in the relative permanence of these systems, i.e., the systems’ ability to remain in the same function for a long period of time, allowing for greater professionalization without considerations of promotions and periodic lateral moves so characteristic of the officer cadre.
- c. *Extending the reenlistment period* for officers completing the IDF Haim Laskov Officers School to three to four years. In recent years, the air force and navy have combined the academic contents for the officers and naval commanders courses so that anyone graduating from these courses earns a Bachelor’s degree. This change has necessitated extending the training period and consequently also the extension of the reenlistment period. By contrast, the ground forces still operate with a model of a short five month course followed by a single year’s reenlistment period. One of the assumptions is that extending the reenlistment period would lower motivation and reduce the number of soldiers attending the Officers’ School, thereby making it difficult for the army to fill its ranks. Yet this assumption prefers the current view to the visionary one, which necessarily invites false conclusions and leaves the current system in place. Although it is difficult to say with certainty what the implications of such a change would be on

the motivation to become an officer, it is certainly possible to point to two processes that would assuredly change today's statistics. The first is that the IDF will train far fewer officers every year, and therefore will need much less of a potential pool of candidates than at present. The second stems from the expected shift in ethos likely to result from so significant a change that would necessarily lead to a different view of the officer's role in the IDF.²⁰

Training the Officer Cadre

One of the central questions in this discussion thus becomes, what is the military profession? Whether the IDF is a profession or a mission has been debated for years. The view of officer training presented by Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi to the General Staff in 2007 stated that there is no contradiction between the two: service is a mission that must be executed professionally. Over the last two years the Doctrine and Training Division of the IDF has undertaken a comprehensive study in order to define the manner of training for the IDF officer cadre that ensures ongoing training to develop the officer's capabilities with regard to the level at which s/he operates and in accordance with her/his position. This is the first time that there is an outline of a development track for the IDF's officer cadre in accordance with universal professional standards. The concept, now in its implementation stages, has established academic contents for the entire officer cadre in order to create a necessary common professional basis, and requires that every officer undergo a command and staff course before being awarded the rank of lieutenant colonel in order to prevent a situation (prevalent in recent years) where officers studied law or business administration instead of the military profession.

If we focus on officers' courses (at the Haim Laskov Officers School, pilot training course, and naval commander course), the question that immediately arises concerns the profile of the graduates: are we giving them the technical tools to be a platoon commander, for example, or are we giving them the fundamentals and a broad base for all the components of the military profession that are supposed to be the professional foundation necessary for their continued professional development? Clearly, the five month period most officers spend (and for most of them this will be the only professional military training they undergo during their entire military service, whether in the regular army or in the

reserves!) is not enough to give them both. The system naturally tends towards the practical field and results in a technocratic officer class,²¹ one that is highly capable of dealing with practical problems at familiar levels but is hard pressed to cope with complex problems requiring broad based theoretical knowledge and a high level of understanding of the military profession.

Here too the IDF differs from foreign armies where officer training occurs in a long, institutionalized training process in military academies that allow officers to acquire the professional foundations that will serve them over the course of a military career. The basic assumption in these armies is that being an officer is a profession and that from the moment someone has chosen this profession s/he must undergo in-depth training just like other academic professions. The IDF still takes the approach that being an officer is more a posting than a profession; the direct result is that the vast majority of officers trained by the Israeli army will remain in their positions for a very short period before turning to their “real” careers in life after their term of service ends. The problem focuses primarily on those who stay in the system and continue to develop in it as officers. The vast majority of these personnel will remain with the training they received in their officer’s course – the last training they ever receive in the military profession.²² Those who continue to develop into roles played by lieutenant colonels will have to wait 10-15 years before encountering the institutions of military training in the command and staff training course.

Officers Academy: Bestowing the Foundations for the Military Profession

Selecting officers from among the ranks has allowed the IDF an advantage in the way that officers are selected and in the practical experience they accrue before they join the officers’ training course. Nevertheless, given the assumption based on earlier recommendations about selecting officers and reducing their numbers, the IDF is required to improve significantly the professional foundations given to its officers in their basic officer training in the form of a military academy for training the officer class. Such an approach reflects the universal recognition that the military is a profession like any other, requiring a broad base of theoretical knowledge, and requires the adoption of an academic model instead

of the current one, which emphasizes practical knowledge serving the officer in junior positions.

Considering that designated officers have undergone very basic training and even junior command courses before coming to the officers course, and given the assumption that it is possible to bestow an academic degree on those remaining within the system at a point in their future development, it should be possible within one year to give a firm professional foundation to the future IDF officer cadre. Such a foundation is of course required also of the officers being trained in the pilot and naval commander courses, which have already embraced an academic model, but requires significant adjustment of the academic contents for implementation of this approach. If all IDF officers acquire a firm professional basis in the officers course it will be possible to build the designated training programs in the regular service and the reserves on these foundations and thereby considerably improve the professionalism of the entire IDF officers core.

The Short Military Career: A Mixed Blessing

Questions about retirement age of standing army service personnel and early retirement are often central issues in the public discourse in Israel, especially when it comes to the argument between a Treasury that rejects the notion of the special conditions enjoyed by standing army personnel, versus the IDF and the Defense Ministry which insist on them.²³ This discussion quickly degenerates into pure economics: rights, rewards, the attractiveness of the service, compensation for the irregular way of life, and so on. In the midst of this, people – especially army personnel – often forget the professional aspects affected by this argument. There is no doubt that army service, especially that of the operational officer class, cannot be considered a profession just like any other and that it must not be thought of as such, if only for the simple reason that the purpose of the operational officer cadre of all ranks requires the members of this cadre to risk their lives routinely in order to fulfill the tasks assigned to them. In this the military profession is different from any other profession and is therefore worthy of different standards in terms of the service model and its rewards. However, the discussion of officers' careers must not end with that statement. It is only proper that the question of "what is the right way to develop officers over their term of service in order to

train them in the best way possible for their positions” also be asked, assuming that filling different positions, both operational and staff and training positions, are an integral part of the training system of an officer advancing through the ranks.

The basic assumption of a short career has unintentionally created a number of byproducts that affect the development of a military career. The first is the phenomenon known as “the second career,” which implies the significant advantage of the second career that officers, according to this model, can pursue after leaving the army while still in their prime. One of the major problems created by this phenomenon is that many officers are busy preparing for their next career during their military service. An expression of this problem is the fact that many prefer general studies capable of promoting a second career to military studies, and do so on the army’s dime and the army’s time.

In practice, one can easily imagine a paradoxical situation of an educated discussion in a commanders meeting about economic or legal issues while those seated around the table lack the necessary professional tools to discuss and solve military-professional problems. While this scenario is extreme, it is not far from the reality that has come into being, as both the Command and Staff College and the National Security College have been educating the officer class not designated for central command or staff positions, while the “hard core” operations officers have been attending academic institutions and studying in departments of law, economics, and business administration. In recent years this issue has been redressed to a certain extent: the operational officers and potential future commanders are now required to go through the Command and Staff College or the National Security College. Thus the IDF has found itself – not in its best interest – training senior manpower for the Israeli economy, while it parts from its officers when in most cases they have not yet realized their potential.

A second issue is the duration of postings and officer development between posts. In recent years there has been a dramatic change that has significantly raised the age of commanders. If 15-20 years ago the average battalion commander was appointed at the age of 28 and the average brigade commander started his posting at 32-33, today battalion commanders are appointed at 32-34 while brigade commanders start at 36-37. The primary reason for this situation lies in the creation at the end

of the 1980s of service tracks that led to many officers reenlisting for long service periods, together with the creation of a norm of holding posts for relatively long periods (two years) in command positions.²⁴

In practice, especially with regard to ground forces, the concept of developing a career in a professional manner has not yet taken hold, leading to two secondary phenomena with severe ramifications: one, there is almost no transition between command and staff positions, because the understanding is that command positions are much more influential with regard to promotions (the old IDF ethos that venerates operational command over paper-pushing at the staff also contributes to this), and therefore many officers avoid significant staff postings before being promoted to the rank of brigadier general,²⁵ a fact that without a doubt represents a significant professional lacuna according to professional criteria. The second phenomenon is that high quality officers in the ground forces are not represented in the general staff – neither as a professional cadre whose voice is heard in fundamental discussions shaping the nature of the IDF for years to come,²⁶ nor as an element representing the interests of the branch in various discussions.

The third issue touches on budgetary concerns. In practice, the Israeli army finances the pensions of its officers until the age of 67 out of the defense budget. This component of the IDF's budget is expected to continue to rise in the coming few years and will continue to offset the army's budgetary flexibility and, as such, the army's ability to respond to operational needs and force buildup. Understanding this point has led the IDF for the first time in years to examine the issue of the pensions and duration of service. In 2004, the IDF moved to a model of a cumulative pension. The effects of this move on pension expenses are expected to reduce the spending on pensions out of the general defense budget in the long term and to increase the defense system's budgetary flexibility. However, while the results of this move will economically speaking be visible in the long term, its implications in terms of the career army officers model are liable to find dramatic expression much sooner. The pervasive reluctance to leave the service, due to the monetary pension that left many standing army personnel in the system until retirement age, is expected to crumble and with it, the assumptions about the career model.

One Central, Balanced Career

In terms of regulating the military career, the IDF must make some immediate adjustments. First needed is a fair relationship between the serviceman and the system so that the challenge of the job itself will be the central component in an officer's considerations when thinking about staying on. One of the central tensions and a real challenge to the military is finding a balance between the highly demanding nature of the organization represented in its culture and conduct, on the one hand, and family life, on the other. This issue arises as a central point for officers making a choice about continuing their military career, which is a challenge to family life. The issue has become even more complex in recent years as women have been developing their own careers and the demand for a different type of division of the family burden has become increasingly legitimate. There is no doubt that in this sense the IDF is required to make a profound change, not just in the material or organizational settings, but also – and especially – in its conception of manpower management and organizational culture. Raising the age of retirement can be an opportunity for the IDF, instead of its being the threat it is viewed as today. A long career ending at the age of 55-57 allows a more moderate promotion policy necessary for the inclusion of staff positions, training, and education for officers at every rank, instead of the intensity embodied by the current model. Such an alternate model would ensure a more professional group of officers as well as less intensive periods at every stage of their careers that could also allow the officer and his family some breathing room. In short, it would be possible to develop the officer more professionally and in a more balanced manner, and to save significantly on pension spending while improving the conditions given the officer and his family. Over the years, this model would produce a professional officer corps, where military service is a calling and a source of pride. Such an officer cadre would be capable of creating a new ethos for the military profession that would raise its status and thus attract more highly qualified manpower into its ranks.

Conclusion

The complex sphere in which the IDF operates, which includes international law pressures, questions of legitimacy, the motivation of Israeli society, and budgetary limitations confront the army with an

unprecedented challenge. The need to supply uncompromising security on the one hand and the enormous complexity of the combat sphere on the other require IDF commanders more than ever before to have professional skills (theoretical-analytical) no less than operational skills in leading forces into battle. It would seem that here the IDF is finding it difficult to generate an essential change, as it is caught between current needs and its own ethos.

This vicious cycle can be broken in only one long but crucial way, namely, professionalization of the army's chain of command. This change is intimately linked to a change in the ethos that has accompanied the IDF since its inception: not just experience but also in-depth, professional training in the military profession ("academization"), not just a calling but also a career, not "the best to elite units" but also the best to command, not a first career on the road to the real career but rather one major career.

The IDF is already required to construct a whole coherent model to develop a high quality command core based on four components: selecting the most highly qualified candidates for command; drastically reducing the number of officers trained and raising the standards of training; institutionalized professional training for all command echelons; and adjusting the career aspect in terms of length of service and the pattern of postings, because of the needs of officers and their families, the needs of their professional training, and the needs of the system. Without constructing a whole new model it seems that the crisis in which the IDF has found itself in recent years will only become more acute.

It is not necessary to change the people's army model, nor is it necessary to overwhelm the budget. The IDF itself has the capacity to improve the quality of its command cadre fundamentally at every level through making decisions that are within its own purview, and to base its doctrine of operations on this highly qualified command core in the face of the developing challenges. When David Ben-Gurion established the IDF he demanded that Israeli quality counter the quantity enjoyed of Arab armies. The truth of this founding principle has not only not eroded, but appears more right than ever for the IDF and the State of Israel in the contemporary environment. High quality command is a fundamental principle for a professional Israeli army and a cornerstone of IDF strategy, which requires comprehensive reforms so that the IDF

may continue to safeguard the integrity of the State of Israel and the security of its residents from any future threat.

Notes

- 1 The Winograd Commission Report, Chapter 17, Section 40, p. 550.
- 2 Winograd Report, Chapter 12, Section 31, p. 425.
- 3 Exceptions are the pilot training course and the naval commander course, which identify the future officer cadre in a selection process taking place before enlistment.
- 4 This includes elite commando units, pilot and naval officer courses, elite units such as Shaldag, search and rescue units, Egoz, and so on, and the paratrooper division, which is a volunteer unit. The general rule is that anyone who is basically fit and wants to try out for one of these units is given the opportunity to do so.
- 5 The IDF selects soldiers for elite units differently from the way this is done in most of the world's militaries, where the pool of potential officers comprises the soldiers that have served in regular units.
- 6 "Top" expresses the combination of cognitive capabilities confirmed in the early selection process at the recruitment centers with physical, social, leadership, and other capabilities demonstrated during the physical selections.
- 7 The selection method prior to enlistment gives preference to the hopes of future conscripts to serve in volunteer units. Most of the high quality recruits strive to get into the most elite units. There are recruits who will attend three or even four retreats before placement in order to fulfill their dream. Those who do not succeed are placed in companies designated for operational battalions.
- 8 So, for example, Moshe Dayan designated a central role for Unit 101 in establishing high norms of command and combat. The assimilation of these norms throughout the IDF was made possible by the appointment of the graduates of 101 and its successor, the Paratrooper Brigade, to central command positions.
- 9 At stake here is primarily a change needed in the selection for the field units, because the air force and the navy already select their officer cadres for pilot and naval commander courses in their pre-enlistment selection process, and thereby ensure the high quality of the command structure in these branches.
- 10 Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979) uses universal experience and professional parameters to analyze the primary reasons that caused the failure of the command in this war.
- 11 This means that in the course of 25 years of service by an officer in the regular army and the reserves, the IDF trains tens of thousands of officers! Obviously, in the best case scenario, most of this potential is not fully tapped; in the worst case scenario, they make a negative contribution by inflating the

command centers suffering from a surfeit of officers or by certifying officers in many reserve units above the quotas. In some cases, they serve functions as squad commanders; in other cases, two to three officers serve in the same platoon, and this is liable to be very damaging to cohesion.

- 12 Exceptions to this are the pilot and naval commander courses, which train a relatively small number of officers over a relatively long period of time (three to four years), before assigning them operational positions.
- 13 Similar to the medical phenomenon in which the patient breathes very shallow rapid breaths in order to supply the necessary oxygen to the body, which under normal conditions needs fewer but deeper breaths.
- 14 In fact, in the IDF's list of available positions there is no such rank as second lieutenant. Second lieutenants serve in positions that according to the IDF's manpower requirements are described as lieutenant positions.
- 15 For purposes of comparison, whereas an air force pilot is trained for almost five years before becoming an operational pilot and a naval commander is trained for almost four years before commanding a junior operational task, the young officer in the ground forces, will, after a two and a half to three year service period (of which five to six months are spent on officer training), find himself commanding a system in operational activity in the different combat zones.
- 16 While in the regular army there is a constant race to fill the ranks, in the reserves there is an overwhelming glut that cannot be utilized and certainly not developed or trained. In certain places, this results in the social division of the burden among several officers (a destructive trend, capable of damaging the cohesion of the troops) or in situations in which officers fill the function of NCOs – a problematic situation in and of itself.
- 17 In a General Command Faculty conference held in 1956 after the Sinai Campaign, when it became clear that the layer of squad commanders was the weak link in the chain of command, the head of the training division at the time, Col. Iska Shadmi, claimed that the reason for the failure was "not the result of inadequate training – this was not the problem – but rather the level of manpower remaining for the task after the large scale entreating of people to serve in all other conceivable positions." Sagi Turgan, *Training Combat Leadership in the IDF 1949-1956* (Doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008), p. 87.
- 18 Recently the commander of Training Base 4, Col. Aharon Haliwa, said that anyone who can embark on an officer's training course and fails to do so is "a criminal," a statement that is deeply rooted in the existing ethos.
- 19 One example, cited by the Brodet report, is transferring the medical services given in military clinics, currently employing many officers in the regular and standing army and in the reserves, into civilian hands.
- 20 A representative example in this context lies in the changes that took place in the age of service personnel in command and staff positions, as well as the

extension of the terms of the positions, two changes that were seen as impossible merely a decade ago.

- 21 A fairly superficial examination will show that the vast majority of majors in the principal command headquarters who serve as the foundation for the system in executing most of the work of the staff underwent their first and only training in the form of the officers course (at the Haim Laskov Officers School or the now defunct BAHAD 12 Officers' School in Tzrifin), which gave them the "professional foundations" serving them to this day.
- 22 This gap in the perception of officer training has been identified especially among personnel with the rank of major serving on the staffs of the principal command headquarters. Therefore, a course designed to close the training gap, if only a little, has already been developed especially for them.
- 23 For many years the IDF assumed that the main draw for serving in the IDF was the early age of retirement and that any impinging on it would lead to its inability to keep officers in the system. However, at the same time the IDF avoided asking what damages from a professional perspective resulted from this service model.
- 24 Until the early 1990s the average service time of a battalion or brigade commander was one to one and a half years.
- 25 A familiar phenomenon is that ground force officers reaching the rank of general first encounter "the staff world" as heads of divisions at the General Staff.
- 26 This is especially serious because the IDF is a ground army and the General Headquarters (MATKAL) is the headquarters of the ground forces in addition to being the supreme headquarters encompassing all the military service branches.