

# **From Civilian Protection to a Civilian Front: The Triple Paradox**

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This essay examines how the State of Israel has provided for its civilian population in the face of the evolving array of threats to the civilian front (otherwise known as the “home front,” or the “rear”) since the Six Day War. The article presents a three-dimensional strategic paradox that has challenged the State of Israel over the last five decades. The first dimension is that as the traditional threat from the Arab states diminishes, the perceived threat to the population of Israel increases; the second suggests that despite Israel’s strategic might and its unequivocal advantage over its non-state adversaries at all levels and in all aspects, Israel finds it difficult to dispel the growing, persistent threat that its adversaries present to the civilian front; and the third is that through its official reaction to the nature and scope of the threat to the civilian front, the government of Israel contributes to the reverberations created by these threats, and consequently amplifies them in the public domain. All of these have direct and negative implications for Israel’s perception of the security threat and, in turn, for its perception of the military conflict with its adversaries.

The essay discusses the essential manifestations of the transformation of the threat to Israel’s civilian front, from what historically was a relatively passive and marginal level to the contemporary active and central role. The article also looks at the gap between the weight of the current threats and the responses to them and presents necessary recommendations for narrowing

this gap on the strategic level. The analytical prism used here is the trifold paradox and its negative implications for Israel's threat perception.

### **The Trifold Paradox of Israel's Civilian Front**

Israel's defense of the civilian population following the War of Independence was based on keeping the military confrontation far from the country's borderlines. This was the main lesson learned from that war, which reflected one of the most important components of Israel's traditional security doctrine, known as "strategic depth." This was the state of affairs during the Sinai War, the Six Day War, the War of Attrition, and the Yom Kippur War, in which the Israeli rear was protected and passive, and its primary function was to support the IDF from afar. This was a highly successful strategy.

As long as Israel fought against state entities with powerful regular armies—at least from a quantitative perspective—the IDF managed to provide victories and protect the civilian population. However, presently, when Israel is engaged in recurring low intensity confrontations with non-state entities and terror, and when the threat to its existence and its sovereignty as a state is limited, the civilian front has become far more prominent. It is threatened and challenged to a much greater extent than in the past. The experience of the confrontations since the 1991 Gulf War, and mainly those of the last generation—generally referred to as "low intensity war" or "hybrid war"<sup>1</sup>—shows that in contrast to what was the case fifty years ago, the core of the security threat has shifted to the civilian front. However, while Israel knew how to provide appropriate and successful strategic responses to the challenge of the traditional military-to-military wars, it continues to struggle to design a full strategic response to the current confrontations. This, in a nutshell, is the paradox that Israel must confront.

The contention here is that the strategic paradox of the State of Israel in the context of the civilian front comprises three layers: First, as the military threat to Israel from the Arab countries diminishes, the popular perception of the severity of the security threat increases; second, despite its strategic might and its clear-cut advantage over its non-state adversaries, Israel finds it difficult to remove the persistent threat to the civilian front; and third, in its official and public statements the State of Israel itself contributes to

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1 Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, Virginia: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), pp. 5–65.

the broad resonance of the threats and consequently amplifies them in the public domain.

This complex paradox invites two fundamental questions. First, what is it that enables Hezbollah and Hamas to create the image of such a threatening enemy that can effectively deter Israel? Second, why is Israel, in 2018, unable to meet the threat and defeat two moderately powerful organizations, whereas it met the threat against the Arab armies so successfully in 1967 and in 1973? The tangible damage to the civilian front in the Second Lebanon War (2006) and even more so in the three rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip since 2008 was at most low to moderate. In each of the rounds, Hezbollah and Hamas managed to launch not more than an average of about 120 rockets per day. More than half did not even come close to actual civilian targets, or did not cause significant damage. If so, what is the real reason for the anxiety that prevails in Israel regarding the threat of high-trajectory weapons, and recently, with increased intensity, the threat of the offensive tunnels on the border with the Gaza Strip (and in the north of Israel, where there is no evidence of their existence)?

We are not underestimating the severity and magnitude of the threat. It is indeed neither normal nor acceptable for the daily routine of a civilian population to be interrupted, usually unexpectedly, and for civilians to find themselves under attack from the air, with their routines disrupted, while drumrolls are sounded in the media, and a sense of helplessness complements uncontrollable fear. Still, it seems that the somewhat hysterical response to the threat, primarily when it materializes, raises questions concerning both its source and the reactions of the Israeli establishment.

Our claim is that more than a significant physical threat, the phenomenon is first and foremost an exaggerated reaction to psychological warfare initiated and directed by Hezbollah and Hamas, which is a function of their perception that the struggle against Israel will be decided in the domain of public awareness.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Israel faces a complex convergence of growing risks that are reinforced by an amplified cognitive effort by the enemy, which in turn is augmented by Israeli self-perception.

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2 This is essentially a strategy of perceptual defeat rather than a real defeat. See Uzi Rubin, "The Civilian Front and the Component of National Endurance," ed. Efraim Inbar, *Studies in Middle East Security* 128 (Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2017), pp. 73–91 [Hebrew].

The role of psychological warfare is to sow fear among the civilian population. This is similar to the fundamental objective of every act of terror, designed to generate anxiety and demoralization among the civilian public, as the weaker link in a system targeted by terror. Can Israel not respond successfully to such psychological provocations in an effective manner? And furthermore, is it possible that Israel itself contributes to the messages that sow fear among its citizens? The offensive tunnels, which were cast as a hair-raising story narrated with panic by politicians and the media and became a core issue of Operation Protective Edge (2014), provided a recent worrisome example of this dynamic.

It can be posited that the government in Israel, including those who are directly responsible for the security of the civilian front, is reluctant to develop means of securing its citizens from the enemy's psychological warfare and essentially is fanning the flames by transmitting messages that inspire more fear than reassurance. Thus, for example, in engaging with the Israeli public, the establishment sends out the following three-pronged message, which is presented repeatedly during the rounds of conflict: a) the Israeli public is steadfast; b) it can successfully deal with the attacks; and c) in this way Israeli society supports the IDF. Such a message places the burden of support for the IDF on the public, more than it emphasizes the natural expectation that the IDF will protect them. These messages are highly questionable, particularly in times of emergency, when the citizens expect the state and its systems, and the IDF in particular, to provide them with necessary protection.

Even Iron Dome, the active defense anti-rocket system that to no small extent imparted a sense of security to the public, in view of its impressive successes in the last round of fighting with Hamas, is presented as limited in its operational capacity in extreme scenarios of all-out attacks on urban areas.<sup>3</sup> In fact, there is no increase in the number of Iron Dome batteries that will provide an adequate response to the expanding array of threats to the civilian sector, critical infrastructure, and IDF bases.

The inability to successfully address the psychological warfare waged against the civilian front raises doubts as to the level of understanding among

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3 Meir Elran, Yonatan Shaham, and Alex Altshuler, "An Expanded Comprehensive Threat Scenario for the Home Front in Israel," *INSS Insight* No. 828, June 15, 2016.

the decision makers in Israel regarding the importance of reassuring the public during a conflict. Is the government not interested in mitigating the sense of danger or victimization of the public? This question is central to the strategic discourse and is intertwined with questions relating to Israel's capacity to defeat its enemies and the IDF's ability to win wars. Thus, the projected image is complex, suggesting that the IDF can possibly produce a military victory, in the technical sense of the term, but the psycho-political environment, both within Israeli society and in the international context, makes such an achievement less accessible or requires a major investment that is beyond what the Israeli public is willing to make. According to this logic, the difficulty in achieving a decisive military offensive victory in a short time necessarily means difficulty in fully protecting the civilian front or at least in shortening the time span that the public is subject to major disruptions by the enemy.

It can be expected that likewise in the next round with Hezbollah or Hamas, Israel will encounter similar political and psychological constraints that are liable to dictate restrained military actions. For the civilian front, this primarily means a long(er) period of rocket attacks, primarily (though not exclusively) against civilian targets. Serious damage to essential infrastructure, such as the electricity system, would be severely disruptive for the population, as would be the consequent emergency routine. The military buildup of Hezbollah, and to a lesser extent Hamas, will make such a confrontation more severe and perhaps also longer, which might inflict more damage than in the past. The entry of enemy countries, such as Iran and others, into the circle of confrontation, if the regional strategic circumstances change, will no doubt present much more difficult challenges for the civilian front, which will require an "outside the box" reexamination of the necessary responses.

Does the solution lie completely in the military domain? It appears that the answers are to be found, and to a greater extent than in the past, in the political and psychological domains. There is a need to strengthen the defensive capacities of the civilian front through the enhancement of "soft" traits, which have the potential to reduce the harmful effect of the enemy's psychological warfare, improve the ability of the Israeli public to deal successfully with the exposure to threats, and boost the societal resilience of the public, augmenting its ability to bounce back quickly following disruptions. Progress in these directions will strengthen the public's capacity to meet the challenges facing the civilian front, which for its part is meant to

project confidence in the efficacy of the military and the civilian leadership to deal successfully with non-state foes.

## **From Home Front to Civilian Front: Framing the National Capacity to Defend the Population**

The defining event in Israel's history where the civilian home front was broadly and intensely involved in the fighting was the War of Independence.<sup>4</sup> Between November 1947 and March 1949, 1,162 civilians were killed in Israel. They accounted for about 20 percent of the total number of Jews killed in the war.<sup>5</sup> In Tel Aviv alone eighteen people died on a monthly average, which would represent a rate of some 180 casualties a month in the current population. This led to the establishment of the Civil Defense in 1951,<sup>6</sup> and more importantly, served as the basis for Israel's security concept. The lessons of the War of Independence shaped the principle of "strategic depth," as an objective to distance the enemy from the civilian rear and to protect the population from a major disruption.

Since the end of the War of Independence, the Israeli civilian rear has enjoyed a relatively high level of security. Thus, the Sinai War (1956), the Six Day War (1967), the War of Attrition on the Suez Canal (1968–1970), and the Yom Kippur War (1973) were fought exclusively on the military front, without any harm to the civilians. Although in the period before the war in 1967 there was a fear of mass casualties on the home front given possible air attacks by the Arab forces, this scenario was not realized, as a result of the destruction of the Arab air forces and their air bases by the Israeli air force.

These wars were fought between regular armies, at a great distance from Israeli population centers, which remained unharmed.<sup>7</sup> To a large extent

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4 Mordechai Bar On and Meir Hazan, *The People of War: Civilian Society in the War of Independence* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, The Institute for Zionist Heritage, and the Center for Defense Studies, 2006) [Hebrew].

5 Mordechai Naor, *On the Home Front: Tel Aviv and the Recruitment of the Population in the War of Independence* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi and the Center for Defense Studies, 2009) [Hebrew].

6 The Civil Guard Law, 5711-1951, Security – Civil Protection, [https://www.nevo.co.il/law\\_html/Law01/125\\_001.htm#med1](https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/125_001.htm#med1) [Hebrew].

7 Uzi Rubin claims that the watershed in the characteristics of Israel's wars was the Yom Kippur War. Until then, and in general, Israeli wars were primarily army against

this pattern shaped the Israeli perception of the nature of the conflict and influenced the framing of its security mindset. This was reinforced primarily among the senior military command, which saw itself, and also presented itself, as capable by means of its sheer power to produce spectacular victories and clear strategic achievements, even when the state is faced with severe challenges, as was the case in 1967 and again in 1973. Moreover, the high level of IDF capacities proved themselves, from the Israeli viewpoint, not only as a lever for defending the state's primary interests and providing security to the civilian rear but also for advancing strategic objectives, such as the peace with Egypt, its oldest and most powerful enemy.

### **The Strategic Transition: Stages in Structuring the Civilian Front**

This picture changed dramatically with the missile attacks from Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War,<sup>8</sup> which began with a round of six Scud missiles launched from western Iraq toward Tel Aviv on January 17 and 18, 1991 and continued with subsequent attacks until February 28. While the attacks caused negligible damage to property and people, they were met with confusion and civil and political demoralization. Most importantly, this was the defining beginning of a new era in Israel's security reality, an era of security threats from high-trajectory weapons of various types. Although in previous years short-range rockets were launched at Israel (Katyushas of various types, primarily from Lebanon, before the First Lebanon War), these were primarily tactical weapons that constituted little more than a local nuisance.

Israel needed some time to internalize the significance of the new threat. It may be that the full national integrated response to the high-trajectory weapons threat is still evolving, with lessons learned gradually, following each new round of hostilities. This ongoing process takes place in the shadow of an incoherent concept of prioritizing the security threats, which leads to a somewhat confused approach to the promotion of the necessary responses. An example of this unfortunate state of affairs is the prolonged zigzag with regard to the means of protection against chemical weaponry,

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army and attack on the home front was perceived by both sides as secondary in the military effort. See Rubin, "The Civilian Front and the Component of National Endurance."

8 Joseph Alpher, *War in the Gulf, Implications for Israel* (Tel Aviv: Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1992).

first from Iraq and later from Syria.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the response to the Iraqi chemical threat in 1991 was hesitant and contained. Israeli anti-missile defense was at the time very limited, and Israel had to rely on direct, though marginal American assistance. The United States flatly rejected the offensive option to the Iraqi challenge, given its interests in the war with Iraq. Likewise, the civilian responses were few and primitive and consisted primarily of gas masks and improvised sealed rooms. The early warning system was rudimentary, as was the distribution of information to the population. The basic assumption was then, as it is today, that “the home front is called to stand up to the challenge.” All of this resulted in panic and disorganization among the civilians, who found themselves subject to “World War II standards” from both the conceptual and practical viewpoints.<sup>10</sup>

In at least the organizational domain, this historical chapter was an important turning point. About a year after the Gulf War, in February 1992, the Home Front Command was established<sup>11</sup> by the decision of Defense Minister Moshe Arens, despite the opposition of the IDF.<sup>12</sup> The military’s objection lay primarily in its longstanding reluctance to incorporate the defensive component and civil defense concept within its strategy and force buildup. The decision to revise the outdated military structure of civil defense was essential, but its implementation was slow and lacking. This was primarily due to the low preference given by the General Staff to the newly established Home Front Command. This state of affairs continued until the next upheaval caused by high-trajectory weapons in the Second Lebanon War.

### **The Second Lebanon War (2006) as a Turning Point**

Like many of Israel’s wars, the Second Lebanon War came as a surprise to both sides following uncontrolled escalation. The Israeli side was clearly not ready for it, particularly as far as the civilian home front was concerned.

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9 Meir Elran and David Friedman, “Gas Masks: Toward the End of the Line?” *INSS Insight* No. 487, November 24, 2013, <https://bit.ly/2wcBrWA>.

10 Tomer Sidon, “Viper – Always in the Home Front, Interview with General (ret.) Zeev Livne,” *Ready*, October 24, 2011, <http://ready.org.il/2011/10/israelihomefrontevolution/> [Hebrew].

11 Meir Elran, “The Israeli Home Front Command in Israel: Missions, Challenges, and Future Prospects,” *Military and Strategic Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2016): 59–74.

12 Sidon, “Viper.”



Hence, in this realm it turned out to be a total fiasco.<sup>13</sup> The level of the preparedness of the civilians and the organs that were responsible for the necessary response could not prevent the systemic collapse. Years of neglect of the home front were well apparent in face of a relatively limited strategic threat, which included about one thousand rockets that landed within population centers (about one-quarter of the total launches) over a period of 33 days, which resulted in 39 civilian deaths.

This is not the place to analyze this multifaceted failure. However, unlike the failures during the attack on the home front in the 1991 Gulf War, the Second Lebanon War failure resonated in a way to prompt the introduction of in-depth processes, epitomized by the transition from the concept of “rear protection” to “civilian front.” So as to explain the essential difference between these terms, consider that within the security heritage of the State of Israel, the perception of the civilian rear represents an attitude of low priority, lower standing, and primarily passivity. The home front was traditionally perceived as a sector that absorbs blows from the enemy and whose function is to support the army, which is responsible for the fighting. In contrast, the civilian front is a modern concept, which is meant to project responsibility, active response, and participation together with the military forces regarding the fate of the public in an emergency. Thus, it was finally recognized that the civilian front is no less important than the military one in the context of military conflicts that involve the civilian population. The military front and the civilian front are meant to face the threat together and demonstrate functional synergy. The success of the military front is to be reflected in part through the social resilience of the public; the endurance of the civilian front (or lack thereof) for its part is perceived to affect the achievements of the military front. Together they are meant to provide an adequate strategic response to the contemporary military threat.

According to various reports, the number of civilians who evacuated their homes in northern Israel during the Second Lebanon War is estimated at about one third of that region’s population. The effect on the population and the helplessness of the local authorities and many of the residents of the

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13 State Comptroller, *The Preparation of the Home Front and its Performance in the Second Lebanon War*, July 2007 [Hebrew]; Meir Elran, “The Civilian Front in the Second Lebanon War,” in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives*, ed. Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007), pp. 103–119.

north came as a shock to the decision makers, at least for a while. This was the background for several major decisions that were designed to transform the framework. The damages caused by the second intifada, which ended not long before, killing 743 civilians in terror attacks, lent further sensitivity to the fate of vulnerable civilians in peril, which led to the realization of a genuine issue of personal security and hence a need to create new mechanisms for the protection of civilians under attack. However, the mechanisms put into place since then have not provided an integrative strategic response that can solve the fundamental problem. Among these mechanisms:

- a. On the conceptual level, the traditional approach that grants priority to the offensive dimension and deterrence, which is intended to lengthen the periods of lull between military confrontations, has been called into question. The inclusion of the component of defense as an essential fourth pillar in the defense doctrine (alongside early warning, deterrence, and decision) was recognized by the Meridor Committee in 2006<sup>14</sup> (though not by the government). This constituted an important stage in this rather hesitant process. Nonetheless, the IDF continued to have reservations about the increasing emphasis on defense, in part in view of its fear that over-investment in defense would be at the expense of budget allocations for the components of the offensive forces.
- b. On the military level, the IDF gradually began to revamp the Home Front Command on the basis of lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War. The main change was reflected in the expansion of the Command's roles, from an agency that focuses on rescue missions to one that is focused on strengthening the capacity of the civilian population to deal with a variety of threats, security-related and others, e.g., earthquakes, and primarily with the effects of high-trajectory weapons. In this context, an updated operational doctrine, based on the principle of cooperation with the population, and primarily with the local authorities, was formulated, practiced, and implemented.<sup>15</sup>

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14 Shay Shabtai, "Israel's National Security Concept: New Basic Terms in the Military-Security Sphere," *Strategic Assessment* 13, no. 2 (2010): 7–18.

15 *The Theory of Population Behavior in Emergencies* (IDF, Headquarters of the Home Front Command, Population Department, Behavioral Science Branch, 2011); *The Behavior of the Population during Military Conflict (War and Limited Conflict)* and *the Principles of Intervention* (IDF, Headquarters of the Home Front Command, Population Department, Local Authorities Branch, 2007) [Hebrew].

- c. On the technological level, the process of creating defensive capability was accelerated. This took the form of a rapid process to develop and operationalize the Iron Dome active defense system, as part of the three-tiered defense concept. Here too the IDF hesitated regarding the decision of the government, which was more sensitive to the anxiety of the population and the need to provide it with suitable protection. Nonetheless, the Israeli budget for the development of the system is limited even today, since it is almost completely financed by American resources, which diminishes the ability to build up the force to the required levels.
- d. On the national organizational level, the need to integrate between the various government ministries in all aspects of effectively operating the home front public systems has been understood. To this end, a National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was established, although its progress in developing capabilities has been slow due to numerous bureaucratic barriers.

### **The Rounds of Conflict with Hamas: “More of the Same”**

At the time of writing, it appears that the strategy of deterrence, based on the offensive doctrine, creates longer periods of relative stability between the rounds of hostilities between Israel and its adversaries, primarily in the north (Hezbollah), and to a lesser extent in the south (Hamas). This success has many advantages, mostly with regard to the civilian front. This strengthens the claim of those—within the IDF, for example—that priority should be given to the dimension of offense over elements of defense.<sup>16</sup> Yet even if this is correct, the gap between the national investment and the military responses in the offensive domain and those in the defensive realm (including in the protection of the population) is unreasonably large.

This assertion was proved correct in the three rounds of fighting with Hamas in the Gaza Strip: Cast Lead (2008–9), Pillar of Defense (2012), and most of all, Protective Edge, which lasted for more than seven weeks in the summer of 2014 and ended without a decisive victory and with damage to the civilian front.<sup>17</sup> The rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip,

16 Meir Elran, “The IDF Approach to its Role in the Civilian Front,” in *IDF Strategy in the Perspective of National Security*, ed. Meir Elran, Gabi Siboni, and Kobi Michael (Tel Aviv: Institute of National Security Studies, 2016), pp. 129–38 [Hebrew].

17 Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler, “The Civilian Front in Operation Protective Edge,” in *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, ed. Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom

which followed the Second Lebanon War, reflected the understanding of the non-state adversaries that Israel's weak spot is the civilian front. In four rounds of conflict they focused on attempts to strike civilian targets using high-trajectory weapons as the preferred means. This approach can be seen in their quantitative effort to build up their forces, with the primary goal of creating a statistically accurate disruptive challenge to the civilian routine. At the same time, both Hezbollah and Hamas have made significant qualitative progress, including the introduction of more precision weaponry, which already brought them, according to the former commander of the Home Front Command, to the level that "0.9 percent of what lands on the State of Israel will be accurate."<sup>18</sup> This complements the development of larger, longer range warheads, which cover most of the populated areas of the State of Israel. In addition, the sub-state enemy is developing capabilities in offensive drones and underground and sea infiltration.

All this intensifies the threat and requires new and innovative responses. Does Israel possess them? The State Comptroller's report on the preparedness of the home front, dated December 2016,<sup>19</sup> provides a negative answer. Similarly, evidence by two of the heads of the agencies responsible for the civilian front reveals insufficient levels of preparedness on the civilian front. Thus, on May 29, 2016, the Head of the National Emergency Authority warned that the level of preparedness of the home front in Israel is "medium plus" and much work remains.<sup>20</sup> The previous commander of the Home Front Command stated that the preparedness of the home front is better than what people think, but still lacking: "There is more than a half-full cup, although it should be clear: the next war will be a totally different experience, more challenging, with serious disruption of functioning, but it will be possible to

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(Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2014), pp. 121–27.

18 Yoav Limor, "Iron Dome Encouraged Complacency," interview with General Yoel Strook, outgoing commander of the Home Front Command, *Yisrael Hayom*, February 9, 2017, <http://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/451059>.

19 State Comptroller, *Special Audit Report on the Preparations for the Protection of the Home Front against the Threat of Missiles and Rockets* (Physical Fortification, Warning and Evacuation of the Population), (2016), <https://bit.ly/2N82cmw> [Hebrew].

20 Reshet Gimmel of Kol Yisrael, Brig. Gen. (res.) Bezalel Trieber, former head of NEMA, <http://www.iba.org.il/bet/?entity=1162227&type=1&topic=0&page=0> [Hebrew].

deal with if we move in the right direction.”<sup>21</sup> This is not a very encouraging picture, if one takes into consideration that this evidence comes from people who were heads of the two chief organizations responsible for the welfare of the civilian front.

## Conclusion

Alongside the “traditional” Palestinian terror that occasionally reemerges in prominent fashion, the threat to the civilian front is the most pressing military challenge facing Israel today. This threat is manifested primarily in the massive potential use of high-trajectory weapons and replaces the past threat from the Arab armies, which represented Israel’s strategic order of priorities from its independence until the Yom Kippur War.

Today’s wars do not resemble the wars of the past.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen along two axes. The first is the transition from military threats originating from nation states, which jeopardized the sovereignty and security of Israel, to that of risks from non-state entities, with relatively limited military capacity, which can mainly cause disruption and annoyance to the civilian population of Israel. The second axis is represented by the transition from virtually total success in the past in protecting the Israeli population against the adversaries, to a state in which the public is continuously threatened and becomes the main target for repeated kinetic attacks.

This change in the level and character of the threat should have led to a totally revised defense doctrine and to different responses, military and diplomatic, against Israel’s new foes. It could be expected that Israel, with its advanced military, political, and economic robust resources, would have produced strategic circumstances that would represent its clear superiority over its relatively weak adversaries. These new manifestations would have been designed to limit significantly the military threat to the state and its citizens, or at least to diminish the perception of the threat and the ensuing sense of anxiety. This is seemingly not the case, for various reasons, primarily psychological. The impression is that among the Israeli public, the political leadership, and perhaps even the senior military ranks, there is a common

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21 Limor, “Iron Dome.”

22 Uri Ben Eliezer, *Israel’s New Wars – a Sociological-Historical Explanation* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Publications, 2012), pp. 426–427 [Hebrew].

belief that Israel is limited in its military-political efficacy to achieve a decisive victory over its enemies, despite the strategic gap that exists between them.

Unlike the perception in the past, when Israel faced major state military threats but succeeded in developing a clear sense of military efficacy (sometimes perhaps in an exaggerated manner), today the general mindset seems more frail. The prevailing perception is that the IDF does not exercise its full potential to provide the necessary strategic responses to the contemporary threats, which are clearly on a lesser scale. External and internal political considerations limit capacities, particularly in the realm of the IDF's ground forces to fully and rapidly implement their maneuvering capacity against Hezbollah and Hamas, at a reasonable cost and casualties. Furthermore, the ongoing public debate regarding the expected casualty level among the soldiers of the ground forces, which sometimes resonates more than the discourse regarding the expected number of civilian casualties, undermines the military efficacy and spawns fear and weakness. This feeling is also connected to the political and legal constraints imposed on the military power. The net result is that the Israeli deterrence is challenged and the needed defense of the civilian front is repeatedly questioned. This results not only in less effective military robustness but also in a broadened sense of apprehension on the civilian front.

The home front in Israel needs a strong and effective military to not only defend it from its weaker adversaries but also to further its own resilience to stand up to the growing challenges, which are expected to become more severe in the foreseeable future. The nexus and interdependency between the military front and the civilian front is more prominent than any time since the War of Independence. This calls not only for understanding but also for taking concrete measures to enhance the capacities of the civilian front.