Examining the Transformation of Israel's Military into a Professional Force through the Lens of Huntington's Civil-Military Relations Theory

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Introduction

Political scientists have explored the intricate field of civil-military relations for centuries. They have recognized that the dynamics between the military and civilian society constitute a multidisciplinary spectrum encompassing all facets of the interaction between the armed forces and the state. This interaction extends to state institutions, its citizens, and various sectors of society with which the armed forces collaborate or are embedded. This environment presents a paradoxical situation in which the army – whose task is to safeguard the state and its citizens - can potentially threaten them in the event of a confrontation with the government or conflicting interests rooted in opposing ideologies and policies. The seminal works on civil-military relations acknowledged that the issue transcends the mere question of military coups. As far back as 1957, Huntington argued that "the problem of the modern state is not armed revolt but the relationship between the expert and the politician."

The objective of this research is to analyse civil-military relations following the brutal attack of the terror organization Hamas on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, which shocked Israel and its allies from civilized communities all over the world. The attack inside the country ended up killing 1,400 civilians and soldiers and taking hundreds hostage. The unprecedented breach of the border sent terrorists inside Israeli communities and military installations and left mass graves of soldiers and civilians, including infants and elderly grandparents, after being tortured and burned.

This study is rooted in the Huntington model, where the military is under civil political control while upholding its separation from the civilian sphere to nurture its professional code, centred on military goals and devoid of political influence. The study investigates the civil-military relationship in Israel, traditionally guided by the concept of a dual relationship between the government and the army, with the result that no conclusive military strategy could be determined. Within this examination, the study contemplates whether a transition to a professional army in alignment with Huntington's theory might have averted the catastrophic terrorist attack and the astonishing failure of the Israeli military to prevent it.

Theoretical Approach

The research examines civil-military relations by drawing from the established theory of Samuel Huntington that highlights the connection between professionalism and military subordination to civilian authority. The prevailing and highly influential theory put forth by Huntington in his work, "The Soldier and the State" (1957). [1] Huntington's institutional theory remains the predominant framework for examining civil-military relations. It has had a tremendous and lasting effect on American thinking about how the military interacts with civilian society, and the US military has come to endorse many of its general conclusions and has made it central to its civil-military relations education.[2]

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[1] S. P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State, Cambridge, Harvard University Press
[2] Owens, Mackubin Thomas 2017. Civil-Military Relations. (Oxford: Oxford University Press.1957).

The study is rooted in Huntington's main philosophy, which emphasizes that maximizing professionalism is best achieved by removing the military from political involvement and, conversely, by keeping politicians out of military affairs. Huntington applied his theoretical principles to analyzing military intervention in politics. [3] He argued that the military should operate in a sphere separate from the civilian domain of policymaking and decisions about the use of force.[4] His argument posited that external threats and prevailing social forces, ideologies, and institutions within the society influence civil-military relations. Thus, the conflict between the imperatives of military security and the principles of liberalism can only be resolved by reducing the security threat or diminishing the influence of liberalism.[5]

Liberalism is a philosophical approach that rejects power-driven politics as the sole inevitable outcome of international relations.[6] Liberal peace conceptions contend that democratic nations are significantly less likely to engage in warfare with each other because they possess a greater propensity for collaboration compared to non-democratic states. Liberalism is underpinned by the belief that democratic peace should gradually supplant a world plagued by perpetual conflict, representing a lasting and significant tenet of liberal thought.[7]

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States played a central role in establishing the liberal world order to prevent the conditions that had triggered two global conflicts in just three decades from recurring. [8] Contrary to this policy, in Huntington's perspective, the challenge that the United States faced during a protracted struggle like the Cold War was that while transmutation might be effective for brief periods requiring concentrated military efforts, it would not ensure a sustained and

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[3] Gabriel Ben-Dor, "Institutionalization and Political Development: A Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, 3,(2009).

[4] Huntington, 1957.

[5] Suzanne Nielsen, "American Civil-Military Relations Today: The Continuing Relevance of Samuel P. Huntington's The Soldier and the State," *International Affairs* 88, 2. 2012;

[6] *Synder, Jack. "Strategic Power: USA/USSR," in The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor.* Editor: Carl G. Jacobsen, 1990

[7] Charles S Maier, Charles S.,   "The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy after World War II." *International Organization* 31 4. (2009).

[8] Jeffrey W. Meiser, "Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory,",2018.. www.e-ir.info/2018/02/18/introducing-liberalism-in-international-relations-theory/#google_vignetteps://Www.e-Ir.Info/2018/02/18/Introducing-Liberalism-in-International-Relations-Theory/

robust military capability over the long term. [9] Huntington maintained that the ideological aspect of societal imperatives, which encompasses the prevailing liberal anti-military ideology, made it exceedingly difficult to develop the military forces necessary to address the functional imperative – enabling military leaders to take measures essential for national security. [10] He contended that only within a conservative environment that aligns with military leaders' objectives can they effectively wield the political influence that society relies on them while upholding the essential tenets of military professionalism that are crucial for a society's survival. He further argued that anti-military liberal ideology leads to either *extirpation* – essentially the near-elimination of military forces when external threats are minimal, or *transmutation* – the transformation of the military to align with liberal values, resulting in the loss of its distinctive military characteristics when external threats become significant.

Huntington's theory delineates two categories of civil-military relations, subjective control and objective control, which pertain to how political leaders manage the military. In the subjective control model, the military is closely intertwined with the political and social system. Both officers and enlisted personnel are selected from the civilian population to form a militia during times of threat. After the danger subsides, they return to their civilian roles, including engaging in politics. In this scenario, Huntington contends, military professionalism is limited.[11]

Huntington's work, *Civilian Control and the Constitution* published a year before *The Soldier and the State*, examined the civil-military predicament from the perspective of the founding era and offered further insight into his ideas. It suggests that the subjective approach was more prevalent in the early United States' political and cultural milieu and influenced how the founders addressed civil-military issues when crafting the Constitution. Huntington explicitly favours the objective model, where expertise in one domain does not overlap with competence in another.

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[9] Rita Brooks, . "Paradoxes of Professionalism: Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in the United States," *International Security* 44, 4 (2020).

[10] Tom W.Smith, "General Liberalism and Social Change in Post-World War II America: A Summary of Trends" *Social Indicators Research* 10. (1982).

[11] Vasabjit Banerjee, Sean. P Welbeck, "Civil-Military Relations: Through a Perilous Lens," *Armed Forces & Society*, (2022).

His objective control model portrays a highly specialized military and political system. In this system, military professionals and political leaders operate within their spheres of expertise. The military remains separate from the political system and concentrates on developing proficiency in warfare, encompassing the *management of violence*. In this model, military professionalism is maximized. Huntington's objective model follows an approach in which senior military professionals ensure the state's security while offering military counsel to political leaders who exercise their expertise in politics and national strategy.[12]

His focus on "objective control" enhances military professionalism because adherence to civilian authority is the central tenet of professionalism.[13] The military should operate in a separate environment from the civilian authority of policymaking and decisions about the use of force. Civilian authorities should grant a professional officer corps autonomy within military affairs. According to his philosophy, implementing objective control is essential to limit the military's power and enhance civilian control without compromising external defence. This approach ensures the safeguarding of civilian society from external threats and undue military influence.[14] Huntington defines the core of objective control as *the recognition of autonomous military professionalism*. This balance between military autonomy and civilian authority is a crucial aspect of his theory and its application to contemporary situations[15]. Huntington maintained that objective control is indispensable to minimize the military's influence and ensure more robust civilian control without compromising protection against external adversaries.[16] This is essential for safeguarding civilian society from external threats and potential encroachments by the military. He posited that achieving military security necessitates a fundamental shift in societal values from liberalism to conservatism.

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[12] John (2010).

[13] Owens, 2017.

[14] S. P. , 1961)

[15] Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Civil-Military Tensions and the US Civil-Military Bargain," *Orbis*6, 4 (2022).

[16] S.P. Huntington, N*ational Policy and the Transoceanic Navy*, (United States Naval Institute Proceedings, 1954),p. 80.

In this framework of the relationship between civilians and the military, he argued that civilian authorities bestow upon a professional officer corps a degree of autonomy regarding military affairs.[17] He concluded that a highly experienced officer corps should remain prepared to carry out the directives of any legitimate civilian authority that holds power within the state.[18] Establishing clear boundaries between civilians and soldiers emphasizes that civilian authorities should grant a professional officer corps autonomy within military affairs. A highly professional officer corps is expected to be ready to execute the directives of any civilian group that legitimately holds authority within the state. In the context of Huntington's argument, military autonomy is not absolute. While the military assumes operational and tactical decisions, civilians must determine policy and grand strategy matters.

Methodology

This study is closely aligned with the fundamental principles of Huntington for two main reasons. Theoretically, since his institutional theory remains the dominant paradigm for examining civil-military relations and practically because the US military adheres to the core principles of Huntington's civil-military framework. The US military has embraced many of Huntington's conclusions and has integrated them into its civil-military relations education. In contemporary times, military professionalism in the United States encompasses many elements, including skill, organizational characteristics, and ideological components.[19] Huntington's approach is arguably dominant within the U.S. military today.[20]

This research seeks to address whether the main arguments of his theory apply to Israel. The theory is connected to the IDF's failure to weaken its soldiers' military capabilities and reinstate a feeling of deterrence in the region with advanced technology. This aligns with Huntington's concept of a *loss of its distinct military attributes*, which,

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[17] Alen P. Grimes, "Contemporary American Liberalism," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 344, 1 (1962).

[18] S.P. 1968).

[19] Nathan K Finney, and Tyrell O. Mayfield, *Redefining the Modern Military: The Intersection of Profession and Ethics*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press.).

[20] Brooks, 2020).

regrettably, was demonstrated to be accurate. The importance of Huntington's arguments is particularly relevant to Israel's historical experience, making it impossible to miss the significance of the timing of the Hamas attack during a Jewish holy day on 7 October 2023. Just 50 years earlier, on 6 October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, catching Israeli forces off guard. The Yom Kippur War prompted Israel to reassess its military strategy and preparedness and highlighted the importance of intelligence and readiness in deterring and responding to potential threats. However, Israel had not encountered a large-scale ground offensive since 1973 and was unprepared for such an attack. It was under the impression that it was effectively managing Hamas exhausted from conflict by offering economic incentives to Gazan labourers in Israel. As a result, Israel heavily invested in cyber capabilities and air defence while overlooking its terrestrial border defences.[21] The assault of Hamas marked a monumental breakdown in Israel's military intelligence similar to that of 1973, dealing a tactical blow to the country's reputation for military supremacy.[22]

The research aims to investigate whether the 7 October 2023 events could serve as a warning sign that the IDF strategy needs to align with Huntington's arguments. Based on the analysis presented, this research explores whether the IDF, the Israeli political system, and the multicultural society can embrace the agenda that advocates respecting an independent military sphere of action. This approach is rooted in the experience of the failure to prevent 3,000 armed terrorists from executing a brutal attack on Israeli communities and military bases. This research investigates if military affairs' political and social interference undermined its professionalism and jeopardized what Huntington designated as objective control.

Israel has declared war on Hamas following its surprise assault and is currently undergoing a process of doctrinal and structural adaptation as it experiments with a new warfighting concept. The fact that this adaptation process is ongoing and that a new strategy for civil-military relations will have to be examined makes the timing of the

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[21] Dov Waxman, "Hamas Assault Echoes 1973 Arab Israeli War – a Shock Attack and Questions of Political, Intelligence Culpability," *The Conversation* 8 October 2023.
[22] Peter Beaumont, "Hamas's Murderous Attack Will Be Remembered as an Israeli Intelligence Failure for the Ages," *The Guardian*, 7 October. 2023.

research ideal. The research analyzes the issues that impose obstacles to the transformation of the IDF to a professional army under the control of civilian authorities while maintaining its social separation to uphold a professional code driven by military objectives – according to Huntington's principles of civil-military relations.

The question that emerges is how we should evaluate Huntington's philosophy, considering its age of nearly a century and the central role that technology now plays in modern military strategies. This question holds excellent significance, as the study seeks to explore an alternative approach to civil-military relations in Israel in light of the challenges faced in fulfilling the fundamental purpose of military operations. These challenges include safeguarding the nation's citizens in light of hand and the shortcomings in the present army operational procedures, as evidenced by the Hamas attack. The research is confident that given the US military's acceptance of the critical arguments of Huntington's theory, there is a genuine opportunity to investigate whether these principles can also be applied within the context of the Israeli army's civil-military relations.

Objective Control

The most pressing issue in examining civil-military relations in Israel is the autonomy of the military in the course of its conduct with the government. Huntington put forth the argument that the army should function independently and professionally, separated from politicians' influence in decisions related to the use of force. In this context of civil-military relations, he contended that civilian authorities need to grant a professional officer corps a level of autonomy in military matters. He claimed that a defensive military ideology eliminates military forces during periods of minimal external threats and the loss of distinct military characteristics when external threats become significant. Based on this principle, the research maintains that the failed reaction of the Israeli army was because the IDF did not receive autonomy in military matters, and the military strategy was based broadly on assumptions of the political establishment, which proved to be incorrect.

From an economic perspective, Israel is considered a developed country with a strong economy; Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United

States, and the European Union. It has been the de facto authority in Gaza since shortly after Israel withdrew from the territory in 2005, governed by the Sharia-based Palestinian Basic Law.[23] However, the watchdog Freedom House found in 2020 that the *Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations*. The economic situation in Gaza was already dire before Hama's assault, and the counterattack by Israel is exacerbating the extreme poverty of its residents.

The technological mismatch between Israel and Hamas is staggering, which caused disdain and military unpreparedness. Israel is proud of having world-class intelligence, with Mossad, Shin Bet, military intelligence, the most exquisite human resources, and the most capable technical intelligence gathering capabilities, including cyber and signals intelligence. Israel is one of the world's most specialized and productive high-tech economies, and this advantage provided the central defensive policy of the IDF.

Considered the most intricate endeavour undertaken by Israeli defence officials, a barrier was built, stretching the entire border between Israel and the Gaza Strip. It consists of an underground wall equipped with sensors, a six-meter-tall above-ground fence, and a sea barrier to detect naval intrusions.[24] However, the highly praised $1 billion security barrier along the Gaza border proved ineffective as Hamas militants employed basic bulldozers to breach it and armed paragliders to navigate above it. Waves of rockets penetrated Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system, and Israel's surveillance infrastructure, comprising a dense web of drones, cameras, and cyber surveillance, was found to be tragically inadequate, as adversaries managed to circumvent and overpower it.[25]

The heavy reliance on technology and the culture of extreme surveillance collapsed when members of the terrorist organization Hamas launched an unprecedented land, air, and sea attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip. The infiltration was

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[23] Ashley, 2023.

[24] Lazar, Berman, "Capturing Contemporary Innovation: Studying IDF Innovation against Hamas and Hezbollah," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 35,1 (2012).

[25] Adam Rasgon, and David Kirkpatrick, *The New Yorker*. 13 October2023. Https://Www.Newyorker.Com/News/News-Desk/What-Was-Hamas-Thinking

a complete surprise for the Israelis and the world, as it was believed that Hamas would be unable to attack this scale and complexity. The assault took the IDF and the intelligence services by surprise since Israel had a *smart fence* along the border that was supposed to detect any activity. Further, the assessment of the intelligence agencies and the government's official policy was that Hamas would not attack this magnitude. The infiltration was a total shock, given the fact that Hamas was able to pull off an operation of this size and complexity, with fighters that infiltrated 22 Israeli communities 15 miles away from Gaza's border with Israel, massacred hundreds, raped young women, brutalized bodies, and abducted many.[26]

The communities on the Gaza border were left defenceless. They expected the IDF to arrive within minutes, not within hours. They expected Air Force assets overhead immediately. They expected that no one would ever be kidnapped to Gaza. While many forces fought heroically and many soldiers and police died, it was not enough to prevent disaster, and the failure of the IDF was imminent. In the face of the security forces' inability to respond to the attackers, individuals resorted to sending desperate text messages to their family members for help. During this time, armed terrorists freely roamed for hours without any intervention from the highly regarded Israeli military. This breakdown in the military's security technology and their inability to confront the Hamas militants contributed to a widespread feeling of abandonment among Israeli civilians and victims. The collapse that Israel faced was worse than a military defeat but a massacre of civilians. Hamas's goals were not just to destroy military bases but to commit mass murder against civilians, going house to house to kill them all. A third of the respondents testified that their sense of personal security is low or very low. The army will, therefore, have to regain the public's trust in a lengthy process that will require transparency and draw essential conclusions.[27]

The attack by Hamas was a total system failure on Israel's part. The Israelis are accustomed to being able to know precisely what the Palestinians are doing, in detail, from their sophisticated means of spying. They built a costly wall between Gaza and the

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[26] *Masih, Niha, "What Is Hamas, and Why Did It Attack Israel Now?" The Washington Post*, 9 October 2023. Https://Www.Washingtonpost.Com/World/2023/10/09/Hamas-Israel-War-Explainer/

[27] INSS, ("Social Solidarity Is No Less Significant than Military Success for Restoring Public Trust,"Https://Www.Inss.Org.Il/Social_media/Social-Solidarity-Is-No-Less-Significant-than-Military-Success-for-Restoring-Public-Trust/2023).

communities on the Israeli side of the border. They had been confident that Hamas was deterred from launching a major attack. They were convinced that Hamas would not dare because they would get crushed, and the Palestinians would turn against the political control of the terror organization for causing another military conflict. The Israelis believed that Hamas was in a different mode, focusing on a long-term cease-fire arrangement, and allowed about 20,000 Palestinian workers to enter Israel every day from Gaza – a move that was benefiting the economy and generating tax revenues.

The questions raised about the Israeli response to the attack remain unanswered. Where was the air force supposed to respond quickly? Why were not commandos sent to the border to stop the terrorists from bringing women, children, and older people back to Gaza? How were 311 soldiers killed by Hamas, an organization that was supposed to be inferior to our IDF? Why did the high command and intelligence services not know about the planned attack? Why were not tanks sent directly to the border? Why did it take a day or two to secure the area?

These questions hold significant importance in light of the Israeli military's technological failure and its heavy reliance on technology. However, the successful breach of Israel's advanced defence systems by a militant organization using methods reminiscent of those from Huntington's era underscores the need to reevaluate the central role of technology in Israel's military strategy. Therefore, based on the principles of Huntington's theory, the research indicates that it would be impossible for Israel to develop a plan to address external threats without a shift in priorities and values.

The questions put forward by this research can be examined according to what Huntington defines as the *loss of its distinct military attributes*. Huntington contended that the prevailing anti-military ideology could lead to the elimination of military forces during periods of minimal external threats and the loss of its distinct military attributes when confronted with significant external threats. Huntington argued that the ideological dimension of societal imperatives, characterized by the prevailing anti-military ideology, poses an essential challenge in building the military capabilities required for fulfilling the functional imperative of ensuring national security. Consequently, Huntington's theory included a predictive element indicating that it would be impractical to develop the necessary military forces to counter external threats without effectively transforming societal priorities.

The elements of his theory proved to be correct. Claiming that Hamas had been successfully contained in Gaza, Israel gradually withdrew troops from the south of the country to protect against violence in regions within the West Bank where Israel maintains security control authority. However, it turns out that was all a massive deception. The forces left behind at the military and intelligence bases were trained to rely on sophisticated technology, including cameras and sensors, to monitor border infiltrations and alert troops on the ground in case of unusual events. The soldiers that were supposed to protect them were blind to the unfolding disaster or had been killed or kidnapped since there were not enough soldiers, not enough capabilities, and no weapons. This day will forever be remembered as a dark day in Israel's history and in humanity's history - a reminder that there are humans capable of utterly inhumane things.

Based on the unique local and regional circumstances, Israel's objective was always the same: degrade Hamas's military capacity and restore a sense of deterrence to the Israel–Gaza border region.[28] However, the events of October 7 proved that the disregard for the abilities of Hamas continued even as the brutal attack started. The lack of autonomy of the IDF and the hesitated policy of the government, coupled with the overall perception of a weak Hamas, resulted in cause. As security forces failed to confront the attackers, people desperately sent texts to family members for assistance while armed individuals roamed freely for hours, with no intervention from Israeli soldiers. The military's security technology breakdown and the failure of one of the leading armed forces in the world to confront militant people intensified an extensive sentiment of abandonment among civilians and victims.

According to Huntington's perspective, the questions put forward by this research can also be examined, such as whether technology can be effective for short periods when concentrated military efforts are needed. Still, it may not guarantee a sustained and robust military capability in the long run. Since the army is responsible for providing security for the society that depends on them, military officers should have specialized expertise in the management of violence, with the ability to set their entrance standards and enforce their own professional ethics and security strategy. This implies that the military's role in policymaking is often to analyze and report on the implications of

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[28] Gil Z. Hochberg, "Operations in Gaza," *College Literature* 43, 1(2016).

alternative courses of action from the military point of view. This conclusion finds relevance in Israel's recent conflict, where the security forces were not prepared for a surprise attack. Technology failed, and with no alternative point of view, ground forces were unable to carry out the fundamental military task of protecting Israeli communities. Military strategy should be based on multiple methods, allowing the use of technology in coordination with ground forces. Conversely, when Israel conducted a well-planned military campaign in response to the brutal attack by Hamas, the utilization of technology to achieve the war's objectives of demolishing the terror organization demonstrated the Israeli army's superiority.

Boundaries Between Civilians And Soldiers

The ongoing political disagreement between the right-wing and center-left factions led to political chaos, with five elections within three years. The divisions in the political system have consistently been a central theme in Israel, as each of the political camps asserts that they champion the country's paramount interests. The divide is perpetuated by the Israeli political system's reliance on proportional representation, which allows for the presence of numerous small parties. This system makes it exceedingly challenging for any single party to establish an effective government capable of devising a well-structured military strategy. The necessity to form coalitions involving multiple parties results in smaller parties wielding disproportionate influence since they can determine the success or failure of a prospective alliance. [29] As a result, most governments have operated with narrow majorities, and there is a consistent risk that any of the smaller coalition parties may not align with the long-term political and military objectives. [30] The reduced electoral strength of significant parties, stemming from the electoral law mandating coalition-building among competing political groups, has bolstered the influence of small and medium-sized parties in shaping the government's

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[29] GideonRahat, "Why Are There So Many Political Parties, and Why Does This Fragmentation Obstruct Governance?" Israel Democracy Institute. Https://En.Idi.Org.Il/Articles/25792, 2019.

[30] Erez *Cohen, "Political Instability in Israel," The Middle East & Central Asia Research Center.* Https://Www.Ariel.Ac.Il/Wp/Mecarc/Political-Instability-in-Israel

character, decision-making procedures, and legislation.[31] Consequently, establishing a stable government has become exceedingly challenging, and the concept of a dominant, leading party capable of instituting enduring and coherent policies has become increasingly improbable.[32]

A prime illustration of this situation can be found in the actions of former Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who prepared a document outlining the possibility of a future attack. This document, titled *The Destruction of Israel by the Year 2022 and the Liberation of All Palestinian Territories*, warned of a potential large-scale assault on Israeli territory by Hamas that bore a striking resemblance to the events of 7 October 2023. It explicitly advised against refraining from launching a preemptive strike, highlighting the far-reaching consequences such a decision could have. The document emphasized the potential impact on Israel's southern region, the psychological well-being of its citizens, and its international reputation.

Lieberman's assessment included predictions of the plan of Hamas, which entailed the capture of Israeli communities near the Gaza border and the abduction of civilians. The document concluded that failing to take the initiative could lead to a significant strategic error, potentially placing Israel in a precarious situation. Regrettably, this document was never discussed with the government, and Lieberman resigned at the end of 2018. Subsequently, a new election was held in April 2019, although no government could be established due to a 60-60 Knesset member tie between the right-wing and center-left blocks[33]. Initially supporting the right-wing block, Lieberman's party gained five seats but refused to join the right-wing coalition. Eventually, the right-wing block formed a government after several elections, but the political turmoil persisted. This situation highlights the intricacies of developing a strategy for civil-military relations within Israel's political landscape. The ability of a small party, irrespective of the accuracy

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[31] Plesner, Yonatan 2021. Israel's Political System Is Broken. Here Is How to Fix It. Israel Democracy Institute. Https://En.Idi.Org.Il/Articles/34025, (2022).

[32] S. Matthew Shugart, "The Electoral System of Israel," T*he Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society*. Reuven Y. Hazan (Ed.) et al. 2020

[33] Aron Heller, "Israel's New Election Highlights Tense Ties to Ultra-Orthodox," *Times of Israel*, June 4 2019. Https://Www.Timesofisrael.Com/New-Election-Highlights-Tense-Ties-to-Ultra-Orthodox.

of its agenda, to impact government policies, whether to adopt or reject them, poses a significant political challenge.

Before the 7 October attack, Israel was in political turmoil over the planned judicial reform by the newly elected government, which the opposition viewed as a power grab in favour of executive authority.[34] The reform is a legislative package to overhaul the judicial system and remove the Court's power to cancel government decisions. The conflict intensified after the right-wing's victory in the November 2022 election, and the government introduced a comprehensive judicial reform act. The reform was designed to curtail the extensive powers of the courts. However, the centre-left opposition claimed that the plan signalled *the end of democracy*, and hundreds of thousands of Israelis nationwide joined protests against the reform.

Since the start of 2023, substantial weekly protests have been held by people opposed to the government's reform plans. The scale of the protests escalated as tens of thousands went to the streets in towns and cities across the country.[35] In a move that caused deep concern, hundreds of military reservists threatened not to serve in an undemocratic country, which they charge Israel will become if the government's plan to overhaul the judiciary is realized. The protesting reservists from some of the military's most elite formations, including combat pilots, members of the elite 8200 intelligence unit, and reserves of Special Forces units, attracted particular attention, stirring alarm from defence chiefs worried that the protests risk compromising national security. This also led to warnings by the government that the IDF could impair Israel's military capabilities.

The opposition was deeply concerned that this reform could potentially transform Israel into a non-liberal religious state, allowing the government unchecked powers.[36] Prominent figures from various sectors, including business leaders, warned that such a change would jeopardize Israel's international reputation. While the protest movement

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[34] Hadas Gold, "A Threat to Democracy or Much-Needed Reform? Israel's Judicial Overhaul Explained, *CNN*, 27 March 2023. Https://Edition.Cnn.Com/2023/03/25/Middleeast/Israel-Judiciary-Netanyahu-Explainer-Intl/Index.Html.

[35] Raffi *Berg, "Israel Judicial Reform Explained: What Is the Crisis about?" BBC News*, 11 September 2023. Https://Www.Bbc.Com/News/World-Middle-East-65086871.

[36] Bethan McKernan, "What Is Israel's Judicial Overhaul about and What Happens Next?" *The Guardian*, 12 September 12 2023. Https://Www.Theguardian.Com/World/2023/Jul/24/What-Is-Israel-Judicial-Overhaul-Vote-about-What-Happens-Next.

against the judicial reform received support from both domestic and foreign media, proponents of the reform argued that the opponents' objective was not to safeguard democracy but rather to preserve the power of the ruling progressive elite, which promotes left-wing policies and wields significant influence in Israel's political system through the courts, despite the electoral success of the alternative right-wing bloc.

Tensions grew between the government and the heads of the security establishment concerning the operational readiness of the IDF in light of measures taken by senior reservist officers. The politicization of civil-military relations widened the socio-political and ideological divide between the two main political blocs, involving reserve soldiers from both sides. The protests against the government's judicial reform bill led the Air Force and Military Intelligence Reserves to contemplate publicly halting or suspending their voluntary reserve service. This development had severe implications for the operational readiness and cohesion of the army, causing tensions between political leaders and senior military commanders – who bear overall responsibility for national security and the unique status of the IDF in Israeli society. Kasher and Elran[37] argue that the divisive discourse among those responsible for national security has significantly eroded trust between the government and the military, further undermining public confidence in both institutions, which was already strained.

The IDF was built on the principles of the *people's army*, with universal conscription and reserve service. This system has served as a cornerstone of national defence and has played a significant role in shaping the identity of successive generations of Israelis, with young men and women undergoing this significant rite of passage.[38] The IDF draws on reserves in wartime and requires that they undergo regular training. Soldiers who refuse to report for volunteer service are not in violation of military or civil law and thus cannot be punished, although they made clear that if Israel entered a state of emergency, they would report for emergency call-ups. Israeli Military Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi called the volunteer system critical and said, *The calls for non-reporting hurt*. Halevi spoke directly

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[37] Asa Kasher,; Meir Elran,; and Idit Shafran Gittleman, "On Israel's Sensitive, Tense Civil-Military Relations," *The Institute of National Security Studies. 12* September 2023. Https://Www.Inss.Org.Il/Publication/Civil-Military/.

[38] Dov Lieber, "In Israel, Army Service Is Required for All. That Could Now Change," *The Wall Street Journal. 12* May. 2023. Https://Www.Wsj.Com/Articles/in-Israel-Army-Service-Is-Required-for-All-That-Could-Now-Change-2c76624d.

with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, warning him of the consequences the military could face with reservist noncompliance, including the quality of the IDF taking a hit. Israeli Air Force Chief Tomer Bar threatened to fire reservist pilots who refused to join training or service, saying that reservist pilots not showing up for duty would shed and possibly be removed from operational activity. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said in response to the growing calls by reservists to refuse to volunteer for service in demand for the political decisions to "talk, and quickly, since we face heavy and complex challenges." He added that "Calls for insubordination hurts the Israeli military's ability to function and carry out its missions." Former Defense Minister Benny Gantz called on researchers to *keep serving and show up, no matter what" while admitting that danger*. Former Israeli national security adviser and major general Yaakov Amidror warned that Iran was pushing Hamas and Hezbollah *to act more boldly* against Israel because Tehran believed the months of protests against the government were evidence that the country was weak.

Concerns have been raised regarding the escalating distrust between political and military leadership, exacerbated by deep-seated disagreements within opposing political factions.[39] As Michael[40] explained, there is a discernible decline in public trust in the military. Although the army still maintains a prominent position in the eyes of the public compared to other state institutions, its standing is unquestionably diminishing. While the Israeli public may maintain high confidence in the army's capabilities and operational prowess, their trust in the army's organizational conduct and treatment of soldiers is significantly lower. Within Israel, the failure of the military's security technology fed into a broader sense of abandonment among citizens and victims, who called into news programs and texted family for help while gunmen rampaged for hours, unimpeded by Israeli soldiers. Israelis at large feel that the state abandoned them, and the collective reliance on the government and the army collapsed. The state owes the citizens protection as the most basic promise, and that protection has disappeared.

The IDF's failure to protect Israel's citizens can be understood according to Huntington's theory, which asserted that ideological conflicts pose significant challenges

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[39] Akiva Malamet, "Israel's Internal Divisions Are Its Mortal Enemy Now," *The UnPopulist*, 18 May 2023. Https://Www.Theunpopulist.Net/p/Israels-Internal-Divisions-Are-Its

[40] Kobi Michael, "A Warning Light for Civil-Military Relations in Israel," Https://Www.Inss.Org.Il/Publication/Hebron-Incident/, 2022.

in building the military forces required to address the functional imperative and allow military leaders to take essential measures for national security. According to his theory, a change in societal imperatives is necessary to create the military forces needed to confront external threats. He also contended that the absence of a clear military ideology can eliminate military forces when external threats are minimal, potentially leading to the erosion of distinctive military characteristics when significant external threats arise.

In contrast to the political divide's consequences, Huntington's normative aspect emphasizes clear distinctions between civilians and military personnel. He argued that civilian authorities should grant a professional officer corps autonomy in military affairs, expecting a highly experienced officer corps to be prepared to execute the directives of any legitimate civilian authority within the state. In practical terms, this theory suggests that if the IDF had been given autonomy within its domain and military personnel had maintained a high level of professionalism, free from political involvement, it could have potentially averted the conflicts between the government and the military.

In practice, this theory implies that if the IDF had been granted autonomy in its sphere, and army personnel would have been professionals who cannot and should not be involved in politics – the conflict between the government and the army would have been prevented. It is almost certain that Iranian and Hamas perceptions of Israel as weak, vulnerable, and divided were strongly encouraged by repeated warnings inside Israel that the IDF readiness was being compromised by thousands of critical reservists refusing to report for voluntary duty and training in protest against the judicial reform proposals. Based on the principles of Huntington, it should have resulted in a professional military that remains politically neutral and willingly submits to civilian control.

Conclusion

The research is grounded in Huntington's model, where the military is under the control of civilian authorities while maintaining its social separation to uphold a professional code driven by military objectives, free from political interference. However, the capacity to keep the military entirely apolitical is constrained within Israeli society. This research analyzes the political and social divides that impose obstacles to transforming the IDF into a professional army.

The questions put forward by this research can be examined according to Huntington's arguments that underscored the importance of maintaining a clear separation between the military and civilian spheres when it comes to policymaking and decisions related to the use of force. In examining the failure of the IDF, it is clear that the perspective Huntington highlights the need for civilian authorities to grant the professional officer corps a degree of autonomy in military affairs. A highly professional officer corps should stand prepared to carry out the directives of any legitimate civilian group in authority within the state. In line with Huntington's argument, it is essential to recognize that military autonomy has limitations. As he maintained, and as should be the new civil-military strategy of Israel, the military should be responsible for operational and tactical decisions. At the same time, civilians should determine policy and strategic matters.

The practical application of Huntington's theory in the modern era suggests that if the military is granted autonomy within its sphere of expertise, it develops a professional military that remains politically impartial and willingly subordinate to civilian oversight. In the context of the ongoing political debate in Israel, we can draw parallels to Huntington's argument, emphasizing that military autonomy is not absolute. While the military is responsible for operational and tactical decisions, policy and grand strategy matters should remain the prerogative of civilian authorities.

We cannot know if the political and social crisis were a contributing factor that led Hamas to launch its brutal attack. However, it is not difficult to assume that the intense divisions inside Israel and the refusal of the reservists to report for duty were significant contributors to the catastrophic intelligence failure and breakdown of Israeli defence systems around Gaza. Israelis are still profoundly shocked and united in grief and horror, and there is overwhelming agreement that nothing else matters but destroying Hamas and rescuing the hostages. After the war with Hamas, the worst intelligence and defence debacles in Israel's history will be evaluated. However, one major conclusion of this research is that there should be a separation between political and military responsibilities. As concluded here, the new strategy for civil-military relations should be to *Let the IDF do what is needed and not what is caused by disagreements with the government*.

Huntington's conclusion should be consistent with civil-military relations in Israel, considering the intricate and unpredictable interactions between military personnel and

the government, along with the extensive engagement of reservists in politics. Regarding the ongoing political debate, although within the political and social context of Israeli society, the capacity to keep the military entirely apolitical is constrained – we can relate to Huntington's argument that underscores that autonomy is not absolute, and while the military bears responsibility for operational and tactical decisions, matters of policy and grand strategy must be determined by civilians. Based on this conclusion, when we consider the application of Huntington's theory, it becomes clear that nearly half of Jewish Israelis favour discontinuing compulsory conscription and transforming the Israel Defense Forces into a professional military. 47% percent of Jewish Israelis polled reported in favour of a professional military in 2019, and support for a mandatory draft fell under 50% for the first time in 2021, according to polling by the Israel Democracy Institute.[41]

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