**Moshe Dayan’s Principles of Management**

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Moshe Dayan, the sixth chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces (from December 1953 to January 1958), is primarily known for having been the COS who took command of an army with low morale and little motivation and imbued it with a fighting spirit, audacity, and initiative. Much has been written about how Dayan spearheaded a revolution affecting every aspect of IDF leadership. Years later, when he was appointed defense minister just days before the start of the Six-Day War, his major contribution was, according to many, his charismatic leadership that inspired confidence in the ranks of the political leadership, the military, and the nation as a whole.

The aim of this essay is to discuss another facet of his personality: not Dayan the charismatic leader, but rather Dayan the manager. To each position he held, he applied a unique style of management that reflected the character and worldview of one of the most influential, colorful, and creative figures in Israeli history who garnered some glorious achievements but also a few resounding failures. We must learn about them all. The major focus of this essay is on the years in which Dayan served as chief of staff – 1953 to 1958. But because his fundamental patterns of management did not undergo any significant change over the years, the essay presents examples from Dayan’s term as defense minister (1967 to 1974) and from his last government position, as foreign minister (1977 to 1979).

In military doctrine, the act of command entails three major components: military command, leadership, and management. While military command is defined as “knowing and understanding the art of war and military doctrine… and knowledge… of the proper ways of applying them,” leadership concerns itself with influence and “is noted for the desire to win a battle, supply the purpose, direction, and motivation to do so.” Management in the military sense means “command and control of the fighting and activities related to it or stemming from it (such as managing a battle, managing fire, and so on). There is also civilian management in the army.”[[1]](#footnote-1) These are the components as defined in military doctrine. Clearly, the commonplace distinction of the military definition is analytical; in practice, these elements are less distinct and more interrelated.

This essay’s intention is to focus on aspects we will refer to as civilian management, i.e. aspects not necessarily related to fighting but rather to routine civilian life and are shared by all bureaucratic organizations maintaining certain processes and exchanging inputs for defined outputs or goals. Such aspects would include articulating goals and planning their attainment, managing time and meetings, defining the organizational structure and positions within it, assigning tasks, allocating resources, and communicating and motivating people, the last of which also relates to leadership. The literature offers many definitions of management, most of which speak, in one way or another, about leading organizational processes efficiently and effectively. Management researchers provide lists of functions with which managers work, such as the list proposed by pioneering management researcher Henri Fayol, who divides management into four major categories: planning, organizing, leading, and coordinating and controlling.[[2]](#footnote-2)

At its core, Dayan’s strategic understanding was flexible and pragmatic. The major principles he held dear were change and origination. That is to say, what was true yesterday is no longer true today, and what is true today will not necessarily be true tomorrow. Another important principle was his emphasis on the particular context of any issue, i.e. its unique time and place. Dayan rejected general, universal principles in favor of solutions tailored to specific circumstances. Dayan’s management approach was derived from this strategic approach, as manifested in various management practices, such as delegation of authority, flexible planning, time management, running meetings, and team management – all executed in a way that expressed this worldview. Below, the essay will analyze several key practices in detail.

**Managing priorities and promoting projects according to the Pareto principle:**[[3]](#footnote-3)In his various positions, Dayan applied the 80-20 method, also known as the Pareto principle. This method avers that, in a system, one entity represents twenty percent of the factors responsible for a certain unwanted phenomenon, while another entity is responsible for eighty percent of the factors causing that phenomenon. Identifying the latter and improving it significantly will result in an eighty percent improvement of the system’s performance. There is no way of knowing if Dayan was familiar with the Pareto principle, but in practice he acted as if he was. In all the positions he held, Dayan would identify one or at most two issues or challenges whose improvement would lead to an essential change. Having done so, he would from then on concentrate all his attention on that challenge. As chief of staff, the issue was leadership during fighting and retaliatory acts (Dayan linked the two), and in his last year in this position it was preparing the army for a confrontation with Egypt.

In his years as defense minister, Dayan devoted his time to managing the territories occupied in 1967, to the point that some referred to him as “the territories minister” (to be discussed below). When the War of Attrition began, he had already established his policy on the occupied territories and he therefore shifted his focus to managing the long, complex war with Egypt. As foreign minister, Dayan concentrated on a political breakthrough with Egypt and, once that occurred, he shifted his attention to Palestinian self-rule. Shlomo Gazit, who served as Dayan’s first bureau chief when he was chief of staff and who would later head the Military Intelligence Directorate, described this as the “anti-combing” approach. Other managers may use a comb with equally long teeth to tease apart many issues simultaneously, but Dayan, according to Gazit, thought that while he was responsible for the full gamut of issues in his purview, he had a staff to handle those. “I, Dayan, select one, maybe two issues. I focus on them only, to the exclusion of everything else… That is where I can make a real difference to the work.”[[4]](#footnote-4) At times, when Dayan though a solution to a certain problem had been found and it was being resolved, he would stop focusing on that issue and let his subordinates deal it further. Gazit recalls preparing the IDF budget for 1954. Dayan had met with Moshe Kashti, the financial advisor to the chief of staff, for three months to work on it. When the job was done, Dayan told him, “I hope not to see you until September. You do your thing and I’ll do mine.” Apparently, Kashti did not take Dayan at his word, for the next morning he walked into the chief of staff’s office to ask a question. Dayan promptly threw him out.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Building and maintaining a team of advisors and aides (staff) and subordinates:** For this method to succeed, Dayan had to build, maintain, and surround himself with a team of skilled personnel to whom he could delegate authority and handle all other issues under his purview to which he paid no personal attention. His staff and the personnel at his bureau were both independent and also people who could read Dayan closely. Elyakim Rubinstein, who was Dayan’s legal counsel when he served as foreign minister, recalls a practice he adopted: having realized that Dayan was impatient and quick to make a decision, which he would sometimes reverse the next day, Rubinstein would wait a day or two to execute certain orders to see if Dayan would change his mind.[[6]](#footnote-6) Indeed, a popular saying Dayan often used among his staff was: “Whatever I mess up in the morning, you’ll clean up by evening.”

Over the years, others who worked with Dayan at varying degrees of proximity spoke of his capacity for being cold, distance, and hard. Those who worked with him closely provide the opposite impression. In fact, the closer one was to him, the greater Dayan’s trust and warmth, and those who found themselves in his innermost circle reciprocated those feelings. Dayan forged extremely close relationships with people who worked in his office and trusted them implicitly. Close members of his staff, including his secretary, Ne’ora Bar Noah Matalon, Shlomo Gazit, and Mordechai Bar On, remained loyal to him as long as they lived. Other key personnel who worked with him, such as Meir Amit, Tsvi Gur, Matti Niv, and Aryeh Baron, as well as people who were involved with him in politics, matters of state, and legal issues, such as Zalman Shoval, Yosef Tchechanover, Gad Yaakobi, Haim Yisraeli, and Elyakim Rubinstein, represent only a partial list. What they have in common is that they all worked closely with Dayan on a daily basis as assistants and advisors at some point in his long career. All were gifted and independent thinkers who later on worked in key positions of their own. They agree that working with Dayan was a pleasant experience, based on mutual trust and respect. Dayan let all of them know they were free to disagree with him without fear of repercussions.

In his later years, when Dayan was foreign minister, he suffered gravely from headaches caused by the wound to his eye, and could therefore be impatient with those around him, but he always remained attached to his inner circle, as both Ne’ora Bar Noah and Elyakim Rubinstein testify.[[7]](#footnote-7) Gad Yaakobi, a close friend and assistant who would later serve as minister of the economy and Israel’s ambassador to the UN, said the following of Dayan’s attitude towards his intimates: “Dayan provided everyone who worked with him a great deal of freedom, a sense of initiative and independence, but he also made of point to give guidance. He was unforgiving of those who betrayed his trust. It was therefore easier for self-disciplined, rigorous mavericks to work for him than it was for weak and sloppy people. There were usually no barriers between him and those whose manner of work he appreciated, and he shared with them his deliberations and state of mind.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

When he became chief of staff, Dayan made a point of surrounding himself with a skeleton staff and maintained a small office with few employees and modest furnishings. Unlike his predecessor who maintained a luxurious office (relative to the times), Dayan insisted on a plain desk covered with a military blanket, and instructed that the air conditioner not be used – moves made to express solidarity with the soldiers in the field.

Dayan valued independent, capable individuals. He surrounded himself with knowledgeable, skilled people, in particular those who complemented his lacunae of which he was well aware. Others who served as chief of staff – Tsvi Tsur, Haim Laskov, and Yitzhak Rabin –were appointed to positions because he recognized the organizational and force building capabilities they brought to the IDF, matters for which he sometimes had no patience. Laskov challenged Dayan professionally in a well-known debate over the role of the armored corps,[[9]](#footnote-9) while Rabin, as a friend an ally of Dayan’s eternal opponent Yigal Alon, was an actual rival. Nonetheless, Dayan brought Rabin back from his studies in the United Kingdom and appointed him to head the Training Division of the General Staff, a job that suited him to a T. Dayan relied on Meir Amit to head the army’s Operations Directorate to such an extent that he left him to lead the campaign in Kadesh while he himself rushed into the Sinai to be with the troops. Dayan said that he was completely convinced that Amit would make the very best decisions, the same as he would have done.

Amit described Dayan as “a creative, impatient man who dominated and intimidated everyone he met. He knew what he wanted and demanded that his wishes be fulfilled at once.” He projected authority and leadership, was a deep thinker, grasped things quickly, considered the long term, and was used to analyzing situation with wondrous clarity and calculating surprising moves. Another of Dayan’s important characteristics, says Amit, was his ability to tell the wheat from the chaff. Still, Amit notes, it was not easy to work with Dayan. “He was restless. He abhorred wasting time and always wanted to start with the end (what you could call ‘get to the point’). There were only a few people he was willing to listen to for long.” Amit attributes some of Dayan’s impatience to the pain he suffered from his wound, but undoubtedly it was also a feature of his personality and his critical judgment of some of the people around him.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Still, the people who worked most closely with Dayan experienced a different man, someone who was tolerant and appreciative towards his office personnel and nurtured and empowered them. He delegated authority to senior members of his staff as well as to people working in his office. Shlomo Gazit, for example, started out as bureau chief for Mordechai Maklef, the IDF’s third chief of staff, where he participated in only one weekly meeting of the division; his work consisted primarily of shuffling papers and handling correspondence. However, the moment Dayan took over, he decreed that his bureau chief would participate in all discussions and meetings and would furthermore be responsible for taking the minutes. He told Gazit: “Once the discussions is over, I don’t want to hear about it again. You’re to distribute the summary.” According to Gazit, “This was a revolution of the whole approach.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

When Dayan was still a young, inexperienced head of the Operations Directorate, he contacted Aharon Yariv, an intelligent young officer (and future MI chief), to propose he establish and command the Israel National Defense College. Yariv told Dayan that he lacked the necessary knowledge and experience to command such an institution. Dayan answered: “If [Yitzchak] Ben Zvi can be president, Maklef can be chief of staff, and I can be head of the Operations Directorate – you can be the commander of the Defense College.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Others, though, were treated quite differently. Many of his commanders, subordinates, and colleagues saw him as remote and unpredictable, whose responses were liable to be harsh and hurtful. In his career, Dayan left a trail of angry and aggrieved commanders, subordinates, and colleagues. Chief of Staff Maklef, who was Dayan’s commander, said of him: “He doesn’t fight with others; he just cuts them off.”[[13]](#footnote-13) This could have been said also by Yohanan Peltz, Dayan’s second-in-command in Commando Battalion 89 in the War of Independence. Thus, it all comes down to when and whom you ask. Dayan had many faces.

**Time management:** Dayan’s time management method was very unusual. Time is managers’ most highly prized asset. When it comes to managers’ time, the literature speaks of “attention management.” A manager’s decision to devote time to a particular issue is critical, just as in battle a commander cannot be in two places at the same time. Today, the more senior a person’s position is, the busier their schedule is, full of ceremonies, visits, tours, and other commitments. The time of a high-ranking officer or a CEO is often decided on several months into the future, and reflects priorities and problems. Given that reality sometimes intrudes with sudden emergencies, some obligations are postponed to make room for the unexpected and the entire calendar moves forward. It seems that that is how everyone operates, but not Dayan.

As the head of his bureau and personal secretary testify, Dayan as chief of staff insisted that his calendar be left open. He had two or three regular weekly appointments, such as the Friday morning get-together with the defense minister and the Sunday midday cabinet meeting. One day was set aside for one-on-ones with division heads and various commanders and another for visiting bases and other on-the-ground sites with the IDF staff. Other than that, Dayan’s calendar was blank and flexible, his schedule filling in mostly day to day.[[14]](#footnote-14) Dayan’s instruction to his secretary was to leave him a lot of free time to sit by himself in his office to think. Not only did this provide him the time he needed to mull things over, but it afforded him great flexibility to respond to new, unanticipated developments. This was undoubtedly the most obvious manifestation of Dayan’s perception of reality as changing unceasingly and the futility of rigid planning. On any given day, he could therefore decide to visit a military base without giving prior warning to ascertain if the duty commanders were actually there and watch as the soldiers coming back from an overnight exercise. Once a month, he would make planned visits together with all IDF division heads to solve lateral problems.[[15]](#footnote-15) This way, he always had time to meet to discuss sudden issues on the spot, should it be necessary.

He would end his day in the early evening. Once, Shimon Peres asked him how he had so much time to spare. Dayan’s answer was: “I have a rule: any piece of paper I don’t have time to read by six in the evening, I forget it exists. Whatever I manage by six – great. At six, my desk is clean and the problems are all gone.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The extent to which having free time was important to Dayan is evidenced by the fact that he asked both Ne’ora Matalon, his secretary in the 1950s, and Elyakim Rubinstein who worked with him more than twenty years later, when Dayan was foreign minister, to leave him quiet time for thought.[[17]](#footnote-17) Without it, Dayan was a like a fish out of water. In later years, after he developed an interest in archeology, he would focus on gluing pottery shards together as a type of meditation or mindfulness practice that allowed him to muse. In the Yom Kippur War, he complained about noise in command centers, which made it impossible for him to think, and he criticized the military method whereby “the top-ranking officer of a regional command is surrounded by his staff and doesn’t have a second to think in peace and quiet… Perhaps there is something wrong with me, but until the last day of the war I preferred to skip the regional headquarters and instead meet directly at the command centers on the front.”[[18]](#footnote-18) At Camp David, during breaks, when delegation members sat together or played sports, he preferred to walk the trails in the woods by himself to be able to think.

**Running meetings and discussions:** An inevitable, routine task of a manager or military commander is holding meetings, which are a way to gather people in disparate positions whose functions somehow intersect, to exchange information, coordinate action, and most importantly make decisions. Meetings consume valuable hours multiplied by their number of participants. Therefore, when meetings are inefficient, the organization pays a steep price in both efficiency and effectiveness.

The meetings Dayan ran may be divided into two types. One was limited meetings to make a series of operative decisions. Dayan like starting these meetings with relatively simple issues and leave the more difficult ones to the end. It can be a good technique in that it clears up niggling matters before digging into the harder issues. But, in the critical hours preceding the Yom Kippur War, this method failed him. Dayan and David Elazar met with Prime Minister Golda Meir at 8 AM, on October 6, 1973, to discuss preparations for the war. Dayan began by raising relatively marginal issues; it was only around 9 AM that he got around to the most crucial matter at hand – the scope of the reserve call-up. (He and Elazar disagreed. While Elazar wanted a full call-up, Dayan was inclined to a partial call-up.) As a result, the order went out only at 9:20 that morning, after losing valuable time.[[19]](#footnote-19) The war began at 2 PM.

The other type of meeting is the periodic gathering of senior personnel, such as the General Staff meeting. Dayan used such get-togethers to consider and iron out essential and strategic questions. He encouraged open discussions, though once a decision was made he made sure everyone was completely onboard with it, down to the last detail.[[20]](#footnote-20) Minutes from General Staff meetings of that era show the same pattern. Dayan would announce the start of a free and open discussion. At the beginning of the discussion, he would update the General Staff on political developments and listen to updates on military matters. After that, he would present the central dilemmas facing the army, which he would formulate clearly and sharply in the form of a series of questions. Questions would mostly be connected to an emerging political reality that would directly affect military action. Sometimes, these would involve political constraints with implications for the military manner of conduct, such as choosing means and targets; at other times, these were the possible political ramifications of certain military actions. One example dates to the War of Attrition. During those years, Dayan would ask what would force Egypt to hold its fire and question the ramifications of every action Israeli could possibly take or what type of response would make the Soviets intervene. Dayan would listen to what the General Staff generals had to say, then summarize the military actions and their concomitant political ramifications. Sometimes, Dayan would summarize a political situation and then sketch out the significance for the army, and ask the GS to prepare an appropriate plan to respond to the political scenario. In other words, he functioned as an intermediary between political insights and considerations and possible military actions, never forgetting to note the constraints. It seems that Dayan was aware that he, more than anyone else, could combine a broad state view with the application of matching military force. He generally made a point of intervening whenever he felt that a military action would have political consequences. For example, during the War of Attrition, he was personally involved in choosing and authorizing Egyptian targets, preferring to attack army facilities rather than infrastructures. Operationally, it was simpler, and politically he felt that an attack would not trigger too harsh a Soviet reaction.[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Management by walking around:** This concept, found in the literature, refers to managers who spend time walking the production floor, customer service points, warehouses, and all other places where work is being done. The military analogy is obvious. Throughout history, many commanders made it a practice not to be satisfied with the reports their subordinates submitted, and took the time to spend time with the soldiers at the front to sense the atmosphere for themselves, see the condition of the equipment up close, understand the topography from the perspective of a soldier trying to surge ahead, and so forth. Of course, in terms of showing leadership and boosting morale, there is a great deal of value to a commander appearing among the rank and file, but leadership is not the issue under discussion. Dayan was of the opinion that he had to see things for himself, unmediated and without filters, to understand the situation. Indisputably, Dayan applied this principle to the greatest extreme possible. As noted already, as chief of staff, he toured bases and units, and during the period of retaliatory acts he would often wait for the units to re-cross the border. Much has already been written about the fact that, for most of the Sinai Campaign, he was in the field, traveling behind the troops; the fact that he was absent for long stretches from headquarters was also roundly criticized. In typical fashion, Dayan responded to his critics by saying, “Perhaps they’re right. But I cannot, or maybe do not want to, do things differently.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Dayan’s inclination to remain close to the battlefield did not change. As defense minister, he spent much time in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, speaking with local inhabitants, taking a read of the atmosphere and listening to their problems and complaints. This earned him a great deal of respect and appreciation in the territories. At the time, terrorist cells were infiltrating the country from Jordan; the IDF set ambushes and engaged in chases; and Dayan, a fan of the field, could not help himself and joined such an ambush in which three smugglers were intercepted and killed. Dayan, who was armed, got off a few shots, but mostly reported that he enjoyed the break from the routine and being close to the land and nature.[[23]](#footnote-23) As chief of staff, when driving to bases and through the territories, he would often cut through all the red tape and ignore all procedures just so he could speed up the decision-making process. He never agreed to take a tour based on an itinerary planned by a local echelon who undoubtedly wanted to show certain things and skip others, and he was known to upend any set schedule.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, he went into the field and visited the fronts. In the former, he did not have many opportunity to do so, but during the latter, he was at the front every day of the war, except for October 8 when David Elazar was there. Dayan reached the division command post and, as the nation’s defense minister, crossed the Suez Canal with it, something that today is unthinkable. A few days before the war, he toured the northern front and ordered manpower be increased there. He did not undertake a similar tour of the southern front, something he rued after the war.[[25]](#footnote-25) After overcoming the shock of the first two days of fighting, his many visits to the front were tremendously useful. At times, he made beneficial operational suggestions (with the reservation that these were merely ideas out of respect for the military chain of command). For commanders on the ground, such as Ariel Sharon and Avraham “Bren” Adan, the visits were a shot in the arm, especially because Dayan made a point of keeping them abreast of the broader political developments. On the other hand, his loss of prestige and authority during this period was evident and his “ministerial advice” became something his critics spoke of in the context of Dayan’s attempt to avoid responsibility.

There is certainly a great deal of merit to unmediated study and proximity to events, and many of Dayan’s decisions were based on realizations he came to during his tours. He could consequently respond quickly to any development before complications set it and it became difficult to find a solution. As defense minister in charge of the occupied territories, he would immediately show up in person whenever he heard of a problem. He would call on all involved on the Israeli side and the local Palestinian side, tease apart the components of the issue, and make a decision then and there.[[26]](#footnote-26) But, there were cases in the occupied territories when distance would have been advantageous and where proximity to the ground disrupted the ability make balanced decisions. Visiting the site of a terrorist attack, he, as defense minister, could get extremely worked up and give in to momentary rage, leading him to decree harsh retribution, such as house demolition, contrary to his own policy. His closeness to the event kept him from applying cold calculation that staying in his office may have afforded.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Another example occurred during the Yom Kippur War. On the second day of the war, Dayan visited the Northern Command HQ and also the Southern Command HQ. In both, he saw exhausted officers and heard dire situation assessments. The southern part of the Golan Heights lacked a force large enough to stop the Syrians. On the southern front, Maj. Gen. Shmuel Gonen (Gorodish) told Dayan he could not hold the Artillery Corps line (an axis running along the Suez Canal, 10 km inland, near the fortifications, where it was more or less possible to prepare a defense). Dayan started his trip back to Tel Aviv despondent and worried. While he was still en route, Gonen received a report from Ariel Sharon that his battalion’s reservists had arrived, which altered Gonen’s assessment of the situation. When Dayan was finally back in his office, he was not yet aware of the change in the situation at the front. Therefore, while David Elazar was reevaluating the situation, Dayan was relating to what he had seen and heard at the canal, which was no longer relevant.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**Attention to detail:** Dayan was considered lenient on disciplinary matters and dismissive of military niceties such as dress code and proper salutes, dedicating himself instead to strategic matters and core issues. Nonetheless, let no one be deceived into thinking that Dayan was not detail oriented in areas he considered important. Ne’ora Bar Noah, his secretary during his years as chief of staff, recalls that in lectures and talks he gave to commanders and soldiers, he carefully considered every word and expression. He insisted on writing the IDF Order of the Day himself as well as the various speeches he gave to soldiers. He would obsessively review intelligence and reports on army morale as well as soldier complaints.[[29]](#footnote-29) Gad Yaakobi described Dayan as defense minister as follows: “…his approach to every task he was serious and precise. He was one of the most demanding people, not only with regard to accuracy of time but also with regard to the use of data. He always strove for the most condensed, consolidated formulations that dealt with the heart of the matter by peeling back the external layers and penetrating to the sometimes harsh truth.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

**Study habits:** Dayan was criticized over his attitude to institutional learning. He had not been an outstanding student in his own army courses (an exception was his attitude to the senior command course he took in the United Kingdom at British Armed Forces School of Command and Staff) and did not improve later when he studied for – and never finished – a BA at the Hebrew University. But Dayan was self-taught, as were most of Israel’s leaders of that time, and he felt that his career in the military was a consequence of necessity rather than choice. Clearly, Dayan did not enjoy learning in a rigid, sterile classroom environment, but it would be false to think that he opposed learning and the accumulation of knowledge.

Dayan was curious about people and places. He kept an open mind, applied critical thinking, had a good imagination, and took nothing for granted. His approach to the study of war did not stem from an intellectual passion to understand war and its aspects as a universal phenomenon. Rather, it was an upshot of practical needs: how to resolve concrete political problems by military means. On the other hand, he never felt the need to apologize for his career and described war as “the most exciting experience a human being can have.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Most importantly, he never lost his natural curiosity and his views on strategic matters always evolved. These characteristics led him to visit Vietnam during its war with the United States, which afforded him an opportunity to be an outside observer of a complex confrontation in which he had no personal stake. It helped him develop his views on this type of warfare, so essentially different from what he knew from his IDF service, and understand a superpower’s strategic perspective.

As a man of action, Dayan’s method of learning is best described by the phrase “the reflective practitioner,” coined by organizational psychologist Donald Schön, who developed the notion in a book of the same name. In it, he explains that learning by observing depends on one’s ability to observe an action in a way that leads to a long-term process of learning. It includes critical attention to the practical and theoretical values inherent in daily activities by examining actions reflectively and reflexively, leading the practitioner to a developmental outlook. Observation can be an important tool by which individuals learn from their own professional experience instead of from formal study or knowledge. According to Schön, the practitioner observes a phenomenon and his previous understanding as reflected by his behavior. He runs an experiment that is a tool to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. To do so, we do not cling to established ideas and techniques and the schemas of action found in textbooks. Rather, we think about things in depth, because every case study is unique. Nonetheless, we can base ourselves on what happened previously.[[32]](#footnote-32)

When the “reflective practitioner” examines a situation he perceives as unique, he relates to it as something that already exists in his repertoire of action. To see it as other does not mean to include the first under the category of the other. Instead, the unique, unfamiliar state must be viewed as both similar to and different from the familiar one; at the outset, we lack the ability to say if it is similar or different and in relation to what. The familiar state functions as a precedent to the unfamiliar one. Cumulative experience catalogues and identifies certain patterns upon which theories are created and responses made that match the new situation. This theory is tested and, based on the reaction, leads to the formulation of a fuller theory or the replacement of another.

Shabtai Tevet, the biographer who spent much time with Dayan, claimed that Dayan’s source of inspiration and originality came to him “from within, from contexts and circumstances, not from extensive research in military doctrine or history…”[[33]](#footnote-33) Dayan’s learning and his new ideas were developed and shaped by his natural curiosity and creativity, because he learned from every situation and experience. These created a circle of experimentation based on which he could create a framework for relating to the current situation and give a solution or idea that, at that point, could be a way of testing the waters. This was the proposal he made in his famous speech, “Jumping into the Deep End” about the negotiations carried out after the War of Attrition, in which he explained that there was no way of predetermining everything, but rather that it was necessary “to jump into the deep end.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

Two proximate events exemplify well the way Dayan studied an emerging event. In both, Dayan’s way of learning was similar, and it is possible that the first affected the second. The first event was his visit to Vietnam as a military journalist in 1966, when he wanted to get to know and understand the conflict from up close. The second occurred in May 1967, during the pre-Six-Day War waiting period, when Dayan very much wanted to return to active IDF duty and serve in a command position, and was preparing himself for an army posting after a decade of absence from the military. This is how Dayan explained his decision to tour Vietnam:

After 25 years of security and five years of farming, this is the only war now taking place anywhere in the world. Hardly anyone among us has seen or taken part in a war of this scope. While exploiting the most modern techniques. My primary expertise lies in security. As an expert in plant disease, I travel to observe plant diseases and the ways to treat them. That is how I want to see and study the war in Vietnam and any possible ramification of it on the war in our region.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Dayan departed for Vietnam in July 1966. But he did not travel directly. First, he stopped in France and the UK where he listened to the opinions of French generals who had previously found in Indo-China and met with Gen. Montgomery, the hero of el-Alamein. From there, he continued on to the United States where he met with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, the deputy national security advisor, and the former general and chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Everyone gave Dayan comprehensive overviews. From there, Dayan traveled on to Vietnam where he met with various commanders, though he insisted on being included in tours with soldiers in the jungles. He found himself under fire; he toured with a Marine platoon, the 101 Airborne Division, and the 1st Cavalry Division, which was reformed to become a transportable helicopter division. Dayan also demanded to speak with the leadership in Washington about what was happening on the ground. On June 4, 1967, after he was appointed defense minister and a day before the start of the Six-Day War, Foreign Minister Abba Eban read out loud a message from Secretary of Defense McNamara: “Very much appreciate and personally respect Dayan who provided the most balanced report and assessment of considerations that has ever been brought to my attention,” while remarking on the clarity of thought of Israel’s defense minister.[[36]](#footnote-36)

In May of 1967, during the waiting period before the Six-Day War, Dayan very much wanted to be appointed commander of the southern command. To that end, he once again donned the IDF uniform and, in those weeks, visited IDF bases to study the army with which he had had no contact for a decade. As he had done as chief of staff and as a student of the Vietnam War, he toured the fronts, spoke with the rank-and-file and the commanders, and studied the army’s preparedness and morale. In his diary, he wrote, “That entire time, I toured IDF units in the south, north, and center. From time to time, I would come home to Tel Aviv, listen to what was happening and respond.”[[37]](#footnote-37) His tour of the army resembled his tour of Vietnam: he started with the senior commander and headquarters and systematically went down the ladder to lowest echelons, from the strategic to the tactical levels, where strategy is translated into action. “I wanted to see the true IDF, what it could do and what it couldn’t […] I found a much improved IDF. It sent my soul soaring.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

Dayan emerged encouraged by his study; his certainty that the IDF would prevail increased. When he assumed his position on June 1, he was ready.

**Dayan as defense minister managing the occupied territories**

At the end of the Six-Day War, Israel found itself in charge of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with some one million Palestinian inhabitants, most of whom were hostile to Israel. The central question was how to rule people who were not Israeli citizens. Dayan’s visit to Vietnam aroused in him the awareness of the difficulty of facing a popular uprising. Dayan worried about an uprising in the recently occupied territories and therefore, as defense minister, he focused on the territories to prevent such a possibility. In that period, Dayan’s above-discussed patterns of management stood out in particular. However, as Dayan’s close associates testify, he had aged and was more somber, but his management practices remained essentially the same.

In practice, Dayan’s actions shaped the nature of the military government in the occupied territories. Dayan’s three major principles for controlling these territories were: a minimal presence of the Israeli military, both in terms of manpower and infrastructures (government buildings, military camps, etc.), maximal autonomy in self-governance, and open bridges, including freedom of movement between the occupied territories and the Arab nations.[[39]](#footnote-39) He followed developments in the Arab population of the territories very closely and was often first to discern change. He established a network of loyal informers and was personally involved in the selection of every regional commander and the staff of the Israeli administration. He encouraged open debate, but once he had made a decision, he made sure that everyone fell in line with it.[[40]](#footnote-40) Regarding the management of the territories, Dayan’s approach was characterized by spending much time on the ground among the people. He made many visits, took many tours, and had direct conversations with people in all walks of life. Dayan detested bureaucracy, and therefore would often bypass procedures and processes.[[41]](#footnote-41) He simply cut through red tape by ignoring the rules; what mattered was to speed up the decision-making process. He never agreed to take a tour based on an itinerary planned by a local echelon, undoubtedly keen on showing certain things and skipping others, and he was known to upend any set schedule.

In terms of time management, Dayan continued to work much as he had done as chief of staff. “If you checked his daily calendar when he was defense minister, you would find that the government meeting was scheduled for every Sunday and the weekly staff meeting every Friday. Another day was set aside for touring the territories or some military destination. The rest of the days and hours were open and available. In the morning, when he came into the office, he would take time to deal with matters he’d been considering and had kept him up that night or occurred to him as he fiddled with his collection of pottery shards and antiquities. He would summon people to his office without warning (and who would tell the defense minister ‘I’m busy’?) or eliminate the issues that bothered him with a single phone call, or even – and this happened frequently – rustle up an unplanned tour to check things out and get a feel for events in an unmediated fashion.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

Dayan carefully selected the military commanders by himself. He chose only highly-qualified, combat-experienced, moral officers who were also likeable, a characteristic he considered critical for the job. He interviewed each candidate personally and expected them to conduct themselves humbly and respectfully.[[43]](#footnote-43) Dayan established a mechanism to coordinate the work of the ministerial committees issuing documents of principles to guide the administration. These principles included a policy of using extreme measures against any potential uprising, while also ensuring “fair, humane treatment of the population,” which meant respecting holy sites and clerics, maintaining local family and tribal structures, minimizing unnecessary contact between soldiers and the populace (especially women), and, finally, providing welfare and healthcare services.[[44]](#footnote-44) On the other hand, Dayan favored harsh punishment for anyone directly involved with terrorism or supportive of it, though he was opposed to collective punishment.[[45]](#footnote-45) A further characteristic, entirely a reflection of Dayan’s personal style of working, was his immediate intervention and response to any development before difficulties set it, making it hard to find a solution. Whenever he heard of a problem, he as defense minister would immediately show up in person. He would call on all involved on the Israeli side and the local Palestinian side, tease apart the components of the issue, and make a decision then and there.[[46]](#footnote-46) To get an idea of the Palestinians’ national aspirations, Dayan invited the Palestinian national poet Fadwa Tuqan for a conversation at his home. He was rounding criticized by the Israeli right, to which he responded that he felt it was incumbent upon him to know what the atmosphere was like, “what the public thinks, what it will accept and what it will resist, not just what the political leaders are saying.”[[47]](#footnote-47)

In his tenure as defense minister, Dayan primary goal was to prevent a popular uprising that might spread and become uncontainable. In this, he succeeded. His major struggle was with Fatah cells that tried to organize such a revolt. Israel’s security services and the IDF managed to thwart these efforts, and Dayan maintained a relatively effective separation between the organization and its subversive activities and the population as a whole, which was mostly law-abiding. The success is attributable to Dayan’s balanced policy, which generally avoided blind, collective punishment. The Israeli right criticized him for this, too, but the policy worked and the population did not cooperate with the heads of the Fatah cells who had infiltrated the territories from Jordan.[[48]](#footnote-48) Undoubtedly, the force of Dayan’s personality was felt in the field and this was also the source of his greatest weakness, because it succeeded [only] as long as his presence lasted.

**The Dayan approach in light of management and strategic theory**

To understand the rationale of Dayan’s management approach, it is first important to appreciate his take on reality and his attitude to the process of shaping and planning strategy. Management researcher Henry Mintzberg distinguished between two types of strategy: deliberate versus emergent. Calculated strategy entails a process of planning that is created at the apex of the organizational pyramid to achieve a final, whole output. When the planned output is complete, there is an effort to force the plan onto reality. By contrast, emergent strategy is more open, the outcome is never final, and the approach assumes ahead of time that it will never be possible to control a reality that is always emergent and changing. Therefore, the difference in the process of shaping and planning strategy is manifested in several dimensions: at the level of detail, time frame, objective, and planners’ identity. Deliberate strategy focuses on control while emergent strategy focuses on learning. While the emphasis of deliberate strategy is on implementation and the realization of the original intention, emergent strategy stresses new insights-in-the-making and adapting the plan to them.[[49]](#footnote-49) Organizational psychologist Karl Weick explained that, unlike the management approach that divides thinking from action in a dichotomous fashion, in which the latter begins only when the former ends, the approach of emergent strategy says that we try things, wait to see the outcome, and continue. There is no clear order in which analysis precedes interaction with the surroundings. This approach views the world not as a stable entity somewhere out there, waiting for us to take it apart and put it back together; rather, it sees reality as emerging while we constantly supply explanations and updates based on our past experience.[[50]](#footnote-50)

On the continuum between the two approaches, Dayan was clearly closer to the emergent end. He viewed life as a constant struggle of forces that cannot be controlled. Therefore, for him, reality was ceaselessly changing and decisions had to be changed with it. Still, there was no absolute separation between them, and there was a North Star always showing the direction on which action must be based. In Dayan’s case, it was the security and prosperity of the State of Israel. Every subject was examined in light of this end point, because Dayan changed his mind over many issues. Some saw this aspect of his personality as inconsistency and criticized him for it. Leadership, these critics felt, clung to one consistent line, whether of ideology or of policy. Dayan’s response became another of his famous bon mots: “Only a mule never changes its mind.” Dayan had the rare ability to state, “I said what I said, but circumstances are different and conditions have developed differently than I thought, and I am therefore changing the policy.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Historian Mordechai Bar On, who served as bureau chief for Dayan when he was chief of staff, characterized Dayan as follows:

His personality was complex and self-contradictory. One of his prominent characteristics was avoiding anything extreme or maintaining absolute fealty to a dogmatic ideology. He was notable for his unflagging desire to examine a constantly changing and developing reality over and over again without prejudice… Without a doubt, he was capable of maneuvering and “getting clever,” but he was incapable of pretending or appealing to empty pathos. He would always say what he thought and fled from dishonesty like the plague… He had no trouble changing his mind when circumstances turned out to differ from what was anticipated or he realized he’d made a mistake. Nevertheless, he always remained true to himself and his fundamental values: his love for the land and dedication to the Zionist enterprise. He devoted his life to these two values.[[52]](#footnote-52)

# It is important to understand Dayan’s ability to decide one thing and then change the decision, sometime by 180 degrees, to appreciate the unique way in which he developed and operated as strategist, leader, and manager. Historian John Gaddis used Isaiah Berlin’s famous metaphor that distinguished between the hedgehog and the fox. Hedgehogs are in-depth experts on a single topic and take a narrow view. Foxes, by contrast, split their attention among many topics superficially, but their view is broad. “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing,” says the ancient Greek proverb that inspired Berlin’s analysis. Gaddis claims that a successful strategist must be part fox, part hedgehog, and cites F. Scott Fitzgerald who said, “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” The strategist, Gaddis claims, must be capable of having a clear sense of direction like a hedgehog and sensitivity to a changing environment like a fox.[[53]](#footnote-53) Indeed, historian Michael Oren has stated that Dayan’s mind “was capable of containing much more than just two opposing ideas at the same time,” and that at various critical decision-making moments, “he shifted from vehement opposition to unreserved support literally within hours.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

# Dayan was raised on classical Russian literature. As an adult, he read primarily Hebrew poetry and showed an interest in Kabbalah and the *Book of Splendor*, an esoteric enough field for someone who spent his life dealing with earthly matter and who tended to a pragmatic outlook. Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Cohen, who earned an MA in Philosophy, proposes an explanation for Dayan’s interest in mysticism: Kabbalah understand the *shekhina* as having a dual essence riddled with contradictions – male and female, strict judgement and mercy, the son of David Messiah and the son of Joseph Messiah, even the fox and the hedgehog. That is to say, there are two models representing opposites. The fox has the power to shatter conventions, and outcomes are judged relative to the concrete, local context. The hedgehog represents the polar opposite: the desire for fixed, universally valid rules, regulations, and principles. Based on this view, the leader’s role is to shatter conventions when a dynamic reality turns these conventions into shackles, a handicap. A system-wide military strategist is tested by his ability to apply universal principles into context-specific action, even if that action stands in stark contradiction to those principles. As chief of staff, Dayan was notable for an ability to adapt to changing circumstances.[[55]](#footnote-55) Henry Kissinger, too, offered an interesting take of Dayan, one that noted the polar opposites of his personality: he described Dayan as “Israel’s most original, realistic, and poetic leader.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

# What may be learned from Dayan’s management approach?

# Dayan’s approach and figure are deeply steeped in his historical era. It was a time of tremendous change and volatility. He was born during World War I, saw World War II, and experienced the establishment of the State of Israel, as well as Israel’s wars with Arab nations under the pall of the Cold War. He was a farmer, scout, squad commander, prisoner, raid unit commander, chief negotiator, strategist, chief of staff, defense minister, and finally diplomat as foreign minister. He started as a member of the underground and learned to think and act like a guerrilla fighter. When he joined the Israeli military, the IDF was just starting to construct its hierarchies, exactly as the state it was defending. Everything was fluid, under construction, in the process of being shaped and institutionalized. More than anything and anyone, Dayan’s figure and career was an accurate expression of the zeitgeist, the concept born in German Romanticism and associated with philosopher Georg W.F. Hegel who spoke of the relationship between a leader and his era: the great leader can only come into his own in the context of his era and as a product of his period, which he then raises to its pinnacle.

# Today, it is difficult to see senior commanders leaving their calendars blank for days on end, deciding in the morning on spontaneous visits to various units or trading in their fancy bureaus for a narrow office and simple desk covered with an army blanket. Today, it is also impossible to engage in any of those proscribed acts Dayan allowed himself to do, such as speeding into an army base in a military vehicle and ignoring the regimental police officer’s order to stop before entering. And that is a good thing. It was a different time with different mores. But we should stop and think if the balance has been disrupted. Have we become too much like the hedgehog? Technicians rather than artists, focused on rules and regulations while abandoning thought about essence and content? In a world flooded with stimuli, do we have any time at all to think? Are there any people around us who are independent, critical thinkers, whom we trust implicitly?

# If we think the answer to the last question is no, then learning about Dayan’s management style and adopting some of its components could serve as inspiration that would rebalance the cosmic order between foxes and hedgehogs.

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2. Henri Fayol***,*** *General and industrial management* (Ravenio Books, 2016), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. וילפרדו פארטו היה כלכלן וסוציולוג איטלקי (1848 – 1923) שמצא וניסח את העיקרון על שמו. כמובן שהעיקרון איננו מדויק אלא כלל אצבע והיחסים יכולים להיות אחרים כמו 70-30 וכ'. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. שלמה גזית "משה דיין וצה"ל", בתוך: מרדכי בר-און (עורך), *לנוכח גבולות עוינים: צבא וביטחון בעשור הראשון למדינת ישראל***,** (הוצאת אפי מלצר בע"מ, 2017), 171 – 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. שם., 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. אליקים רובינשטיין *דרכי שלום* (תל אביב: משרד הביטחון, 1992), 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. שם.,221. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. גד יעקבי, *בחסד הזמן: פרקי אוטוביוגרפיה*, (תל אביב: הוצאת משכל, 2002), 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. הדרך שבה ניהל דיין את המחלוקת המקצועית שהיתה כרוכה גם במאבק על יוקרה אישי והרבה אגו מעניינת מאוד כשלעצמה, ראה בנושא זה מאיר פינקל, *הרמטכ"ל* (תל אביב: מערכות- מודן, משרד הביטחון, 2018), 186- 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. מאיר עמית, *ראש בראש – מבט אישי על אירועים גדולים ופרשיות עלומות* (תל אביב: הוצאת מעריב, 1999), 85,39 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. הדברים מצוטטים אצל שבתי טבת, *משה דיין: ביוגרפיה* (תל אביב: הוצאת שוקן, 1971), 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. שם., 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. שם., 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ראיון עם שלמה גזית, כפר סבא, 20 אוגוסט 2018, ראיון עם נאורה בר נח, הרצליה, 10 נובמבר 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. נאורה בר נח - מטלון, *מקום טוב בצד* (תל אביב: כותרים, 2009),34 -35. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. טבת., 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. רובינשטיין, 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. משה דיין, *אבני דרך: אוטוביוגרפיה*, (תל אביב: הוצאת עידנים ודביר, 1976) ,621 . [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ראה שמעון גולן, *מלחמת יום הכיפורים: קבלת החלטות בפיקוד העליון במלחמת יום הכיפורים* (תל אביב: מערכות -מודן 2013), 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. שלמה גזית, *פתאים במלכודת: 30 שנות מדיניות ישראל בשטחים*, (תל אביב: זמורה-ביתן, 1999), 75-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. יואב גלבר, *הזמן הפלסטיני – ישראל, ירדן והפלסטינים 1967 – 1970* (תל אביב: כנרת זמורה ביתן דביר 2018),

    460-461. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. דיין, *אבני דרך*, 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. שם., 536. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. שלמה גזית, *המקל והגזר – הממשל הישראלי ביהודה ושומרון* (תל אביב: זמורה ביתן, 1985), 125-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. בר נח-מטלון, עמ 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. גזית, *בצמתים מכריעים*, עמ' 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. שם, עמ' 125-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ראה גולן, *יום הכיפורים*, 393-395. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. בר נח-מטלון, 28-27 . [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. יעקבי, *חסד הזמן*, 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Moshe Dayan said "Wars are the most exiting events in life" Interview, TV Thames,1972 , <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzVrRStVo9k>, (accessed 1 October 5, 2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983), 68. It would be great to have the original quotations in the text instead of my paraphrases. FYI [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
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35. טבת, 550. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. ישיבת ועדת השרים לענייני ביטחון, כ"ה באייר תשכ"ז, 4.6.1967. ארכיון המדינה, תיק: EES0002. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. דיין, *אבני דרך*, 398. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. יעקב ארז ואילן כפיר, *שיחות עם משה דיין*,(תל אביב: הוצאת מסדה, 1981),46. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. שלמה גזית, *פתאים במלכודת: 30 שנות מדיניות ישראל בשטחים*, תל אביב: זמורה-ביתן, 1999, עמ' 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. גזית, *פתאים במלכודת*, עמ' 75-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. בראון, *חותם אישי*, עמ' 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. שלמה גזית, *בצמתים מכריעים – מהפלמ"ח לראשות אמ"ן*, (ת"א:ידיעות ספרים 2016) עמ 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. משה אלעד, *אם תרצו - זו הגדה – הממשל הצבאי בגדה המערבית בעשור הראשון 1967 - 1976,* (חיפה: פרדס, 2015 ) 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. גזית, *בצמתים מכריעים*, עמ' 163-162. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. גזית, *פתאים במלכודת*, עמ' 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. גזית, *בצמתים מכריעים*, עמ' 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. בר-און, עמ' 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. גלבר, *הזמן הפלסטיני*, עמ' 274 – 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. הנרי מינצברג, ברוס אלסטראנד, גו'זף לאמפל, *ספארי אסטרטגיות: סיור מודרך בערבות הניהול האסטרטגי*, (ת"א הוצאת פקר – ידיעות אחרונות), 24 , 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. שם., 220- 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. שלמה גזית "משה דיין וצה"ל", בתוך: מרדכי בר-און (עורך), *לנוכח גבולות עוינים: צבא וביטחון בעשור הראשון למדינת ישראל*(ישראל: הוצאת אפי מלצר בע"מ, 2017), 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. מרדכי בר און, *משה דיין*, עמ 358-359. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. John Lewis Gaddis, *On Grand Strategy* (US: Allen Lane, 2018), pp.19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
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55. תקשורת אישית, גרשון הכהן, תל אביב, 02.10.2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
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