

Where is the deception? By Gal Perl

Did the IDF succeed in realizing the principle of subterfuge from the tactical to the operative level in a way that dismantled the enemy's system and shortened the duration of the war? Considering the possibility that the IDF will be required to maneuver in Lebanon, we must carefully study the campaign in the Gaza Strip to improve the readiness of the forces for the next campaign, should it begin.

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First Published at Maarachot journal (Hebrew) September 2024

"Tactics are the art and wisdom of each and every one of you. Meaning, to lead the people at the front of the force, [utilizing] a plan that employs **stratagem**, not only initiative, considering the enemy and the battlefield, with proper analysis and employing the various elements of your force correctly" (LTG Gabi Ashkenazi).¹

In the past, even before the IDF was established, the Hebrew Defense Forces extolled the principle of stratagem. The Special Night Squads under the command of British Captain Orde Wingate highlighted the need to think deceptively while implementing surprise.² Wingate drew inspiration from the Bible, especially from the judge Gideon Ben Yoash, who established the principle "Look on me, and do likewise",³ and attacked the Midian camp at night from several directions, using Shofars (horns) and torches to sow panic among the s guards.⁴ Subsequently, this principle was implemented repeatedly by the IDF during the War of Independence, in battles fought by Palmach units and others, such as the night attack on the St. Simon Monastery⁵ and operation Horev on the southern front.⁶

The Ground Forces Command and Control Field Manual defines stratagem as follows: "Searching for or creating weaknesses in the enemy system, and then exploiting them to defeat the enemy. Therefore, from the initial stages of forming an operational status until the end of the assessment and the formulation of the operational approach, searching, and striving to find the enemy's weaknesses, or how to create weaknesses and exploit them must be present throughout the process".⁷

For years, the IDF's ethos was inspired by two aphorisms. The first, from scripture, stated that "By Way Of Deception, Thou Shalt Do War".⁸ The second, was the slogan of the British Special Air Service commando unit established by Lieutenant Colonel

¹ Urich, J. (October 14, 2009). The IDF presents: This is how we will act in the next campaign. IDF website.

² Aqabaya, A. (1993). Orde Wingate: His Life and Work. Maarachot, pp. 55, 268. (Hebrew version).

³ Judges, 7: 17.

⁴ Ibid., 19-22.

⁵ Kadish, A. and Arnwald, M. (2008). Battles of Jebusi. Ministry of Defense, pp. 153-181. (Hebrew version).

⁶ Shimshi, A. (1995). By the Power of Deception. Maarachot, p. 93. (Hebrew version).

⁷ Ground Forces (February 2016). Command and Control in Ground Forces Operations. Ground Forces HQ, p. 106.

⁸ Proverbs 24: 6.

David Stirling during World War II – “who dares wins”.⁹ These precepts were adopted in light of the limitations of the IDF’s force, both in resources and personnel, and out of a need to conduct a short war in order to reduce the burden on the economy and remove the threat to the home front. To craft a successful, effective, and war-shortening stratagem requires taking calculated risks, daring, and a willingness to act unexpectedly. The question as to how effective the IDF has rated in this account during “Swords of Iron” remains, as the war has been ongoing for many months. Tactically, it is evident that the IDF has been adhering to the principle of stratagem at all levels, from the senior echelon to the commanders in the field. However, from a systemic standpoint, although the IDF has cause severely damaged Hamas, success is still only partial.

All warfare is based on deception

MG Amir Baram and LTC (Res.) Dr. Sagi Torgan stated in their article that: “The Stratagem is the first and most basic tool in the art of war, and it consists of four basic concepts: surprise, trickery, deceptions and feints. Through deception, it is possible to create an erroneous picture of the situation for the enemy, create uncertainty within the adversary’s system and disrupt decision-making”.¹⁰ By means of subterfuge, the military can cause the enemy to act incorrectly, waste valuable time trying to assess the situation, exploit weak points or create them, and severely damage the enemy’s morale and fighting spirit. In fact, as the Chinese sage Sun Tzu once wrote, “All warfare is based on deception”.¹¹

Stratagem was placed fourth among the IDF’s central principles of war and is defined as “a clever way of making war by seeking out enemy weaknesses or by creating them. It is intended to surprise the enemy by throwing it off balance and bringing about its collapse. In any situation and at any level, deception is the essence of the operational idea around which the method of execution is formulated”.¹² The purpose of deception is to surprise the enemy, and this can be expressed in a variety of ways: in place, method, means, and timing. “Deception is not only a matter of appearing in an unexpected place and time and utilizing surprising intensity and unforeseen means nor should it be reduced to tactics such as flanking, for example. It is much more than that – deception affects the enemy’s consciousness and understanding. By its very nature, it requires high-level and sometimes complex skills and competence”.¹³ Hence, deception is required at every level, tactical, operational, and strategic.

Considering the severe threat to the Israeli home front, the increasing burden on the economy, and the finite resources (human resources, munitions, combat platforms, fuel, spare parts, etc.), time is an essential element, which makes it necessary for Israel to defeat its enemies quickly. A deception operation is intended to enable the IDF to defeat the enemy economically, sparingly, and swiftly employing force, by consolidating efforts on weak points utilizing “maximum force, at minimum time”.¹⁴

⁹ Cowles, V. (1958). The Phantom Major. Maarachot, p. 104 (Hebrew version).

¹⁰ Baram, A. & Torgan, S. (August 2022). The Principles of War: Their Adaptation to the Characteristics of War at the Present Time. Maarachot 494, p. 11 (Hebrew version).

¹¹ Shimshi, A. (1995). By the Power of Deception. Maarachot, p. 93 (Hebrew version).

¹² Doctrine Department (February 2007). The Principles of War Series. Operations Directorate – Doctrine and Instruction Division, p. 23. (Hebrew version).

¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁴ Eisenkot, G. (November 21, 2019). The importance of the ground maneuver. Lecture at the Ground Maneuver as an Essential Tool in National Security Conference, Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

The bolder the action and the greater the (calculated) risk, the less likely the enemy is to anticipate it, and thus the more likely it is to be caught unprepared.¹⁵ This method, coupled with operating at a high rate of operations against all the enemy's elements, in line with the principle of operational continuity, will enable rapidly defeating the enemy. The strength of the maneuver is dependent on momentum, and there must also be firepower and mobility.

Operational pace is determined by seven interrelated factors: physical mobility, tactical progress rate, amount and reliability of information, logistical and combat support, how long each step takes, command and control, and communication.¹⁶ When all these elements are not employed, the enemy too will recover.

The beginning of any operational plan is an analysis of the ground and deriving ramifications, including locating key areas and kill zones, vantage points, controlled areas, and more. The IDF's operational order template (that in other armies is sometimes called The five paragraph order) were updated about two years prior to "Swords of Iron". The change in viewing the enemy as an operational system grew out of a realization of how important it is to analyze the enemy as such and understanding all its components and the interactions between them (for example, the observation and anti-tank systems, which support ambush capabilities, and fire support that reinforces and assists defensive positions enemy compounds). According to the updated order, each adversary system has a controlling area, a C&C center, central structure – a component which if struck disrupts the adversary's organization, throwing it off balance.

The maneuvering approach (not necessarily maneuvering forces on the ground) aims to bypass the enemy's force employment elements and utilize its vulnerabilities to bring about its rapid collapse. Although it is possible to defeat the enemy, eliminating its will to fight and its ability to do so through an essentially erosive action, which destroys the enemy's capabilities at a rate higher than it can recover them, this is an approach that takes a long time and consumes resources.¹⁷ Moreover, contrary to ongoing security operations and the Campaign Between the Wars (CBW) settings, it is not beneficial for Israel because of the burden on the economy and the threat posed to the home front. It should be noted that both approaches can involve a combination of fire and ground maneuvers, but the maneuver approach is more fitting for Israel in a war given the dimension of time.¹⁸

Deception lies at the heart of the maneuver, since its essence is analyzing the rival system, locating the center of gravity and understanding how to strike it rapidly and unexpectedly.¹⁹ A complete analysis of the adversary's ground and system enables the commander to identify the enemy's weaknesses and strengths, to then formulate analytically, utilizing a CCVWH²⁰ process, a deception-based operational idea aimed at a weak point, which when struck, deprives the enemy of power employment components and even lead to its collapse.²¹

The operational idea embodied in deception is the conceptual level that connects mission to method.²² It is also the time to explain deception junior commanders and soldiers

¹⁵ Eiland, G. (2018). *Can't Fall Asleep*. Yedioth Books, p. 84. (Hebrew version).

¹⁶ Simpkin, R. (1999). *A Race to the Future*. Maarachot, pp. 60, 152. (Hebrew version).

¹⁷ Liddell Hart, B. (1956). *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*. Maarachot, p. 14. (Hebrew version).

¹⁸ Bazak, Y. (August 2018) *Between victory and decision, between maneuver and erosion*. Maarachot 479, pp. 28-30. (Hebrew version).

¹⁹ Liddell Hart, B. (1956). *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*. Maarachot, p. 344. (Hebrew version)

²⁰ Center of gravity, critical assets, vulnerabilities, what will overcome, how to overcome.

²¹ Hirsch, A. (May 2022). *Updating the format of the Ground Forces Orders – why it needs to be updated and why it is necessary*. Maarachot 493, pp. 42-47. (Hebrew version).

²² Bharav, A. & Yeshurun, N. (August 11, 2021). Chapter 10 – Operational Idea and Deception. *Learning on the Go – The Military Colleges Podcast*.

using unrestricted language to illustrate it to them. It should be noted that to implement a deception-based operation, a mission command approach is required, which allows commanders the freedom to act in an original, daring manner, and to take advantage of operational opportunities in real-time.²³

The Deceptive IDF vs. the "Crushing" IDF

A prominent example of executing a stratagem is the battle to capture the fortified Um-Katef complexes during the Six-Day War, commanded by MG Ariel Sharon, the commander of Division 38. Sharon, who was known for his boldness, strategic thinking, and ability to read the battlefield, ever since his days in the paratroopers, decided to attack the complex at night. Sharon said he did so because "the Egyptians don't like to fight at night, and they don't enjoy close-quarters combat – and we specialize in both".²⁴ The battle he planned required coordination and control at a level hardly seen at the time in the IDF, and relied on subterfuge, surprise and tapping into every ounce of his forces' capabilities.

The 14th Armor Brigade attacked the compound's outskirts, suppressing the forward positions with fire. The 99th Infantry Brigade, commanded by COL Yekutiel "Kuti" Adam, made a 14-kilometer journey through the sandy dunes, which the Egyptians considered impassable, to strike the fortified posts from an unexpected direction. At the same time, two battalions from the 80th Reserve Paratroopers Brigade, commanded by COL Danny Matt, flew to Jabal Delfa to capture Um Sheikhan and neutralize artillery installations deployed there (this was the first time the IDF had launched such a large-scale air mobile operation). The 63rd Armor Battalion, commanded by LTC Nat'ka Nir, was tasked with bypassing through the dunes and assisting the capturing of Bator. Additional forces from the division were employed on block and decoy missions. The divisional artillery battalion provided close support.

Shortly before the attack on the complexes, when the forces were already at the starting points, the Southern Command Commander, MG Gavish, suggested to Sharon to postpone the attack until morning, so they could receive air force support. Sharon firmly rejected the proposal, fearing it would disrupt the momentum of the attack, interfere with the plan, and give the Egyptians time to rush in reinforcements.²⁵ During the battle, General Sharon 'smiled at the changes' and demonstrated mental flexibility. When it became clear that the 63rd Battalion had already taken Bator, the 80th Brigade's assignment was changed. The brigade's two battalions were dropped off by helicopters at the dunes north of Um Sheikhan and set out to attack nearby artillery positions. However, the paratroopers battalion meant to attack from the west had difficulty gathering forces and organizing, and when it was ready for an attack the 63rd Battalion had already destroyed the enemy forces. The 2nd Paratroopers Battalion raided the targets from the east, striking artillery and anti-tank forces before returning to its positions.²⁶ The attack was supposed to break out in several locations in an inter-service and inter-branch manner. Thus, the maneuvering of the 63rd Battalion, through the dunes, to strike Um Sheikhan from the west; the 99th Brigade and the 80th Brigade from the north, through challenging dunes, physically and mentally undermined the Egyptian force,²⁷ and the compound was seized. The battle was defined as a model combined-arms operation and is studied in military academies around the world.

²³ Interview with MG Yaron Finkelman, Camp Assaf Simhoni Beer Sheva, (February 15, 2024).

²⁴ Magal, Y. (2023). Kuti. Matar, p. 53. (Hebrew version).

²⁵ Zalmanowicz, B. (ed.) (2017). The 63rd during the battle of Um Katef-Abu Agila, June 5-6, 1967. IDF History Department, pp. 23-24. (Hebrew version).

²⁶ Shimshi (1995), p. 184.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 185.

A subterfuge operation is easier to carry out when the enemy is not alert and expecting it, but even when it is ready and expecting it, deception must still be utilized. In the past, the IDF managed to act with deception even after it was surprised. A prominent example is operation "Valiant" (Abirey-Lev), the crossing of the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War. It was a night battle that relied on both deception, surprise and exploitation of a weak point (the gap between the Egyptian armies).²⁸

Since then, the IDF has utilized deception in a series of special and large-scale operations. These include amphibious landing at the El-Awali estuary during the First Lebanon War, and even the opening moves of operation "Cast Lead". Nonetheless, it is worth revisiting the words of MG (Ret.) Sharon, who warned that "we cannot be exempt from a thorough examination of the thesis regarding the IDF's shift between 1948 and operation "Peace for Galilee": here, an army whose strength is qualitative and relies on defeating the enemy through deception; and here, an army that subsists on quantitative superiority, by "crushing" the enemy with its larger force".²⁹ The question asked is, has the IDF since abandoned subterfuge thinking, and rarely implemented it, is only a "crusher", eroding its enemies?

For example, in operation "Change of Direction 11", at the end of the Second Lebanon War, a heavy, predictable and slow maneuver (which it was clear that it would not be able to achieve his objectives within the defined timeframes) was chosen over the alternative of a limited but surprising, deceptive, maneuver, as suggested by Transportation Minister LTG (Ret.) Shaul Mofaz.³⁰ was formulaic and lacked subterfuge. A prominent example from recent years is Operation "Blue South," the attack on tunnels during Operation "Guardian of the Walls," where the "crushing" method was chosen over the originally planned subterfuge maneuver. According to the original plan, the limited ground maneuver was meant to be a ruse to lure Hamas operatives into the tunnels. However, this tactic was not executed as intended, and in the end, the Israeli Air Force struck tunnels that were empty of terrorists.³¹ The question of whether the IDF has abandoned subterfuge has only become more apparent in the settings of the "Swords of Iron" war.

We employed deception at the tactical level – what about the operational?

At the outbreak of the "Swords of Iron" war, Hamas launched a surprise, subterfuge-based offensive that clearly identified the IDF's centers of gravity, strengths and vulnerabilities, focusing its efforts on neutralizing the IDF's advantages and exploiting its weaknesses.³² Despite the difficult opening conditions, the IDF recovered, repelled Hamas' terrorists, and regained control of the areas surrounding the Gaza Strip at a heavy price. Three weeks after the outbreak of the war, the IDF launched a large-scale ground maneuver, the largest since 1982.³³ Let's not forget that this was a recovery vis-a-vis a particular enemy that should be judged from the right perspective rather than compared to the IDF's recovery in 1973, in the face of the Syrian and Egyptian armies. During the war, the forces of the Southern Command, both regular and reserve, under the command

²⁸ Azov, A. (2011). Crossing. Dvir, pp. 111-136. (Hebrew version).²⁹ Shimshi, E. (1995). By the Power of Deception. Maarachot, p. 8 (Hebrew version).

²⁹ Shimshi, E. (1995). By the Power of Deception. Maarachot, p. 8 (Hebrew version).

³⁰ Harel, A. & Issacharoff, A. (2008). 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon. Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 388-392 (Hebrew version).

³¹ Hazoot, G. (2024). The High-Tech Army and the Cavalry Army. Maarachot and Modan, pp. 22, 58.

³² Bazak Y. & Gilat A. (June 24, 2024) Podcast on the maneuver from "Maarachot", fourth episode.

³³ Shelah, O. (July 2024). Force Design Following "Swords of Iron" – Avoiding Treading on the Same Rakes. Dado Center Journal Vol. 41.

of MG Yaron Finkelman, implemented the principle of subterfuge utilizing a variety of means, mainly encircling cities in the Gaza Strip, evacuating the population (during which enemy operatives were also captured), and unanticipated strikes as evident by the enemy's deployments.³⁴

The IDF's main effort in the ground maneuver were the attacks of the 162nd Division in the northern Gaza Strip and the 36th Division, which took over the Netzarim corridor. These divisions quickly penetrated the heart of the Gaza Strip, with the understanding that Hamas operatives focused their efforts on the outer circles of their defenses, leaving the inner layer much weaker. The divisions joined forces on the coast and then moved east toward Israel. It was a move of deception as Hamas deployed its forces in the opposite direction. In fact, Hamas was deprived of the ability to fight effectively based on its pre-war preparations.³⁵ At the same time, the 252nd Division, which moved from east to west toward Beit Hanoun, carried out a deceptive move considering the manner of the strike and its direction as Hamas expected it.

The divisions killed enemy operatives, destroyed weapons, tunnels, headquarters and infrastructure, encircled Gaza City and exerted pressure on Hamas's military and administrative centers of gravity in the northern Gaza Strip. In addition, the forces implemented the principle of subterfuge in their methods of operation, since the enemy system was dismantled by a combination of fire, which struck tunnels near forces maneuvering into enemy territory, denying Hamas terrorists of shelter in the subterranean dimension (the "breaking element"), and a ground maneuver that hunted and killed Hamas operatives who were forced to remain above ground.³⁶

In Khan Yunis, the 98th Division employed a stratagem, quickly maneuvering into the heart of the enemy formation, at the expense of the principle of security, acting contrary to its deployment.³⁷ The division's forces fought a combined battle above and below ground, surprised the enemy with their willingness to fight underground, killed Hamas operatives, and destroyed weaponry and infrastructure.³⁸ Why didn't the IDF fight on a large scale in this domain earlier? Although such an operation involves risk and requires boldness and professional skill, it has the potential to stun Hamas, surprise them, and possibly contribute to its quick defeat.³⁹

On the tactical level, IDF soldiers excelled in the war, utilizing deception through daring, unpredictable thinking. For example, the 697th Reserve Paratroopers Battalion in the 551st "Fire Arrows" Brigade (full disclosure: the writer fought within this unit during "Swords of Iron"), utilized deception all throughout the war in Gaza. The battalion made sure that every target was struck considering the center of gravity not only by means of mass and timing to "crush" the enemy, but also in a way that neutralized the strengths of the opposing system.

Although the strike on the "Sevion" neighborhood in Beit Hanoun was carried out from the expected direction, there too, the battalion utilized deception – the 551st struck the target at night, from several directions. On the night between October 28 and 29, 2023, the battalion crossed the Gaza-Israel border from Kibbutz Erez and covered about three kilometers on foot to Beit Hanoun. A tank company attached to the battalion led the advance, with continuous support from heavy fire. At dawn, the battalion struck the outskirts of the built-up area, with the main operational objective being the capture of the brigade's key terrain and securing it with two company combat teams. The

³⁴ Telephone interview with BG (Res.) Guy Hazoot, (July 21, 2024).

³⁵ Interview with MG Yaron Finkelman, Camp Assaf Simhoni, Beer Sheva, (February 15, 2024).

³⁶ Interview with BG (Res.) Moshe (Chico) Tamir, Kfar Daniel, (February 19, 2024).

³⁷ Telephone interview with BG (Res.) Guy Hazoot, (July 21, 2024).

³⁸ Goldfuss, D. (2024, March 13). Statement of the 98th Brigade Commander. Khan Yunis.

³⁹ Telephone interview with BG (Res.) Guy Hazoot, (July 21, 2024).

operational concept aimed to pin down the enemy ambush on the outskirts using armored forces while infantry, secured by tanks, flanked towards the key terrain. The reconnaissance company moved on the left flank, where it killed several terrorists. Another encounter occurred on the right, where a team from Company B, the battalion XO's command group and a tank fired at a building where terrorists were detected. Night movement combined with the fire effort, which made it difficult for the enemy to effectively conduct observations, enabled the battalion to surprise the enemy at dawn by stationing itself on the outskirts of the built-up area. The battalion quickly established operational control over the Sevivon area.

Another example is the fighting in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City in December 2023. The battalion conducted a series of raids and "attract-strike" operations, during which it forced the enemy to expose itself, then striking it with precision fire. The battalion often employed tanks as a diversion in one direction and infiltrated utilizing infantry forces that set up sniper ambushes from another direction. This enabled them to close fire circles on the enemy, who was exposed to aerial attack forces. All the forces recorded successful hits.

The raid as a form of combat is inherently deceptive in nature, both at the systemic and tactical levels, because it undermines the enemy's ability to anticipate and prepare accordingly. In a raid, forces move into enemy territory, hit and return to friendly lines, allows for surprise, prevents strategic stagnation, undermines the enemy's confidence, and creates a sense of being hunted.⁴⁰ The raid is particularly effective against terrorist armies such as Hamas and Hezbollah, because they are prepared to defend against certain directions of attack, and are inferior to the IDF in real-time intelligence and control capabilities. They often avoid counter-maneuvers, which would leave them vulnerable to the IDF's firepower and maneuvering abilities.⁴¹

During the raids phase of the war, the value of deception was realized more than once. In operation "Local Surgery", the 162nd Division together with special forces raided the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza, where they managed to surprise the enemy by quickly reaching and encircling the hospital.⁴² Another notable operation was "Arnon," the rescue of four hostages from Hamas captivity, carried out by the Yamam unit (SWAT) with support from forces from the Kfir, Givati, Paratroopers, and 7th Brigades in the Nuseirat refugee camp. The forces surprised the enemy by acting during the day, despite the risk to their troops, as the enemy had anticipated an attack at night.⁴³

On the other hand, since the IDF released most of the reserve forces in early January 2024, there has been an operational halt in the fighting, and subsequent difficulties in maintaining momentum and initiative, which, as stated, are essential for shortening the duration of the war. While it is evident that the enemy's interest is to prolong the war and even turn it into a multi-front war of attrition,⁴⁴ the IDF at times acted in a predictable manner, which, although effective in inflicting damage on the enemy, took a considerable amount of time and was primarily based on the "crushing" logic.

Ahead of the next war

Did the IDF succeed in converting its implementation of deception at the tactical level (in which it achieved impressive successes) to the operational level in a manner that dismantled the rival system and shortened the war? The IDF employed fire support on

⁴⁰ Shmuel, S. (July 11, 2024). The Raid – Crawling to the Target. Maarachot. (Hebrew version).

⁴¹ Shelah, O. (2015). The Courage to Win. Yedioth Books, p. 122 (Hebrew version).

⁴² Dvori, N. (April 1, 2024). The IDF's deception and the quality intelligence obtained: Behind the operation at Shifa Hospital. N12 website (Hebrew version).

⁴³ Harel, A. (June 9, 2024). Good triumphed over evil, for a day. Haaretz, 2024, p. 4 (Hebrew version)

⁴⁴ Telephone interview with BG (Res.) Guy Hazoot, July 21, 2024

an unprecedented scale during "Swords of Iron", but one wonders whether this policy "did not lead to excess use of firepower at the expense of subterfuge and basic soldiery, as uncontrolled use of fire has a considerable impact on the IDF's endurance and on its dependence on ammunition supplies from the United States".⁴⁵

On the operational level, the IDF only partially succeeded in implementing deception. This was due to the nature of the enemy—a hybrid terror army that combines elements of conventional military, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare—making its centers of gravity less clear. Additionally, the need to consider the civilian population (which must be warned before entering combat zones) complicates the ability to surprise the enemy. Another reason was the slower-than-required operational tempo, which allowed the enemy to regroup. The IDF initially focused its efforts on the northern Gaza Strip,⁴⁶ not striking all the enemy's positions in central and southern Gaza at once. The pace of operations was never high enough, and often allowed the enemy time to recover. It is important to acknowledge the real challenge of devising stratagems against hybrid terror armies, both at the beginning of the conflict and later, when facing a disintegrating enemy system, as forces encountered during various stages of fighting in Gaza. However, we are not exempt from addressing this challenge.

With that said, this does not mean that tactical excellence has not had a cumulative effect. IDF forces destroyed significant enemy assets, including tunnels, weapons depots, and headquarters, and killed many enemy operatives, including senior commanders. These losses, along with the pressure exerted on the population on the ground, and the ruin of Hamas sovereignty in Gaza, considerably damages the enemy and serves as substantial leverage.⁴⁷ However, the duration of the fighting indicates that the IDF found it difficult to produce a deceptive move at the higher level that would quickly dismantle Hamas and shorten the war.

Perhaps against an enemy that is not a regular and industrial army, there is no such move, and it is better to make do with what the IDF used to call "severe damage" over the years. Perhaps the war can be decided quickly with an unexpected strike from a variety of directions on all the enemy's positions simultaneously. It is possible that the collapse of a terror army of this kind might only be achieved through a war of attrition, in which the army will "crush" stronghold after stronghold, and then clear, raid, and maintain a constant presence on the ground, as like in Judea and Samaria during operation "Defensive Shield".⁴⁸ Either way, this requires different force buildup of a military with significantly enhanced durability in terms of personnel, supplies, and units.

In view of the possible need to maneuver in Lebanon, it is worth reiterating the need for subterfuge against Hezbollah, a terrorist army more effective than Hamas, given the estimation that they will continue to function more effectively even in the face of a maneuver. Another reason is that the threat in Lebanon is not only short-range but spatial in nature. It can be assumed that the enemy will employ long-range precision capabilities (anti-tank and artillery fire), UAVs and other means not only from the immediate combat arena but also from the periphery.

Given the possibility that the IDF may be required to maneuver in Lebanon, it is important to once again emphasize the necessity of stratagem thinking against Hezbollah, which is a more efficient terror army than Hamas. This assessment is based

⁴⁵ Amidror, Y. (May 2024). *Swords of Iron – An Interim Assessment of the Gaza War*. Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS). (Hebrew version).

⁴⁶ Due to the need to evacuate the population from the battle zones, the order of battle, tension between arenas in view of the warming of the northern front against Hezbollah, and more.

⁴⁷ Harel, A. (July 17, 2024). The IDF believes that the military pressure on Hamas has borne fruit and improved the terms of the deal. Haaretz (Hebrew version).

⁴⁸ During which phase one, restoring operational control, was conducted relatively quickly.

on the expectation that Hezbollah's system will continue to function more effectively even in the face of a maneuver operations. Additionally, the threat in Lebanon is not limited to short-range engagements but is broader in scope. It is likely that the enemy will employ precise fire from long distances (anti-tank missiles and artillery fire), UAVs, and other means not only in the immediate combat zone near the forces but also from the surrounding area. Therefore, tactical deception and operational surprise will be crucial to countering this hybrid and geographically expansive threat.

It should also be noted that the Gaza Strip, which is mostly flat and where the maneuvering forces covered relatively short distances, posed fewer challenges for the IDF in terms of both maneuvering and logistics. Lebanon is a completely different ballgame. To dismantle such a system, deceptive thinking is required—one that identifies the enemy's strengths and vulnerabilities and neutralizes them in order to achieve a swift and effective decisive victory.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop a professional discourse and establish knowledge about deception at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. We must carefully study the campaign waged by the IDF in the Gaza Strip, including what operational methods and ideas proved suitable, what was missing, and what is not relevant for the future, to improve the readiness of the forces for the next war, should it begin. This way, the principle of deception will be implemented not only at the tactical level, but in a way that will bring about the enemy's quick defeat thus substantially shortening the duration of the war.

The author thanks BG (Res.) Guy Hazoot, BG (Res.) Dr. Meir Finkel and LTC (Res.) Tzach Ekshtein for their kind comments on this article.