

NEW BOOK

# Transforming Command

by Dr. Eitan Shamir



Dr. Eitan Shamir and his new book, with Prof. Efraim Inbar.



Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen, Brig. Gen. (res.) Moni Chorev, and Dr. Eitan Shamir.

In June, the BESA Center held a conference to mark publication of Dr. Eitan Shamir's book *Pikud Mesima* (Modan-Israel Ministry of Defense, 2015). This is an updated and revised Hebrew edition of Shamir's landmark *Transforming Command* (Stanford UP, 2011), which has been endorsed by General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The volume is required reading in many military academies including the US army, navy and marines, the UK military colleges, and in the IDF. Dr. Shamir has been invited to speak at the US Marines U., the Navy War College, Norway's Defense Academy, and the UK Ministry of Defense.

The book examines in depth the experiences of the armed forces of the US, Israeli, and British armies in implementing mission command.

It reveals the key factors that have determined the success or failure of implementation-factors such as the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), the spread of low-intensity conflicts and operations other than war, and differences in how military cultures interpret, articulate, and exercise the command function. The book offers perspectives on the development of military doctrine and the training and education of tomorrow's military leaders.

Speaking at the BESA Center conference, Shamir said that "On today's complex, fragmented and fast-moving battlefield, where combatants adapt constantly to exploit one-another's weaknesses, there is a demonstrable requirement for military commanders to devolve a high level of autonomy of decision-making and action to leaders on the ground. An effective model for doing this has existed for some time in the form of mission command and has been utilized by the IDF and Western armies, but with mixed success."

Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen, a former corps commander and commander of the IDF military colleges (who recently joined the BESA Center) argued

that the IDF has become too dependent on technological solutions, rather than developing traditional strategies to cope with new threats.

Hacohen: "Military doctrine is a function of culture; it is never universal but is rooted in time and place. For years the hallmark of the IDF was the initiative and creativity of individual soldiers. Instead of the 'art of war,' today the IDF has become obsessed with the 'science of war' – statistics and numbers of targets hit – but this does not necessarily measure effectiveness. The IDF needs to maintain its ability to adapt to changing circumstances just like some of its rivals are doing. Technology cannot solve everything!"

He also warned that IDF commanders, who once deservedly held a reputation for independence and initiative, are today exhibiting less of these traits. "They have become too bureaucratic and stiff. We need more IDF 'bandits – shakers and movers – and fewer technocrats," he said.

Brig. Gen. (res.) Moni Chorev of the BESA Center, also a former senior IDF commander, explained that in the new era of operations that are characterized by attrition and centrally-conducted stand-off fire, there is less opportunity for commanders to exhibit independence.

