

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The operational success of CBW, the satisfaction at the unprecedented level of intelligence behind them, the precise execution in the vast majority of the operations, and the almost total prevention of casualties on the Israeli side have created trends in Israel that are familiar from routine security operations during the days of the major wars. Among them:

- a. Amplifying tactical achievements and increasing the appetite to attain more in the same way, despite the changes occurring in the arena, the region, and the international system, which demand rethinking.
- b. Drawing far-reaching conclusions regarding the actions' impact on readiness for a major campaign and deterring the enemy from it, with a limited and forceful understanding of the concept of deterrence in general.
- c. Attributing strategic significance and even conceptual innovation to what is in essence a collection of tactical operations, and ascribing mistaken strategic importance to a campaign against capabilities that by nature cannot succeed entirely or change the basic interests of the enemy. In addition, taking pride in the fact that Israel is kinetically prevailing in an arena in which the enemy is inferior, and ignoring its achievements in other much more important areas.
- d. Ignoring the enemy's interpretation of events, and attributing the other side's statements to propaganda or frustration at Israel's success.
- e. Subordinating strategic considerations and broader political interests to CBW – despite its limited achievements and the high cost inherent in operating it.
- f. Ignoring the impact of the emphasis on CBW on Israel's readiness for war, both in terms of the readiness of the force and in terms of the enemy's belief that Israel is averse to conflict.

Consequently, action must be taken as soon as possible to implement necessary conclusions:

- a. Examine in depth the objectives, achievements, and future operational directions of the campaign between wars, while examining the changes underway in the region and the international sphere – the reconciliation between Gulf countries and Iran, the strengthening of Bashar al-Assad's regional standing, the tightened relations between Russia and Iran, and the increasing brazenness of the regional axis led by Iran. In addition, define an end state of the campaign that will enable measuring and assessing its achievements.
- b. Convey in military buildup, statements, and actions on the ground that Israel is not afraid of a full-scale war and is not willing to adhere to the red lines set by the enemy.
- c. Prepare the IDF for the scenario of a multi-arena war, while assessing its capabilities in depth and giving renewed attention to aspects that have been neglected (in particular, land maneuvers, logistics, operations in large forces, and stand-in warfare). In this framework, it is necessary to examine seriously ambitious force buildup trends in the IDF, some of which are less than likely to create a critical mass for addressing a multi-arena scenario.
- d. Examine the situation in Syria carefully, including the emergence of "four Syrias" with different characteristics as the civil war subsides,<sup>75</sup> and shape various modes of operation vis-à-vis each of these entities, in a way that goes beyond the kinetic-military sphere.
- e. Focus CBW kinetic actions solely on worthy targets of enemy buildup, with an emphasis on Hezbollah, while not exaggerating the importance

<sup>75</sup> See Carmit Valensi, Orna Mizrahi, Yoram Schweitzer, and Eden Kaduri, "The Northern Arena: A Military Challenge Joined by Potential Political and Economic Cooperation," In Tamir Hayman, Ram Yavne, and Anat Kurz, Eds., *Strategic Analysis for Israel 2023* (Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2023). <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/north-2023/>

of symbols such as “Iranian entrenchment in Syria,” whose significance on the ground is sometimes marginal.

- f. Rethink the benefit inherent in striking regime targets and its usefulness, vis-à-vis the cost that could be extracted from Israel given the changing standing of Assad and the regional legitimacy he receives.
- g. Design and employ non-violent, covert, and political forms of influence in the region, such as those that Iran successfully employs in Syria. Within this, distinguish clearly between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government and people, in order to increase the pressure to restrain the organization.
- h. Form regional and global coalitions, not only for the conceptually limited and forceful objective of a defensive front against Iran (the recent changes in Iran’s standing vis-à-vis countries in the region indicates the failure of this approach), but rather in a broader framework that will help renew US interest in the region and constitute a counterweight to Iran’s growing power.
- i. Study the ways of learning and shaping concepts in the IDF, and examine to what extent they are influenced by successes in employing force and desire to maintain operational achievements, rather than a sober, professional look into the future.