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**The IDF's Cognitive Effort: Supplementing the Kinetic Effort**  
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In late January 2018, IDF Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Ronen Manlis published an article in the Arab media, warning Lebanon's citizens of "Hezbollah's hooligan-like behavior, the establishment of terror infrastructures and plants for manufacturing weapon systems under the very eyes of the Lebanese government, and the undisturbed military deployment within the civilian population." Manlis added that Lebanon's citizens had better not "let Iran and Hezbollah exploit the naiveté of Lebanon's leaders and establish plants to produce precision missiles, as they have lately attempted." The IDF is fully prepared for any eventuality, and "as we proved in previous years - and those who need to know are aware of this - our security red lines are clear-cut, and we prove this every week."

Manlis's article provided a glimpse into a range of IDF overt and covert activities in the realm of cognitive operations, with the aim of delivering messages to target audiences in Lebanon, the region, and the world at large: namely, that buildup efforts by Iran and its proxy Hezbollah are clear to Israel, that Israel has the ability to act against them, and that therefore Lebanon's citizens would be better off not to sanction these efforts, as they designate the civilian population as human shields in a future campaign.

The IDF engages in additional cognitive-related efforts vis-à-vis Hezbollah in Lebanon. Avihai Edrei, in charge of the social media in the Arab world in the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, conducts a heated online discussion in order to confront Hezbollah with various target audiences in Lebanon. In advance of Lebanon's forthcoming elections, scheduled for May 2018, the Lebanese news website IMLebanon published an article reviewing IDF activity in the Lebanese social media. Under the headline "Whom Are You Laughing At?" Edrei addresses Nasrallah directly, "Who commanded you to send youths to die in Lebanon? What interest did you have to be dragged in to a war that Lebanon has no part in, if not just the interest of Iran?" Confronting Nasrallah further, he charges, "Why did you, along with the Iranians, assassinate Badreddine?" It is hard to assess the impact of this activity on Hezbollah, but it appears that this activity has resonated in the Lebanese press and has potential for influence in the long term.

The IDF has recently intensified its cognitive-related activity and has engaged in a significant buildup process in this area. This has included developing a cognitive

operations doctrine and engaging in developing technological tools, training human resources, and building organizational frameworks supporting the doctrine. In addition, the cognitive realm has been incorporated into IDF exercises. To be sure, the importance of the effort is not new and has long featured in the annals of war. “The importance of suppressing the fighting spirit of the adversary is no less important than the actual killing of its soldiers,” declared Carl von Clausewitz, emphasizing that the kinetic activity in the battlefield must be combined with activity designed to influence the enemy’s mindset.

Technological development enables a wide range of focused means of influence vis-à-vis various target audiences, and in effect creates another combat arena beyond the classic kinetic combat arenas. Armies and states find themselves having to contend with enemy efforts of influence that utilize the technological realm and social media in order gain achievements without resorting to the use of kinetic means or employ both types of tools together. This phenomenon requires armies and states to work both on the defensive plane, in order to counter enemy efforts, as well as on the proactive and offensive plane, in order to achieve objectives by influencing enemy target audiences, including decision makers, commanders, combatants, and domestic and world public opinion.

Cognitive efforts can be divided into three categories: (1) Covert efforts, whereby the attacked target is not aware that an effort to influence it is underway. In such operations, the messages are conveyed in a way preventing the target audience from identifying that it is subject to an influencing operation. An example might be messages transmitted by disguised elements. (2) Undercover efforts (also termed “operations under a false flag”), whose target, whether an organization, public, or country, is aware of the activity against it, but those behind it hide behind a false identity. An example is the campaign for the election of the Governor of Florida in 1994. Activists of Democratic candidate Lawton Chiles telephoned about 70,000 elderly voters, identified themselves as representing Republican candidate Jeb Bush, and told them that he intends to cut national insurance and medical aid to the elderly, subjects of critical importance to them. (3) Overt efforts, such as the messages in the article by the IDF Spokesperson to Lebanon, or IDF activity on the social media in Lebanon.

The common denominator of all types of cognitive efforts is that most of the activity takes place in the overt realm, conveying messages to the target audiences in the classic media (the press, television and radio) and via the internet, the social media, forums, blogs, and website advertisements. The overt effort bears with it most of the ability to influence and change public opinion, with respect to a large public or at the decision making level. The activity in the overt realm necessitates certain skills, primarily an understanding of mass psychology and the ability to analyze target audiences. In this context, the development of operational capabilities in armies in general and in the IDF in

particular can benefit from the civilian world. Campaigns to influence various target audiences are the bread and butter of every advertising and public relations office marketing products or campaigning for politicians.

In the IDF, as in other armies, an ongoing debate concerns who should lead the influence operations. There is a traditional tendency, stemming from the “soft” nature of these operations and the closeness to psychological warfare, to associate them with the intelligence operations sphere. This is partly due to the fact that in the past these operations had to be based on focused intelligence; thus, the activity was directed to the covert intelligence field. However, in view of the fact that most of the operations take place in the overt realm and the skills needed involve activities in the public realm vis-à-vis various target audiences, it would be best for the IDF if those specializing in the field led these operations. Moreover, developments in recent years and the transfer of the operational arena to the overt realm necessitate building capabilities on a large scale, tapping all the operational capabilities of armies in general and of the IDF in particular for operating in the overt media.

The use of overt capabilities by the IDF Spokesperson's Unit enables direct discourse with many target audiences in enemy states on the social media, as well as with terrorist elements. This is effected using the various capabilities developed in recent years in the IDF, designed to create legitimacy in international target audiences, influence the enemy, and even maintain deterrence. The current development of technology in the social media, whether overt or covert, constitutes a strategic asset for Israel alongside traditional kinetic assets. There is considerable potential for activity in the overt sphere, including in the operational context, while in tandem maneuver and fire operations in the physical realm are intensified.

The cognitive battle consists of three efforts: preliminary (before the confrontation), concurrent (during), and following the confrontation and complements the principal campaign in the physical realm. The cognitive battle for the must be guided by an overall principle that incorporates all the relevant entities and authorities in the country, including the army, defense entities, and legal, financial, and diplomatic elements; it requires ongoing tasking of intelligence, both gathering and assessment. It is necessary to develop tools and capabilities for operating in the cognitive field, including responses to existing threats, ability to interdict evolving threats, and ultimately proactive attack capability to achieve objectives vis-à-vis various relevant target audiences. Therefore, IDF activity in the social networks used by the enemy bears considerable operational potential for Israel.