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The IDF Must Be Ready to Prevent Iran's Nuclearization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Ensuring the necessary capabilities to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons should political efforts fail to achieve this goal must be the IDF's top priority. Judging from his speech on January 26, Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi is facing this professional and moral responsibility with great determination.

The ability to ensure a swift and decisive military victory is an important means of preventing war. It is therefore a key tool in the political toolbox, and references to it in the public statements of members of the political and military echelon—in military exercises and in other shows of force—are warranted not only for practical but also moral reasons.

Clausewitz defined the roles of the political and military echelons sharply and clearly: the statesman is required to prevent war and the military man is required to end it if it breaks out anyway. The military man must end the war as quickly and cheaply as possible and with sufficient major military achievements to buy the political echelon strong cards to play in negotiations.

The differences in the roles of the statesman and the military man reflect the differences in the nature of their leadership and the manner in which they are publicly expressed. The statesman is expected to act the "good cop" so as to exploit all available political means to prevent war (as Levi Eshkol did in 1967 and Yitzhak Shamir did in 1991). The military man is expected to lead like a "wild horse that can barely be held back" while accepting the authority of the political echelon.

The statesman must rise in the morning and retire at night optimistic about the possibility of preventing war. From this optimism will be drawn the power needed to take the political risks of war prevention. The military man's

approach must be the exact opposite. In order for him to provide a military safety net sufficiently credible to allow the political echelon to take risks, he must adopt the worst case scenario approach, ever on the alert to confront the most unexpected and difficult predicament. In the Israeli case, this worst case scenario is an existential threat.

In his book *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel Huntington defines the military man's approach to his position this way:

In estimating the security threats the military man looks at the capabilities of other states rather than at their intentions... If a state has the power to injure one's own security, it is necessary to assume that it will do so. Safety requires attributing to other powers the worst intentions and the shrewdest abilities. ... Military opinion must never be colored by wishful thinking ... The military man will be dealing with military fact, hard figures, grim realities of time and space and resources.

An example of the approach required of the military man is the situation assessment discussion held by the IDF General Staff on May 19, 1967. Chief of Military Intelligence Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv raised three possible reasons for the Egyptian forces' surprise entry into Sinai and three likely scenarios for their employment against Israel. He advised Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin to pay particular attention to the third option, which he considered the most dangerous: an Egyptian invasion of Israeli territory. Rabin responded to his recommendation as follows: "I will now discuss options not according to their reasonableness, but according to their danger. The main danger is an all-out Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian attack, with an air opening toward which we must be prepared." As is well known, that is the scenario that was prepared for, to great effect.

When statesmen and military men confer, it is essential that the former adhere to his peace-seeking political approach while the latter adheres to his militaristic approach. The adherence of each to his particular approach is vital, because it enables the statesman to make the most balanced decision possible: one that will either prevent the outbreak of war before the exhaustion of all available political means, or will allow the most optimal political and military management of the situation should war nevertheless break out.

Knowing that going to war or avoiding it is the result of a considered and balanced political and military decision is the key to achieving national consensus— "wall-to-wall" support—for the government's decision. Without that support it is not possible in a democratic society to demand total national mobilization and expect the population to be willing to bear the possible consequences of starting or preventing a war.

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