



# The Changing of the Guard: The IDF, from Aviv Kochavi to Herzi Halevi

Tamir Hayman and Eden Kaduri

Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) – Tel Aviv University

“The IDF is the people’s army” is a common phrase that reflects the standing of the military in Israeli society, given the conscription law and the sense of public involvement in developments relating to the military. The military’s level of fitness, professionalism, and effectiveness are sensitive subjects for the Israeli public. The transition between Chiefs of Staff is an opportunity to look toward the future and to update military strategy in relation to expected challenges. This paper proposes a viewpoint for analyzing the military’s fitness, and offers insights about changes in IDF force buildup and force application under the 22<sup>nd</sup> IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi. It discusses central gaps and challenges facing the current Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, and includes relevant recommendations.

*Keywords:* IDF, civil-military relations, strategy, national security, General Staff, new era of combat, ground forces, campaign between the wars, Gaza, Hezbollah, Iran

## Introduction

“The IDF is the people’s army” is a common phrase that reflects the standing of the military in Israeli society, given the conscription law and the sense of public involvement in developments relating to the military. The military’s level of fitness, professionalism, and effectiveness are sensitive subjects for the Israeli public. Recent years have seen increasing criticism of the defense budget and greater scrutiny of IDF activity. The more seriously one engages with this criticism, the clearer it becomes that the criticism is sometimes based on incomplete information and does not reflect the full picture or the logic guiding the IDF.

The transition between Chiefs of Staff is an opportunity to look ahead and update military strategy in relation to expected forthcoming challenges. This paper proposes a viewpoint for analyzing the military’s fitness and offers

insights about changes in IDF force buildup and force application under the 22<sup>nd</sup> IDF Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi. It then discusses central gaps and challenges facing the current Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi. The information presented is based on unclassified publications as well as on the experience of Maj. Gen. (res.) Tamir Hayman as a member of the IDF General Staff from 2015-2022, subject to information security regulations.

There are [many approaches](#) to an analysis of military preparedness. In this work we have chosen to analyze processes of force buildup and force application in light of operational achievements, and to examine issues related to the conscription model and civil-military relations, as essential components of IDF force buildup. The article discusses whether and how processes promoted by the former Chief of Staff assist the IDF in consolidating the capabilities

it needs to win wars, and what processes or trends require rethinking by the current Chief of Staff.

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## **Force Buildup Processes**

### ***Adapting Operational Deployment to the New Warfare Era***

Military force buildup during the Kochavi era was primarily shaped by the Tnufa (“Momentum”) multiyear plan. The plan was the result of a long steering process that began with an intelligence assessment and continued with in-depth discussions that analyzed internal and external trends impacting the IDF, diagnosing existing gaps, and proposing alternative solutions. The plan was implemented by Chief of Staff Kochavi via budgetary transfers within the military, but was not approved and funded formally as a multiyear plan by the political echelon.

The Tnufa plan aimed to address the most dramatic question facing the IDF in the new warfare era: What is the purpose of military action and how can it now be realized? The new era is characterized by technology-improved combat equipment, civilian populations that serve as the primary target for terror and civil uprising organizations, and cognition, which has become a powerful weapon in shaping the perception of winning the battle. In the present era, the value of decisive tactical victory is low, and the army must take action that simultaneously yields both operational and cognitive achievements. If so, the questions at the heart of the discussion are, how can the IDF win the next war, and is it prepared strategically and operationally to conduct a limited campaign in which most weapons are pointed at the Israeli civilian front and the enemy is focused on the cognitive impact.

A discussion of these questions led those who formulated the multiyear plan to the conclusion that maneuvers are not sufficient for achieving victory in war. Victory will be achieved by massively striking the enemy in a short time frame, during which the IDF denies the enemy essential capabilities for carrying out its operational methodology, especially capabilities that threaten the civilian population on the home front—with emphasis on high-trajectory fire. Kochavi’s perception of victory focused on “wiping out key centers,” based on analysis of the enemy as a system, and defining its strengths and weak points. The approach strives for planned action and precise achievements, as opposed to other approaches that aim for wide, overall damage. As a result, the concept of “exposure” is a core element of the victory concept, because without accurate information about the enemy it will not be possible to wipe it out.

The core change in the army in the wake of the Tnufa plan lay in consolidating the capability to expose and attack the enemy with a high degree of accuracy, but with breadth joining quality. Three capabilities were significantly strengthened during Chief of Staff Kochavi’s term as part of the “multidimensional strike” concept:<sup>1</sup> reliable tactical intelligence capability in real time, allowing target exposure and strikes; aerial operational capacity to strike many targets, by increasing the number of existing bombs in the IAF arsenal and by developing its operational capability to attack many high-quality targets accurately in a short time; and development of digital media and communications in the IDF under the “digital transformation” framework, which includes an “information project” (with unprecedented collection and processing capabilities), and “operational internet” for improving the crucial connection in attacks between intelligence and the air force so that it works quickly, continuously, simply, and reliably. The digital infrastructure that the IDF built over the past few years will ensure its

basic preparedness for the next era of warfare, during which [autonomous capabilities](#) (gliders, drones, and combat robots) will become part of the battlefield, and AI and communication will be essential to victory.

Although maneuver is not sufficient for victory in war in the spirit of this new approach, it has an important role in removing threats and negating enemy capabilities. In the multiyear plan substantial resources were invested in renewing the maneuver mechanism under the guise of “multidimensional maneuver.” New forms of operational units were organized; they reflect innovative understandings of combat that include technology and intelligence as inseparable elements of the battlefield (human-machine integration). Commanders in the field enjoy more accessible and relevant intelligence that meets their needs. The multidimensional unit was aimed at leading a revolution in the ground forces and their maneuvering capabilities, which can be replicated among all ground forces. But in practice, the multidimensional unit was a single case that has not yet reached full operational capability, and as of the writing of this article there is difficulty in replicating the model broadly across the ground forces.

In contrast with the innovativeness described above, the ground forces and the logistics directorate remain the Achilles’ heel of IDF force buildup. Investment in logistical military force buildup was not at the heart of Chief of Staff Kochavi’s innovation and empowerment plan. The engagement with the core assumptions regarding maneuver, and the need to challenge and change perceptions of force buildup and application, were sidelined. While this is a result of prioritization and the need to move resources around within the army, there is an issue that should be addressed: technology has improved immeasurably, but the ground forces do not have sufficient operational capabilities to fulfill their mission.

### ***Conscription and Human Resources Policy***

The conscription policy put in place by Kochavi during his term included canceling the “quality group” ranking system, changes to the initial psychological test, the addition of parameters for suitability tests for new recruits, and streamlined screening processes, with the aim of creating a “[more equitable, fairer, and shorter process](#).” Kochavi also launched training programs for combat soldiers aimed at increasing their motivation for combat duty, as well as upgraded programs for technological service, with the aims of retaining necessary manpower. At the same time he [coined the slogan “our people are valuable,”](#) and called for commanders to increase the attractiveness of military service by enhancing discipline, leadership, interpersonal relations, culture, and conditions of those serving in the IDF. Specifically, Kochavi expanded the policy of “shutdowns” or breaks in the IDF, in order to assure that soldiers use their vacation days, and increased soldiers’ salaries.

At the same time, however, he applied the “cannons before socks” policy, which put operational force buildup ahead of conditions of service. As a result, Kochavi was criticized extensively by soldiers and by the public that despite his rhetoric, combat battalion soldiers in the IDF face [difficult conditions of service](#). This policy was expressed in particularly blatant fashion during the pandemic, when Kochavi ordered the diversion of resources from areas related to soldiers’ wellbeing to operational and attack needs. At the same time, the demand made of soldiers and particularly combat soldiers during that time to help shoulder the burden led to command failures, harm to soldiers’ individual and medical rights, and insufficient medical treatment, as can be seen in the [report](#) on soldiers’ complaints by the military ombudsman. There are still complaints about inferior service conditions today, particularly among ground forces, as well as about poor

medical services, which influence soldiers' motivation to serve and their basic rights.

### ***Trends in Socio-Military Relations***

Relations between Israeli society and the military are one of the most sensitive and important fields in military force buildup. The IDF's high quality derives from mandatory conscription, which contributes to the cohesion of Israeli society based on the idea of "the nation builds the army that builds the nation." More than once in recent years IDF actions were the subject of political controversy in a manner that threatened this delicate relationship. This joins increasing public criticism of the IDF as not reflecting demographic changes in society (described below) and of the IDF's role in maintaining socio-economic disparities and social immobility. All of these require the Chief of Staff to make principled and professional decisions, in order to increase public trust in the military and strengthen its perception as a force for national unity.

Political controversies and criticism were created inter alia by military activity at points of political friction. One notable example was the Elor Azaria incident, in which then-Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot determined that the soldier had contravened orders, breached discipline, and acted in an unethical and unnecessary manner. This led to unprecedented public criticism of the Chief of Staff and to the perception of his decisions as political.

Chief of Staff Kochavi avoided entering this sensitive political field during the course of his term. In his last few months in the position, he decided to add the value of "mamlachtiut" (stateliness) to the IDF ethical code. But in practice this wasn't enough to respond to the weakened public trust in the IDF, as can be seen in an INSS poll, which indicated an incremental decline in public trust in the army. This finding contrasts with the finding of the 2023 Israeli Democracy Index published by the Israel Democracy Institute, which found a small increase in public trust in the IDF, although

the level of trust is below the average for the years 2003-2023. Civil-military relations figured prominently during the pandemic, in light of Chief of Staff Kochavi's decision to request a budget increase for the IDF in spite of the financial crisis. Two public disputes took place during the final part of his term: his decision to condemn violence by soldiers against an unarmed Israeli citizen in Hebron, and his involvement in the decisions by the political echelon to transfer responsibilities from the Civil Administration and the Border Police in the West Bank, which led to accusations of politicizing the IDF.

If so, Chief of Staff Kochavi finished his position while this subject continued to be the focus of public disputes. The current Chief of Staff, in cooperation with the political echelon, will need to make complex fundamental decisions and take a clear and professional stance.

### **Force Application Processes**

#### ***The Campaign Between the Wars***

The Campaign Between the Wars (CBW) began during the term of Chief of Staff Benny Gantz. Organizing all the operations carried out by the security establishment in accordance with a logic of a single campaign aimed at fulfilling Israeli security interests, including operational activity below the "brink of war," was a formative event. Over the past decade the campaign evolved and expanded, and today the aims of the CBW and its operational spaces touch on all the arenas and security challenges to the State of Israel—the northern arena, the Palestinian arena, Iran, and the Shiite militias.

Regarding the campaign against Iranian entrenchment in Syria, in the Kochavi years, the expanded entrenchment in Syria was decided militarily. The vision of the Shiite militias in Syria, as projected by Qasem Soleimani, included consolidating Iranian control of the Syrian state and operating military capabilities there. This vision failed thanks to systematic regulation of the CBW based on defined and measured

targets, which were directed by Kochavi in the framework of in-depth discussions and regular situation assessments. He also [expanded the campaign](#), both geographically and in terms of operational method. Today, other than kinetic operations, the CBW is underway in the cyber realm, the economic arena, and the maritime arena. The CBW concept has also been replicated in the Palestinian arena, with the aim of reducing the ability of Hamas to arm itself in Gaza and preventing financial transfers from Iran to terrorist organizations.

During Kochavi's term there was greater involvement by all branches of the military in the CBW. The regional commands played a significant part in managing and leading the campaign, alongside the Intelligence Directorate and the air force, and they included the CBW in their routine ongoing security activity. A noteworthy example is the successful [campaign against Hezbollah consolidation on the Golan Heights](#) front (the "Golan File") led by the Northern Command. The regional commands also led the campaign on the Palestinian issue. This included the Southern Command leading the campaign to prevent Hamas arming itself, and the Central Command leading the campaign against weapons smuggling and trade in the West Bank and the economic campaign against Hamas as part of the inter-organizational economic campaign to prevent financial transfers from Iran.

### ***Deterring Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip***

The reality of rounds of fighting in Gaza began primarily in March 2018 with the "[Marches of Return](#)," which sparked increased friction at the border on a regular basis. The expression "rounds of fighting" referred to exchanges of fire between the IDF and the terrorist organizations in the Strip, especially Hamas. These rounds included rocket fire from Gaza as a response to people who were wounded or killed in the "Marches of Return" demonstrations, and the

chain of responses that usually continued for about a day.

The change that Kochavi implemented here was semantic but also material—redefining these rounds with the name "days of battle." The core difference between a day of battle and a round of fighting is that while a round is circular and leads back to the point of departure, days of battle are supposed to lead to a systemic change aimed at changing the balance of deterrence. Although it is difficult to measure the extent of the change, at the end of each day of battle, from the perspective of the overall process, the campaign in the Gaza Strip changed for the better. The characteristics of terrorism from the Strip changed and deterrence was strengthened, due to the new framing and operational concept implemented by Kochavi.

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The [2022 annual summary by the IDF](#) noted a noticeable decrease in infiltration attempts from Gaza, as well as a decrease in the number of rockets fired from the Strip during the last five campaigns: 76 high-trajectory weapons were shot fired Operation Pillar of Defense in 2012; 21 during Operation Protective Edge, only five during Operation Guardian of the Walls, and three during Operation Breaking Dawn in 2022 (these numbers relate to the half-year period after the operations). This reflects restraint by terrorist organizations in the rocket field. Over the past year Hamas has also refrained from using incendiary balloons and from "nighttime confusion" methods—actions that aimed to disturb daily life in the Gaza envelope region. This is in large part due to the offensive strategy implemented by Kochavi in response to these actions, designed to deter terror operations.



At the same time, the Gaza arena is far from quiet, as evidenced by [recent Hamas threats to act against the new government](#) and the continued arms buildup by the terror organizations, as well as the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the issue of missing and captive soldiers, which was given new public expression when [Hamas released a video of Avera Mengistu](#) in January 2023. These are additional indications of the need for an overall relevant long-term strategy for this arena.

### ***Managing Tension on the Northern Border***

In recent years Hezbollah has dedicated substantial resources to military buildup, with an emphasis on high-trajectory precision weapons, which threaten the Israeli civilian home front. That led Israel to restrain its actions vis-à-vis Lebanon and Hezbollah somewhat. This restraint has in turn raised the question: Does Israel's restraint, as demonstrated under Kochavi, harm the balance of deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah in a manner that creates a strategic threat?

In spite of the policy of restraint, Israel has acted several times in the past few years with the aim of challenging Hezbollah and tilting the balance of deterrence in Israel's favor. [Operation Northern Shield](#) occurred in January 2019 late in the term of Chief of Staff Eisenkot, and was followed by covert operations on Lebanese soil, the best-known of which was [the attack on the planetary mixer in the heart of Beirut in August 2019](#), under the command of Chief of Staff Kochavi. These actions somewhat undermined Nasrallah's pretensions and shaped the balance of deterrence in Israel's favor.

[Nasrallah's deterrence equation](#), whereby every Israeli action that violates Lebanese sovereignty or causes Lebanese deaths will be met with an equivalent and accurate response, constituted a fundamental component shaping the balance of deterrence. However, under Chief of Staff Kochavi, unfolding events indicated

that this equation has weakened, in light of continued Israeli actions, [Nasrallah's threats](#) notwithstanding. There were several events over the past few years in which Hezbollah chose not to exact a price for Israeli actions, while settling for rhetorical threats that were not fulfilled or attempts that failed. Examples include [the late response to Operation Northern Shield](#), and making do with failed sniping attempts on Israeli soldiers [in July and August 2020](#) in response to the killing of a Hezbollah agent in an attack in Syria. The weakness of the deterrence equation is also seen in the lack of response to the [building of a border barrier](#) in April 2020, which includes segments that run through territory that according to Nasrallah is Lebanese territory, and in the choice to make do with mere rhetorical condemnations of the [killing of two Revolutionary Guards officers](#) in an attack in Syria in March 2022.

In tandem with the perhaps increased Israeli deterrence under Chief of Staff Kochavi, there were a number of incidents in which Nasrallah threatened or carried out actions that could have led to war. A remarkable example of these was the [threat to the Karish gas field](#). In response Kochavi implemented an aggressive strategy, which reflected the deterrence concept he had led throughout his term—[presenting aerial photos](#) of targets that would be hit if Hezbollah continued its activity. Nonetheless, the serious threat to the gas field proves that Nasrallah aspires to shift the balance in his favor in a manner that constitutes a long-term threat to Israel.

### ***The Iranian Nuclear Threat***

In May 2019, five months after Kochavi became Chief of Staff, Iran began to carry out [a series of provocative actions](#) relating to uranium enrichment, in violation of the JCPOA. This was a response to the unilateral withdrawal by the United States from the nuclear agreement and the reimposition of sanctions. For the first time since 2015 there was a change in Israel's threat scenario—the potential threat of an active

nuclear program in the hands of Israel's main enemy became a reality. The possibility of aggressive action toward Iran became a more central component of IDF force buildup.

The prolonged political instability in Israel was an obstacle to the possibility of an increased budget for the IDF to make necessary adaptations to its force buildup. This created a weighty dilemma for the General Staff: How much should force buildup directions set in the Tnufa multiyear plan be changed to focus on responding to the Iranian threat? The changes that were chosen focused on IDF investments in components that would yield benefits "in both Iran and Gaza," so to speak. Investments in the Air Force and the Intelligence Directorate were increased, as well as in capabilities that link them (teleprocessing, relevant logistics, and more). This harmed force buildup in the ground forces to some extent, because even though they were also strengthened and underwent far-reaching reforms in their links with intelligence and firepower, they underwent the smallest change relative to other fields.

One of the core processes led by Kochavi was the establishment of the [Strategy and Third Circle Directorate](#) in June 2020, by dividing the IDF Planning Directorate. Also known as the Iran Directorate, under Kochavi's leadership it dealt with force buildup for responding to third circle threats, including strategic planning toward Iranian nuclear advancements. In April 2021, almost a year after the directorate was established, directorate head Maj. Gen. Tal Kelman said that [readiness for responding to the Iranian threat had significantly improved](#), while all national efforts were synchronized, with the aim of formulating campaign strategy.

## Looking Ahead: Recommendations for the New Chief of Staff

Lt. Gen Herzi Halevi assumed the post of Chief of Staff at an extremely tense period. The expected tension between his office and the government is likely to be a critical challenge, as trust between the political and military

echelons is a necessary condition for military buildup, in accordance with IDF needs and operational capabilities. From early in his term, Halevi will need to maintain a position of stateliness (*"mamlachtiut"*) and find a way to manage tensions with the political echelon and public criticism.

Like his predecessors, Halevi is expected to launch a strategic assessment process in the near future to analyze challenges and opportunities, and thereafter formulate his worldview in relation to IDF force buildup and application. The Tnufa multiyear plan is an excellent starting point, but several challenges and gaps stand out and invite the recommendations below.

### *Recommendations for Force Buildup*

#### *Changes in the Structure of the Regional Commands*

Over the years many changes have been made in the structure of the General Staff, but the regional commands have essentially maintained their structure and their missions. The changing enemy and developments in the concept of force operations reflected in the Tnufa multiyear plan provide a basis for a possible change in these commands' structure and mission. For example, the responsibility for the Palestinian arena is divided between two regional commands—Central and Southern. This division reflects an assumption that the Palestinian systems in Gaza and in the West Bank are separate. On the other hand, this assumption is less valid since Operation Defensive Shield, and became even less so over the past year. It is worth reexamining the validity of this assumption and considering whether the division of the campaign between two commands serves the IDF's strategic logic in the Palestinian arena.

Structural changes are also necessary to strengthen multi-branch maneuver, which requires extensive attention, full authority, and professionalism for implementation. Today responsibility for the multi-branch maneuver

is divided between the General Staff and the regional commands, and in some cases also the corps. This division makes it more difficult to conduct combat and fully execute General Staff capabilities in maneuvers. It also creates a high degree of complexity, which makes it more difficult to conduct operations with a ground maneuver element. When conducting multi-arm maneuvers it is therefore worth appointing a single commander to whom all necessary capabilities and equipment for carrying out the mission, including multi-branch elements, are subordinate. The same body must hold the authority and capability to carry out a ground mission.

#### *Conscription Policy*

In order to maintain the mandatory draft and the IDF's role as the people's army, conscription policy must be adapted to trends in Israeli society. The Central Bureau of Statistics forecasts that by 2065 Arab society will remain around one-fifth of the population, while ultra-Orthodox Jews will comprise about one-third. This means that four decades from now, groups that do not enlist in the army will make up over half of the Israeli population. This joins the significant increase in ultra-Orthodox electoral power over the past two decades, which reflects substantive growth in the political and social influence of this population. This situation challenges the principle of the "people's army," and essentially turns it into "half the people's army." This may further increase a sense of injustice among new conscripts, and the call to shift toward a professional army will rise. The army opposes the professional model in principle and on professional grounds; IDF service may thus become a source of controversy in Israeli society that divides rather than unifies.

Therefore, to maintain the standing of the IDF in Israeli society, the Chief of Staff must enlist the political echelon and the public in an effort to formulate and lead a conscription policy for all of Israeli society, in which the burden of service is shared equally. This should include creating

mechanisms in which all Israeli citizens are required to perform service, whether military, national, or civil. At the same time the present status quo must not be changed in a way that offers entire populations a blanket exemption from mandatory service. The expected passage of the conscription law, which exempts all yeshiva students from military service, is likely to increase tension and weaken the army over the long term.

#### *Human Resources*

In order to retain the high-quality manpower necessary for the IDF, compensation mechanisms for two populations essential for military success—combat soldiers and technology soldiers—must be examined. Pension-based compensation is not sufficient for retaining these groups exploring career alternatives outside the military, while also generating significant public controversy. Compensation based on pensions offers an incentive seen as far off and uncertain by young people considering a military career, given that few reach retirement age as soldiers. The Chief of Staff must therefore work with the political echelon to formulate an appropriate strategy for retaining necessary manpower. Creative ways must be devised to attract these groups toward long-term career service and offer them relevant compensation during their service, via grants, tax exemptions, state assistance in various fields, and so on.

The difficulty in retaining quality manpower coincides with the decline in active reserve duty soldiers. Given that only 4 percent of the population of reserve duty age actually perform this duty, the IDF's reserve system faces a crossroads. Alongside formulating a strategy for retaining necessary manpower, action must be taken to maintain the reserve corps, while acknowledging reservists' contributions and offering relevant compensation that will make performing such service more worthwhile. The reserve duty shield program is one such way to achieve this.



### *Ground Forces Fitness*

The Tnufa plan focused on strengthening the multidimensional strike concept, and now the multidimensional maneuver capabilities must be advanced—by adapting the ground forces structure to the present threat. The necessary change must allow changing the structure of the basic formation, from a division to a small, well-protected multi-corps unit, similar in form to the multidimensional unit established by Chief of Staff Kochavi. These units must have equipment that allows them to maneuver in all types of terrain, with advanced protective gear, especially protection against anti-tank missiles. The more units of this type there are, independent but identical, the greater ability there will be to use them together as a flexible and high-quality force capable of reaching significant operational accomplishments more efficiently, or in other words, using the fewest forces and least equipment. The army possesses the necessary technologies and equipment, so this change is primarily structural and conceptual, and can end the pointless argument about the value of ground maneuvers. The “boutique” model begun in the Tnufa plan must become a production line for such units. The true challenge is thus how to replicate the operational concept and improve it using other means, so that it will suit all combat units with their variety of missions in routine security, wartime, mandatory, and reserve duty service.

### ***Recommendations for Force Application***

“The victory concept” expressed by the Tnufa plan and the campaign between the wars under Chief of Staff Kochavi proved to be highly operationally effective. Assuming that the incoming Chief of Staff adopts this approach, he will have to validate the operational concept and embed it in programs and operational routine.

### *Planned Force Operation for a First-Circle War*

In light of contemporary changes to warfare, shortening the duration of combat and scoring

cognitive achievements have become especially important. IDF strategy must be improved, and a force application approach that serves these ends must be formulated. The strategy and approach must take into consideration the need to achieve a ceasefire as quickly as possible with acceptable conditions, because it will take a long time to wipe out sources of fire, either by returning destructive fire or by conquering the entire territory. In other words, the aim of the combat must be directed toward a political victory rather than a military victory—in contrast to the concept in widespread use today. One possible way to achieve a political victory is to create a reality that is unbearable for the enemy within a few days in order to impose a ceasefire, without actions that harm Israel’s legitimacy to act in the eyes of the world.

Chief of Staff Kochavi used the Tnufa plan to advance the development of destructive capabilities and reinforced the concept of harming key centers, as a first stage in preparation for first-circle war. It is recommended that the new Chief of Staff continue this process and broaden it into a holistic concept. Force buildup in the cognitive realm and strategy for the cognitive dimension of decision, which are essential for completing the operational concept, must be further developed.

### *Force Application for the Campaign Between the Wars*

In light of Kochavi’s success in expanding this campaign and transforming it into a systematic and effective system, there is a risk that only after this system has begun losing effectiveness will we recognize that it is no longer relevant. There is already a certain erosion of the effectiveness of the CBW, particularly regarding [the campaign in Syria](#). This may indicate a need to diversify and enhance the tools of the campaign, with a particular emphasis on the cyber dimension of CBW and enhanced political and economic efforts, as necessary complementary means for achieving strategic targets at the base of the campaign.

A new Chief of Staff is therefore an opportunity for a strategic update in this campaign as well, in coordination with the political echelon, which must approve the campaign and its targets. The following questions must be asked once again: What are Israel's interests? What achievement do we seek? What resources are necessary to achieve it? After formulation of a strategy, or more precisely, a collection of strategies regarding each of our principal enemies, the format of the CBW should be redefined, including its methods, responsibility for the campaign, and its boundaries. Renewed consideration of the campaign will allow enhancing and deepening it by expanding its tools, enlarging its areas of activity, and acting in a more sophisticated manner.

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#### *Strategy vis-à-vis the Iranian Nuclear Program*

In light of the substantial uncertainty that exists regarding the Iranian issue, and especially the uncertainty about the potential formulation of a new agreement, the Chief of Staff must consolidate—in cooperation with the political echelon—a multidimensional strategy encompassing the entire security establishment, based on cooperation and tight coordination with the United States. First, Chief of Staff Halevi will need to continue adaptations in force buildup begun by Kochavi, while diverting additional resources toward strengthening IDF capabilities. These force buildup adaptations are necessary for the formulation and implementation of appropriate strategy.

This strategy must include diplomatic, operational, and deterrent elements. Continued

use of diplomatic tools that can further economic pressure on Iran and harm its key centers as much as possible is recommended. We believe the best solution for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons uses diplomatic tools to reach an international agreement restricting Iranian nuclear development. While such an agreement would be temporary and not provide a long-term solution, the same is true of a military operation. Assuming that there is no plan to conquer a country, an agreement is another means to buy time. The Chief of Staff should therefore, in cooperation with the US, promote paths to formulate a renewed nuclear agreement.

At the same time, the IDF must prepare to eliminate the Iranian nuclear project in a military operation, using three principal methods—cyberattack, covert operation, and overt attack operation. The IDF must prepare all three methods simultaneously, and in real time choose the action with the greatest chances of success and fewest risks, while understanding that this is a temporary solution that aims to delay, but also has a deterrent element.

There is a disagreement whether a state determined to achieve nuclear capabilities can be dissuaded from doing so via nuclear deterrence; we believe that it is impossible to do so. Some claim that the only way to manage the nuclear project is to overturn the Iranian regime, with the hope that the regime that would be established in its wake would have different priorities than the regime of the ayatollahs. A certain strategic level must tackle this question and examine this as a possible alternative.

## Conclusion

Outgoing Chief of Staff Kochavi led a revolutionary process in the IDF during his term. The Tnuva multiyear plan was characterized by innovations in force buildup and application. It is already possible to point to unprecedented operational achievements made possible by these capabilities, but it is best for complex force buildup processes to continue and be

evaluated over time. Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi begins his term with several important challenges ahead. The new era of warfare will continue to be the most significant challenge, and it is recommended that the new Chief of Staff continue discussions on the framework of essential conditions for victory. Among the challenges noted in the paper is the most important and essential basis for the strength of the IDF, namely, its cohesion and legitimacy. For this reason, we began by stating that the IDF is the people's army, and we will conclude that the new Chief of Staff will be judged first and foremost on his success in maintaining consensus regarding conscription and retaining the best people to serve in the army.

**Maj. Gen. (res.) Tamir Hayman** is the Managing Director of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). During his 34 years of service in the IDF, Maj. Gen. (res.) Hayman held a wide range of command positions in the ground forces (armored corps and infantry) and gained operational combat experience in the security zone in Lebanon and in the Palestinian arena. Hayman joined the IDF General Staff in 2015, served as commander of the National Defense College, and in 2018 was appointed head of the Intelligence Directorate. He

led the revolution in multidisciplinary intelligence and the revolution of the unified information venture, which harnesses artificial intelligence capabilities for effective intelligence. Maj. Gen. (res.) Hayman holds a B.A. in political science and economics, and an M.A. from the National Defense College. [tamirh@inss.org.il](mailto:tamirh@inss.org.il)

**Eden Kaduri** is a research assistant to the Managing Director of INSS and the Northern Arena Program Coordinator. She holds a B.A. cum laude in political science and international relations from the Open University of Israel, and today is an M.A. student in the Security and Diplomacy Program at Tel Aviv University. Previously Eden served in IDF Intelligence in several strategic research positions. She is also a graduate of the LEAD organization, which develops young leadership, and worked as a Research Assistant at Pnima—Israeli Solutions, a movement that aims to advance cohesion in Israeli society. [edenk@inss.org.il](mailto:edenk@inss.org.il)

## Notes

- 1 The idea of the multidimensional strike developed as part of the development of the decisive approach in the IDF; it is intended to harness, develop, and pinpoint all IDF capabilities such that the enemy will feel their influence powerfully and rapidly during combat.