**Chapter 3**

**Generalship**

Before being appointed Chief of Staff, Dayan had held two senior positions: commander of the Southern Command and commander of the Northern Command, in the course of which he, of course, also served as a member of the General Staff. During his tenure in these positions, he was not involved in any major military episodes, as Israel’s major challenges in the first years after the War of Independence entailed absorbing the young nation’s mass waves of immigration and addressing economic privations, the latter reflected in Israel’s austerity policy.[[1]](#footnote-1) In terms of security, Israel did not expect an imminent invasion; the armistice agreements and the weakened economic and military condition of the Arab nations prevented them from embarking on another round of fighting. The major threat to security was of an ongoing, “routine” nature and not “fundamental”[[2]](#footnote-2), arising from the infiltration of Arab refugees into Israel. While this was a growing phenomenon, refugees were coming mostly from the Jordanian kingdom and heading for central Israel. Therefore, the Southern Command headed by Dayan was relatively uninvolved; the same was true in during his time with the Northern Command, which he headed for only six months. This period of Dayan’s life may be considered an interim stage dedicated mostly to learning and training before becoming Chief of Staff. In this period, Ben-Gurion made good on his promise to Dayan about important military training; indeed, beyond the experience he gained as the head of the two commands, Dayan was able to take two courses: a battalion commanders course in Israel and a course at the British Army’s Senior Officers’ School in Devizes, England. He also participated in many of the IDF drills and exercises for testing its troops’ fighting fitness. All this training was to play a major role in Dayan’s understanding of military doctrine and the art of strategy.

The job of Chief of Staff in Israel is unique and immensely challenging. It is doubtful whether any similar position exists elsewhere. According to the law, the Chief of Staff is the highest command rank in the IDF and is subject to the government’s authority and subordinate to the defense minister. But this brief (and vague) description does not reflect the position’s tremendous scope and complexity. The person holding the post is not only the head of the General Staff but is, in practice, the commander of all the armed forces, because when the IDF was established, it did not develop distinct Services for the air force and navy as had many other militaries. The General Staff, then, is in charge of all air, sea, and ground forces, in terms of both building and operating the forces. According to the IDF Establishment Command, the Chief of Staff is subordinate to the government[[3]](#footnote-3) by virtue of this dual responsibility for all service branches in all theaters.[[4]](#footnote-4) In light of this, some scholars have claimed that the Chief of Staff, as an institution, has “excess power.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Israel’s Chief of Staff is a central national figure who enjoys a special status in the public mind. The position requires having a broad strategic vision, both regional and global, of the theater of war, as well an operational view of the various theaters and the functions of all the service branches in them. The major tasks of the Chief of Staff are deploying the army to face current challenges and building the military force to ensure the IDF’s preparedness and fitness to face future ones, all while managing the tremendous risks involved and maintaining public trust in the army.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The 21st Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, described the job as follows:

The Chief of Staff has three unique functions in the IDF: seeing the comprehensive theater of war, which is a matter of strategy; taking a broad strategic view, which is a matter of meta-strategy; and taking an operational comprehensive service branch view. The Chief of Staff’s major areas of work are the force construction and deployment of the IDF. In the absence of an agreed-upon security approach, the reality created in Israel is complex and requires the Chief of Staff to engage in a continuous dialogue and ongoing process of clarification with the political echelon. And the Chief of Staff must do so while developing mechanisms of learning and knowledge for routine times, emergencies, and war.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, the 18th Chief of Staff, who served between 2005 and 2007, described the job as follows:

The Chief of Staff’s job is highly diverse. It involves command and management of construction and deployment, the necessity to understand budgets, and a pinch of political insight. He is a media and social figure with obligations not only to those who appointed him but also to the public at large.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Many of the fundamental challenges facing recent Chiefs of Staff are essentially similar to the ones Dayan faced in 1953: the relationship between the political and military echelons, public legitimacy, managing the expectations of the Israeli public, the Chief of Staff’s relationship with the commanders of the corps and commands, managing a strict budget, making multiyear force construction plans, and maintaining a high level of alertness given the possibility that war could break out at any moment, while at the same time engaging in building the military forces and updating the army’s military doctrine.

Finkel, in *The Chief of Staff*, aptly describes the uniqueness of Israel’s Chief of Staff as an institution compared to senior command position in other Western nations:

It is difficult to compare the IDF’s Chief of Staff position to [its equivalent] in other armies. With regard to the U.S. Armed Forces, the position of the Chief of Staff in the IDF combines to a large extent both the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which, on the face of it and based on the terminology, would be parallel to the IDF Chief of Staff, and the position of the commanders of the operational commands. To demonstrate (despite the size differences), the function of the IDF Chief of Staff combines the position of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II and the position of George Marshall as the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, which constructed force and sent it to fight.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Training for Generalship**

**The Southern Command**

The signing of the Armistice Agreements on July 22, 1949 ended a chapter Dayan’s life and he now had to decide on his future. On September 22, 1949, Dayan proposed to Ben-Gurion a military action designed to conquer Mount Scopus and open a road to the Western Wall, a sign that he had despaired of reaching a peace agreement with Jordan.[[10]](#footnote-10)

For a short time after the War of Independence, a sense of normality had prevailed in Israel. Many commanders and officers left the army for jobs in civilian life. Even Dayan, uncertain about the future, considered following suit. He felt he lacked a real military education, which might one day prove to be an obstacle. “His desire to acquire military doctrine was not great, whereas his interest in policy was,”[[11]](#footnote-11) wrote Teveth. This was a hint at what was to come, because Dayan was the most politically involved Chief of Staff of all time. It was Ben-Gurion who convinced Dayan to stay in the army and take over the Southern Command. Ben-Gurion, who wanted an army that was professional, orderly, and loyal to the idea of “statehood,” wanted to appoint Dayan, the maverick (whom future Prime Minister Levi Eshkol would call “Abu Jildeh”),[[12]](#footnote-12) to a senior command position in the IDF. It seems that Dayan’s unique combination of charisma as a leader and battlefield bravery and personal loyalty and ability to turn Ben-Gurion’s ideas into action distinguished him for “the Old Man.” At this point, Dayan realized that Israel’s struggle with its Arab enemies would not end soon and that his life was bound up in it.[[13]](#footnote-13)

On November 9, 1949, Ben-Gurion appointed the 32-year-old Yigal Yadin to serve as Chief of Staff and immediately thereafter made the 34-year old Dayan commander of the Southern Command. At that time, the Operational Division officer of the Southern Command was Yitzhak Rabin, a Yigal Allon loyalist. Rabin quickly realized it would be difficult for him to serve under Dayan and that they would have to part ways. Other than Rabin, Dayan did not replace any other staff officer who had worked with Allon, a sign of his immense self-confidence. Before leaving his position, Rabin wrote a letter to his idolized commander Allon, then in Paris, containing scathing criticism of Dayan: “Moshe Dayan shows up. I get him up to speed. The guy has no clue whatsoever. In my opinion, he lacks even the most minimal military understanding beyond the company or battalion level. And in his human relations he is utterly lacking in tact.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Rabin was correct in his assessment of Dayan’s poor knowledge of military matters – Dayan would have been the first to admit it – but was wrong about Dayan’s interpersonal skills. While Dayan could be tactless when he wanted to be, he was perfectly capable of charming people around him and sweeping them up like a Pied Piper by creating an honest, easygoing, spirited atmosphere. Accompanied by his intelligence officer, Rehavam (Gandhi) Ze’evi, Dayan would often go out into the field to familiarize himself with the south, which, unlike the north, he did not know well.[[15]](#footnote-15) As for order and procedures – he paid little attention to these; instead, Tzvi Tzur, Dayan’s aide-de-camp, was put in charge of “all that military BS” as British psychologist Norman Dixon called it.[[16]](#footnote-16) “Moshe wanted to put all he had into the main effort,” Tzur related, “and viewed enforced order and discipline as manacles that had to be uncuffed.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Dayan certainly had no patience for the slow pace of the military hierarchy, and would issue direct orders to any rank regardless of the chain of command and without coordinating with others. Relations between the professional military man Tzur, attentive to procedure and discipline, and the unruly Dayan were both difficult and productive, but the fact that Tzur continued to work with Dayan, later as head of the IDF Manpower Directorate when Dayan served as Chief of Staff and then as his assistant when he became prime minister is telling. Ze’evi, who was the intelligence officer of the Southern Command, recounted that Dayan had a wild streak: together they would “liberate” chickens from coops they spied and then roast them over open fires. Ze’evi also spoke of Dayan’s more serious side: “Dayan would stick with a subject and dig deeply into it. At that time in the army, he focused almost exclusively on improving the operational capabilities.”[[18]](#footnote-18) According to Ze’evi, Dayan’s command style made it possible for the people around him to express themselves and even voice criticism. “Dayan would drill me and talk about his ideas before giving lectures so that I could critique them… He wanted me to provide the pros and cons.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

The period of Dayan’s leadership of the Southern Command was relatively calm compared to his turbulent career, but some of his unique patterns of command and emphases were already in evidence: a lack of formality and lots of pranks, going into the field for an extended stay, unmediated relationships with soldiers, simplicity of conduct, and an uncompromising insistence on maintaining a high operational level.

**Advanced Command Courses**

In 1950 and 1951, Dayan attended two advanced military training courses, one in Israel and the other in England. The two-part Israeli course lasted six months. Its first part was a battalion commanders course and its second part more advanced training intended for more senior ranks. The battalion commanders course was unique: the participants were of senior ranking commanders while the instructors, who had already taken the course, were lower in rank, such as Maj. Uzi Narkiss, who was relatively experienced in the subjects covered.

Dayan did not enjoy universal adulation in this course. He was surrounded by former Palmach fighters who felt that his loyalty was with Mapai, their ideological rival. The course instructors found Dayan overly critical, but Uzi Narkiss saw Dayan, despite his criticism of the course material, as someone who was there to learn.[[20]](#footnote-20) The course aimed to train the participants to become brigade commanders, to impart knowledge needed for staff and command work at senior ranks, and to provide a military education in general. The method of study combined theory with various planning exercises, as is customary in many armies.[[21]](#footnote-21)

In his memoirs, Dayan wrote that he did not excel in technical knowledge. According to him, the instructors said that he had a tactical mind but did not bother remembering details, such as the structure of the lead unit of a brigade on the move.[[22]](#footnote-22) When it came to the exercises, Dayan inveighed against the textbook solutions taught to the students and was adamant that all solutions had to be derived from the immediate, concrete context. He was therefore opposed to the instructors’ approach that there are universal solutions that transcend place, time, society, and culture. For him, military action could be understood only in its specific political and social context.

Uzi Narkiss, Dayan’s instructor, would later write that “Dayan questioned these exercises from the outset. He excelled at tying the textbook solutions into knots firmly embedded in the land of Israel and disagreed with theoretical solutions to operational problems that did not take settlements on the ground into consideration.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

In one exercise, the students had to deploy a brigade-level defense against an invasion by an Egyptian brigade. According to military doctrine, junctions have to be defended, but this would have left Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, which had already fallen to the Egyptians, outside the brigade’s defense system. Dayan was steadfast in his refusal to submit a plan of defense that abandoned a Jewish settlement. “Perhaps you could teach defense plans at West Point, but not in Israel,” he concluded.[[24]](#footnote-24) The instructors’ explanations failed to convince him that these are the binding principles of military doctrine if one wants to defend a region well. The instructors asked him to ignore the context and the fact that the region was home to certain settlements and relate only to the region. “So give me a different location,” Dayan insisted. The instructors had no choice but to change the solution to the exercise and include Yad Mordechai and other settlements that had been left out. According to Narkiss, it was this insistence that crystallized for Dayan the IDF’s doctrine of regional defense, which is based on a combination of settlements that are static points of defense and mobile forces as part of brigade-level planning.[[25]](#footnote-25)

To mark the end of the course, Dayan drew a cartoon and wrote an accompanying rhyme. In the drawing, he is the fox (the symbol of the Southern Command) while his instructors are depicted as an owl (the symbol of the Doctrine Branch). The rhyme pits the fox’s “street smarts” against the universal wisdom of the owl that fails to grasp reality as it is: even when settlements fall into enemy hands, it cannot digress from the hopelessly detached written law. At the end of the second part of the course, Dayan continued his rhyme under the heading “The Song of the Swan as Sung by the Fox,”[[26]](#footnote-26) in which he declares, “I, personally, will never make a general.” Teveth suggested that Dayan was torn between the strictures of his job and his love of freedom. Another possible explanation may be Dayan’s disgust with the technical, professional general possessing military technical, universal knowledge isolated from the context of place and culture. Dayan was incapable of seeing himself as a general beyond a certain time and place in the land of Israel, the state of Israel, and the IDF.

Nonetheless, Dayan, whose weaknesses in military tactics were made quite evident when he led the defense of Jerusalem of, was well aware of his lack of interest and inability in instilling order, discipline, and procedures in those under his command. He therefore made sure his staff included people like Tzvi Tzur and Uzi Narkiss, telling Narkiss, “I want the best organized and most orderly command in the IDF.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

After concluding the battalion commanders course, Dayan was given the command of the Northern Command, and in early 1952 he started his second course two-month senior commanders course in England. Teaching this course were experienced British officers, World War II veterans, who had seen a battle or two in their service, knew what mattered, and had a grasp of balancing doctrine and practical smarts. It is not surprising, then, that Dayan found this course very helpful. In his letters to Yadin and Ben-Gurion, he wrote that he was learning very well and that much of the course material involved armored fighting: “[I came] to hear, see, and expand military horizons. The emphasis was on the question of how to think and plan rather than on the outcome… The instructor would ask many questions…and did not seem to care very much if my conclusions were put in the proper order.” The attitude at the British school was quite the opposite of the textbook solutions offered in the IDF course. He had finally found a place where the methods were to his liking.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Dayan was not sent to the British Command and Staff College course in Camberley, the course that most Israeli commanders of that time took (including Yitzhak Rabin in 1952 and Ariel Sharon in 1957). Instead, he participated in a course for senior commanders instituted in 1916 to train officers of the British Commonwealth from all service branches (including navies and air forces). The course sought to expand the officers’ knowledge, and the subject matter was not just military but also covered, political, geostrategic, and technological topics.

Dayan received a highly positive assessment from the school’s commander:

[Dayan] showed keen interest and worked hard. Despite the language difficulties, he played a significant role in group discussions. He was intelligent and always contributed something to the debate. He possesses comprehensive knowledge of organization and tactics, and he is a very congenial fellow. He formed good relationships with his group members. All in all, an outstanding exemplar of his army. We enjoyed being his hosts and having him stay with us.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Dayan asked to take other courses in Great Britain, but did not receive permission to do so. He returned to Israel in what was described as a state of high enthusiasm generated by the knowledge and tools from his recent studies. As the leader of an entire command, he held a series of exercises applying the material he had learned.[[30]](#footnote-30) It may have been the only time in his life that Dayan was excited by any formal learning setting and did not criticize it harshly.[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Exercise "Maneuver 2"**

In August 1951, the IDF was in the midst of a series of large exercises led by Chief of Staff Yadin intended to examine various aspects of the army. Its central maneuver, called Maneuver 2, was designed to test “unit moves while fighting” and “the fighting methods of ground forces given enemy superiority in the air and armor.”[[32]](#footnote-32) The Southern Command under Dayan played the role of “the greens” (what they called the enemy then; today they would have been called “reds” as is the custom in militaries around the world) fighting against the Central Command, led by Maj. Gen. Tzvi Ayalon, playing the role of the IDF, called “the blues.” Conquest, flanking, parachuting, and other fighting components were all drilled and tested in this exercise.

Uzi Narkiss was Dayan’s operations officer and the two formed a cohesive team, as staff doctrine demands of the commander-operations officer relationship. According to military staff doctrine, an operations officer serves as support for and an extension of the commander: the operations officer knows the commander well, knows how he thinks, and knows his intentions. According to military historian Spenser Wilkinson, the operations officer is the commander’s alter ego.[[33]](#footnote-33) Narkiss recounted that his room was next to Dayan’s and that the two spent many hours together. They spoke about current issues while showering and shaving almost in the buff. Dayan often invited Narkiss and his wife to his home in Jerusalem to socialize, and the two developed a very close relationship.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Returning to Maneuver 2, in the first part of the exercise, the troop commanders, Dayan and Ayalon,[[35]](#footnote-35) were ordered to undertake a full 48-hour standard operating procedure, including intelligence gathering, troop preparation, and planning. The exercise included a previously structured scenario in which first the “greens” would invade Israeli soil and achieve partial successes. At the second stage, the “blues” would counterattack and oust the “greens” from their area. When Narkiss explained to Dayan the long, cumbersome standard operating procedures process, Dayan ordered him to immediately shift to the shortened version and decided to run a planning and a command group at the same time to facilitate a rapid transition to action. Maj. Uri Ben-Ari, then deputy commander of the 7th Brigade, who was on the “green” side, was very eager to prove the armored corps’ deep penetration capabilities. Ben-Ari later said that Dayan “did not run the orders group according to the SOP formulated in the IDF’s military school, but rather on the basis of a different and more unique one: a rushed procedure, which in this case was applicable only to an armored force.”[[36]](#footnote-36) Dayan assigned the mission to the 7th Brigade, which included breaking through the “blue” line and heading deep into “blue” territory – all the way to the “blue” command post located in Ramleh.

Ben-Ari was thrilled, but the rushed battle procedure and the mission he was given deviated from the instructions of the exercise administration. The 7th Brigade surprised the “blue” force and conquered the command post as Dayan had instructed. The exercise administration, headed by Maj. Gen. Moshe Tzadok, was not pleased with the stunt Dayan and the 7th Brigade had pulled, and ordered the brigade to remain in place for 24 hours to allow the “blue” force to regroup.[[37]](#footnote-37)

In practice, Dayan ordered a deep breach that completely ignored the enemy’s pockets of resistance, bypassing them and aiming directly for the enemy’s center of gravity, a small-scale blitzkrieg. The exercise administration did not accept Dayan’s approach, complaining he hadn’t used the infantry at his disposal, that he’d moved across difficult, unpaved terrain, and that he had not evacuated the settlements in his sector of enemy troops. “That doesn’t take a genius,” they told Dayan. Similar to what he said in the officers course in Joara and his response to Ben-Gurion’s remark after the raid on Ramleh – “That’s not how you wage war” – his answer was, “Actually, it does.”[[38]](#footnote-38) In practice, the controversial move in the exercise was a preview of the move that the 7th Brigade would later make in the Sinai Campaign.

The maneuver summary report showed that a fierce debate ensued between Dayan and the exercise administrators. Dayan outright rejected the claims made against him, asserting that because nothing had been said to the contrary, he felt free to do what he did. In general, Dayan and Narkiss split their duties: Dayan conducted himself calmly and diplomatically, while Narkiss ferociously attacked the “blues” and the exercise administration.[[39]](#footnote-39) Yadin was furious with Dayan, but also blamed the “blues” and the judges for the events of the exercise.

The most important result, however, was that Yadin came to realize the maneuver capabilities of an armored brigade like the 7th, as well as the danger that the enemy might engage in such a move. Ben Ari felt that Dayan was correct in his unconventional approach to the exercise, and the IDF was doubly rewarded: it began to appreciate its weakness in defense and also learned about the potential of armor, which Ben Ari would prove in 1956 in Sinai. In the meantime, the incident caused “a surge of real concern on the General Staff.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

Underpinning Dayan’s conduct in the maneuver was his fundamental rebellion against accepted rules and codes. For him, the exercise was not a fair sporting event in which the sides are obligated to play by the rules, but a simulation of the thing itself – war – in which the sides exploit every situation and every opportunity to achieve superiority. Dayan liked to shorten processes, to command “from the saddle” while on the move, and create the advantage of surprise, maneuvering faster than his enemy. These tendencies would be manifested in campaigns and operations Dayan would command in the future.

Dayan’s approach to the exercise can be better clarified in terms of game theory concepts. Game theory distinguishes between finite and infinite games. In finite games, the rules are clear, the players are fixed, and the goal is unchanging and clearly articulated. Group sports and chess matches are good examples. In contrast, in infinite games, the goal is not fixed but evolves constantly as do the players and the rules. Participants in a war may view the war as finite, in which case two or more sides fight in a certain theater using similar methods until one side is bested. But war may also be seen as infinite, in which the goal and the rules and other components are fluid and reflect a chaotic political and military reality. This is how Dayan insisted on seeing the campaigns in which he participated.[[41]](#footnote-41)

**The Northern Command**

On May 26, 1952, after refusing Yadin’s offer to become his deputy, Dayan was put in charge of the Northern Command. Dayan felt his personality made him ill-suited to be anyone’s deputy, as a deputy must fully identify with his commander, while his tendency was to express his own positions loud and clear.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The head of the Northern Command Staff was Haim Bar-Lev and its intelligence officer was Ariel (Arik) Sharon. Sharon, then a young command-level intel officer (although, to be fair, everyone, including the most senior commanders in the IDF, were very young), was disappointed by the lack of action and was thinking about leaving the army for the university. At the end of 1952, during the “officers’ incident,” he had the opportunity to prove to Dayan that he wasn’t a run-of-the-mill officer like the rest. Jordanian soldiers had abducted two Israeli soldiers in the course of a routine patrol and were refusing to release them. Israel was at a loss. Dayan, however, had an idea. He summoned Sharon and asked him if he could take some Jordanians hostage. While Dayan intended to think about the idea, Sharon hurried to implement it, and straight away abducted two Jordanian soldiers on the shared border at al-Hasin Bridge. Before long, the Israeli POWs were exchanged for the Jordanian ones. This was the beginning of the Dayan-Sharon alliance that would last for many years, an alliance that knew ups and down, great appreciation as well as great suspiciousness, and many joint achievements. For many years, Dayan was the main architect of the army while Sharon was the outstanding executing contractor-cum-tactician who excelled at converting Dayan’s intentions into outstanding execution on the ground. From commander of a small commando unit to corps commander –there was arguably no better military tactician than Arik Sharon.

During that time, the Northern Command did not engage in much operational activity. Nonetheless, Dayan frequently ran various exercises, indicative of his way of thinking: a refusal to concede to routine and accepted conventions. In summing up a two-brigade exercise, he said, “Neither side won, because the IDF cannot beat the IDF.” In another exercise, a commander reported that he was besieged as the enemy force had cut him off from the main force. Dayan replied, “Perhaps your enemy is besieged. Siege is just a matter of stance, of feeling, not something physical. As far as I’m concerned, you’re not besieged; your enemy is. Act accordingly.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

One characteristic of Dayan’s conduct was his division of labor between him and his staff. He focused only on issues he deemed critical, what he called “strategic matters,” while all the rest was handled by his staff. He took very little interest in routine administrative matters, but would fully back his men. The way he saw it, each individual was responsible for his specific area.

While in charge of the Northern Command, Dayan, who also always considered the political angle, tried to advance negotiations with the Syrians on issues left unresolved after the Armistice Agreements were signed, including fishing rights in the Lake of Galilee and the future of the demilitarized zones, both of which had led to violent clashes between the sides. He renewed contact with the Israeli-Syrian Armistice Committee and tried to reach agreements on these issues. The talks he held with Syrian officers led him to understand that, at that stage, Syria had no intention of changing the status quo.[[44]](#footnote-44)

**Chief of the General Staff Directorate and Chief of Staff[[45]](#footnote-45)**

Following the sharp cuts to the IDF budget decided on by Prime Minister and Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion in 1952, Yigael Yadin resigned his position as Chief of Staff and was replaced by Mordechai Maklef on December 7. Dayan was appointed head of the General Staff Directorate and Acting Chief of Staff; he refused to accept the title “Deputy.” A year later, on December 6, 1953, Dayan was officially appointed Chief of Staff. Because he continued many processes he had begun in his tenure at the General Staff Directorate, these two consecutive periods can be viewed as one. Years later, Dayan, too, would make no distinction: “In terms of my memory, I don’t draw a line between the time I headed the General Staff Directorate and served as Chief of Staff.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Still, Neora Matalon, Dayan’s secretary, described a change for the worse in Dayan’s mood after he was appointed Chief of Staff. The weight of the responsibility coupled with the absence of Ben-Gurion (who had resigned from the government) left their mark. Suddenly, Dayan was subordinate to a defense minister (Pinchas Lavon) he didn’t trust and a prime minister (Moshe Sharett) with whom he didn’t agree.[[47]](#footnote-47)

As head of the General Staff Directorate and Chief of Staff, Dayan took over a broken army, a shadow of the organization that had won the War of Independence. Most skilled commanders had already resigned and the most talented young people preferred to enlist in administrative units and Nahal, the paramilitary IDF program combining military services and the establishment of agricultural settlements. The infantry, the IDF’s backbone in those days, consisted of new immigrants who were experiencing the profound crisis entailed in moving to a new country and learning a new language. The army suffered from low-quality manpower with low potential, a lack of leadership, and low morale.[[48]](#footnote-48) The challenge was immense. Maklef and Dayan, were charged with an enormous, dual-purpose task: to cut back on the order of the battle and budgets, on the one hand, and raise the IDF’s fighting fitness for “the next round,” on the other.[[49]](#footnote-49) The IDF had multiple problems: not only were resources very poor, but the enlistment cohorts were small and of low potential, command posts were bloated, and fighting fitness and preparedness were constantly deteriorating.[[50]](#footnote-50) Dayan therefore had to address two major challenges in his work: fostering the IDF’s fighting spirit, especially among the commanders, and changing the imbalanced structure of inflated commands at the expense of fighting units.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Historian Yagil Henkin posed this question about the change in the IDF in those years:

How come the IDF, that in 1953 failed in some half of its operations, including one in which an infantry battalion was driven back by a few armed Jordanian villagers; that up until 1954 lacked an armored command or a command and staff college, and could field only one battalion-sized armored task force in short notice; that used only one unit extensively for retaliation operations because most of the army was deemed unfit for offensive action; that its most modern armored forces were deemed “catastrophe” by its own officers; that was in a deep crisis in 1953, and lacked manpower, training, and equipment--how did this army transform itself in just three years and achieve a swift victory over the Egyptian army in 1956?[[52]](#footnote-52)

According to Henkin, the answer was the profound change both in spirit and in substance that Dayan instituted during his tenure as Chief of Staff that made the victory in the 1956 Suez Campaign possible. Moreover, the change was also the platform for the 1967 victory in the Six-Day War.

Many greeted Dayan’s appointment as Chief of the General Staff Directorate and Chief of Staff with astonishment. Dayan’s image was that of an undisciplined savage, and many felt that his appointment to Chief of Staff bordered on the irresponsible.[[53]](#footnote-53) As head of the General Staff Directorate, he didn’t make Maklef’s life easy: he issued contradictory instructions and never tried to impose discipline. He had never served as the chief of staff or as a deputy of a military commander, and, as usual, only dealt with topics that interested him. Matters of coordination and the details of staff work were left to his assistant, Meir Amit.

Of Dayan, Maklef related:

He doesn’t quarrel with others. He simply cuts them out… Maj. Gen. Dayan cannot be tamed… He possesses uncommon battle cunning… He projects charismatic leadership to soldiers and people in general.[[54]](#footnote-54)

During the period Dayan headed the General Staff Directorate, Israel faced two major challenges: fighting the ongoing threat of infiltrators and other ongoing security threats, and force construction to prepare for another all-out war, i.e., the fundamental or immediate existential threat in terms of Israel’s security approach.

The first, then, involved Arabs crossing the borders into Israel, which sometimes resulted in heinous attacks, thereby transforming a strategic nuisance into a strategic threat. The second was building the IDF’s force and preparing it for war. Given the state of the army and the Israeli economy then, this complex challenge involved two parts: mental and material. The mental part involved improving morale, fighting spirit, leadership, courage, and a belief in victory. The material part involved the construction of the military corps and weapons needed to conduct a modern war, as well as the development of a fighting doctrine suitable to the conditions under which the IDF was operating, one that would take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the IDF and of its enemies and the unique terrains of the various theaters.

Dayan’s solution was to yoke the two challenges to one another. For example, the reprisals operations had two goals: to resolve the infiltration problem by setting a price tag for every Arab action against Israel and, at the same time, to train the army’s units and commanders in all aspects of fighting – morale, leadership, and tactics.

**The Reprisals as a Way to Raise Army Morale**

At the end of the War of Independence, Israel had no clearly defined or fenced borders, resulting in Palestinians moving from outside Israel into the country for a variety of reasons Some reasons were innocent, such going home; some were criminal, such as engaging in theft and robbery; and some were nationalistic, motivated by the desire to harm Jews. In addition to spontaneous infiltrations by individuals and small groups, a new phenomenon began: organized infiltration by armed groups to kill Israelis, destroy property, and gather intelligence.[[55]](#footnote-55) By 1956, some 300 civilians and 250 soldiers had been killed in infiltration operations.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Over time, under the guise of unorganized infiltration, most of which had been non-violent, Fedayeen units,[[57]](#footnote-57) supported mostly by the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes, started to operate with the explicit aim of executing attacks on Israeli soil.[[58]](#footnote-58) Civilians were killed and wounded, and there was considerable direct and indirect economic damage. The major victim was the public sense of security, as people began to abandon settlements near the border.[[59]](#footnote-59) In those years, the problem of infiltration was the major challenge and became one of the key focuses of activity of the Israeli security establishment.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Reprisals were not the only way to fight the infiltrations. Other efforts included diplomatic talks, policing, and regional security.[[61]](#footnote-61) But none stopped the phenomenon and the problem only grew worse. The major ramification was psychological: a loss of a sense of security and a feeling of helplessness on the part of the inhabitants of the border areas.

The idea of reprisals did not originate with Dayan; reprisals have existed since the start of documented military history. The Romans engaged in reprisals, which they called punishments, after Germanic tribes conducted raids on the empire’s soil, as did the British in response to raids by tribes on areas controlled by the British Empire on what is now the Indian-Pakistani border (in the 19th century, all of the Indian subcontinent was under British control).[[62]](#footnote-62)

Examples of reprisals in the history of the Yishuv include the actions Orde Wingate led in response to the reprisals during the Arab Revolt. Dayan, who had accompanied Wingate, had been impressed by the method. The Haganah also engaged in reprisals; as early as December 1948, it carried out 14 such actions.[[63]](#footnote-63) Reprisals were part of the ethno-communal nature of the Arab-Jewish conflict. When the war was regularized and fought against invading state armies, reprisals lost relevance, but after the war, the conflict resumed an ethno-national character with the hallmarks of guerrilla warfare, terrorist, and vandalism, and consequently the reprisals returned.[[64]](#footnote-64)

In 1951, Dayan adopted the reprisal method in response to harm to Jews and damage to Jewish property. Responding to the arson of a granary in the Yatir region by infiltrators from the Hebron Hills, Dayan ordered the burning of two large granaries in the southern Hebron Hills. Teveth wrote that this was the first eye-for-an-eye policy, the foundation for the reprisal policy he adopted as Chief of Staff.[[65]](#footnote-65) Dayan himself said, “Reprisals are the only method that has proven itself to be effective. Not justified, not moral. But effective.” He felt that without reprisals, “The situation would have been many times worse and resulted in utter chaos.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

One problem Dayan noted was the fact that infantry units, which bore most of the burden of the reprisals, were being allocated low-quality soldiers.[[67]](#footnote-67) Indeed, the level of execution by the IDF in these actions was abysmal, as seen in the battle at Tel al-Mutila in May 1951. The Golani Brigade was sent to conquer the *tel* (small hill), which controlled the Jordan River estuary and where Syrian troops had set up fort. The fighting began on May 2 and lasted five days, an example of the IDF’s hesitant, lumbering conduct. Had the Air Force not intervened and scattered the Syrian soldiers, it is doubtful that the army would have taken the *tel*. The cost of the battle was high: 41 dead and many wounded.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Dayan was appointed head of the General Staff Directorate in May 1953. That year saw a long series of operational failures due to gaps in expertise, operational fitness, and determination and leadership. For example, a force from the Givati Brigade failed in its attack on the village of Flama, a center of hostile activity. The force, which attacked the village on January 23, 1953, fell back when it came under fire on the village outskirts, leaving one dead man in the field. A furious Dayan sent the battalion to attack the village again on the night between January 28 and 29. This time, the force did a little better, but a lack of resolve and failure to complete the mission were still evident.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Historian Zeev Drory summarized the period as follows:

Anyone who reads the reports of operations carried out in 1953 and early 1954 cannot fail to note the number of actions that that were not executed or failed in the initial stages of attack or failed to attain any of the military goals dictated by the commanding echelon.[[70]](#footnote-70)

As head of the General Staff Directorate, Dayan presented the data on the failures of the IDF: “Not only did the majority of the ambushes and chases fail. Only 13 of the 42 offensive missions given the IDF succeeded.”[[71]](#footnote-71) The committee headed by Col. Yehuda Wallach, appointed to examine the reasons for the failures, found that, in general, the level of manpower was inferior, especially that of the officers and the NCOs.[[72]](#footnote-72) A study the IDF conducted in 1954 determined that “the high percentage of underprivileged immigrants in the IDF is negatively affecting the level of the army compared to the War of Liberation [Independence].”[[73]](#footnote-73)

Dayan was determined to effect a radical change in the situation and institute reforms in the IDF. First, he decided to improve the relationship between the “tail,” i.e., support and logistical services, and the “teeth,” i.e., the fighting units.

Dayan noted that raising the fighting fitness was the current need:

I am absolutely determined to put an end of the shameful results of the battles between our units and the Arabs and the indifference of the IDF command, whose every rank accepts the disgraceful failures and lame excuses that “we just couldn’t.”

The organizational changes are important, but they do not require courage and personal risk. The moment of truth is still war against the Arab armies. But how will we best the regular Arab armies if our soldiers retreat when facing the *fellaheen* in the National Guard?[[74]](#footnote-74)

Dayan linked the reprisal policy with building the IDF’s fitness for war. He believed that reprisals were not only a deterrent but also a means for preparing the army and strengthening it for the fundamental test of security – a comprehensive war against the Arab armies. More than anything else, what bothered Dayan was the phenomenon of commanders sitting together in the forward command center and conducting the battle through their communications devices, a phenomenon he had harshly criticized in the War of Independence. He had three goals: to improve the soldiers’ willingness to sacrifice themselves; to change the function and location of the commanders; and to change the fundamental approach of the General Staff to the entire issue of executing the mission.[[75]](#footnote-75)

Dayan felt that the reprisals were a way to improve the fitness of the Israeli soldier, but of equal importance was the Israeli soldier’s self-image and the enemy soldier’s image of him:

The reprisals require the Arabs to occasionally ask themselves: is the destruction of Israel truly a realistic plan, or should we despair of it...The clashes on the borders will determine how the Arab public and army view the image and force of the Israeli soldier.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Dayan’s objective, then, was to undertake a reform in the IDF’s fighting spirit. He announced he would not accept the explanation of any unit commander who failed to complete his mission unless he had, during a skirmish with the enemy, lost at least half of his force.[[77]](#footnote-77) In addition, Dayan demanded, counterintuitively, that the commanders stop looking for ruses and indirect approaches, because sometimes “the way to complete an assignment is to break through, to breach, to conduct a real fight over the target while paying with the coin of loss.”[[78]](#footnote-78) However, no top down orders and threats issued against commanders is enough to get them perform.[[79]](#footnote-79) To achieve a cultural revolution in the ethos of fighting and self-sacrifice, a much more profound change is needed; it is necessary to create a leadership model that inspires and motivates people to action, a model people will strive to emulate.[[80]](#footnote-80)

**The Merger That Generated a Revolution**

The solution to the profound crisis in the fighting spirit and the IDF command spontaneously emerged in the first half of 1953 from the bottom up when Moshe Dayan was still head of the General Staff Directorate. In the sector of Col. Mishael Shaham, the commander of the Jerusalem Brigade, a reservist brigade, there were many cases of infiltration. Shaham identified Mustafa Samueli, a gang leader, as responsible for many of the attacks and came up with the idea for a daring action in which an IDF force would come to Samueli’s house and blow it up. Because he realized that no reservist unit under his command was capable of executing such a mission and that even the regular army had no unit of sufficient operational capabilities to fulfill the mission, he floated the notion of putting together a small, elite unit of outstanding volunteers capable of succeeding in carrying out this task. Ariel Sharon, previously Dayan’s daring intelligence officer in the Southern Command, who had without hesitation abducted two Syrian soldiers, was now a student at the Hebrew University; in the reserves, he served as a battalion commander in the Jerusalem Brigade. For Shaham’s purposes, Sharon was the ideal choice to command this dedicated unit. He therefore contacted him and offered him the job. In turn, Sharon recruited seven friends and together they embarked on the army’s mission. Disguised as civilians, the went to blow up Samueli’s house. By accident, the unit dynamited a nearby building, and that, too, with only partial success, because the charge they laid was too small. The group was forced to retreat under fire. Still, this small and fairly hapless action laid the foundation for the establishment of Unit 101, the short-lived force heralding the revolution in the IDF.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Convinced they had hit on a solution, Shaham and Sharon came to see Chief of Staff Maklef and persuaded him to establish a special unit to carry out actions across the border. The unit, they said, would be able to carry out the government’s reprisal policy, thereby allowing the rest of the army to devote its time to training for the war against the Arab armies. Dayan opposed the idea. As far as he was concerned, the reprisals were preparation for war on the part of all IDF units, and it was not right to exclude the regular military units.[[82]](#footnote-82) He said that it would only cause greater deterioration, because the army would then have no operational activity at all. Interestingly, Dayan’s approach was similar to that of the U.S. Marine Corps. For many years, the Marines opposed the establishment of special units within the corps. From their perspective, all the Marines are special. The Marines realized that one problem stemming from the establishment of special forces is that these forces channel the best soldiers and commanders to small units whose impact on war is relatively small; the price the regular units pay for losing the best manpower might be critical. Given the manpower crisis in the IDF, Dayan’s opposition to the establishment of a special unit was entirely understandable. But despite his opposition, Maklef ordered the unit to be established.[[83]](#footnote-83) Before long, Dayan was on excellent terms with unit members Ariel Sharon and Meir Har-Zion, who personified the very traits Dayan was hoping would come to characterize IDF commanders and soldiers.

The unit existed for less than six months, from August 1953 to January 1954, after which it was merged with the paratrooper brigade.[[84]](#footnote-84) Its conduct was chaotic, and had neither standard uniforms nor standard weapons, resembling mostly a ragtag band of World War II Partisans. It comprised just a few dozen fighters, and recruitment was based on the “friend brings a friend” system. The men practiced guerrilla warfare and executed small raids of no particular importance. Nonetheless, they demonstrated extraordinary courage and resourcefulness. Word of the unit spread far and wide, and the group became a legend that fired the imagination of every man in the IDF.

One Unit 101innovation concerned the commanders leading from the front, not only during an attack itself but also en route to the target. Before the establishment of the state, unit trackers specifically trained had exclusive expertise in navigation. Commanders followed the trackers who were supposed to know the way and saw no need to navigate themselves. In battle, battalion commanders and, at times, even company commanders sat behind the front lines. This made it difficult for them to understand how the battle was going and forced them to rely on reports from the front line. Given the limited means of communication available back then, commanders clearly had trouble properly assessing the state of the battle and issuing appropriate orders. Inspired by Unit 101, especially Meir Har-Zion, the unit’s star fighter, it became abundant clear just how important it was that commanders of all ranks be able to navigate. This ability helped establish the norm that the commander’s place was in the front, heading the force. In his quiet way, Har-Zion provided a personal example of the placement of the commander en route to battle and in the battle itself.[[85]](#footnote-85) In that sense, the unit fully created the effect Dayan had sought: it had already had an impact on the army. On the other hand, its men thought they were above the law and seemed to model themselves on sheriffs bringing order to the Wild West, free to ignore normal military rules. A case in point was the December 1953 Tiberias Night incident, in which the unit seized control of an IDF military police station and beat up the military policemen who had arrested a unit member.[[86]](#footnote-86) Sharon and Dayan swept this gross disciplinary violation under the carpet, and the attackers were never charged.[[87]](#footnote-87) But it was clear that the existence of so unruly a group within the IDF could not continue.

The change in Dayan’s stance about the unit – from initial opposition to enthusiastic support – had to do with an unintentional shift in its original designation. After merging with the paratroopers brigade, it ceased being a special operations unit and instead became an agent of change.[[88]](#footnote-88) Its men turned into the spearhead of the paratroopers’ transformation and ultimately the transformation of the IDF as a whole. At the time, the paratroopers were a cohesive group with a good reputation. They trained well together and their commander, Yehuda Harari, was considered a good fighter. But when carrying out operational missions, they didn’t demonstrate any more courage or valor than men in any other unit.[[89]](#footnote-89)

On the night between October 12 and 13, a Fedayeencell crossed into Israel and threw a hand grenade at the home of the Kinyas family in the town of Yehud. The mother, Suzanne, and her children, 4-year-old Shoshana and 1.5-year-old Benjamin, were killed. This attack, the last in a series of vicious incidents originating in Jordan, was the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back. The Qibya action was a raid on the village of Rantis, some 5 kms north of Qibya, the location to which the terrorists’ tracks led; its purpose was defined as “carrying out maximal killing and maiming to make the inhabitants flee their homes.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Some 130 soldiers – one-third of them Unit 101 members, the rest paratroopers – took part in the raid. The force seized control of the village and detonated about 45 houses. The action took the lives of some 70 civilians, including women and children, who, unbeknownst to the force, were hiding in basements. There were various political and strategic ramifications to the incident, some negative, but despite the high civilian casualties, the force had scored a military success. Dayan wrote:

Most important was the lesson the IDF learned. Government and General Staff instructions were no longer just wishful thinking, but rather, at a minimum, a forecast. Instead of having units coming back and, as in the past, making excuses for why they didn’t do what they had been tasked with, the paratroopers had to explain, after every action, why they had done more than what was expected. The veins and arteries of the IDF were coursing with self-confidence. The paratroopers were the spearhead, and other units followed in their footsteps.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Because of the merger between Unit 101 and the 890th Battalion, Dayan finally got what he would some years later call his “Noble Stallions.”

According to the military strategist and author Edward Luttwak, strategy is the field of “contradictions, irony, and paradox.”[[92]](#footnote-92) The fact that Israel killed so many civilians in a reprisal had significant political and strategic ramifications. According to an IDF assessment, the Qibya action succeeded in stopping infiltrations from that area, partly because of the villagers’ fear and because of the efforts of the Jordanian Legion deployed throughout the sector to stop the phenomenon. In December 1953, Military Intelligence reported that in the previous month, the number of infiltrations had fallen to the lowest number since they started because of the fear the raid had aroused in Jordan.[[93]](#footnote-93) However, in the political arena, Israel was condemned; the international pressure exerted was too much for the small, fragile nation. Consequently, Israel suspended its responses to infiltrations’ provocations. For example, Israel refrained from responding to the sabotage of the train tracks on the Tel Aviv-Haifa line near Kibbutz Eyal. At the same time, the raid increased the desire for vengeance on the part of different Arab groups.[[94]](#footnote-94)

But beyond the immediate, local significance, the Qibya action led to a reversal in Dayan’s thoughts about strategy and consequently also to a change in the reprisal strategy. From the pressure applied to Israel, Dayan concluded that “what the Arabs – and other nations – were allowed to do, the Jews and Israel would never be forgiven for.” Therefore Israel had to direct its actions against military targets and government institutions alone,[[95]](#footnote-95) even though he knew that attacks on military installations would be less effective than attacks on villages: he felt that the pressure on the villages would cause them to push the regime to deploy the military and stop the infiltrations.[[96]](#footnote-96) In a speech he gave in June 1950 to senior figures in the ruling Mapai party, he said, “The only method that has proven to be effective – not justified or moral, but effective – is targeting the villages.”[[97]](#footnote-97) Paradoxically, the approach advocating targeting the army, claiming this was more moral and more consistent with international law, was precisely the approach that triggered escalation. Thus, the Qibya massacre led to the unification of Unit 101 and the paratroopers, starting the process of strengthening the IDF and making it a resolute offensive army, while at the same time triggering a gradual escalation.

In early December, Dayan was appointed Chief of Staff, and about two weeks later he decided to merge Unit 101 with the 890th Paratrooper Brigade.[[98]](#footnote-98) It is difficult to ascertain who came up with the idea of the union. Meir Amit, then the head of the General Staff Directorate, wrote that “someone had the idea.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Teveth was more certain, and attributed the idea to Dayan.[[100]](#footnote-100) Whether the idea originated with Dayan or someone in his circle, Dayan had a profound grasp of the revolutionary advantages of the merger and did all he could to ensure its success.

This merger was innovative, even groundbreaking. It was neither a change or reform coming from the top of the hierarchic pyramid aimed at the lower ranks in a top-to-bottom fashion, nor an initiative from the ground up adopted by the command echelon in a bottom-to-top way, the way that military innovation is generally described in the literature,[[101]](#footnote-101) but rather an innovation carried out laterally – a merger of units so that a unit with a dominant culture could transmit its values and codes of conduct to another – until this culture was instilled in all the units. Of this process, Mordechai Bar-On, the head of Dayan’s bureau (1956–1957) who would later become a historian, wrote:

Had Unit 101 not been merged with the 890th [Paratrooper] Battalion, and had the 890th not become a brigade, and had the Nahal not been invited to participate in Sabkha, and had the Sea of Galilee action not included a company from Givati – this process would not have happened if the 101 had remained an outlier. At a certain point, Dayan realized that these people… it made sense to place in a larger unit, and in the end transmit the legacy also to others.[[102]](#footnote-102)

When the merger of two units fails, a common reason is an organizational-cultural gap between them.[[103]](#footnote-103) There was a disparity between the unruly, disorganized Unit 101 and the relatively disciplined paratrooper unit. Dayan handed off the command of the newly merged troop to Sharon. Yehuda Harari, who had commanded the paratroopers until then and had hoped to continue to hold that position, was so unceremoniously dumped by Dayan that even Arik Sharon expressed his regret about it in his autobiography.[[104]](#footnote-104) This was not the last time Dayan would act heartlessly towards people he didn’t respect. However, with respect to Sharon, this was the start of a long and complicated relationship, as Sharon testified in his book: “[The relationship] was complex and characterized by mutual appreciation and respect, but it was also charged with suspicions.”[[105]](#footnote-105) Their relations were ambivalent. At times, there was real warmth and closeness, wrote Sharon, but also “alienation, sometimes simultaneously.”[[106]](#footnote-106) While tensions would run high at times, it was clear to both that they needed one another’s gifts: Dayan needed a brilliant field commander and tactician of Sharon’s ilk to put daring strategic plans into practice, while Sharon needed an unusual strategist like Dayan to focus his raging force in many difficult missions, limit it when necessary, and provide it with a defense to shield it from criticism whenever it crosses red lines.

In both units, there were men who opposed the merger. Dayan was aware of this and tried as much as possible to reduce any possible fallout, such as an exodus of soldiers and commanders. The announcement of the merger was made at a party Dayan hosted for Unit 101. There, he heaped lavish praise on its men and then dropped the bomb: the unit was to be merged into a single entity with the paratrooper brigade. He explained that it was important that the unit raise the level of the entire army: “The unit has sketched out new ways of fighting. It is now time to share these ways with the whole IDF.”[[107]](#footnote-107) For two full years, until December 1955, Dayan made sure all reprisal actions were carried out by the paratroopers. He accompanied them on the missions, waited for them to return, went to see them in training, and celebrated their successes with them.[[108]](#footnote-108) In practice, the merger caused no special problems, and the paratroopers became an elite unit swathed in a glow of legendary heroism. Dayan went further: after a visit to the United States in 1954, during which he saw ground troop officers doing a Rangers’ course[[109]](#footnote-109) in which they had to parachute, he decided that all IDF officers would have to jump from an airplane as a test of courage and a symbol of their status. Of course, Dayan himself took the course and Sharon, too, wore the paratrooper wings emblem.[[110]](#footnote-110)

In Sharon, Dayan had finally found an aggressive, proactive commander. Sharon would later say that he used to call Dayan after infiltrator attacks to suggest plans and ideas he had already prepared and drilled.[[111]](#footnote-111) Between 1953 and 1956, the paratroopers carried out some 70 reprisals, almost all of which were missions the paratroopers initiated and proposed.[[112]](#footnote-112) Dayan was responsible for the open atmosphere in which field ranks were encouraged to make suggestions, an atmosphere that persists in the IDF to this day. For example, in 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada, infantry commanders – whether from paratroopers, Nahal, Givati, or Golani, brigades were the ones who pushed for recapturing West Bank cities to against their hesitant senior superiors.[[113]](#footnote-113)

**The Reprisals and the Development of Israel’s Security Approach**

Israel’s national security approach developed over many years has several elements, most of which are attributed to Ben-Gurion. The 18-point document he presented to the government before his first resignation from the government, emphasized social, national, and moral resilience as essential national security elements.[[114]](#footnote-114) Ben-Gurion’s approach was expansive and far-sighted, yet practical and applicable to the challenges of his time, appropriate for a visionary leader who took a broad view but was also a grounded human being. The document discussed national infrastructures and their capacity to raise resources. Ben-Gurion attributed great importance to an alliance with a strong international power to create the diplomatic umbrella Israel needed so badly. Furthermore, from a very early stage, he pushed for the development of nuclear capability to ensure Israel’s existence in the large, hostile expanse surrounding the nation. As for the military threat, Ben-Gurion concentrated on the biggest, most dangerous of all: an invasion of Arab armies and a rapid conquest of Israel. Ever since then, the national security doctrine has focused on that as the most fundamental threat. The response to the threat, i.e., *basic security*, was over many decades conceptualized in the triangle of the concepts of deterrence-early warning-decision.

As a corollary to this outlook, Dayan developed a comprehensive approach designed to provide a response to ongoing challenges that do not represent a clear and present danger but whose cumulative impact turns nuisances into a strategic threat. This layer, the second part of Israel’s security approach, is called *routine security* and Dayan was the one to lay its groundwork.

In this regard, Dayan distinguished between the War of Independence and the wars Israel would certainly have to fight in the future:

The War of Independence was, for the most part, a war fought on Israeli soil. The level of defense the IDF demonstrated was good, but this was not the case in offensives. There, the forces did not prove a high enough level. Then came the reprisals that kicked the level up. [The reprisals] led to two results: …the crystallization of the commander’s role… The other one was an articulation of standards for the army as a whole.[[115]](#footnote-115)

From Dayan’s perspective, the reprisals were a preparation for the war in Sinai. “Without two years of reprisal actions, the IDF would not have been capable of executing a move such as Operation Kadesh,” he wrote.[[116]](#footnote-116) Even though they were small in scope and therefore limited in the sense of not reflecting many of the army’s systems, they did test the IDF’s fighting spirit.

Dayan’s most cogent presentation of his routine security doctrine was given in a lecture to commanders, later published in the IDF journal *Maarakhot*. The title, “Military Actions in Peacetime,” was a typical Dayan oxymoron. In the lecture, he referred to “peacetime battles,” explaining that “tiny battles” mattered beyond routine security: they affect Israel’s deterrence and “the Arab assessment of Israel’s strength and Israel’s belief in its own power.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

As explained by Dayan, the rationale of the reprisals was complex, because military leadership in the region is complex. It was difficult for the regimes in Jordan and Egypt to stop infiltrators intent on stealing property from Jews. According to this rationale, the reprisals provided Arab regimes with a reason to stop the infiltrations lest Israel retaliate. “The motive forcing Arab governments and forces to [prevent infiltrations] …must be concrete, real, and certain: reprisals by the Israeli army and fear of them.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Dayan faced criticism of the reprisals, which he rebutted by saying that defensive measures were insufficient: “We did not have the means to safeguard every water pipe from being ruptured and every tree from being uprooted. We did not have the means to prevent the murders of farmers in their orchard and families in their beds. But we did have the power to set a steep price for our blood.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

Dayan also explained that the various diplomatic means that had been tried, including pressure on governments and appeals to the U.N. Security Council, had been useless.[[120]](#footnote-120) The action was not one of vengeance, Dayan insisted, but rather one of punishment and deterrence. And more important than the immediate effect of the reprisals, they would force the Arabs to ask themselves if the notion that Israel could be destroyed was even possible. The answer was already linked to the high level of performance required of the army. Nonetheless, he said, it was necessary to remember that a test of war would require so much more: “Offensive missions our units will be charged with in wartime – an attack on defended, fortified enemy outposts – will be much more serious, incomparable with these [reprisal] actions.”[[121]](#footnote-121) The ability to execute daring actions at a high level of performance must be instilled to the entire army, not just elite units, and “the battles in peacetime” were what would make it possible to nurture a fighting spirit and command training.[[122]](#footnote-122)

In a different speech, Dayan clearly distinguished between routine and fundamental security. He said that the army must confront two issues: “One is called ‘routine security’ and in practice it constitutes the maintenance of [everyday] life, the maintenance of what exists in a regime of the Armistice Agreements in the period between war and peace, or between one war and the next…a period whose length no one knows but whose content is known.” The other issue is “in a limited military area: ensuring victory if war breaks out,” i.e., decision in a threat scenario of a regulated state army invading the country.[[123]](#footnote-123)

An international platform where Dayan had an opportunity to lay out his political and security doctrine was offered by the prestigious magazine *Foreign Affairs*, which provided space for Dayan to engage in a public argument with British officer Lt. Gen. Sir John Bagot Glubb (Glubb Pasha). On July 1, 1954, Glubb published an essay in which he attacked Israel’s policy and claimed that the Legion had never invaded Israeli soil. He accused Israel of conducting a violent campaign on Jordanian territory in response to innocent refugees crossing the Israeli border. Glubb further claimed that the forces on the two sides were not symmetrical: on the one side were innocent refugees crossing the border who, if they were causing damage, should be referred to the police, while on the other side were the forces of the Israeli army intent on targeting Jordanian installations.[[124]](#footnote-124)

Dayan’s response to Glubb’s analysis was published on January 1, 1955. In his introduction, Dayan explained the geostrategic challenge facing Israel, its international isolation, and Arab hostility to Israel’s very existence. He detailed the real threat of terrorist and guerrilla attacks, followed by several suggestions for security arrangements on the Israel-Jordan border should Jordan agree to cooperate. Dayan described every Jordanian refusal individually, such as Jordan’s refusal to turn the Armistice Agreement into long-term agreements and its refusal to conduct negotiations with Israel as required by Paragraph 8 of the Armistice Agreement, which, if implemented, would add to the political path for reducing tensions in the Middle East. Dayan added that, until tensions were indeed reduced, the IDF would confront the difficult mission – and do so virtually alone – of safeguarding the physical integrity of Israel. Jordan’s refusal to cooperate was forcing Israel to use the military rather than the political alternative.[[125]](#footnote-125)

Dayan also referred to peace and its centrality in Israel’s security doctrine: “Peace is a condition for realizing Israel's mission and destiny,” he declared.[[126]](#footnote-126) However, it’s unlikely that Dayan truly believed in peace at his point. His true outlook on peace can be found in the eulogy he gave at the interment of Roi Rotberg. Rotberg, a 21-year old Nahal officer, was the regional commander and security coordinator of Kibbutz Nahal Oz. Dayan had visited Nahal Oz just a few weeks before Rotberg’s murder; the two toured the settlement and Dayan had been impressed. On April 29, 1956, Rotberg, patrolling the border, walked into an ambush by infiltrators who murdered him and mutilated his body. U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld happened to be in Israel, engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Jerusalem and Cairo designed to ease border tensions. An enraged Dayan came to Rotberg’s funeral and, according to Mordechai Bar-On’s testimony, shut himself up in a room for about half an hour and wrote a short, impassioned eulogy that would become a groundbreaking speech in the annals of Israel:[[127]](#footnote-127)

Early yesterday morning Roi was murdered. The quiet of the spring morning dazzled him and he did not see those waiting in ambush for him, at the edge of the furrow. Let us not cast the blame on the murderers today. Why should we declare their burning hatred for us? For eight years they have been sitting in the refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we have been transforming the lands and the villages, where they and their fathers dwelt, into our estate.

It is not among the Arabs in Gaza, but in our own midst that we must seek Roi’s blood. How did we shut our eyes and refuse to look squarely at our fate, and see, in all its brutality, the destiny of our generation? Have we forgotten that this group of young people dwelling at Nahal Oz is bearing the heavy gates of Gaza on its shoulders? Beyond the furrow of the border, a sea of hatred and desire for revenge is swelling, awaiting the day when serenity will dull our path, for the day when we will heed the ambassadors of malevolent hypocrisy who call upon us to lay down our arms. Roi’s blood is crying out to us and only to us from his torn body. Although we have sworn a thousand-fold that our blood shall not flow in vain, yesterday again we were tempted, we listened, we believed. We will make our reckoning with ourselves today; we are a generation that settles the land and without the steel helmet and the cannon’s muzzle, we will not be able to plant a tree and build a home. Let us not be deterred from seeing the loathing that is inflaming and filling the lives of the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who live around us. Let us not avert our eyes lest our arms weaken. This is the fate of our generation. This is our life’s choice – to be prepared and armed, strong and determined, lest the sword be stricken from our fist and our lives cut down…”[[128]](#footnote-128)

The speech reflects the ambivalence that was typical of Dayan: on the one hand, he was able to identify with the enemy’s motives and perhaps even with their pain, and, on the other hand, he had an absolute belief in the necessity of a resolute and uncompromising armed conflict that would emphasize the imperative of settlement behind barricades with gun in hand, an approach somewhat similar to Zev Jabotinsky’s “iron wall” concept.[[129]](#footnote-129) At this time, Dayan did not believe that a political process would be useful in calming the situation, and in the speech, he harshly criticized the diplomatic effort.

Because of the complexity of the message, two different political camps have exploited the speech, with the Israeli left emphasizing the need to understand the other side, and the right warning that concession would only lead to more Arab aggression. In 2011, Aluf Ben, the editor of the daily liberal – left *Haaretz*, wrote, “Today, Dayan would have been accused of being a post-Zionist, of identifying with terrorism, of violating the Nakba Law,” but with this, too, Ben argued, Dayan expresses Israeli belligerence in all its essence, and quoted sociologist Baruch Kimmerling who viewed the speech as “the most authentic expression of Israeli militarism.”[[130]](#footnote-130)

**The End of the Reprisals Period**

Israel carried out reprisals on its three major borders – with Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Each border and nation had its own internal dynamics, but the three sectors were linked in a way that made them a single system with interdependent components. After Ben-Gurion assumed the defense portfolio in Moshe Sharett’s government, the era of relative restraint – Sharett’s policy – ended, and audacious, aggressive reprisal actions resumed. In response to a raid by Egyptian Fedayeen and the murder of an Israeli who happened to be in their way, the IDF embarked on Operation Gaza, code-named Black Arrow (28 February–1 March 1955). The operation to attack buildings at an Egyptian military base went awry, resulting in heavy losses to both the Egyptian and the Israeli sides.[[131]](#footnote-131) The raid was a severe blow to the prestige of the Nasser regime, forcing it to respond by bolster the Egyptian presence in the Gaza Strip.[[132]](#footnote-132) Some claim that this operation pushed Nasser into Soviet arms and led to the weapons deal signed between Egypt and Czechoslovakia, starting the countdown to a military clash between Egypt and Israel.[[133]](#footnote-133) Later studies showed that Nasser’s decision to link Egypt’s destiny with the USSR and receive military aid from the Eastern Bloc was made long before Operation Gaza.[[134]](#footnote-134)

Shortly after the operation, the Egyptians once again began harassing the Israeli population with live fire and land mines. The escalation became institutionalized with the establishment of the Fedayeen (“those ready to sacrifice themselves”), guerrilla units organized, trained, and financed by Egypt. Many of the recruits were Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, and from the time Egypt started to work with the Fedayeen, the enemy raids became better organized and deadlier. In response, and after Dayan threatened to resign because the reprisal policy was not being implemented and Prime Minister Moshe Sharett was cancelling planned missions at the last minute, Khan Yunis was raided on August 31, 1955. Three paratrooper companies participated in the raid in which more than 70 Egyptian soldiers and Palestinians were killed and some 60 injured. The IDF suffered one casualty. This was followed by an aerial battle the next day in which the Israel Air Force downed two Egyptian fighter jets. At this point, Egypt suspended the Fedayeen raids but tightened the naval blockade on the Straits of Tiran and engaged in other hostile acts. As early as 1953, the Egyptians had placed cannons at Ras Nasrani, which controlled the Straits, and in early 1955 they further restricted passage by closing the skies south of Israel to Israeli airplanes.[[135]](#footnote-135) In September 1955, the situation escalated and in October, after Nasser’s announcement of the Czech arms deal, the countdown to the next round of warfare began.

To prevent an Israeli response on its soil at an inconvenient time, Egypt made sure that the Fedayeen raids would originate in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.[[136]](#footnote-136) At the beginning of this period, Moshe Sharett managed to curb Ben-Gurion and Dayan’s aggressive line to a certain extent, but on October 2, 1955, Ben-Gurion replaced Sharett as prime minister and the policy of offense against Egypt was once more in play. That night, the Sabkha action (Operation Volcano) was carried out not only by the paratroopers, but also by the Golani and Nahal Brigades and reservist paratrooper companies. It was the largest IDF action since 1948.

In the argument between Moshe Sharett’s moderate political school of thought and Dayan and Ben-Gurion’s more aggressive security approach, one can appreciate the many advantages Dayan and Ben-Gurion saw in the reprisals. They viewed these actions as a continuation of practical Zionism, a proactive movement that seeks to shape reality, not just respond to it, especially given the fact that Sharett’s policy of restraint did not lead to concrete positive results: it failed to reduce the number of infiltrations and failed to increase international support for Israel.[[137]](#footnote-137) Above all, it is necessary to understand the atmosphere of that time. Israel – less than a decade after the Holocaust and the War of Independence – suffered from a profound sense of isolation. Given the frequent threats issued by Arab leaders and their propaganda machines, the blockade on Israeli shipping, the international community and world powers’ refusal to provide real aid, and the border incursions, Israel felt besieged. These conditions took their toll. In this sense, the Sinai Campaign was the dramatic end to this chapter.

During September 1954 and for most of 1955, Jordanians authorities did their best to prevent infiltrations across the Jordanian border, but during 1956, attacks from Jordan increased.[[138]](#footnote-138) In the first half of that year, Israel adopted a policy of restraint, but after a series of killings, the government decided to respond. The climax came with the Qalqiliya action (Operation Samaria) on October 19, 1956. The operation made use of a brigade-scale, multi-branch force consisting of paratroopers, armored soldiers, combat engineers, and artillery. The goal to destroy a police fortification serving a Jordanian army force was achieved, but not without a difficult fight against Jordanian reinforcements. In the midst of the battle, fighter jets had to be deployed for assistance. The action took the lives of 18 paratroopers and 68 others were wounded. The Jordanian Legion suffered some 90 dead. The fact that the action did not go as planned stunned Ben-Gurion and senior military commanders. At a debriefing session meant to assess what had gone wrong and what lessons could be learned, Dayan – in the presence of the Chief of Staff and senior officers involved in the action – harshly criticized Arik Sharon, the commander of the action, claiming he had needlessly endangered his men because of his excessive zeal. Dayan also explained the constraints of the planning team and presented considerations that, today, are familiar to any IDF officer stationed in the Lebanese or Gaza sectors: how to avoid collateral damage and civilian casualties.[[139]](#footnote-139) In addition, he also spoke of the fear that Great Britain would intervene as result of the escalation.[[140]](#footnote-140)

The major difference between the 1950s and today is that, then, the use of planes came with the risk of escalation and therefore the risk that forces would make missteps, forcing Air Force intervention and leading to an international crisis. Today, there is a preference for using planes; ironically, ground action now bears the risk of escalation, which also triggers an immediate international response.

With all this in the background, Dayan arrived at the firm conviction that the era of reprisals was over. At a meeting with journalists immediately after the action, Dayan asked himself and those present if these actions were even necessary and what their purpose was.[[141]](#footnote-141) Dayan spelled out the constraints on the IDF: not seizing or holding any territory, avoiding harm to innocent bystanders, and not using certain weapons, such as planes.[[142]](#footnote-142) A few days later, on October 17, Dayan answered his own question at lesson-learning conference with the operation commanders: “It seems we are on the cusp of a reversal of our action formula for the future.”[[143]](#footnote-143)

In a conversation with Ben-Gurion, Dayan claimed that, “Were it possible to go back and destroy entire villages; were it possible to deploy armored forces, artillery, and airplanes without limitation; were it possible to hold territory past dawn – things would be different.”[[144]](#footnote-144) However, the rationale of the reprisals was that they would be executed at a under the threshold of war – “actions of war during peacetime” as Dayan called them. He added that now that the enemy had developed an effective response and the danger of crossing the threshold had risen to unacceptable levels, the reprisals had lost their utility and the strategy had run its course. For Dayan, the action in Qalqiliya was what von Clausewitz had termed “the culmination point of strategy,” i.e., the point beyond which the cost begins to outweigh the benefit.[[145]](#footnote-145)

All this led Dayan to realize that “It seems we are on the cusp of a reversal of our action formula for the future. There will be an interregnum in which we will rethink our reprisal method very well.”[[146]](#footnote-146) In a conversation with Ben-Gurion, Dayan said, “The IDF has reached the end of the chapter of the nighttime reprisal actions.”[[147]](#footnote-147) The current situation, “of neither war nor peace cannot go on,” he added. While in cabinet meetings and the General Staff “nothing absolute has been decided on as far as the future is concerned, it is clear to all of us that we have reached the end of the chapter of nighttime reprisal actions.”[[148]](#footnote-148) From Dayan’s point of view, the alternative was clear: absent the possibility of attaining peace, the only option was a preventive war – a dramatic step attended by many risks, but one that would dramatically and immediately change the strategic situation. He believed that after such a war, the borders would be calm and the restrictions on Israeli shipping the Red Sea would be lifted.[[149]](#footnote-149)

The Qalqiliya action came under criticism, although limited mostly to its tactics. Still, Dayan realized that the root of the problem lay in the fact that the strategic conditions had changed:

I have no doubt that the claim is, in and of itself, correct, and I do not disagree with the critical need of meticulous preparations and giving the soldiers a chance to rest beforehand. But it is my opinion that the critics are not sufficiently appreciating the other considerations. We must remember that a military action is not itself a goal. It is undertaken to attain some political purpose and we, the army, must adapt to the conditions that the political setting dictates.[[150]](#footnote-150)

In fact, at the time of the Qalqiliya action, the wheels of the processes towards the war in Sinai were already in full motion.

The policy of reprisals is a source of disagreement for both ethical and utilitarian reasons. The debate over the reprisals – did they achieve their goal? – remains unresolved. The research of Jonathan Shimshoni, who examined the political success of the reprisals, appears the most systematic on the subject. Shimshoni concludes that on the Jordanian border, the level of violence dropped because of increasingly effective action by the Jordanian Legion against the infiltrators in 1954 and 1955, itself the result of Israeli pressure. The data for 1956, too, according to him, reflect the reprisals’ relative success.[[151]](#footnote-151) As for the Egyptian front, the findings are less positive: they show a drop in violence only in the very short term – for a few weeks after the action – whereupon it would resume.[[152]](#footnote-152) The escalation in violence and the fact that the reprisals did not succeed in stopping the attacks from Egypt were among the factors that led to the war in Sinai.

**The Reprisals: Escalation or Deterrence?**

In his study on IDF force construction, historian Zev Elron reached the opposite conclusion of most historians writing about the period. According to Elron, the IDF of the early 1950s was incapable of executing the offensive doctrine advocating rapid maneuvering deep into enemy territory, causing the enemy’s main forces to collapse, conquering territory, and achieving a clear decision. At the political level, Israel accepted the status quo as its guiding principle, and while militarily there was an obvious preference in principle for the offensive, as long as the IDF was based on infantry brigades rather than an armored corps and an air force, it was self-evident to the army commanders that it was impossible to execute.[[153]](#footnote-153)

On September 18, 1953, after his “second seminar,” a study period lasting a few months,[[154]](#footnote-154) Ben-Gurion presented his 18-point national security plan to the government. The paper, introduced less than a month before Dayan became Chief of Staff, began with a few key military principles, which formed the foundation for Dayan’s working plan. Ben-Gurion’s instruction was to focus effort on force construction with emphasis on quality and operability. This included the establishment of a strike force with aerial, armor, and parachute[[155]](#footnote-155) units. According to the plan, these would be developed by cutting all components that did not contribute to the army’s operational capabilities. The direct line between Ben-Gurion’s recommendations and the man he chose to implement them is obvious.

About four months later, Dayan, in a General Staff meeting, said the following:

One point that I think is a given is that there will be no war for the next two years. On the other hand, we will be going to war with the Arabs [eventually]. I think that the last two months are a better indication of this than the three years since the war [War of Independence]. I do not know if this is something everyone agrees on. When I express my opinion, I think that, on this matter, this has become clear in an increasingly serious matters, namely the preventing factors are weakening and the planning [motivating] elements are showing this quite obviously.[[156]](#footnote-156)

The historiographic debate may be divided into two parts. The first relates to the timing. When did Dayan decide it was best to fight another round with Egypt? This decision would have impacted the reprisals to be carried out in a way that led to escalation and consequently to the outbreak of war. The second part relates to the question of who forced his will on whom: was it Dayan who forced his desire for war on Ben-Gurion – a war Ben-Gurion did not want – and led him there by the nose, or was it Ben-Gurion who was interested in war and Dayan merely enabled him to overcome his hesitations?[[157]](#footnote-157)

Scholars disagree about the point at which the goal of the reprisals changed from deterrence to escalation. Yair Evron has written that, between 1954 and 1956, there was a change in policy and the goal became to escalate the situation to justify a preemptive war that would stop the change in the balance of power.[[158]](#footnote-158) Benny Morris has argued that, for Dayan, “starting from a certain point in 1954, the reprisals raids were intended…to egg on one Arab nation or another to begin a premature war against Israel.”[[159]](#footnote-159) Moti Golani identified the change as occurring in the spring of 1955,[[160]](#footnote-160) while both Mordechai Bar-On[[161]](#footnote-161) and David Tal[[162]](#footnote-162) have written that until September 1955, the month of the large Egyptian-Czechoslovakian arms deal, the reprisals policy served the goal of maintaining the status quo and only after a few months – toward the end of 1955 – did the reprisals become one component of a proactive policy of escalation. Elron, whose study is the most up-to-date and relies on primary documents from the IDF Archive, agrees with Bar-On and Tal, namely that the IDF was at this time in a state of low alert, which he calls for "long term force development at the expense of immediate readiness,” and he found no evidence of preparations for a preemptive war until September–October 1955. What is new about Elron’s research is that it does not focus on declarations and stated intentions or even on plans, which have always been used as evidence for starting a war against Egypt in those years, but rather on actions and capabilities.[[163]](#footnote-163)

Despite the development of an offensive security doctrine, Dayan did not have the ability to affect a significant enough IDF force construction between 1953 and 1955 to enable him to carry out an offensive move accompanied by deep maneuvering – as required by the conditions of the Sinai Peninsula – until just a few months before the Sinai Campaign when the Israeli army received massive military aid from France. Now Ben-Gurion and Dayan operated as one, a front that Sharett found difficult, even impossible to oppose.

In his situation assessment, Ben-Gurion marked Nasser as Israel’s most bitter enemy. Ben-Gurion warned of superpowers maneuvering in the region, worried their moves would be made at Israel’s expense. He also felt that the U.N. could not be trusted, and therefore concluded that Israel could rely only on its own military strength. However, because there had been no significant change in the situation assessment of the forces on the ground until the Egyptian-Czech arms deal, there is no evidence that Israel intended to cause the state of affairs to deteriorate to war. In fact, until October 1955, no policy of escalation that might have led to war was ever adopted. Moreover, Elron disagrees with Moti Golani’s claim that once Ben-Gurion assumed the defense portfolio in February 1955, the IDF, under his, Dayan’s, and Peres’s (then the General Director of the Ministry of Defense) leadership, began to prepare from a preemptive war.[[164]](#footnote-164) In practice, the IDF continued its force construction on the assumption that war was not expected to break out within the next two years. Ben-Gurion’s plans focused primarily on force construction that was completed only years later. The Finance Ministry, too, did not rush to approve the IDF’s desire to acquire French tanks and airplanes, which only goes to show that the government in general and Ben-Gurion in particular did not think a war was likely in the near future.

On February 28, 1955, after several violent infiltrations that including murders on the Egyptian border, Israel, in the context of Operation Black Arrow, attacked an Egyptian military base in the Gaza Strip. This action was destined to become a bone of contention among historians. Some view the decision to undertake so aggressive a mission against an Egyptian military target as a sign of an escalation policy, whereas others claim the mission did not fall outside the normal reprisal policy.[[165]](#footnote-165) There is still disagreement about the action’s ramifications, especially with regard to the claim that the mission pushed Nasser into the arms of the Soviet Union and towards the Czech arms deal. But this claim has been laid to rest by the study of Middle East expert Rami Ginat, who has clearly demonstrated that the weapons agreement was signed before the mission was carried out.[[166]](#footnote-166)

In any case, Elron asserts that at that time, the Israeli government policy was still trying to avert war. The fact is that Israel avoided conflict even though Egypt, in September 1955, closed the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, certainly a legitimate *casus bello*. The Sharett government policy for tackling the naval blockade consisted of diplomatic activity, such as complaining to the U.N., and symbolic actions, e.g., sending the *INS Bat-Galim* to try to break the blockade and thereby call international attention to the situation – efforts that garnered poor to no response.

The goal of Chief of Staff Maklef and, after him, Dayan, was first and foremost to pull the IDF out of the crisis it found itself in and turn it into an effective, efficient military force. It was obvious this task would take years to accomplish and would come at the expense of immediate preparedness for war. The desire to go to war with Egypt was not congruent with the ambition to build an army for the long term. Operating on the intelligence assumption that a comprehensive confrontation with the Arab armies was not anticipated in the near future, Dayan spearheaded a modernization process to improve the army to realize Ben-Gurion’s vision. Elron writes:

Because of this way of thinking [i.e., policy of long-term preparations at the expense of readiness for immediate war], it was possible to reduce the regular army ranks, give up on buying tested weaponry, and devote all efforts to force construction of the army reserves and equipping them with innovative weapons systems. [Moreover,] in late 1954 and early 1955, Dayan took the implementation of this policy to new extremes… Regular army units were thinned out or disbanded, the Southern Command was abolished, and soldiers in their last six months of service were sent to receive agricultural training. In addition, training was limited and various opportunities to acquire weapons, ammunition, and other critical supplies were postponed.”[[167]](#footnote-167)

Dayan’s policy at this time was not aligned with an aggressive approach attempting to drag Israel into war. Were that his intention, one would have expected him to add rather than cut the number of regular army units in a high state of alert, ready for immediate action. Furthermore, according to Elron, the reprisals led to increased Jordanian military deployment in the West Bank and a larger Egyptian army presence in the Gaza Strip. Had the state really wanted to conquer these places, it is more reasonable to think Israel would have tried to lull Jordan and Egypt into complacency rather than cause them to bolster their troops, thus making any attempt to occupy these areas that much more difficult. Therefore, Elron concludes that: “The reprisals and aggressive declarations by security establishment leaders were meant to strengthen Israeli deterrence and obscure the fact of the army’s low state of alert. Dayan and Lavon were barking because they knew the IDF was incapable of biting.”[[168]](#footnote-168) The Fedayeen action at the end of August 1955, the entry of large Egyptian forces into Sinai at the beginning of September, and the Egyptian-Czech arms deal at the end of the same month generated a reversal in Ben-Gurion’s security policy, and the IDF entered into a period of feverish activity designed to bring it to a high state of alert for an imminent war.

In response to the Egyptian Fedayeen raid on August 25, the 890th Paratrooper Battalion raided the Khan Yunis police station on August 31. Simultaneously with that reprisal, the Southern Command was reinstituted.

On September 2, Military Intelligence learned that an Egyptian division, including an armored brigade, had entered Sinai. The reinforcement of the Egyptian forces in the peninsula and their placement in the front line led to a critical change in Israel’s strategic position, as the time needed for an early warning was now substantially reduced from what it had been since 1952 and 1953 when the Egyptians withdrew most of their forces from Sinai.

It was then that Dayan already realized – long before the Qalqiliya action in October 1956 – that the reprisals were no longer sufficient vis-à-vis Egypt. He therefore suggested that Israel make it clear that a response to guerrilla warfare would be “clear military actions.” Despite his call for threatening the enemy with war-like action, the policy Dayan proposed was still based on an attempt to preserve the status quo of the Armistice Agreements rather than on preemptive war. What finally led to the unexpected reversal of strategy was the sequence of regional, political, strategic, and international events between August 22 and September 27, 1955: the reinforcement of Egyptian troops in the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip; the intense deployment of the Fedayeen in Gaza; Egypt’s declaration it was closing the Straits of Tiran for Israeli shipping; the Western powers’ willingness to pay for Middle East agreements with Israeli territory and to arm the Arab nations; Nasser’s announcement of the large arms deal he had signed with Czechoslovakia; and signs of cooperation among the Arab nations, such as the Syrian-Egyptian alliance. These factors together compelled Ben-Gurion to instruct Dayan on October 24, 1955, a week before he established a new government, to change the direction of IDF activity.

A day earlier, on the 23rd, Dayan came to see Ben-Gurion in his room at the President Hotel in Jerusalem. After exchanging their opinions on the military situation and the significance of the Czech weapons agreement, Ben-Gurion instructed Dayan to make operational plans for three possible scenarios: the occupation of the Gaza Strip; an attack on northern Sinai; and the occupation of the Straits of Eilat (i.e., Sharm al-Sheikh, Ras Nasrani, and the islands of Tiran and Sanafir) to ensure freedom of shipping in the Red Sea. Ben-Gurion emphasized the last option; he was “infused by a war spirit.”[[169]](#footnote-169) Dayan’s already prepared contingency plan was code-named Operation Omer. Over the next two months, Ben-Gurion was constrained by his government for political and military reasons, such as the fear of possible British interference on behalf of Egypt and the fact that the IDF was still short on advanced weapons, a cause of frustration for Dayan.

A precondition for success in Operation Omer was the navigability of the desert traffic axes along the shore from Eilat to Sharm al-Sheikh, and the aerial photographs were too vague to provide a clear answer. Operation Yarkon, whose aim was to map the route in preparation, took place between June 9 and June 12, 1955. True to his goal of bringing the quality of other units up to the standard of the paratroopers, Dayan tasked the commander of the Givati Brigade, Col. Haim Bar-Lev (a future Chief of Staff), with the daring operation.

Shortly before the start of Operation Yarkon, however, Ben-Gurion began to second guess himself, and Dayan had to encourage him to implement the plan. A note Dayan wrote to Ben-Gurion and Ben-Gurion’s answer during a debate in the parliamentary Security and Foreign Affairs Committee shed further light on their relationship. “I propose you approve the [unit] going on the patrol,” Dayan wrote to Ben-Gurion. “Many complex preparations have already been done. In the coming days, we can avoid, to the extent possible, contact with the Egyptian guard troops in the Gaza Strip. Postponing the patrol by a month does not seem like an option. If you decide not to carry it out now, it would be best to call it off altogether.” Ben-Gurion responded, “Fine. Responsibility for the underlined is yours.”[[170]](#footnote-170)

On Thursday, June 9, a cell of six, headed by battalion commander Lt. Col. Asher Levy and deputy battalion commander Immanuel Shaked, was put ashore at Dahab by the fishing vessel *Eilat* and the operation to scout out a navigable passage was carried out. The cell was extracted from enemy territory in a daring mission executed by six Piper planes. Dayan awaited the patrolmen with bottles of cold juice in hand. A few weeks later, he hosted a party for them at his house to which the top ranks of the IDF were invited. At the party, he awarded the six citations of merit for showing tenacity and resolve. Furthermore, the information they managed to gather proved to be highly useful, and served the 9th Brigade as it made its way to Sharm al-Sheikh during the Sinai War.[[171]](#footnote-171) The historical importance of Operation Yarkon lies in the fact that it was the first mission coordinated among the IDF’s air, ground, and naval forces.[[172]](#footnote-172)

After October 1955, the IDF carried out several large reprisals under the rationale of the policy of deterioration, designed to lure Egypt into a declaration of war. In terms of force construction, this directive put an end to the policy of long-term preparations at the expense of readiness for immediate war, instead spurring the security establishment to begin feverish preparations.

According to David Tal, this policy was guided mostly by Dayan, and less so by Ben-Gurion.[[173]](#footnote-173) “When Ben-Gurion wanted to impose his will, he knew how to make that happen.”[[174]](#footnote-174) In fact, Ben-Gurion controlled the army to a very large extent. When he wanted, he restrained it; when he wanted otherwise, he inspired it to bold action. When he retreated to Kibbutz Sde Boker, he knew that Peres and Dayan would succeed in implementing his policy, i.e., his influence was exerted behind the scenes.[[175]](#footnote-175)

Undoubtedly, Dayan was an opinionated Chief of Staff who had no trouble initiating strategic and even political moves. However, at this time, as far as his relationship with Ben-Gurion was concerned, it was clear who was the ultimate leader and who had the last word. Dayan’s achievements as Chief of Staff before the Sinai War were impressive. At a difficult time of political isolation and under severe economic constraints, Dayan built an organizational and operational military infrastructure. In terms of force construction and military doctrine, and in terms of fighting spirit, with his stress on the leadership role commanders must play, Dayan shaped the IDF for decades to come. Dayan developed and fine-tuned Israel’s routine security doctrine, which was based on audacious reprisals and raids to deter the enemy (although, at times, their effect was contrary to their intent and led to escalation), which injected the IDF’s chain of command with confidence and provided the corps with a baptism by fire. The average Israeli, too, got the sense that the terrorist attacks on civilians were being satisfactorily addressed.

October 1955 saw the end of the policy of long-term preparations at the expense of readiness for immediate war, and the IDF began a period of accelerated preparations for an impending war. Joint interests with France allowed Israel to close tremendous military gaps of equipment and aerial and ground platforms. The great challenge Dayan now had to face was how to confront the army of Egypt, Israel’s strongest enemy.



The note Dayan passed to Ben-Gurion at the Security and Foreign Affairs Committee

meeting before Operation Yarkon

**Reforms in Force Construction**

During his term as Chief of Staff, Dayan launched several meaningful reforms in the army, which led to an essential change in the IDF’s organizational culture, thereby leaving his imprint on the military for decades. Not only was Dayan’s leadership style extraordinary; so was his management style. Organizational psychologist Edgar Schein has noted leaders’ ability to change and reshape an organizational culture by several ways: selecting the issues to which they are going to devote most of the time and resources; their responses to critical events and organizational crises; articulating the standards for success; and deciding which individuals in the organization they should reward and promote.[[176]](#footnote-176) As Chief of Staff, Dayan used most of the tools available to him as commander and leader so that his leadership messages were crystal clear.

In managing his staff, Dayan preferred to work with a small team. He didn’t demand conditions that would have improved his personal wellbeing. On the contrary: when appointed to the position of COS, he abolished the position of Chief of Staff adjutant. His personal staff included his bureau head Shlomo Gazit and secretary Neora Barnoach-Matalon. Until his appointment, the Chief of Staff’s office looked like and operated like its British Army counterpart, with its etiquette and norms of crisply pressed uniforms, order, and discipline. With the maverick Dayan, things were different.[[177]](#footnote-177) He turned the Chief of Staff’s roomy, well-equipped, and, for its time, luxuriously-appointed office into a conference room,[[178]](#footnote-178) choosing for himself a much smaller space for routine appointments where he insisted on having a standard field desk covered with a military blanket, so that visiting field commanders wouldn’t feel as if they’d landed on an alien planet, far removed from their life in the field.[[179]](#footnote-179) Dayan also instructed that the air conditioner not be used – moves made to express solidarity with the soldiers in the field. Furthermore, he made a point of taking his meals in the regular mess where the junior officers ate, rather than in the senior officers’ dining hall. When he toured the field, he always wore a field uniform, and sat on the ground in the dirt and dust with the men. In addition to scheduled visits, Dayan often went into the field without notice to conduct spot checks of camps and bases.[[180]](#footnote-180)

All of these were clear declarations that a spirit of change was in the air. They may have been small and symbolic, but they were nonetheless significant.[[181]](#footnote-181) The key message communicated was that of action: things must be put in motion and executed without delay.

In a concluding discussion with the second graduating cohort of the IDF Command and Staff College, Dayan, who abhorred military bureaucracy, said the following:

As for the IDF and reality, too often, the IDF is unrealistic about warfare and doctrine. Staff officers are too invested in the daily work and too rarely do they lift their heads to see where they actually are in relation to real life. It seems to me that the IDF Command and Staff College is also going too much in that direction. Moreover, since we are talking of a school for staff officers whose main work concerns coordination, the result is too little doing. There are many subjects and missions that, by their nature aren’t smooth: they have different jagged edges and can never be fully coordinated. Too often, the insistence on full coordination leads to concessions or compromises over the actual critical action.”[[182]](#footnote-182)

Consequently, Dayan also had an extraordinary time management style, which ensured him maximal flexibility and freedom of actions. He would leave his schedule open and flexible, in stark contrast to other senior figures. Dayan refused to have his planner/calendar blocked out with appointments, meetings, and visits weeks in advance, as was the custom other high-ranking individuals, whether in the army, public institutions, or business organizations. He felt that that sort of schedule constricted flexibility and did not leave him any time to think. In fact, his calendar was blank. He had a few recurring events, such as his weekly discussion with the defense minister or a cabinet meeting. His blank calendar afforded him maximal flexibility, the ability to respond to unexpected occurrences, and a lot of time to think.[[183]](#footnote-183) 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 senior officers to solve lateral problems. This way, he always had time to meet to discuss sudden issues on the spot, should it be necessary

As commander, he relied on his staff to the full extent possible. His attitude was that the coordinating and the professional staff were capable of handling all issues with which he was charged.[[184]](#footnote-184) Dayan would identify a problem, make clear what his position was, and deal with it down to the last detail; when seeing change in the right direction, he’d immediately lose interest and hand the problem over to his staff to do the mopping up.[[185]](#footnote-185) This was his modus operandi as defense minister, too. He trusted that the officers on his staff to be able to provide solutions to diverse situations without his involvement; he would focus all his energy on one, at most two issues.[[186]](#footnote-186) In general, he had a great deal of faith in the professionalism of many of the officers working under him. One such person was Lt. Col. Aharon Yariv (who would later become Director of Military Intelligence). In a discussion about appointing a new commander for the IDF Command and Staff College, Dayan said he wanted to see Yariv in that position. Yariv, however, doubted his suitability, and thought his inexperience disqualified him for the position. Dayan’s answer was, “If Ben-Zvi can be president, Maklef Chief of Staff, and I head of the General Staff Directorate, you can be Commander of the IDF Command and Staff College.”[[187]](#footnote-187)

Dayan didn’t much care for how things looked. His uniform tended to be rumpled and his close staff members were forced to argue with him about maintaining a minimally decent appearance. On the other hand, he cared very much about what messages he communicated to the rank and file. He was extremely careful with every word he said that would be published in the press and every sentence that appeared in every speech he gave about various military events. He wrote his own speeches, and coined phrases that became part of canonical Hebrew. He would practice his speeches in an empty room of his bureau and used his closest assistants, Matalon and Gazit, as his sounding boards.[[188]](#footnote-188)

According to the people with whom he worked closely at this time, Dayan spent a lot of time poring over intelligence materials, unit conditions reports, and even soldier complaints. He was particularly angered by acts of hazing and bullying, and tended to deal with them himself.

When he assumed office at the end of 1953, Dayan was mostly busy with the IDF’s 1954 working plan and budget, but before long, he focused on the major and most essential challenge, namely returning the spirit of fighting to the army, and the ability to command and lead to the field commanders, which he accomplished via the reprisals executed by Unit 101 and the paratroopers. His second objective was to reduce the gaps between the General Staff echelon and the field. He was aware of the importance of symbolic actions on the part of leaders, and so to improve relations between the staff and the field, he made a point of having members of the General Staff show their presence in the field with himself at the head. On these visits, he made sure that staff members wore their field uniforms, just as the units in training did.

Dayan’s behaved in unusual ways to make a point. For example, he issued an invitation to Haim Levkov, then a major, to attend an IDF commanders’ warfare drills conference; all the participants were senior to Levkov. When some of the commanders were done making excuses for why they hadn’t fulfilled some mission (the equipment wasn’t suitable, the weather was bad, and so on), Dayan asked if, by any chance, Levkov happened to be in the auditorium. Levkov, who had a habit of going above and beyond executing commands, was frightened by Dayan’s piercing questions, such as “Who gave the order?” But Dayan was simply using Levkov as a living example to demonstrate how a commander should behave: initiate action and go beyond the limits of the official order.[[189]](#footnote-189) Another incident related to imposing discipline on Air Force pilots who liked to perform stunts in the air. Dayan gave a pilot who had pulled the most egregious stunts a discharge from the military to serve as a warning to others. According to Ezer Weizman, the dismissal of this pilot caused a major culture shift in the Air Force. The pilot in question requested to be readmitted, and Dayan agreed, knowing that the intended effect had been achieved and now there was no real reason to keep the young man from fulfilling his destiny as a pilot.[[190]](#footnote-190)

An incident reflecting Dayan’s unusual mode of conduct occurred on a visit to an army base soon after his appointment as Chief of Staff. En route, Dayan stopped the car to pick some oranges in a grove. When he reached the base, he got out of the vehicle holding handfuls of oranges and threw them at the surprised base commander who was standing at tense attention and saluting him. By the next day, the whole army was talking about the impish, convention-defying Chief of Staff.

To shake the army out of its torpor, Dayan also paid surprise visits to bases. He’d travel alone, at night, and enter camps to spot check discipline, guard duty, and stand-by shifts. On such visits, he made sure to deal with soldier complaints, including a complaint about returning from patrol and having nothing to eat because the kitchen was closed. Dayan issued an order and made sure himself that combat soldiers would be met with a hot meal, at whatever time of day or night, every time they came back from operational activities. Thanks to these visits, he often issued new guidelines to senior commanders about patrols, learning, and improving the current situation.[[191]](#footnote-191) His steps not only led to operational alertness and attention to procedure, but also created the sense that someone was looking out for the men and listening to them.

An important organizational change was splitting the General Staff Directorate into several units: intelligence, training, and operations. Separating the intelligence, then a department, from the General Staff Directorate and elevating into an independent Directorate made it possible for the Intelligence Directorate to develop and become a major influencer on Israel’s security establishment. The realization that, in Israel, intelligence is critical was the rationale for the change.[[192]](#footnote-192) Dayan explained it by saying that because of the importance of intelligence and his own personal and involvement in political realms, among others, it was necessary that the IDF Intelligence unit be subordinate only to the Chief of Staff and the defense minister.[[193]](#footnote-193) In fact, he had three reasons: the importance of intelligence to the IDF; the fact that intelligence often deals with the interface between strategy and policy issues requiring that its heads be in direct contact with the Chief of Staff and defense minister; and moving positions out of the Chief of Staff’s bureau to intelligence.[[194]](#footnote-194)

Dayan also elevated the training department into a distinct directorate, an expression of the importance he attributed to it.[[195]](#footnote-195) Not only that, but he appointed Yitzhak Rabin, a Palmach fighter and stalwart supporter of Yigal Allon (widely seen as Dayan’s rival), to the position the Training Directorate Director. Despite their troubled past, Dayan acknowledged Rabin’s talent and trusted he would be able to collate the IDF’s organizational knowledge and turn it into a doctrine and training methods in optimal fashion.[[196]](#footnote-196) Rabin translated Dayan’s principles – placing the commander ahead of his men, sticking to the mission no matter what, and encouraging all ranks to seize the initiative – into a military doctrine and a whole system of training. Some claimed that, beyond the legitimate reason for breaking up the General Staff Directorate, Dayan – who had himself been its director and was aware of the organization’s massive strength – was interested in weakening that locus of power and, not incidentally, increase his own as Chief of Staff.[[197]](#footnote-197)

Another cultural/ethical code Dayan assimilated in the IDF was never to leave any wounded behind. In June 1954, during a paratrooper action in Azzun, Jordan, the force left behind Sg. Yitzhak Jibli who was taken as a POW and tortured in a Jordanian prison. As he had done in the Northern Command, Dayan authorized the paratroopers to abduct Jordanian Legionnaires for a POW exchange. Fighters from Unit 101 and the paratroopers, commanded by Meir Har-Zion, went on several cross-border raids and seized five Legionnaires. After Jibli was returned, it was made very clear that wounded men were never again to be left behind.[[198]](#footnote-198)

One daring, controversial step Dayan took was his decision to force officers to retire around the age of 40 to keep the army young, saying this would allow the men to begin a second civilian career. When he became Chief of Staff, he ousted many officers, a move that painted him as heartless. This was particularly evident in the way he dismissed Yehuda Harari, the paratrooper battalion commander, who was one of the first to be ousted. But it served Dayan’s agenda: it reduced the overall size of the very expensive standing army, and the money saved was used to acquire weapons and other equipment the IDF sorely needed. At first, the plan to lower the average age of the army was greeted with shock, but Dayan was adamant and forced his will on the system. The dual career path became a fact and changed the IDF and Israel’s civilian life, where many ex-army figures have since then integrated.[[199]](#footnote-199)

Another area in which Dayan made changes was the Nahal, which attracted some of the best and the brightest but whose contribution to the combat force was negligible. This pitted Dayan against the kibbutz lobby, a powerful entity at the time, which accused Dayan of being anti-kibbutz because he came from a moshav. Dayan succeeded in bridging the gap by establishing a Nahal paratrooper battalion, then called the 88th Battalion (after the 1956 war, the name was later changed to the 50th Battalion), which became an outstanding elite airborne unit.[[200]](#footnote-200)

Dayan was strict when it came to the IDF’s promotions policy. Worried about the IDF turning into an army of many general and few soldiers, he wanted to avoid an inflation of the ranks. This did not add to his popularity among officers who were expecting advancement. Still and all, Dayan fought to make sure that Yitzhak Rabin – not one of his biggest fans – was promoted to the rank of major general because he felt the man deserved it, and had no problem arguing about it with Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon.[[201]](#footnote-201)

Dayan is often portrayed as someone who did not deal with force construction, leaving the field to his staff officers. Prime Minister Sharett, frustrated by Dayan’s loyalty to Ben-Gurion even after the latter’s resignation, wrote that “[Dayan] has no clue or interest in running the military budget and its economy.”[[202]](#footnote-202) It is true that Dayan did not write many staff documents, and he probably did not read many of them either, because after his injury, reading exacerbated his headaches.[[203]](#footnote-203) One of his bureau chiefs, Eli Zeira, recalls Dayan telling him that the General Staff was composed of three divisions plus one: “I [i.e., Dayan] am the head of the fourth division. I do whatever the others aren’t doing.”[[204]](#footnote-204)

When Dayan became Director of the General Staff Directorate, the IDF widely assumed there was no immediate threat of overall war, but that the army should be built to handle such a scenario. The planning team of IDF force construction prepared a six-year master plan through 1960 designed to allow the IDF to successfully confront an overall war, a scenario that was drilled in war games and planning exercises.

The major changes made in the IDF during Dayan’s tenure as Director of the General Staff s Directorate and Chief of Staff before the war in Sinai were:

* An upgrade and expansion of the reserves, especially of infantry units; organizational change and improvement of combat support and logistics;
* The establishment of three new infantry brigades in 1955;
* The establishment of division settings in February 1952;
* The addition of five artillery battalions to the existing ten, and the establishment of four artillery battalions headquarters;
* The establishment of combat engineer units in the regular army and reserves;
* The establishment of an armored corps headquarters;
* Assimilating the commanders’ ethos of those who seize the initiative, go on the offense, and lead the force (the “mission command” approach).[[205]](#footnote-205)

Because of the urgent need for cutbacks, Dayan believed he could train a reserve army whose functionality would be sufficient for rapid deployment at the expense of a large mandatory army with its high maintenance costs. The expansion of the reserves systems and the organizational changes occurring in those years resulted in the IDF’s immediate readiness for war actually declining, but force construction was focused on the long term.[[206]](#footnote-206)

In terms of force construction, two extremely dramatic developments took place during Dayan’s tenure as Chief of Staff: the first was the IDF’s transition to reliance on the air force equipped with jet engine rather than piston engine planes; and the second was the positioning of the armored corps as the backbone of the ground forces.

In the IDF, there was a heated discussion over the navy. It was obvious that the small Israeli navy was incapable of winning a campaign against the larger and better-equipped Egyptian one; thus, investments in the navy were made at the expense of critical investments in the air force and ground force. Therefore, Dayan’s decision was not to neutralize the navy’s capabilities altogether but also not to allocate it large budgets that might weaken the air force and the armored corps to which he wanted to give a relative advantage. For example, the navy’s demand for destroyers to defeat Egyptians in naval battles would have made it impossible for the IDF to acquire tanks and planes. Dayan’s approach, which IDF historians Zeev Elron and Shaul (Sam) Bronfeld call “the Dayan compromise,” was contrary to others advocating that the IDF make do with what would actually be a small coast guard rather than a navy. Dayan’s position was that the navy should be given “modest operational flexibility” so as not to give the Egyptians a completely free hand, even if this had to be done by means of a relatively inferior force.[[207]](#footnote-207) To this end, two old destroyers and several commando boats were bought to secure the Red Sea. Elron and Bronfeld noted that:

Dayan’s decisions described above were the result of a logical, consistent strategic view implementing his security approach to the naval theater rather than the outcome of ignorance or hostility towards the navy. Just as he viewed the need for destroyers in the Mediterranean theater…, as early as 1955 he identified the great importance of establishing a small naval base in Eilat that would pose a threat to the Egyptian presence and give the IDF a certain freedom of action in the Gulf of Eilat and the Red Sea.[[208]](#footnote-208)

Despite the common opinion that Dayan had a negative view of armored fighting, he in fact strengthened the Armored Corps. During his tenure as Chief of Staff, the Armored Corps got its own headquarters. Formed on February 15, 1954, it generated the armored revolution in the IDF when it came to acquisitions, training, and operational doctrine.[[209]](#footnote-209) The first commander of the new headquarters was Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Pundak, who held the post until July 1956, when Haim Laskov assumed its command, a position he held until November that year. The headquarters was built according to a new format, as a dedicated professional headquarters rather than the operative headquarters like the regional commands. It was designed to serve as the ultimate authority on armor-related issues. In this sense, the status of the Armored Corps was close to that of the Air Force and the Navy, even though it continued to be part of the Ground Forces. Amiad Bresner, the historian of the Armored Corps, has written that there is no doubt that the establishment of a headquarters was “a revolution affecting the organization and operation of the armored forces.”[[210]](#footnote-210) Dayan also eliminated the command rank of the Armored Corps: armored battalions were now directly subordinate to the Armored Corps headquarters. This provided the force with greater operational flexibility and savings ion manpower with the elimination of the brigade headquarters.[[211]](#footnote-211) All of this was aimed at making the Armored Corps into “a mobile armored force that would serve as the key means for concentrating effort and General Staff reserves.”[[212]](#footnote-212)

Dayan also made some impulsive, impractical decisions, such as the decision to eliminate the Southern Command, the motive for which was his desire to reduce budgetary spending. The Southern Command was merged with the Central Command under the leadership of a colonel (the IDF did not yet have the rank of brigadier general). The change turned out to be highly problematic, especially because the Southern Command had been in charge of the sector where Israel’s strongest enemy – Egypt – was located. Indeed, a year later, when the situation in that sector deteriorated, Dayan did not hesitate to admit his mistake and reverse the decision. Nonetheless, he insisted that the change itself, the shake-up he had generated, was a positive for a body as unwieldy as the IDF.[[213]](#footnote-213) To reestablish it, Dayan appointed Meir Amit, who had commanded the southern sector, and allowed him to take all the people he wanted for this task on condition he reconstitute the command within 24 hours.[[214]](#footnote-214)

In contrast to tactical matters, in which he was sometimes hasty, Dayan as Chief of Staff was very cautious on strategic issues. He worried mostly about being criticized by Ben-Gurion, whose focus was on Israel’s international standing rather than on operational matters. For example, in the October 10, 1956, Qalqiliya action (Operation Samaria) in Jordan, a reprisal on a multi-corps, brigade-level scale – an operation that went wrong and turned into an actual battle with the Jordanian Legion – he was reluctant to use the Air Force or artillery without the approval of the defense minister (Ben-Gurion) because their deployment would be of strategic/political significance.[[215]](#footnote-215) His reluctance may also have been personal, because Dayan was in awe of Ben-Gurion. When Ben-Gurion resigned, he wrote the following to Dayan:

You’ve demonstrated two fundamental yet contradictory traits that have made you into one of the most outstanding solider of the Israel Defense Force: almost insane audacity balanced by profound tactical and strategic thinking… These two fortunate traits of yours – supreme talent in military leadership and comprehensive political intelligence – were especially visible over these years.[[216]](#footnote-216)

As for his deficiency in orderly staff work, which requires patience, order, discipline, and organizational skills, Dayan was able to compensate with his keen intuition about people. When it came to fighting spirit and battle readiness, Dayan was meticulous down to the last platoon sergeant. He would wait for units to return from raids to personally greet them with cold juice as they returned. He also had a harsher side; some said they preferred to die in battle rather receive a tongue-lashing from Dayan. Promotions were given only to the bravest who had shown courage under fire. Dayan greatly admired Meir Har-Zion and stayed in touch with him despite the large gap in their ranks. When it came to the staff and service units, Dayan would find the people who understood him and were capable of carrying out his wishes with minimal involvement on his part. By the time of the Sinai Campaign, most of the appointments were his. In fact, he created the IDF anew and then took it to war.[[217]](#footnote-217)

Dayan did not maintain a formal distance, as is customary between generals and the rank-and-file, and he created an atmosphere of familiarity and openness. On the other hand, the people around him were awestruck by him both because of his position and even more so because of the power his personality radiated. No one was really intimate with him, and therefore there was always a sense of mystery, of the unknown about him. Moreover, Dayan’s mood was mercurial, in part because of the headaches he suffered ever since being wounded. These often made him impatient and prone to cut off his interlocutors for no apparent reason, causing offense. He apologized only rarely.[[218]](#footnote-218)

His attitude to people was instrumental. Amit said of him:

He neither loves nor hates. Rather, he either appreciates or doesn’t. He appreciates the brave who fill him with inspiration and is happy to spend time with them; [he appreciates] the wise with who he enjoys talking about problems that preoccupy him and topics he likes, such as archeology. The stupid and the cowardly he simply ignores. For him, they don’t exist.[[219]](#footnote-219)

The combination of these traits – a distant, mysterious figure with mood swings, and his aura as an extraordinary military leader – created the larger-than-life character whom subordinates venerated and feared in equal measure.

As Chief of Staff, Dayan worked under the government and also under central figures with whom he came into contact and who affected his outlook. The first, obviously, was Ben-Gurion, who appointed him Chief of Staff before resigning. Dayan admired – some say idolized – Ben-Gurion; his own take on reality was similar to the older man’s. In many ways, the two complemented one another. Dayan’s attitude to Sharett, who was appointed prime minister on December 7, 1953, after having served as foreign minister in Ben-Gurion’s first government, was very different. Sharett held a much more appeasing political line that his predecessor’s, and Dayan, who did not respect Sharett’s opinion, continued to consult with Ben-Gurion who had retired to Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev. Ben-Gurion rejoined the government on the 21 February 1955 as defense minister under Sharett, on November 3, 1955, Sharett’s term as prime minister ended when Ben-Gurion replaced him as prime minister, whereupon the former again resumed his position as foreign minister. That appointment, however, did not last long. On June 18, 1956, Ben-Gurion dismissed Sharett as foreign minister and replaced him with Golda Meir.

Another influential individual in Dayan’s political environment was Pinhas Lavon. On December 6, 1953, Lavon was appointed defense minister and Shimon Peres director general of the Ministry of Defense. Dayan was already a member of the Mapai political party and resigned from it only when he became Chief of Staff. Although Lavon’s and Dayan’s opinions were generally similar politically, they were constantly on a collision course with one another and engaged in frequent tests of will, both competing to become Ben-Gurion’s heir apparent. Dayan and Peres joined forces against Lavon who, when Ben-Gurion made him defense minister, saw himself as preferred or at least senior.

Lavon opposed Dayan’s appointment to Chief of Staff, but even so their relationship was at first fairly good, In practice, Lavon, Dayan, and Peres formed their own hawkish-activist coalition against the dovish Sharett. However, in the summer of 1954, the already-cool relationship between Dayan and Lavon deteriorated into a rift as they struggled over authority and Lavon’s interference in managing the army, which Dayan deeply resented. An incident demonstrating this occurred as a result of direct contact between Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Dan Tolkovsky and the defense minister. Dayan had every intention of dismissing Tolkovsky because of this communication, but he finally accepted the advice of his bureau chief Shlomo Gazit and made do with issuing a reprimand.[[220]](#footnote-220) On June 15, 1954, Dayan even wrote a draft of his own letter of resignation over this incident. On August 30, 1955, Dayan submitted a second letter of resignation to Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion, who was back in that post in Sharett’s government after the Lavon affair[[221]](#footnote-221), as a result of which Lavon resigned.[[222]](#footnote-222) Dayan protested Sharett’s placating line and the cancellation of planned reprisals. Ben-Gurion used Dayan’s letter to confront Sharett and threatened to resign too so as to force the prime minister to take a harder line.[[223]](#footnote-223) The next day, August 21, Sharett authorized a large reprisal – the attack on the police fort in Khan Yunis.

After Ben-Gurion was reappointed defense minister in February 1955, he sought information on the IDF’s condition. In April, he reported to the government that he had found “tremendous progress both in training the army and in army equipment.” He added that “savings in manpower [that] did not reduce the army’s fighting capacity, and very important work in acquisitions, as well as a new and important institution: the IDF Command and Staff College.” Ben-Gurion attributed these improvements to Lavon and Dayan’s work, and concluded “If the regular army was greatly reduced and the cohort cut back in size…the force of the army has markedly increased.” It seems that Ben-Gurion’s impression resulted from him identifying the combative and confident spirit with which Dayan had managed to infuse the IDF. There is no doubt that Ben-Gurion gave Dayan most of the credit for the change he observed.[[224]](#footnote-224)

In Moshe Sharett’s term as prime minister, Dayan and Peres were the principal figures in IDF force construction, with Dayan serving as a curb to Lavon’s influence in this field.[[225]](#footnote-225) After Ben-Gurion assumed the Defense Ministry, the three principals were Ben-Gurion, Dayan, and Peres. The three worked in close coordination, and most major decisions were made in their weekly forum of three, which Ben-Gurion called his “limited staff.”[[226]](#footnote-226) In August 1956, Ben-Gurion was appointed prime minister, so that this trio led Israel to the Sinai Campaign on October 1956. When Sharett left the government on June 18, 1956, and Golda Meir was appointed Foreign Minister, the harmony among the three was further enhanced. There was less tension between Ben-Gurion and Dayan now that the shared goal was to build and strengthen the IDF for that crucial campaign.

During the second half of his Chief of Staff tenure, Dayan articulated his opinion that it was necessary to go to war against Egypt. When exactly the decision was made became a focus of disagreement among historians, because the answer is also the answer to earlier questions: were the reprisals Dayan initiated designed to escalate the situation towards war and to what extent did they lead to the outbreak of the war?

**Military Diplomacy: Relations with France**

As part of Israel’s approach to security, Ben-Gurion decided that Israel, a small nation in a large, hostile environment, would have to seek the patronage of a large military power to help it politically, militarily, and technologically on the basis of shared values and interests. In the early 1950s, Israel had no such patron. The special relationship Israel has enjoyed with the United States in recent decades was something Israel could only dream of, and Ben-Gurion’s decision that Israel would be part of the West had taken the Soviet Union out of contention. The United States and Great Britain were courting the Arab nations to curb the Soviets’ influence. In the overall scheme, Israel was small and weak, and not important enough to view as a significant strategic partner.

This left France, whose social-democrat leaders were sympathetic to then-socialist Israel and therefore considered ideologically compatible. Furthermore, France and Israel did not have a problematic past, as was the case with Great Britain. When the Algerian Revolution broke out in 1954, and especially after it emerged that Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser was actively helping the revolution, relations between France and Israel went into higher gear. In Israel’s historiography, that period is known as the Israeli-French honeymoon.

Thus, changing historical circumstances led to the two nation’s new bond, but, as is the case with every important historical development, the personality of the leaders and each leader’s individual contribution also played a role. The most important person in cementing relations with France was Shimon Peres. He made all the behind-the-scenes moves connected to acquisitions agreements and the delicate web of contacts between the leaders of Israel’s security establishment and the French regime, despite the opposition of the Quai d’Orsay, the French foreign ministry. Peres, who was totally enchanted with Dayan, worked very closely with him.[[227]](#footnote-227) Dayan’s intelligence, personal charm, and ability to persuade the French that the IDF was a strong army helped tilt the scales in his ongoing communication with them, and led to France’s decision to gamble on a military and political partnership with Israel.

The figure of Dayan, with the black patch covering his left eye, burst into public consciousness in France in August 1954 when the decision was made to award him the National Order of the Legion of Honor, which he accepted en route to Israel after a three-week visit with the U.S. Army. Dayan was suspicious of the French, doubting their military capabilities (his low opinion of these was shared by Ben-Gurion) because they had been defeated in World War II and then again in Vietnam in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu (the French surrendered in May 1954), just a few months before Dayan’s arrival in Paris. Nonetheless, during his visit there, Dayan developed respect for France after learning it had much to offer in many fields, especially the military one.[[228]](#footnote-228)

Dayan’s great contribution to ties with France is well documented in the literature.[[229]](#footnote-229) However, it is important to emphasize the cooperation between Dayan and Peres, which managed to overcome many pitfalls and controversies, and eventually led to the arms deals with France. One task was Dayan’s and Dayan’s only: to persuade France that the IDF was operatively an effective army that could best Egypt. Thanks to his personal charisma, he succeeded. Shlomo Gazit, in charge of coordination with the French delegation, said that after Dayan told the French delegation of senior officers that the IDF would reach the Suez Canal within a week, General Maurice Challe, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, asked Dayan, “So you’ve conquered [the Sinai Peninsula], you’ve reached [the Canal]. How long can you hold it?” Dayan’s first answer was that this was a political question. When Challe insisted, Dayan, trying to be a wise guy, scratched his head for a few seconds before answering, “350 years.” For a moment, it seemed that the French were offended by the arrogant answer, but after Maurice noted the playful look in Dayan’s eye, he became one of Dayan’s ardent admirers.[[230]](#footnote-230)

Personal charisma is all well and good, but it is not enough to persuade professional officers. Dayan had to prove the IDF’s capabilities to the high-ranking French military delegation, headed by the French Deputy Chief of Staff, which landed in Israel on October 2, 1956. The French came away with the feeling that Israel did indeed have significant military capabilities, and Dayan noted to himself that, “The French saw an army whose organizational skill and technical command are beyond what they expected. This was a load off their chest.”[[231]](#footnote-231) Before the visit, the French had been aware of the capabilities of the IDF’s paratroopers and were quite taken with their performance. Had France not believed in the IDF’s capabilities, Israel might have avoided the Sinai Campaign.[[232]](#footnote-232) Dayan, who was certain of the army he was leading, knew how to transmit his confidence to the French.

The esteem in which France held the IDF was an important component in France’s decision to forge closer relations with Israel and cooperate militarily. Every nation choosing a strategic partner is interested in one with a high level of military performance. This was true also in the case of France and Israel of the 1950s. The reprisals were critical in this as well, because the French were in particular impressed with the IDF’s ability, determination, and cumulative experience to carry out operations of that nature. In the historical debate over the reprisals and their usefulness, this subject is barely mentioned.

\* \* \*

In his tenure as Chief of Staff, Dayan continued processes initiated by his predecessors Yadin and Maklef with respect to organization and force construction, but the army he was handed suffered from a severe crisis of morale, which was reflected by poor performance. Dayan kindled a revolution in the IDF’s fighting spirit and made it aggressive, audacious, and pro-active. Dayan’s second contribution lay in setting correct priorities in the organization and in force construction at a time of particularly poor resources. His third – albeit controversial – contribution was devising the reprisals policy and developing a doctrine of routine security in addition to the doctrine of fundamental security. His fourth was a true revolution in the figure of the commander. When he left office, the command ranks were excellent, noted for seizing initiative and assuming responsibility. Dayan focused on the commanders, as he felt that they were key in determining the level of functionality of the system as a whole. But the real test of every military leader is war, and this was still to come.

1. Israel’s Austerity Policy was applied between 1949 and 1959 to lower the deficit by reducing expenditures and cutting benefits and public services. In practical terms, this meant targeting credit allocation and limiting the purchase of food and consumer goods. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Fundamental threats’ describe scenarios in which an Arab actor launches a major offensive (high-intensity war) with the intent of physically annihilating Israel. ‘Routine threats’ cover scenarios in which Arabs conduct constant smallscale raids (low-intensity war) in order to wear down the resolve of the Jewish population to remain in Israel [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Consequent to the findings of the Agranat Commission on Yom Kippur War, the law was amended for the sake of clarification. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. According to Meir Finkel, the directive of the Supreme Command dealing with the General Staff similarly defines “The Chief of Staff [as] the high[est] commander in the army,” describing the job in a single line: “The Chief of Staff commands and controls the use of force of the IDF and its construction by means of the chief commands and service branches.” Meir Finkel, *Haramatkal* (Hebrew) (*The Chief of Staff*), Modan and Maarakhot, Ben Shemen, 2018, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Emmanuel Waller, *Kil’lat hakelim hashvurim: Dimdumey ha’otsma hatsva’it vamedinit hayisraelit (1967*–*1982)* (Hebrew) (*The Curse of the Broken Vessels: The Twilight of Israel’s Military and Political Power*), Schocken, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1987, pp. 164–167. On the excess power of the institution of the Chief of Staff, see also: Avraham Rotem, *Bedek batyit batira* (Hebrew) (*Home Inspection of the Castle*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 2007, pp. 168–169. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Amos Yadlin, Itai Brun and Udi Dekel, “The Ten Challenges Facing the Incoming Chief of Staff,” *INSS Insight,* No. 1130, January 15, 2019, *https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/No.-1130.pdf* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot in his introduction to Finkel’s book, 2018, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Halutz, 2010, p. 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Finkel, 2018, p. 18–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Teveth, 1971, p. 338; Dayan, 1976, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Teveth, 1971, p. 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The nickname was borrowed from the leader of a band of highway robbers active during the British Mandate. The word translates as someone wild and uncontrollable. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Teveth, 1971, p. 343. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Yemima Rosental (ed.), *Yitzhak Rabin, rosh memshelet yisrael, mivhar te’udot mipirkey hayav* (Hebrew) (*Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Prime Minister: Selected Biographical Documents*), Vol.1, State Archives, Jerusalem, 2005, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Michael Sheshar, *Sihot im Rehavam Zeevi (Gahndi)* (Hebrew) [*Conversations with Rehavam Zeevi (Gandhi)*], Yedioth Ahronoth, Tel Aviv, 1992, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Norman Dixon, *Hapsikhologiya shel hashlumi’eliyot batsava* (Hebrew) (*The Psychology of Military Schlemiel-ism*), Defense Ministry Publishers, Tel Aviv, 2003, pp. 181–193. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Teveth, 1971, p. 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sheshar, 1992, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Uzi Narkiss, *Hayal shel yerushalayim* (Hebrew) (*A Soldier of Jerusalem*), Defense Ministry Publishers, Tel Aviv, 1991, second edition, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Sagi Turgan, *Mimeni ishit lo yetseh general: Hakh’sharat hapikud hak’ravi betsahal* (Hebrew) (*I, Personally, Will Never Make General: Combat Command Training in the IDF*), Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 2017, pp. 291–292. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Teveth, 1971, p. 350; Dayan, 1976. p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Narkiss, 1991, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Teveth, 1976, p. 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Narkiss, 1991, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Teveth, 1976, pp. 351–352. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Teveth, 1971, p. 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. In Devizes, Dayan came into contact with experienced instructors who had planned and led large-scale operations, such as the invasion of German-occupied Normandy. Dayan learned the management of large systems and units, such as corps and divisions. Back then, such knowledge did not exist in Israel. The IDF instructors had served in relatively junior officer ranks in the British army; for example, Haim Laskov had been a major. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Report on Moshe Dayan at the end of the senior officers course in Devizes, England, February 29, 1952. See: Avner Falk, *Moshe Dayan, ha’ish veha’agada: Biografiya psikhologit* (Hebrew) (*Moshe Dayan, the Man and the Legend: A Psychological Biography*), Cana Publishing House, Jerusalem, 1985, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Sheshar, 1992, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. In addition to the criticism he had of Haganah courses, Dayan also found fault with his academic studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which he attended after leaving the military. In his memoirs, he wrote of his university studies that the two years were like a vacation, “and, like any vacation, they did not leave a very deep impression.” Dayan, 1976, p. 377. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Mordechai Bar-On, *K’shehatsava hehelif madav: P’rakinm behitpat’hut tsahal bashanim harishinot le’ahar milhemet ha’atsmaut 1949*–*1953* (Hebrew) *(When the Army Changed Its Uniform: Stages in the IDF’s Development Immediately after the War of Independence 1949*–*1953*), Yad Ben Zvi, Jerusalem, 2017, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Spenser Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army: A Popular Account of the German General Staff*, Westminster Archibald Constable & Co., 1985, p. 142. Dayan was blessed with good operations officers who knew him well, complemented him, and especially compensated for his weaknesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Uzi Narkiss, *Hayal shel yerushalayim* (Hebrew) (*A Soldier of Jerusalem*), Defense Ministry Publishers, Tel Aviv, second edition, 1991, pp. 141–142. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In January 1948, Tzvi Ayalon, who had served in the Haganah, was appointed Chief of Staff until the end of the War of Independence. After the war, he was appointed head of the Quartermasters Directorate as well as commander of the Central Command. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Uri Ben Ari, *No’a tanu’a! Sof: Hamaavak al derekh hashiryon* (Hebrew) (*Ye Shall Move! The End: The Struggle over the Armored Corps Path*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 1998, p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid, p. 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Teveth, 1971, p. 357. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Narkiss, 1991, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Simon Sinek, *The Infinite Games*, Portfolio, United States, 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Teveth, 1971, p. 364. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Teveth, 1971. p. 365. In the Korean War (1950 to 1953), Lt. Gen. Lewis “Chesty” Puller adopted a similar approach. After the Marines found themselves surrounded by superior Chinese forces in the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, he said, “All right. They’re on our left, they’re on our right, they’re in front of us, they’re behind us… They can’t get away this time.” <https://www.wearethemighty.com/articles/11-of-the-craziest-lines-ever-spoken-in-battle>. A famous paratroopers’ line is, “Paratroopers are used to fighting while besieged.” [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Dayan, 1976, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. In the IDF’s early years the General Staff Directorate was called the Operations Directorate according to the British system. In later years the directorate was renamed as the General Staff Directorate. For the sake of simplicity, I am using the latter term throughout the book. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Yaakov Erez and Ilan Kfir, *Sihot im Moshe Dayan* (Hebrew) (*Conversations with Moshe Dayan*), Masada, Ramat Gan, 1981, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Author’s interview of Neora Barnoach-Matalon, Herzliya, March 14, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. For more on the manpower crisis in the IDF during the post-War of Independence period, see: Mordechai Bar-On, *When the Army Changed Its Uniform*, pp. 36–38. For more on the budget and cutbacks challenge, see: pp. 275-276. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ze’ev Elron and Shaul Brunfeld, “The General Staff Versus the Navy in a Gloomy Decade – 1953–1962” (Hebrew), *Yesodot*, The IDF History Department, Issue 1, 2019, p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid, p. 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Erez and Kfir, 1981, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Yagil Henkin, *The 1956 Suez War and the New World Order in the Middle East: Exodus in Reverse*, Lexington Books, Maryland, 2015, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Teveth, 1971, p. 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid, p. 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Shimon Golan, *Gvul ham, milhama kara: Hitgabshut mediniyut habitahon shel yisrael 1949*–*1953* (Hebrew) (*Hot Border, Cold War: The Formulation of Israel’s Security Policy 1949*–*1953*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 2000, pp. 248–249; Zaki Shalom, *Mediniyut betsel mahloket: Mediniyut habitaho hashotef shel yisrael 1949*–*1956* (Hebrew) (*Policy in the Shadow of Disagreement: Israel’s Routine Security Policy 1949-1956*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 11–14. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Zeev Drory, *Israel's Reprisal Policy, 1953-1956***,** Cass Military Studies,Routledge, 2004, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Meaning: those ready to sacrifice themselves, armed guerrilla units, mostly Palestinians, trained and equipped by the Egyptian and Jordanian armies [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. For more on the infiltration problem, see: David Tal, *T’fisat habitahon hashotef shel yisrael: Mekoroteha vehitpathuta 1949*–*1956* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Routine Security Concept: Its Sources and Development 1949*–*1956*), Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute, 1998, pp. 23–41; and: Benny Morris, *Milhemot hagvul shel yisrael 1949*–*1956: Hahistanenut ha’aravit, pe’ulot hag’mul vehas’fira le’ahor lemivtsa kadesh* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Border Wars 1949*–*1956: The Arab Infiltration, the Reprisals, and the Countdown to the Sinai Campaign*), Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 44–83. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. For details on the cost of infiltration, see: Morris, 1997, pp. 113–128. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Drory, 2004, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Tal, 1998, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. For a historical survey, see: Efraim Inbar, Eitan Shamir, "What after counter-insurgency? Raiding in zones of turmoil," International Affairs, Volume 92, Issue 6, 1 November 2016, Pages 1427–1441; see also: Jakub Grygiel*, Return of the Barbarians: Confronting Non-State Actors from Ancient Rome to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 65–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Tal, 1998, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. In 1949, Ben-Gurion was already considering the possibility of reprisals, and since 1950 such actions were carried out with increasing frequency; see: Tal, 1998, p. 39; Morris, 1997, p. 210. Data on the exact number of reprisals is inconsistent, but at least one source notes that from 1950 to 1956 reprisals were carried out on Israel’s borders with Egypt and with Jordan. In 1953 and 1054, most occurred on the Jordanian front, whereas in 1955, most were on the Egyptian front; see: Bar-On (ed.), 2017. The chart appears on the inside cover of the book. On the Egyptian front there were far fewer reprisals but they were larger in scope than the reprisals on the Jordanian front, and most targeted police stations and army bases. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Teveth, 1971, p. 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See Dayan quotations justifying the reprisals: Morris, 1997, pp. 204–205. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See detailed data: Turgan, 2017, pp. 91–93. For example, 85 percent of men enlisted in Golani were new immigrants. Their rate in other infantry brigades was similar; Turgan, 2017. p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Zeev Drory, “Army and Society in 1950s Israel” (Hebrew), *Iyunim bit’kumat yisrael*, Volume 16 (2006), pp. 262–264. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Drory, 2006, p. 265. Dayan noted the failed action in his book *Avney derekh* (Hebrew) (*The Story of My Life*), 1976, pp. 111–112. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Tom Segev, *Medina bekhol mehir: Sipur hayav shel David Ben-Gurion* (Hebrew) (*A State at Any Cost: A Biography of David Ben-Gurion*), Keter, Ben Shemen, 2018, p. 486. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Drory, 2006, p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Segev, 2018, p. 486. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Dayan, 1976, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Morris, 1997, p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Dayan, 1976, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Teveth, 1971, p. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Dayan, 1976, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Teveth, 1971, p. 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Aryeh Avneri, *P’shitot hatagmul: Esrim shnot tagmul yisrael me’ever lekavei ha’oyev* (Hebrew) (*The Reprisal Raids: 20 Years of Israeli Reprisals Behind Enemy Lines*), Sifriyat Madim, Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 15–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibid, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. “Order to Establish Unit 101,” 1953, July 30, 1953, Procedure on Unit Deployment, IDF Archive 38/433/1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. “Order to Dismantle Unit 101,” January 29, 1954, IDF Archive, 156/25/1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Uzi Eilam, “Meir Har-Zion’s Unique Contribution” (Hebrew), *Haaretz*, March 16, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. The man detained was Yitzhak Jibli, a fighter in the unit. He was taken to a detention camp in Tiberias where he was savagely beaten. Uzi Eilam wrote that Sharon, apparently with Dayan’s approval, ordered a reprisal against the MPs, which was led by Shlomo Baum. The action was carried out as a military operation in every way. See: Uzi Eilam, *P’shita leylit: Pe’ulot hatagmul – mehagana le’yozma* (Hebrew) (*Nighttime Raid: The Reprisals – from Defense to Offense*), Yedioth Ahronoth and Hemed Books, Rishon Lezion, 2020, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Nir Hefetz and Gadi Blum, *Haro’eh: Sipur hayav shel Ariel Sharon* (Hebrew) (*The Shepherd: Ariel Sharon, a Biography*), Yedioth Books, Tel Aviv, 2005, pp. 102–103. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. According to the theory of organizational change, an agent of change is a member of an organization that leads and steers the change in it. See: <https://businessjargons.com/change-agent.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Arik Sharon, *Warrior: An Autobiography*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 1989, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Morris, 1997, p. 275. Morris notes that the order published by the Command was, for some reason, more strongly worded than that of the General Staff, which made do by suggesting damage “to a few buildings.” Sharon relied on the order of the Command. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Dayan, 1976, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Luttwak, 2002, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Morris, 1997, pp. 289–290. For more data on decreasing infiltration, see: Tall, 1998, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Shaul Bartal, *Hafalastinim mehanakba lafedayeen 1949*–*1956* (Hebrew) (*The Palestinians from the Naqba to the Fedayeen 1949*–*1956*), Carmel, Jerusalem, 2009, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Morris, 1997, p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Drory quoting Dayan: Drory, 2004, p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Tall, 1998, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. General Staff meeting, December 20, 1957, IDF Archive, in: Turgan, 2017, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Meir Amit, *Rosh berosh: Mabat ishi al eru’im gedolim ufarshiyot ne’elamot* (Hebrew) (*Head to Head: A Personal Look at Historic Events and Secret Affairs*), Maariv-Hed Arzi Publications, Or Yehuda, 1999, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Teveth, 1971, p. 397. Teveth wrote: “It came to him to inspire a single entity with the spirit of Unit 101 consequent to the action in Qibya in which two units operated together under Sharon’s command. Despite the political fallout, for Dayan this was a successful military operation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Adam Grissom, “The future of military innovation studies,” *Journal of Strategic Studies***,** 29, No. 5 (2006), pp. 905–934.   [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Lt. Col. (res.) Shimon (Katscha) Kahaner, “Battle Description” (Hebrew) in Bar-On (ed.), 2017, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. George Bradt, "The Root Cause of Every Merger’s Success or Failure: Culture,” *Forbes*, Jun 29, 2015,

 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/georgebradt/2015/06/29/the-root-cause-of-every-mergers-success-or-failure-culture/#7b74121ed305> ; [Michele Gelfand](https://hbr.org/search?term=michele%20gelfand), [Sarah Gordon](https://hbr.org/search?term=sarah%20gordon), [Chengguang Li](https://hbr.org/search?term=chengguang%20li), [Virginia Choi](https://hbr.org/search?term=virginia%20choi) and [Piotr Prokopowicz](https://hbr.org/search?term=piotr%20prokopowicz), "One Reason Mergers Fail: The Two Cultures Aren’t Compatible," *Harvard Business Review*, October 2, 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/10/one-reason-mergers-fail-the-two-cultures-arent-compatible>. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ariel Sharon, *Warrior: An Autobiography,* Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 1989, p.74. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Ibid, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Ibid, p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Uri Even, *Arik: Darko shel lohem* (Hebrew) (*Arik: A Warrior’s Path*), Bustan, Tel Aviv, 1974, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Sharon, 1989, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. An elite U.S. commando unit whose unique command course is taken by exceptional offers and soldiers from various units. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Teveth, 1971, p. 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Sharon, 1989, p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Drory, 2004, p. 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *Hamilhama hashvi’it: Eikh nitsahnu velama hifsadnu bamilhama im hafalestinim* (Hebrew) (*The Seventh War: How We Won and Why We Lost the War with the Palestinians*), Yedioth Books, Tel Aviv, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. David Ben-Gurion, “Army and State” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot* 279–280 (June 1981). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Moshe Dayan, “From One Stage to the Next” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot*, IDF Tenth Anniversary, Vol. 118–119 (1959), p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Moshe Dayan, “Military Actions in Peacetime: Moshe Dayan’s Speech to Commanders” (Hebrew), *Maarakhot* 118–119 (April 1959), p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Ibid, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ibid, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Ibid, p. 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. The Chief of Staff’s address at a concluding event, Teachers’ Camp, Negev, IDF Archive, file 1956-636-108, December 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. John Bagot Glubb, (Glubb Pasha), “Violence on the Jordan-Israel Border: A Jordanian View,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (July 1954), pp. 552–562. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Moshe Dayan, “Israel’s Border and Security Problems,” *Foreign Affairs***,** Vol**.** 33, No. 2 (January 1955), pp. 250–267. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Dayan, 1959, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Aluf Ben, “Militant and Post-Zionist” (Hebrew), *Haaretz*, May 12, 2011, [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Morris, 1997, p. 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. The *Iron Wall* is an essay written by Zionist leader [Ze'ev Jabotinsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ze%27ev_Jabotinsky) in 1923. He argued that the Zionist endeavor could fac a stiff Arab resistance and can only succeed if the Jews will have a solid protection against Arab attacks. He used the iron wall as a metaphor for such a protective shield. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Ben, 2011; Baruch Kimmerling, “Militarism in Israeli Society” (Hebrew), *Teoriya Vebikoret* Vol. 4 (Fall 1993), pp. 123–140. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. The Egyptians had 37 dead and 31 wounded, and Israel had 18 dead and 13 wounded. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Morris, 1997, p. 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See this claim in: Morris, 1997, p. 362. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See: Rami Ginat “Israel and Gaza Action and Egyptian-Czech Arms Deal: A Reassessment of Egypt’s Policy on the Blocs” (Hebrew), in Michael M. Lasker and Ronen Yitzhak (eds.), *Etgarim bithoni’im umedini’im bemivhan hametsiut: Israel bein ha’olam ha’aravi vehazira habeinleumit* (Hebrew) (*Security and Political Challenges in the Test of Reality: Israel Between the Arab World and the International Arena*), 2013, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 313–341. This study demonstrates that Nasser’s decision to buy weapons from the Eastern Bloc was made before 1955 and started to crystallize in 1954. See, too, note 196 in Chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Morris, 1997, p. 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Ibid, p. 397. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ibid, p. 453. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Tal, 1998, p. 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Morris, 1997, p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Because of the defense treaty between Jordan and Great Britain, the Israeli concern was that using the Air Force would lead to British intervention. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Meeting between Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan and journalists after Qalqiliya action, October 11, 1956, IDF Archive, 5/127/1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Document of debriefing of Operation Samaria, October 17, 1956, IDF Archive, 5/127/1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Dayan, quoted by Bar-On in a conversation with Ben-Gurion. Mordechai Bar-On, *Sha’arey aza: Mediniyut habitahon vehahuts shel medinat yisrael 1955*–*1957* (Hebrew) (*The Gates of Gaza: Security and Foreign Relations Policy of the State of Israel 1955*–*1957*), Am Oved, Tel Aviv, 1992, p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1984, p. 570. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Morris, 1997, p. 426. Quoted in the debriefing document of Operation Samaria, October 17, 1956, IDF Archive, 776/58/8. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Mordechai Bar-On, *Etgar vetigra: Haderekh lemivtsa Kadesh 1956* (Hebrew) (*Challenge and Clash: The Road to Operation Kadesh 1956*), Ben-Gurion Heritage Institute, Sde Boker Campus, 1991, pp. 232–233. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Dayan, 1976, pp. 250–251. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Teveth, 1971, p. 440. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Moshe Dayan, *Yoman ma’arkhet Sinai* (Hebrew) (*Sinai Campaign Diary*), Am Hasefer, Tel Aviv, 1965, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970***,** Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1988, pp. 68–67. Brig. Gen. Yoni Shimshoni was Director of the Stratgic Planning Division of the IDF and Deputy Director of the Planning Directorate. His book is based on his doctoral dissertation written at Princeton University. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Ibid, p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Zev Elron, *Hatmurot betsahal vehashinuy shelo haya bitfisat habitahon, December 1952 to September 1955* (Hebrew) (*The Changes in the IDF and the Change That Wasn’t in the Security Doctrine, December 1952 to September 1955*). Written as doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 2009, p. 266. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Seminar: a break Ben-Gurion would take whenever he felt that the nation was at a critical junction to study the problems in depths and come up with alternate policy directions. Ben-Gurion’s first seminar occurred in early 1947 in preparation for the establishment of the state and the War of Independence. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. See summary of document in: Dayan, 1976, p. 138; also: Yitzhak Ben-Israel, *Tfisat habitahon shel yisrael* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Security Doctrine*), Broadcast University, Ministry of Defense, Laor and Modan Publications, Ben Shemen, 2013, pp. 13–68. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Dayan’s address at the General Staff meeting of January 14, 1954, cited by Elron, 2009, p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Bar-On, 2014, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Yair Evron, *Hadilemma hagarinit shel yisrael* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Nuclear Dilemma*), Yad Tabenkin and United Kibbutz, Ramat Efal and Tel Aviv, 1987, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Morris, *Milhemot hagvul shel yisrael 1949*–*1956* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Border Wars 1949*–*1956*), p. 205. Morris elaborates: “Dayan wanted war. Time after time, he hoped that a reprisal raid would embarrass the Arab nation attacked or challenge it sufficiently to engage in a reprisal of its own, which would then provide Israel with a pretext to cause the exchanges of fire to deteriorate into a war in which Israel would be able to realize strategic goals of the highest importance, such as the conquest of the West Bank or Sinai, or the destruction of the Egyptian army. This was unquestionably the major motivation underlying the IDF’s raids against Egypt in Kuntila and Sabkha in October-November 1955 and against Syria in December 1955.” [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Moti Golani (ed.), *Hets shahor: Peulat aza umediniyut hagmul shel yisrael bishnot ha-50* (Hebrew) (*Black Arrow: The Gaza Action and Israel’s Reprisals Policy of the 1950s*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 1994, p. 25; Moti Golani, *Tihyeh milhama bakayits: Haderekh lemilhemet Sinai 1955*–*1956* (Hebrew) (*There Will Be War This Summer: The Road to the Sinai War 1955*–*1956*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 43–44, 87–90, 587. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Mordechai Bar-On, “The Reprisals as a System of Deterrence” (Hebrew), in Golani (ed.), 1994, pp. 97–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Tal, 1998, pp. 236–247; David Tal, “Israel's Road to the 1956 War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Feb. 1996), pp. 59–81, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. For example, Zeev Maoz cites in his book several ready-to-use plans for an attack on Egypt that the IDF made as evidence for plans for going on the offense starting as early as 1954: Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2008, pp. 57–58. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Golani, 1997, p. 41. Despite free access to classified sources and an attempt to prove that the Chief of Staff was headed for war, Golani is forced to admit that “Dayan did not speak explicitly of a preemptive war before April 1955,” but he determines that “It was the real-life meaning of his approach.” To Golani’s thinking, “In April 1955, the IDF began to prepare for the possibility of a preemptive war,” ibid, p. 88. According to Golani, these preparations were only operational plans, and similar ones had been drawn up at least four years earlier, in a period Golani does not study. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Tal, 1998, p. 181; Tal, 1996, pp. 65–68. The opposite take has been presented by, inter alia, Avi Shlain, Benny Morris, and Moti Golani. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Tal, 1998, p. 209. Tal cites Rami Ginat’s study, Ginat, 2013. Further evidence is provided by Navon, who was then serving in Military Intelligence: Yitzhak Navon, *Kol haderekh: Otobiografiya* (Hebrew) (*All the Way: An Autobiography*), Keter Books, Jerusalem, 2015, p. 172. Navon recalls intel about Egyptian arms deals with the Soviets already in the works in 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Elron, 2009, p. 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Ibid, p. 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* (Hebrew), Zemora-Bitan, Tel Aviv, 1987, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Merav Halperin, “25 Years Since Operation Yarkon: Special Ops Pioneer” (Hebrew), *Biton heil ha’avir* (Hebrew) (*The Air Force Magazine*), no. 15 (117) (June 1980), p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. See: “Operation Yarkon: By Fire and Water” (Hebrew), Armored Corps Memorial, Latroun Park, January 27, 2011. Available at: <https://yadlashiryon.com/news/27-%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%90%D7%A8-2011-%D7%9E%D7%91%D7%A6%D7%A2-%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%A7%D7%95%D7%9F-%D7%91%D7%90%D7%A9-%D7%95%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%9D/>; published on February 12, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. “Operation Yarkon,” Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IICC). Available at <https://www.intelligence.org.il/?module=articles&item_id=16&article_id=34&art_category_id=7>. See also: “Operation Yarkon: By Fire and Water” (Hebrew), Armored Corps Memorial, Latroun Park, January 27, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Tal, 1998, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Elron, 2009, p. 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Elron cites Ariel Levita and Yitzhak Greenberg who have claimed that the reason Ben-Gurion appointed Dayan on the eve of his resignation was so that Dayan could spearhead a new direction for the IDF’s doctrine. Ariel Levita, *Hadoktrina hatseva’it shel yisrael: Hagana vehatkafa* (Hebrew) (*Israel’s Military Doctrine: Defense and Offense*), Kav Adom-United Kibbutz, Tel Aviv, 1988, pp. 1819; Yitzhak Greenberg, *Heshbon veotsma: Taktsiv habitahon memilhama lemilhama 1957–1967* (Hebrew) (*Defense Budgets and Military Power: The Case of Israel 1957–1967*), Tel Aviv, Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1997, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Edgar E. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, USA, 2004, p. 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Gazit, in: Bar-On (ed.), 2017, p. 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Ibid, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Author’s interview with Shlomo Gazit, Herzliya, February 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Dayan, 1976, p. 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. From author’s interview with Shlomo Gazit, September 18, 2016, Kfar Saba; Gazit, in: Bar-On (ed.), 2017, p. 173; see also: Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. In principle and in terms of doctrine, Dayan’s approach was correct. See: *Hatora habsisit lepikud uleshlita* (Hebrew) (*A Basic Doctrine of Command and Control*), General Staff 6-sub-01, General Staff Directorate. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Author interview with Shlomo Gazit, Herzliya, October 12, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Teveth, 1971, p. 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Teveth, 1971, p. 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Ibid, p. 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Ibid, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Efraim Lapid, *Lohamei haseter: Hamodi’in hayisraeli – mabat mibifnim* (Hebrew) (*Fighters in the Dark: Israeli Intelligence – a Look from Within*), Miskal Publishers (Yedioth Ahronoth and Sifrei Hemed), Rishon Letsion, 2017, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Elron, 2009, p. 130, citing Dayan at a General Staff meeting on December 20, 1953, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. David Siman-Tov and Shai Horowitz, *Aman yotseh la’or: He’asor harishon le’agaf hamodi’in betsahal* (Hebrew) (*MI in the Open: The First Decade of the IDF Intelligence Directorate*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. In a General Staff meeting, which took place on December 20, 1953, Dayan said, “Training is the most important matter.” Cited by Elron, 2009, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. For more on the appointment, see: Rabin, 1979, Vol.1, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Elron, 2009, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Teveth, 1971, p. 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Teveth, 1971, p. 407. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. See Dayan’s conversation with Ben-Gurion about the Nahal: Dayan, 1976, pp. 161, 170*–*171. About the fury of the kibbutzim, see: Mordechai Bar-On, 2014, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Teveth, 1971, p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Sharett, *Yoman ishi* (Hebrew) (*Private Diary*), Maariv Library, Tel Aviv, 197, p.202. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Teveth, 1971, p. 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Nir Mann’s interview with Eli Zeira. Appears as an appendix to Mann’s book, *Toldot mahaneh hamatkal bashanim 1948-1955* (Hebrew) (*The History of the General Staff Camp 1948-1955*), cited by Elron, 2009, pp. 130, 132. According to Zeira, Dayan avoided dealing with logistical and organizational matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. For the “mission command” as a command approach in the IDF, see: *Tora besisit matkalit, pikud ushlita* (Hebrew) (*Basic General Staff Doctrine – Command and Control*), Ekked, General Staff Directorate, Doctrine and Training, November 2006, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Elron, 2009, pp. 185*–*186. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Zeev Elron and Shaul Bronfeld, “The General Staff Versus the Navy in a Forlorn Decade, 1953*–*1962” (Hebrew), in *Yesodot* (Hebrew) (*Fundamentals*), the Journal of the IDF’s History Department, 2019, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Ibid, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Amiad Bresner, *Susim abirim: Hitpat’hut utmurot bashiryon hayisraeli mitom milhemet ha’atsmaut ve’ad milhemet Sinai* (Hebrew) (*Knights’ Horses: Development and Change in Israeli Armor from the End of the War of Independence to the Sinai Campaign*), Maarakhot, Tel Aviv, 1999, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Ibid, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Ibid, p. 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Benny, Michelson, “Why the Armored Corps Headquarters Was Established” (Hebrew), *59 shanim lehakamat mifkedet gyasot hashiryon* (*Fifty-nine Years Since the Establishment of the Armored Corps Headquarters*), July 2019, Armored Corps Museum, Latroun Park, <https://yadlashiryon.com/news/12-%D7%91%D7%A4%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%90%D7%A8-2013-59-%D7%A9%D7%A0%D7%99%D7%9D-%D7%9C%D7%94%D7%A7%D7%9E%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%A7%D7%9E%D7%AA-%D7%9E%D7%A4%D7%A7%D7%93%D7%AA-%D7%92%D7%99%D7%A1%D7%95%D7%AA/>, published on July 22, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Teveth, 1971, p. 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. For details of this operation, which marked the end of the period of reprisals, see Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Letter of goodbye to outgoing Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan by David Ben-Gurion, January 27, 1958, in: Dayan, 1976, p. 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Teveth, 1971, p. 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Ibid, p. 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Ibid, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. The incident is described in: Shlomo Gazit, *Bitsmatim makhri’im: Mehapalmah lerashot aman* (Hebrew) (*At Crucial Junctures: From the Palmach to the General Staff*  *Directorate*), Miskal Publishers (Yedioth Ahronoth and Sifrei Hemed), Rishon Letsion, 2016, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. On the Lavon affair see chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Isser Harel, *Kam ish al ahiv: Hanitu’ah hamusmakh vehamematseh shel parashat lavon* (Hebrew) (*Brother Rises Against Brother: The Authorized and Comprehensive Analysis of the Lavon Affair*), Keter, Jerusalem, 1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Moshe Dayan, 1976, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Among the historians, the most prominent are Golani and Morris. See: Moti Golani, “Dayan Leads Israel into War” (Hebrew), in *Iyunim bitkumat yisrael: Me’asef live’ayot hatsiyonut, hayishuv vemedinat yisrael* (Hebrew) (*Studies in Israel’s Rebirth: A Compendium of Issues Relating to Zionism, the Yishuv, and the State of Israel*), 1994, pp. 117*–*135; Benny Morris, *Milhemot hagevul shel yisrael 1949–1956*, p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Elron, 2009, p. 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Bar-On, 2014, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ke’of hahol: Shimon Peres – habiografiya* (Hebrew) (*The Phoenix: Shimon Peres – the Biography*), Miskal,Tel Aviv, 2006, p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Yitzhak Bar-On, *Mitriya beyom sagrir…: Yehasim bithoni’im bein tsarfat leyisrael 1948–1956* (Hebrew) (*Umbrella for a Rainy Day…: Security Relations Between France and Israel 1948–1956*), Effi Meltser Publishers, Maccabim, 2010, p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Bar-On, 2010; Bar-Zohar, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Gazit, in: Mordechai Br-On (ed.), 2017, p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Mordechai Bar-On, 2010, pp. 450*–*451. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Gazit, in: Bar-On (ed.), 2017, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)