



Photo: Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, 1949

Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment and Security Policy from the Perspective of Six Years of Experience as an Active MK

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The Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is unique among the Knesset's committees in both its disciplines and its mode of operation. An examination of the Committee's work from the perspective of one who served on it in senior roles, however, reveals structural and conceptual faults that prevent optimal fulfillment of the Committee's purpose—overseeing Israel's foreign policy and security bodies. The weakness of government and civilian oversight of the security establishment renders this failure even more serious. This article analyzes these said weaknesses, and offers practical proposals to solve the problem and strengthen the critical oversight framework.

Keywords: Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, IDF, Mossad, Israel Security Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, security establishment, civilian oversight, security budget

Introduction

In 2013-2019, I was a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee (“the Committee”). I was a member of many of its subcommittees, among them the Subcommittee for Intelligence, Secret Service, and Captives and Missing Soldiers. During this entire period, I chaired the Subcommittee for Security Doctrine and Force Buildup, one of the most active subcommittees, and I was a member of the Joint Committee of the Finance Committee and the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on the Defense Budget and its subcommittees dealing with the budget of the Israel Security Agency (ISA) and the Mossad and the Israel Atomic Energy Commission.

From a comparative viewpoint, these were years in which the Committee, chaired most of the time by MK Avi Dichter, was especially active, with a relatively high public profile. With this vantage, it is possible to analyze how the Committee performs its role, defined in the Knesset Rules of Procedure as overseeing the “foreign policy of the state, its armed forces, and its security” (*Knesset Rules of Procedure*).

This is the perspective underlying this article, which aims to portray from the inside the capabilities and limitations of the Committee, the body responsible for parliamentary oversight of the security establishment, and to propose ways to improve performance. I believe that the Committee’s optimal functioning is critical for both the proper operation of this essential establishment and for improving public awareness of security matters in Israel. The proposals for change and improvement will be presented in the article’s concluding section.

The first paragraph of the Wikipedia entry for “Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee” states that the Committee is one of the two most important Knesset committees. Together with the Finance Committee, it is one of the two Knesset committees that continue their work even when the Knesset itself is not in session (for example, immediately following elections, before a government and coalition

are formed), because it alone has the authority to approve a call-up of military reserves in an emergency. MKs compete for a seat on the Committee, and its subcommittees are usually described as “secret” and “prestigious,” without anyone outside of them knowing what actually happens there. At the same time, a meticulous examination of the Committee’s actions raises essential questions about both its power as a parliamentary committee and the significance of its oversight of the government and the security bodies.

In recent decades, the status of the Committee plenum as a forum for substantive discussion has declined.

The Committee Plenum

By the nature of its duties, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee differs from the other Knesset committees. The Committee site in the Knesset is closed and guarded, and only Committee members and their substitutes are allowed to enter. In addition, entry is barred to the advisers of the Committee members and to MKs who are not Committee members. In any other Knesset committee, a non-member MK can appear, speak, raise objections to bills, and even vote as part of his faction’s representation on the committee. At the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, minutes of meetings are made public infrequently, even when the discussion is open or deals with legislative matters.

In recent decades, particularly after subcommittees for specific issues were established (in 1977, at the initiative of then-Committee Chairman MK Moshe Arens), the status of the Committee plenum as a forum for substantive discussion has declined. Other than on legislative matters, which the Committee deals with less frequently than other Knesset committees, the full Committee has become a symbolic and ceremonial body. Even when it convenes for a specific “secret” discussion,

the ministers and security personnel appearing before it treat the occasion as a press conference.

To illustrate this situation and the relative unimportance that the government attributes to the Committee's oversight, it is possible to compare the Committee plenum's activity during the Yom Kippur War to its activity during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. In 1973, the full Committee convened almost daily. Between October 6 and October 24, the prime minister appeared before the Committee three times, the minister of defense three times, other ministers three times, the IDF Chief of Staff once, and the head of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate twice (Meetings of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, 2016-2017). Minister Maj. Gen. (res.) Aharon Yariv, who was called up for service as assistant to the Chief of Staff during the Yom Kippur War, appeared at most of the Committee's discussions as a liaison between the Committee and the IDF General Staff.

During Operation Protective Edge, Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared once before the Committee plenum, and later expressed justified anger about leaks there. I know from experience that Committee members asked Netanyahu questions for the purpose of leaking the answers, and used them in statements to the media even before the Committee meeting ended. After that, Netanyahu met only with a selected group of members of the Subcommittee for Intelligence and chairs of other subcommittees. The number of appearances of senior officials before the Committee was far fewer than the corresponding number during the Yom Kippur War, while Operation Protective Edge lasted for 51 days and was far less intense.

In all honesty, I see no way of correcting this situation. Fundamentally, it is a result of the ongoing general erosion in the status and power of the Knesset, which is one of the weakest parliaments in the democratic world. The worst example is that the Ministerial Committee for Legislation, i.e., the executive branch, convenes weekly and in effect determines the stance of

the Knesset—the legislative branch—on every bill proposed. In this state of affairs, it is no wonder that the Committee plenum's sessions are meaningless.

Following the dispute between the Committee and the security establishment in 2003, described below, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin and Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Yuval Steinitz established a public commission, headed by Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, to examine parliamentary oversight of the security establishment (the Rubinstein Commission). Former Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Dan Meridor told the Rubinstein Commission that the decline of the Committee plenum and the corresponding rise of the subcommittees constituted an irregular situation because "the Knesset's original, correct, and appropriate intention was that the full Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee would take the place of the Knesset plenum in performing the duty of parliamentary oversight of the security establishment" (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 6). However, I do not foresee the Committee plenum returning to its former glory, even if the Knesset's general oversight authority, and specifically that of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, is properly restored.

The Subcommittees

The subcommittees have in effect replaced the Committee plenum in the oversight of the government and the security bodies. Arens's logic in establishing them was twofold. First, the Committee plenum serves as a quasi-substitute for the Knesset plenum, since only a Committee member or substitute member can enter. In this sense, the subcommittees bear the same relationship to the Committee plenum as the Knesset committees bear to the Knesset plenum.

Second, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee addresses numerous areas. In other

parliaments around the world, topics such as foreign policy, the armed forces, the secret services, the security budget, intelligence, and cyber security are all under the responsibility of separate committees. I have participated in overseas trips of Committee delegations on a number of occasions, during which I met our counterparts in local parliaments. In the United States Congress, for example, there are at least six different committees for the areas of responsibility corresponding to those within the purview of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that are handled by the latter's subcommittees.

On the other hand, on more than one occasion, subcommittees have been established in response to demands by specific MKs, and enjoyed a life span of only one Knesset. These committees usually held only a few lightly attended meetings. For example, a legal warfare subcommittee, founded during the 20th Knesset, met exactly twice in the first two years of its existence (Avital, 2018).

Other than the Subcommittee for Intelligence and Secret Services, which has statutory authority under the General Security Services Law of 2002, the subcommittees have no established status, and there is no obligation to form them. In the 23rd Knesset, Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chair Zvi Hauser refrained from forming most of the subcommittees for many months on the grounds that he was evaluating the Committee's organizational structure (Shalev, 2020). Even today, according to the Knesset website, only a few subcommittees are active, far fewer than in the 20th Knesset. Under these circumstances, a considerable portion of the knowledge accumulated in the Committee is lost, and there is no continuity of processes already launched.

The Oversight Authority and the Duty to Appear

The Knesset Rules of Procedure state that employees and officeholders summoned by a committee must appear before it when asked

to do so. In the security realm, however, the situation is more complicated. The supervised *political* elements, headed by the government and the cabinet, including the Ministry of Defense, pay lip service to the importance of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the obligation to appear before it, but not infrequently try to avoid doing so. Before appearing before the Committee, negotiations often take place between the Committee chair and his professional staff and the governmental elements. Furthermore, a minister sometimes forbids his subordinates in the professional echelon to appear before the Committee because the topic of discussion, or its presumed tone, is not to his liking.

The professional staff usually behaves differently, but here too, matters are not anchored in any real statutory power, and are subject to personal whims. For example, the IDF (with the minister of defense's approval) refused to cooperate with the decision by then-Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Yuval Steinitz when he established a commission to examine the intelligence system following the 2003 war in Iraq (Report of the Commission for Investigating the Intelligence System following the Campaign in Iraq, 2004). Only after a public struggle did the security establishment agree to cooperate with the committee. From my experience, however, I know that such disputes occur almost daily, and are also likely to result from personal animosities, not just disagreements on matters of principle.

The legal basis for summoning officeholders in public service to appear before Knesset committees is Basic Law: The Knesset–1958. The law, however, establishes no sanctions for those refusing to appear. It states only that the responsible minister is entitled to notify the committee that he himself intends to appear in place of the officeholder. This sanction is meaningless, because it is impractical for the minister of defense to appear before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in

place of every officer summoned to appear before the Committee. In practice, long periods of my membership on the Committee were accompanied by tension on this point with the prime minister and the minister of defense, and sometimes with appointed officials as well.

In 2013, then-Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Avigdor Liberman sponsored a bill for improving the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's oversight. The bill was formulated primarily by MK Eitan Cabel and me and was endorsed by the most senior representatives on the Committee from all of the Knesset factions represented, including former President Reuven Rivlin (Improving the Oversight of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Bill, 2013). The bill stated, *inter alia*, that failure to appear before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee or one of its subcommittees, or failure to deliver a requested document to the Committee, was liable to result in a referral of the matter to the Civil Service Commission, the Military Advocate General, or the Knesset Ethics Committee, depending on the identity of the recalcitrant party, after which the party failing to appear would be subject to a personal fine.

The bill also stated that the Committee and its bodies would have the right to visit any element under its supervision, and that "the Committee chairman and the chairs of the subcommittees will be entitled to enter at any time any facility maintained by an agency subject to the Committee's oversight, and speak to any employee, officeholder, employee, or (soldier), and to demand from him the information necessary for executing the work of the Committee or subcommittee" (Improving the Oversight of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Bill, 2013, p. 3).

Full disclosure: the bill was part of a demonstration of force initiated by Liberman against then-Minister of Defense Moshe ("Bogie") Ya'alon for personal motives, and because Ya'alon's office was quite aggressive in its relations with the Committee (Ya'alon was IDF

Chief of Staff at a time of friction with the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee when Steinitz was chairman, involving the examination of intelligence). Later, when Liberman became Minister of Foreign Affairs, he opposed exactly the same bill when it was proposed anew, but this does not mean that the bill had no merit.

Maintaining the Secrecy of the Discussion and MK Responsibility

In other Knesset committees, the reluctance of officeholders to appear before the committee is often attributed to the emotional, unruly, and demagogic atmosphere of the debate caused by the presence of the media. The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is different in this respect: a large majority of its discussions take place with no media presence, and its minutes are not made public. In the many hundreds of deliberations that I attended (in most of the years in which I was on the Committee, there were over 250 discussions a year by the plenum and the subcommittees of which I was a member), the atmosphere was almost always serious and businesslike. The fact that the discussions did not usually conclude with a vote and were not publicized also helped to blur the divide between the coalition and the opposition.

At the same time, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee has a fixed element that those summoned before it find surprising, especially members of the security establishment: its MK members are given access to the most top secret material in Israel. The knowledge base to which an MK on several of the subcommittees is exposed is much more extensive than that of a cabinet member, and in certain cases, more extensive than any minister other than the prime minister. These MKs, however, do not undergo any security checks—not even the check required of a parliamentary adviser. This is, of course, because of the Law of Knesset Members Immunity, Rights and Obligations (1951). Immunity is an essential part

of MKs' work, and must not be compromised under any circumstances (Segal, 2013).

In point of fact, there have been very few leaks from the thousands of discussions by the Committee's subcommittees over the years. In the political-security cabinet, whose members are also not required to undergo any security check before taking office or during their term, there have been far more serious leaks in recent years, including in wartime. One prominent example was the leaked IDF presentation about the number of casualties expected in a campaign to take control of the Gaza Strip, which was presented and leaked during Operation Protective Edge (Ravid, 2014). Demands for security checks for ministers have also been raised occasionally, including a bill stipulating compulsory polygraphs for ministers (Azulay, 2017). Individual demands for polygraph testing in the past in cases of suspected leaks were nothing more than political posturing. During his chairmanship of the Committee, Steinitz proposed that "MKs sign a declaration of secrecy in which they commit, inter alia, not to disclose information to journalists during meetings of the plenum—including contents and derivative action—and not to disclose to anyone information about the subcommittees without approval from the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman (Steinitz, 2005, p. 10). However, I believe there is a better solution that will alleviate the uncomfortable feeling of a senior officeholder that a periodic polygraph test is a condition for being appointed and keeping his job, while the elected official before whom he appears has no such obligations. This and other recommendations are presented below.

The Number of Members on the Committee and the Subcommittees

Under Knesset law, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is one of three committees that can have up to 17 members, while the maximum number of members on all other committees is 15 (Basic Law: The Knesset,

1994). Since only a member or substitute member can enter meetings of the Committee or its subcommittees (except for meetings dealing with legislation), the institution of a substitute member on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee has real significance, while meaningless for any other committee. The result is that the Committee plenum has 34 members (17 regular members according to the Knesset Law and 17 substitute members), amounting to more than one fourth of all MKs, and its subcommittees have 14 or 16 members and substitute members.

There have been complaints in the past that the number of members on the subcommittees is improperly inflated for political reasons. This state of affairs, it is argued, further aggravates the sense of those testifying before the Committee that it is a political body, and enhances their reluctance to disclose to it not only facts, but also opinions and disputes.

The Rubinstein Commission recommended that "only official Committee members be part of the discussions, and that substitute members not be entitled to attend the Committee's discussions. The Knesset factions will retain the option of replacing their representatives on the Committee, provided that they do so only once a year" (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 7).

In my experience, membership on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee or its subcommittees—particularly the most prestigious of them, especially the Subcommittee for Intelligence and Secret Services—is indeed used as a tool for soothing dissatisfied MKs, mainly in the coalition. I was a member of this subcommittee when it had only five members, and also when it had more than 10. The size of the forum inevitably affects the intimacy of the discussion in both the exposure of secret material and the expression of opinion.

On the other hand, there is a known tendency for MKs, particularly those serving in leading positions in their political parties who have

become members of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and its subcommittees mainly for reasons of prestige, to refrain from attending meetings themselves. Such facts are revealed from time to time in reports by various organizations, such as Shakuf (“Transparent”) (Binyamin, 2020). The spectacle of a discussion conducted with only the subcommittee chairman present, sitting opposite an entire panel of summoned individuals, is no less embarrassing for the Knesset—and I witnessed such a situation more than once.

This is part of a general problem in the Knesset’s work, particularly with coalition members, who are members of many committees, and whose vote is needed in order to maintain the coalition’s majority. They find themselves running from one committee meeting to another, which makes it difficult for them to participate in long subcommittee deliberations. Actually, in most of the other committees, the oversight and discussion work is done primarily by the opposition members. This situation is less of a problem on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, where the political dividing lines are less significant, except where legislation is concerned, and are almost nonexistent in a closed discussion room and in a confidential discussion. During long periods of my work on the Committee, opposition members (Eitan Cabel, Omer Barlev, and I) led its important subcommittees—a situation that could not prevail in more “executive” committees.

Where substitute members are concerned, I believe that the Rubinstein Commission was wrong. As someone who chaired one of the most important and busiest subcommittees, I can say that substitute members did much more thorough and important work on it than the official members.

Ideally, it would be best to return to the fundamental situation that prevailed for many years: 17 members on the Committee plenum with no substitutes, with the Committee’s resumed role as a worthy forum for confidential and discreet discussion. The subcommittees

would be small (five to seven members, who would commit to participate in most of the meetings). In practice, however, it is difficult to envision how this situation could exist in today’s parliamentary atmosphere. In the current situation, it is liable to culminate in a non-functioning Committee, with many meetings of both the plenum and the subcommittees left virtually unattended.

External Experts

In certain periods, the Committee plenum and the subcommittees were aided by external experts, either regularly or for a specific matter. This practice was introduced by Moshe Arens when he first founded the subcommittees in 1977 (Yaari, 2004, p. 25). Former Mossad Director General Shabtai Shavit was a special adviser to the investigative commission on intelligence (Report of the Commission for Investigating the Intelligence System following the Campaign in Iraq, 2004). The late Yitzhak Ilan, former ISA Deputy Director, was a professional consultant to the Subcommittee on Intelligence in the 19th Knesset. This practice, however, did not become a fixed routine, and the approval of various experts as permanent advisers not infrequently encountered bureaucratic and legal difficulties.

I believe that the circle of those present at the Committee table should be expanded, for the following reason: when all other Knesset committees hold a regular meeting, they publicize the scheduled meeting and its subject in advance. Discussions by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, however, are often not announced in public, and subcommittee meetings are never publicly announced ahead of time. Again, they are closed even to MKs who are not members of the Committee or substitute members, let alone members of the public—except in matters of legislation.

This prevents expansion of the Committee members’ knowledge base by elements that are not part of the security establishment. The Committee never hears facts and opinions from parties other than security sources regularly

summoned to a discussion. In quite a few matters of policy, issues pertaining to socio-military affairs, and budgetary matters, there is extensive knowledge outside the establishment that is important for the MKs, and is also likely to influence the issues addressed by the Committee.

Weakness of Governmental Oversight

It is impossible to relate to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's oversight of the security establishment without mentioning that the *governmental* supervision of this establishment is, in the words of the Rubinstein Commission, "partial, faulty, and arbitrary" (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 9). In order to illustrate this ongoing and dangerous situation, which prevails in almost all security affairs, I will cite one example—the intelligence bodies.

The main intelligence organizations, the Mossad and the ISA, have always been under the prime minister's direct responsibility (like the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, on which I will not comment here). It is obvious that no prime minister, whatever his experience and capabilities, is able to exercise the same oversight for them that the minister of defense exercises over the IDF, for example. The prime minister has no oversight mechanism to help him in this matter. In recent years, governments have included a minister of intelligence, but this position lacks authority and is meaningless. The cabinet, which is authorized to approve important military operations, does not deal at all in such operations by the intelligence agencies. The prime minister approves these operations, just as he is responsible for the use of military force. He is unable, however, to devote appropriate time and attention to regular and multi-year force buildup programs, budgets, and ongoing activity.

The result is that two important organizations, whose combined budget is

nearly NIS 10 billion (Levinson, 2017), and whose successful or unsuccessful actions have the potential to create enormous benefit or damage, are in effect run without any governmental oversight. From experience, I can say that both organizational changes of enormous significance and changes of policy on the use of force were not infrequently made without the knowledge of any authorized decision makers—not because the heads of these organizations wanted to conceal the changes from the political leadership, but because there was no one whose regular job it was to oversee such measures.

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The work done by the Committee's subcommittee responsible for the intelligence bodies is only slightly better. The subcommittee is shown any material that it requests, and the presentations to it are detailed and frank. Its members, however, even those who have served in senior positions in those same intelligence organizations, have no up-to-date knowledge about them or independent sources of information like the sources they have for the IDF, where the media and Israeli society are by nature far more aware. During the years in which I was on the Subcommittee for Intelligence, all the questions we raised were answered in detail, but there were many topics on which we did not know what to ask, because you never know what you do not know.

I proposed a Secret Services bill several times during the 20th Knesset for the purpose of anchoring the status of the minister of intelligence as a minister in the Prime Minister's Office who will continue to be directly responsible for the ISA and the Mossad, and the government's supervisory authority over

the intelligence agencies (Secret Services Bill, 2019). In what became a fixed, predictable ceremony, Minister Yariv Levin would rise to respond in the cabinet's name, praise the bill and its necessity, and announce that the coalition would vote against it. Nothing changed, and the unreasonable situation of almost no governmental oversight over these two extremely important and powerful agencies still exists. This is only one example of the "partial, faulty, and arbitrary" governmental oversight that detracts from the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's work.

Need for Supplemental Legislation

Also relevant is the very deficient legal framework for security matters. The Knesset is both a legislative and a supervisory body, and the more complete and detailed the legal framework for its actions, the more solid the basis for its work as a supervisory authority. For example, it is possible to assess whether the National Security Council is fulfilling its duty under the 2008 National Security Council Law, which lists no fewer than 11 different functions of the National Security Council.

Where the operations of the IDF, the structure and approach of the political leadership, the functioning of the cabinet, and other core matters handled by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee are concerned, this legal framework is highly deficient. A law exists—Basic Law: The Army. It contains six short general articles that do not say much. In contrast to the Basic Law: The Knesset and the Basic Law: The Government, however, there is no supplement to the Basic Law: The Army listing and defining the military's functions, its subordination to the political leadership, and other core matters. Such a detailed bill was proposed in 2008 by the late Shmuel Even and Zvia Gross and published by the Institute for National Security Studies (Even & Gross, 2008), but my effort to steer it through the Knesset failed.

My bill for anchoring the role and function of the State Security Cabinet was repeatedly

blocked by the coalition (State Security Cabinet Bill, 2016), despite the structural defects in the cabinet's functioning, which the State Comptroller also cited in his reports on the Turkish flotilla affair and Operation Protective Edge (State Comptroller, 2012; 2017), and despite recommendations by a special committee headed by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yaakov Amidror and formed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following the State Comptroller's report on Operation Protective Edge.

Foreign Affairs and Defense, or Defense and Defense?

When the Committee's activity is assessed, it is obvious that "Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee" is a misnomer. Almost all of the Committee's activity is in the security realm. During most Knesset sessions, only one subcommittee, the Subcommittee for Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy, dealt with foreign relations. This subcommittee met infrequently, and attendance at its meetings was usually poor. For example, a review of attendance by MKs at meetings of the Committee plenum and the subcommittees showed that over the 2.5 years of the 20th Knesset (from April 2015 until September 2017), during which the Committee plenum held 177 meetings (almost all on security matters) and the Subcommittee on Intelligence held 98 discussions, the Subcommittee for Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy met only 34 times (Avital, 2018).

A bill for dividing the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee into two committees, one for foreign affairs and one for security issues, has been proposed more than once. It was usually proposed as a possible solution for personnel problems, for example the argument over who would chair the Committee in 2014, when the Committee was left without a chairman for many months.

In most of the world's parliaments, such a separation exists and is regarded as natural. The symbiotic connection between foreign affairs and security, which exists only in Israel, results

from concepts, some of them outmoded, in which foreign affairs are viewed mainly through the security prism.

Yet while this separation is ostensibly natural and obvious, in practice, it would almost certainly further weaken the Knesset's measures pertaining to foreign policy. The emphasis on security results from its place in Israeli consciousness, which is inclined to perceive many issues, not just foreign relations, through security lenses. Many Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairmen in recent decades were previously part of the security establishment. This state of affairs also reflects the relationship between security and foreign affairs in the government's work—the Ministry of Defense is a very powerful ministry with a large budget and a great deal of influence, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a weak ministry that has had to struggle against loss of its authority (in the 2015-2019 Netanyahu government, some of the Foreign Ministry's authority was divided among no less than six different ministries) and budget cuts. If the Committee is split into a Foreign Affairs Committee and a Defense Committee, foreign policy is liable to completely disappear from the parliamentary map.

The Security Budget

Responsibility for oversight of the security budget is in the hands of the Joint Committee of the Finance Committee and the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on the Defense Budget ("the Joint Committee"), whose existence and authority are anchored in the Budget Foundations Law (Budget Foundations Law, 1985). Since the budget is defined in the law, the committee has the same authority as any other Knesset committee to formulate legislation, but it hesitates to use it and thereby influence the priorities in security spending. This is one of the biggest and most unrecognized missed opportunities of the Knesset, which knowingly forgoes its ability to exert substantive influence in security matters.

From the outset, the emphasis on the Joint Committee has been on financial matters and the adjustment to the overall state budget. This is even reflected in its name, stipulated in the law: Joint Committee of the Finance Committee and the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on the Defense Budget (Budget Foundations Law, 1985). This is not just a semantic point. According to the Knesset Rules of Procedure, when there is a joint committee of two permanent committees, the chairman will be the chairman of the committee whose name appears first.

For this reason, the Joint Committee's name was changed in the last Knesset, with the name of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee appearing before that of the Finance Committee. This happened, *inter alia*, because during most of Netanyahu's term as prime minister, the Finance Committee chairs were MKs from the United Torah Judaism party (Yaakov Litzman and Moshe Gafni), who showed little interest in security issues. The change of name made it possible to make the chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee comprises equal numbers of MKs from its two constituent committees. In the years in which I was a member, however, a decisive majority of the MKs present at the Joint Committee's deliberations were from the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

The discussions themselves were long and detailed, at very high resolution, down to details of a few million shekels in a budget amounting to NIS 80 billion a year. The knowledge accumulated in these discussions was to a large extent broader than that of a cabinet member voting on approval of the budget at the government level. As such, the security budget differs from other items in the state budget. Other items are usually discussed by the Finance Committee for a few hours and approved by power of the coalition majority, without any serious scrutiny of their details. When this knowledge is likely to be translated into real

influence, however, the Joint Committee is reluctant to do so, as shown below.

The state budget is discussed and approved at varying resolutions. There is an overall budget total of all the items—in this case, Item 15, the defense budget—and it must be approved by the Knesset plenum by the end of the year; otherwise, the government's continued existence is in jeopardy. For these political reasons, the Knesset committees usually have no practical way of changing the total of each item in the state budget.

Each such item, however, is divided among spheres of activity and programs (for example, the air force budget, and within it the budget for munitions). Since the budget is for all intents and purposes a law, each Knesset committee has full authority to change components within its sphere of activity and programs without affecting the overall budget's chances of being passed by the plenum, unless the relevant government ministry decides to withdraw the budget bill because of the changes, just as the government can withdraw any government bill from the Knesset if it does not like the changes made by the committees.

In the usual frenzied state of affairs, in which the budget is approved at the last minute or in the legal grace period (the first three months of the year), this procedure does not enable the Knesset committees to exert any real influence on the division of the budget. A rare event in 2018, however, which gave the Knesset such an extension, illustrated the point that the Knesset knowingly forgoes its ability to exert its influence. For political reasons, the discussions of the 2019 budget were pushed up to early 2018, because Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister of Finance Moshe Kahlon wanted to avoid the regular drama involved in budget approval before an election. The 2019 budget indeed received final approval by the Knesset plenum on March 15, 2018, eight and a half months before the budget took effect.

There was a consensus in the Joint Committee that the priorities appearing in

the budget were misguided, and that resources should be diverted from certain areas to others (for obvious reasons, I will not elaborate on which areas were involved). At a certain stage, other Joint Committee members and I proposed taking advantage of the unusual timetable for the 2019 budget: we proposed to Joint Committee Chairman Dichter approving the overall total for Item 15, which would make it possible for the budget to pass in the Knesset plenum, but to withhold approval of the budgets for the spheres of activity and programs. A precedent for such an action existed—we did it for other reasons in the 2014 budget discussions.

We proposed that the Joint Committee prepare its own changes according to what it regarded as the right priorities, discuss them with the security establishment, with the knowledge that the final authority lay with the Knesset legislative committee, and commit to the Ministry of Finance that the spheres of activity and programs would be approved by July-August 2018, long before January 1, 2019, when the budget was scheduled to take effect.

This was a rare opportunity for the Knesset to exercise the authority routinely vested in other parliaments. For example, US Congressional committees regularly use their budgetary authority to change priorities, and even to determine production and procurement quantities for the United States defense industries and armed forces. In only one example of many cases, in 2001, Congress halted financing for the V-22 Osprey program, an innovative combined airplane-helicopter in which Israel had also expressed interest (Congressional Bills, 2001), and later changed the number of aircraft that would be manufactured and procured. In Israel, such an initiative—to change the scope of the IDF's procurement of a main platform—would not be considered by MKs, even if they had valid and reasoned objections to the military's decision (involving the Namer APC or the new cannon project, for example).

I can attest from personal experience that in his years as Committee chairman, MK Dichter did not hesitate to oppose the government, or to stand behind documents formulated by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that were highly critical of the government's actions. Dichter did not accept our view in this matter, however, and did not take advantage of the atypical timetable to leave the Committee's mark on matters that he also regarded as important and requiring correction.

In truth, the Knesset usually behaves in this way with the state budget in general. Despite its legal authority, and the fact that the level of expertise of its members generally exceeds that of the government ministers, and the breadth of its outlook is greater than that of the Ministry of Finance officials, it seldom changes the priorities set in the budget.

Informed or Knowing in Advance?

One of the recurring central questions in relations between the Committee and the political leadership and the security bodies is the extent of the Committee's knowledge about the various bodies with respect to specific actions. In its detailed comments on this question, the Rubinstein Commission stated:

The question in this context is whether there exists a duty to report to and consult the Committee about decisions scheduled for future implementation... It is clear that no such duty for reporting or consultation exists for routine operational actions, because the Committee does not command the security establishment, and governmental oversight is sufficient... The question is the fate of decisions for implementation that have strategic consequences for Israel's standing, its international relations, and the risk of war or the lack of such a risk. It is true that in Israel's special circumstances, every operational action can escalate

and assume a strategic dimension. It appears to us, however, that there is a substantial difference between an ordinary operational action, even if it takes place on the other side of the border, and a decision, such as the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Iraq, that is liable to have long-term consequences of some kind. (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 12)

In contrast to the past, when there was a clearer distinction between a decision to go to war and a situation of routine security, campaigns on the borders in recent years did not begin with an orderly decision by one of the sides; they resulted from escalation beginning with an operation that did not stem from any intention to begin a war. In such a situation, the significance of oversight of decisions about a specific operation has become greater than in the past. One such example is the action in which an Iranian general and Jihad Mughniyeh, son of Imad Mughniyeh, were killed (Kais, 2015). Both the global media and Hezbollah attributed this operation to Israel.

In response, Hezbollah fired several anti-tank missiles at a Givati Brigade force in the Har Dov area, and a company commander and a sergeant in the brigade were killed (Buhbut, 2015). Had the results of the anti-tank missile ambush been worse, there would likely have been a risk of a significant conflagration on the northern front, only a few months after the end of the Operation Protective Edge. Such a response by Hezbollah was predictable from the moment the organization attributed the killing of Mughniyeh and the Iranian general to Israel.

The campaign against Hezbollah's buildup and Iranian entrenchment in Syria has been discussed many times in the relevant Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee subcommittees. Without going into details, dilemmas, policy changes, and even arguments between different

security bodies were brought before the Committee. For example, issues were presented to the Committee such as the red lines of the two sides, which if crossed might well result in escalation. These lines are also mentioned from time to time in both the Israeli media and in speeches by Hassan Nasrallah (Schneider & Yaari, 2019). At the same time, it is obvious that advance notice cannot be provided for every operation, and in my opinion should not be provided. I think that there is no need or justification for requiring the political leadership or the security bodies to report in advance to the Committee on planned operations, even if their failure or success could bring Israel closer to the risk of war.

It should be noted in this context that Basic Law: The Government was amended in 2019 to authorize the cabinet (instead of the entire government, as was formerly the case) to approve going to war. At the same time, the definition in the law of an operation requiring government approval was changed from “war” to “war (or) a significant military operation liable to lead, with a level of probability close to certainty, to war” (Basic Law: The Government, 1968). This was done in the recognition that in the current era, conflicts usually result from escalation originating with an operation not intended to cause a war, rather than a deliberate decision by Israel or the enemy. It is mandatory under this law to report an operation very likely to result in escalation to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee “as soon as possible” (Basic Law: The Government, 1968), but not in advance.

Approval of Senior Appointments

Bills are occasionally proposed to make senior civil service appointments contingent on a public Knesset confirmation hearing. Such hearings are conducted in the United States for many civil service positions, including both cabinet secretaries and senior officeholders. In the past, then-Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked and then-Minister Yariv Levin proposed

that appointments of senior officeholders be preceded by a Knesset hearing, and only afterwards brought to the cabinet for approval (Azulay & Ynet, 2017).

Some of these bills were proposed in the framework of the political struggle concerning the relative power, real or imaginary, of senior civil service officials (attorney general, state attorney, and more) vis-à-vis the elected echelon. Keep in mind that there is an evaluation process for appointments by both an appointments committee chosen by the government and, once a candidate is selected, by the advisory committee for senior appointments in the civil service. This committee, which was founded following the Bar-On-Hevron affair, evaluates the candidates for the seven most senior civil service positions in Israel: IDF chief of staff, police commissioner, ISA director general, Mossad director general, prison services commissioner, governor of the Bank of Israel, and deputy governor of the Bank of Israel.

The advisory committee, however, considers only whether there is a suspicion of ethical offenses in the candidate’s record, “to ensure... that improper appointments are not made for reasons such as personal relations, business relations, or political relations with people in the government” (Cabinet resolution 2225, 1997). It does not examine the candidate’s views or outlook concerning the position that he is designated to fill.

The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee’s spheres of actions directly affect three of the seven positions reviewed by the advisory committee: IDF chief of staff, Mossad director general, and ISA director general. These are the three most important appointments in Israel approved by the government, but the selection is in the hands of a single person (the prime minister, in the case of the ISA director general and the Mossad director general) or two people (the prime minister and the minister of defense, in the case of the IDF chief of staff). The procedure is unregulated and no explanation is required. This process has been severely

criticized in recent years, including in cases in which there were reports that the name of the candidate was changed at the last minute, and that improper efforts were made to influence the process.

Even if the process unfolds impeccably and the candidate is worthy, it is very important for the heads of the security organizations in Israel—where the importance of the bodies that they head sometimes exceeds their stated roles—to present their outlook to the Knesset, and to the public, wherever possible. This becomes even more necessary when the weakness of governmental and parliamentary oversight of these bodies' operations, as noted above, is taken into account. This is particularly true of the IDF chief of staff. He is selected to head the largest organization in Israel, the people's army that conscripts people under the Defense Service Law, 1986, and his character and actions affect social, budgetary, and ethical matters of the utmost importance.

Making Defense Accessible to the Public

One of most important but less frequently mentioned roles of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is to constitute the gate through which various security issues are communicated to the public in credible and unbiased fashion. The media in Israel discuss security matters a great deal, but their reports are inherently touched by the interests and viewpoint of their sources, as well as by the knowledge that the security bodies mentioned in the media reports are the most popular and esteemed institutions in Israel—far more so than the media themselves, which frequently earn especially low marks for credibility and prestige in public opinion.

Most of the significant discussions in the Committee take place behind closed doors, and cannot be followed and studied directly like similar discussions in other Knesset committees. The right way to make security affairs accessible to the public is therefore

by means of periodic publication of reports, documents, and opinions by the Committee or some of its members. For long periods, however, the Committee functioned as a quasi-House of Lords in which the members convened, usually under the leadership of one of the former senior security establishment figures, in order to hear what was happening in their former workplaces, and to express their opinion to the current officeholders. The public remained outside, even when there were no security-related grounds for non-disclosure.

It is very important for the heads of the security organizations in Israel—where the importance of the bodies that they head sometimes exceeds their stated roles—to present their outlook to the Knesset, and to the public, wherever possible.

As the Rubinstein Commission put it, even a closed discussion, none of which is reported, is significant, because “it is not infrequently the only discussion taking place outside the security establishment itself, and it is very important for security establishment members to hear other divergent and diverse opinions within the Committee (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 7). It is no less important, however, for the public—which in essence is represented by the MKs, which provides the resources used by the security establishment, and which the security establishment is mandated to defend—to be aware and informed on these matters. There is much information that if reported will enhance state security, not harm it.

An example of the difference between a discussion behind closed doors, however thorough, and a discussion with a result that is disclosed to the public can be found in deliberations conducted by the Subcommittee for Security Doctrine and Force Buildup in 1986-1987, on the subject of Israel's security concept, chaired by then-MK Dan Meridor.

The subcommittee submitted a detailed and thorough report challenging quite a few of the then-prevailing doctrines (Yaari, 2004, p. 25). It was submitted, however, only to the decision makers and the agencies involved in execution of policy, and made no impact on the public.

This state of affairs is harmful in two ways. First, the public is not a “customer” of the security establishment that is supposed to accept its rhetoric and activity as divinely inspired; it is an important partner. The resources used by the establishment and the legitimacy of its actions come from the public. Elsewhere in the world, the shaping and publication of the security concept is part of every government’s clearly recognized duties, and its publication is an integral part of security itself. Israel’s security concept, however, has never been published in an official document. Second, concealment from the public makes it easier for those mentioned in the report to ignore its conclusions, because the entire discussion takes place in a closed room, and the only “damage” involved is barbed commentary by the Committee members.

The Rubinstein Commission had valid insights on this subject: “We believe that subject to the rule requiring the maintenance of secrecy when disclosure is liable to cause direct damage to state security, the principle should be adopted that the more open the discussion, the better for both Israeli democracy and its security” (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 3).

During Avi Dichter’s term as Committee chairman, together with MK Omer Barlev and with the chairman’s backing, I led an effort in which a detailed classified edition of the Committee’s many documents, and certainly its important reports, was sent to the relevant entities, while an open public edition, which was subject to censorship, dealt with matters on which it was important to educate the public and present to it the view of the country’s main oversight body. This was the case with the report published by the Subcommittee for Readiness

and Continuous Security, chaired by Barlev, on the subject of the IDF’s readiness for war (Report of the Subcommittee for Readiness and Continuous Security, 2018).

MK Barlev and I also issued an open version of a document that we wrote as chairmen of the relevant subcommittees about the future of the IDF ground forces. This document reflected a view that was not approved by the Committee, and was therefore not an official Committee document, but both we and MK Dichter regarded it as part of the Committee’s duty to the public on a critical matter for security and the budget. I recently published an updated version in the framework of my work at the Institute for National Security Studies, because the issue has become even more important since the document was first written, and was the focus of a public dispute following Operation Guardian of the Walls (Shelah, 2021).

Two especially good examples of an entire process that reflect all of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee’s functions can be found in two areas that the Committee dealt with during the 20th Knesset: the IDF’s Gideon multi-year plan and the regulation of cyber affairs in Israel.

With the consent of then-IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, and contrary to the usual policy in which IDF plans are approved at all levels and only then presented to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the Subcommittee for Security Doctrine and Force Buildup under my chairmanship was a full partner in the process of shaping and implementing the Gideon plan for two years, from the time Lt. Gen. Eisenkot became IDF chief of staff in January 2015 until the concluding discussion of the plan in early 2017, a year after the plan was first formulated. The result was a comprehensive report that dealt with both the process and the outcome of designing the multi-year plan. The report’s comments provided a basis for adjustments and changes in the plan by the military from 2017 onwards. The full report was kept classified, but was accompanied by an abridged public report

that dealt mainly with the process of formulating the plan and the approaches behind it. It is important for the public to know these matters; they must not be concealed under the cloak of secrecy (IDF Gideon Multi-Year Plan, 2017).

A process that was even more complete, because it included legislation, took place in the Subcommittee for Cyber Affairs under Chairman MK Anat Berko on the question of responsibility and authority in the field of cyber defense in Israel. The subcommittee held discussions, reached conclusions, and published a classified and an unclassified report (Report on Division of Responsibility and Authority in Cyber Defense in Israel, 2016). Its conclusions served as a basis for legislation by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee for regulating this sensitive area.

I believe this entire array—deliberation and investigation; formulation of conclusions; relay of conclusions to the political and the executive echelons in a classified version and report of what can be publicized; and legislation, if necessary—constitutes the complete and proper cycle of events in the Knesset's work. Unfortunately, such a comprehensive process takes place in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee only rarely. The changes proposed in the next section, and others, can redress this lapse at least in part and help the Committee realize its mandate, to the benefit of the public and Israel's security.

Recommendations for Change *Oversight Authority, Appearances before the Committee, and the Disclosure of Documents*

No specific legislation is needed for the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee; what is needed is to anchor in law the oversight authority of the entire Knesset. The authority of every Knesset committee to summon witnesses, view documents, and visit relevant sites should be anchored in a general oversight law that will strengthen the Knesset's capabilities in what I regard as its essential role. The authority listed in the bill for Improving the Oversight

of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee should be vested in every committee in its field of responsibility, as defined in the Knesset Rules of Procedure.

The authority of every Knesset committee to summon witnesses, view documents, and visit relevant sites should be anchored in a general oversight law that will strengthen the Knesset's capabilities in what I regard as its essential role.

In addition, the same bill should anchor rules for appearing before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and disclosing documents to it. The Rubinstein Commission also recommended as follows:

As in the provisions of Article 12 of the General Security Service Law, the IDF chief of staff shall report on IDF activity from time to time to the Committee or the appropriate subcommittee—as decided by the Committee chair. The current practice of a report once a month appears to us to fulfill the needs.

In cases of an urgent discussion, which the Committee chair believes cannot be delayed, the Committee chair is entitled to summon the chief of staff or his deputy for an urgent discussion within 48 hours. If the minister of defense takes issue with this summons, the Knesset speaker shall decide the matter.

Investigations by the military shall be included in the documents that the Committee and its subcommittees are authorized to obtain and examine. For this purpose, Article 593A of the Military Justice Law should be amended accordingly (Report by the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 11).

Confidentiality

I propose that each member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee sign a commitment that if he is shown to have leaked the contents of a discussion classified at any level of secrecy whatsoever, he will not request immunity against prosecution, and will not accept such immunity if it is granted to him. This commitment will be deposited with the Knesset legal advisor, as is done with declarations of capital given by each MK upon taking office. This will increase public trust, and the trust of those appearing before the Committee, in the Committee members' responsibility.

Subcommittees

The identity and roles of the subcommittees must be regulated and anchored in the Knesset rules of procedure. This will establish the status of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee plenum as a "substitute Knesset" for foreign affairs and security matters, and give the subcommittees a status similar to that of the permanent Knesset committees with respect to the Knesset plenum.

Historically and objectively, the principal subcommittees are as follows:

- a. Subcommittee for Intelligence, Secret Services, and Captives and Missing Soldiers
- b. Subcommittee for Security Doctrine and Force Buildup
- c. Subcommittee for Readiness and Continuous Security
- d. Subcommittee for IDF Human Resources
- e. Subcommittee for Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy
- f. Subcommittee on Home Front Affairs
- g. Subcommittee for Israel Atomic Energy Commission Affairs

The identity and size of these subcommittees should be anchored in the Knesset Rules of Procedure, so that their existence does not depend on the caprices of the Committee chairman. No additional subcommittees should be added, except in special cases of ad hoc committees required for reasons of secrecy of

the discussion or a necessary reduction in the number of participants.

The Number of Members and the Question of Substitute Members

A solution should be found to prevent political inflation of the number of members of the Committee and the subcommittees, while on the other hand ensuring a respectable attendance at discussions and the proper work of these bodies: the number of substitutes will be limited, and a large majority will be members of the opposition, so that the total number of members and substitute members on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee does not exceed 25. This will not impact negatively on the coalition majority in legislative matters. The number of members on a subcommittee will not exceed nine, including substitutes. There will be no more than five members each on the Subcommittee for Intelligence and the Subcommittee for Israel Atomic Energy Committee Affairs.

Preservation of Knowledge and Consultation with External Experts

The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee has a highly skilled permanent team of veterans that maintains the Committee's organizational memory and is very knowledgeable in the Committee's fields of responsibility. It is important for this team to maintain ongoing and fixed contact with relevant parties outside the Knesset, and to propose that the Committee chairman utilize their help from time to time—with obvious restrictions for maintaining secrecy—in order to expand the base and scope of the Committee's discussions. When the Committee receives all its information from the security establishment, which in any case has a virtual monopoly on the data, the discussion is liable to be channeled to this knowledge base, which will detract from proper oversight.

Governmental Oversight

Suitable legislation should be enacted immediately in order to institutionalize governmental oversight of the intelligence agencies. Such institutionalization will facilitate the work of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee's subcommittee, which will be able to obtain answers more easily, not only from the intelligence bodies themselves, but also from the responsible governmental echelon and those with appropriate knowledge. Similarly, the entire governmental oversight mechanism for the security establishment should be institutionalized and improved, which will also improve the Committee's work and make it more effective.

The legal framework for the actions of the security bodies, their structure, and their subordination to the political echelon should be supplemented. A complete framework of this sort will also help the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in fulfilling its oversight functions. An IDF law, a State Security Cabinet law, and other laws should be enacted for this purpose.

The Lack of Discussions on Foreign Affairs and the Proposal to Split the Committee

I recommended against splitting the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee into two committees. Instead, the Knesset speaker and the Committee chairman should agree on a minimum threshold of attention to foreign affairs and their proper weight in the Committee's activity. Israel's foreign relations are a critical matter with an influence on the country's security and prosperity equal to that of security activity. This should be reflected in the Committee's activity, but not through a mechanical division.

The Security Budget Approval Process

The process for approving the security budget can be improved as follows: the Joint Committee will examine the budget in detail, as it does now.

It will propose, debate, and eventually approve changes in the fields of action and the programs, while approving the overall budget total, in order to avoid delaying Knesset approval of the budget and threatening the government's viability. History shows that MKs are better able than government ministers to detect errors and bias in the security establishment's actions. There must be no hesitation in doing this in the main area in which it is possible.

I recommended against splitting the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee into two committees. Instead, the Knesset speaker and the Committee chairman should agree on a minimum threshold of attention to foreign affairs and their proper weight in the Committee's activity.

Advance Notice of Operations and Campaigns

There should be no obligation to report actions and operations to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, and I agree with the finding of the Rubinstein Commission: "It is not desirable for a parliamentary committee or its subcommittees to have direct command authority, or to bear any responsibility whatsoever for the decisions and actions of the defense establishment" (Report of the Public Commission for Examining Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Establishment, 2004, p. 8). At the same time, it is mandatory to inform the Committee of ongoing matters, policy disputes, and a change in red lines, and to discuss them before its appropriate body. The Committee chairman is updated regularly by the political echelon, and has the authority to bring a given matter up for discussion in the appropriate subcommittee. However, the current situation also depends on the will of the political echelon or the extent of the Committee members' external knowledge, which leads them to ask the Committee chairman to schedule a discussion on a given matter.

Confirmation Hearings for Senior Officials

In the Israeli system, there is no need to make any appointment whatsoever for a senior position contingent on Knesset approval, including the three security appointments: IDF chief of staff, ISA director general, and Mossad director general. Such a condition would constitute a change in the system of government on a single arbitrary point. Rather, I propose that someone appointed to one of the leading positions examined by the appointments committee appear before the relevant Knesset committee after final approval of his appointment, and present his plans and outlook in the matters for which he will be responsible. For the three security positions, this will be the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and its subcommittees. Part of his appearance should be public—particularly that of the chief of staff and a specific part of the ISA director general's appearance—and part should be before the Subcommittee for Intelligence, or a different body selected by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chair. This will not be a hearing for confirmation purposes, and the Committee will have no authority over the appointment itself.

Former MK Ofer Shelah joined INSS in June 2021 as a senior research fellow. In 2013 he was elected to the Knesset as an MK for the Yesh Atid party, serving there until 2020. Mr. Shelah was the Chairman of the Yesh Atid faction (party whip), and a member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. In that capacity he chaired the Subcommittee on Security Doctrine and Force Buildup and was a member of the Subcommittee on Intelligence and Secret Services, a member of the Joint Committee on the security budget, and other subcommittees. His books *Boomerang* and *Dare to Win* were awarded the INSS Tshetshik Prize in Security Studies, and the latter was also awarded the Yitzhak Sadeh prize in Military Studies. ofers@inss.org.il

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