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THESES

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Threat-Based Military Organization – A Conceptual Shift in the Israeli Defense Forces

Ph.D. dissertation

AUTHOR'S SUMMARY

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Background and Relevance of the Topic

The Middle East and the State of Israel have traditionally held a unique position on the geopolitical map of the world. The geopolitical events and security incidents occurring in the region not only attract significant international attention but also deeply divide the international community and societies. Modern Israel is a key player in Middle Eastern affairs, often serving as a primary shaper of events. Today, it is evident that the Middle Eastern region, and within it, the State of Israel, is indispensable for the analysis of global security.

Since 2006, Israel has played a decisive role in eight military conflicts of varying intensity. Since October 7, 2023, it has been continuously conducting military operations in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, with the conflict escalating into open clashes with Iran by the fall of 2024.

Israel's modern history, survival, and military successes rest on broader foundations than mere military planning and assessment: the constant state of threat, along with the desire for peace and stability, fundamentally shape the country's political, economic, social, and military organization and subsystems. While military security is often emphasized, the concept of security in Israel is not confined to the traditional military dimension. Instead, it exists within a broader political, economic, and societal context, where the various pillars exist in a delicate balance. Events, conflicts, and clashes are not the main focus of this dissertation but rather act as catalysts. The key actor in this process is the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

But what exactly is the IDF? According to David Ben-Gurion, *"The IDF is part of the spirit that created the State and forged our unique community. [...] This organization is not merely a means of threat but also a guardian of democracy."* (Ben-Gurion, 1970). A close relationship exists between the Israeli Defense Forces and Israeli society, which creates a unique situation for the IDF. The Israeli military is not only responsible for national defense but is deeply embedded in society, actively shaping it as well. Its role extends beyond traditional military functions, as it forms one of the foundations of national identity, serves as the guardian of security, and is simultaneously a key organizer of economic and social processes.

In the first decades of the 21st century, Israeli security policy and military organization underwent significant transformations, particularly in response to the lessons learned from the Second Lebanon War in 2006. New types of non-traditional threats, such as rocket attacks and asymmetric warfare, have fundamentally reshaped the operations of the Israeli Defense Forces. The IDF and its security strategy continuously adapt to the evolving security environment. Israel's security concept has always been based on the premise that military strength and

deterrence are critical for the nation's survival. However, deterrence alone is not sufficient: effective defense requires continuous innovation, strategic flexibility, and a deep understanding of regional dynamics. In Israel, military thinking is never merely a response to the challenges of a given period, but rather takes into account the long-term impact of regional and global security changes.

The objective of this dissertation is to provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Israeli military thought, operational planning, force organization, and military development in the period following the Second Lebanon War (2006). This period has been marked by the emergence of new types of challenges, risks, and threats, which have fundamentally transformed the operations of the IDF and determined the directions of its development and modernization.

Scientific problem

The scientific problem examined in this dissertation can be summarized as follows: What role(s) do the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) play in maintaining the security of the State of Israel?

At the core of this scientific inquiry lies the question of how a state with limited territorial depth can maintain its defensive capabilities and respond to new forms of security threats. In recent decades, particularly following the Second Lebanon War in 2006, the transformation of the IDF has become a focal point, highlighting that traditional military strategies are no longer sufficient to guarantee the country's security. The Israeli security strategy must be capable of simultaneously addressing traditional threats in the region and new types of asymmetric challenges, while maintaining military superiority and deterrence capabilities. A key question from a research perspective is how the matrix of challenges, risks, and threats (CRT) is structured. How does Israeli defense strategy respond to this matrix? What theoretical and practical frameworks have emerged in the transformation of the IDF's organization and structure? The IDF must be able to quickly and effectively adapt to the constantly evolving security environment. However, this must be achieved within a political and social framework where the relationship between the military and civilian spheres is exceptionally close. Thus, the position, role(s), and development of the IDF must be examined not only from a military perspective but also in broader societal, political, and economic contexts, within the matrix of challenges, risks, and threats.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the research conducted within the framework of this dissertation can be summarized as follows:

1. Examination of **the theoretical frameworks of military organization** in the context of the Israeli Defense Forces, with a particular focus on the threat-based military organization school.

2. **A comprehensive analysis of the Israeli security situation post-2006, focusing on changes and assembling the matrix of challenges, risks, and threats** using the Copenhagen School's security sector framework, supplemented by innovative, data-driven research methods.

3. **Exploration of the historical roots and transformation of Israel's security perception**, presenting the formation and evolution of security concepts in response to the challenges of the modern era.

4. **Presentation of the evolution of Israeli military thought after 2006**, with particular emphasis on the emergence of new types of security challenges and their impact on military strategy and force development.

5. **Analysis of the phases of Israeli military development after 2006**, identifying turning points, underlying causes, and evaluating the impact of the development directions initiated by these changes.

6. **Examination of the social embeddedness of the IDF, analyzing its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities**, with a particular focus on the interactions between the military and society and the delicate balance that exists.

7. **Examiniation of the applicability of interdisciplinary approaches**, with special attention to the use of data-driven and combined methodologies in the study of the Israeli Defense Forces.

Hypotheses

Considering the scientific problems, research objectives, and research questions outlined, I formulate seven hypotheses that align with these aspects.

The force development directions of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) after 2006 were fundamentally shaped by (1) the impact of the Second Lebanon War, (2) the evolving regional security situation, and (3) the strengthening of new types of sub-state threats. Israeli military strategy and force development primarily draw from realist and neorealist theoretical frameworks, which emphasize the importance of maintaining state sovereignty in an anarchic

international system (Waltz, 1979). These theories are particularly relevant for Israel, as persistent regional threats, such as Iran's nuclear program, the activities of Hamas and Hezbollah, and similar armed organizations, necessitate constant military readiness and development (Freilich, 2012). The IDF's force development follows a goal-oriented approach, integrating various theoretical perspectives, reflecting a pragmatic strategic framework. This strategic eclecticism enables the IDF to adapt different theoretical frameworks based on emerging threats and shifts in the international security landscape (Inbar-Shamir, 2014). Israel shapes its military strategy not only in response to direct security challenges, risks, and threats but also in accordance with its own geopolitical ambitions. This flexibility and adaptability are integral to Israeli military thought, where objectives and methods continuously adjust to the evolving security environment.

The analysis of the theoretical framework behind the IDF's transformation is essential, as these frameworks contextualize the CRT matrix and the phases of the IDF's development after 2006.

Hypothesis 1: After 2006, the Israeli Defense Forces' force development has been dominated by realist, neorealist, and threat-based theoretical frameworks. However, in practice, these frameworks mix with other approaches in a goal-oriented manner and do not appear in their pure theoretical form.

The force development directions of the Israeli Defense Forces after 2006 were fundamentally shaped by (1) the impact of the Second Lebanon War, (2) the evolving regional security situation, and (3) the strengthening of new types of sub-state threats. Israeli military strategy and force development primarily draw from realist and neorealist theoretical frameworks, which emphasize the importance of maintaining state sovereignty in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979). These theories are particularly relevant for Israel, as persistent regional threats, such as Iran's nuclear program, the activities of Hamas and Hezbollah, and similar armed organizations, necessitate constant military readiness and development (Freilich, 2012).

Understanding the complex framework of challenges, risks, and threats contributes to comprehending Israel's and the IDF's strategy, while also providing lessons for the development of long-term preventive military strategies.

Hypothesis 2: The framework of Israeli challenges, risks, and threats after 2006 is a multidimensional matrix that integrates both traditional and new types of CRTs and

can be interpreted on global, regional, national, societal, organizational, and individual levels.

The Israeli security concept can be traced back to the defensive practices of the Yishuv, which relied on the self-defense of Jewish settlements and community cohesion during the British Mandate period, particularly through precursor organizations such as the Hagana. These organizations were closely integrated into the Yishuv community, facilitating the rapid development and adaptation of military capabilities, which became a central part of Israeli identity and security perception (Ben-Eliezer, 1998; Kimmerling, 2001). The early self-defense mentality has had a lasting impact on Israel's security doctrine, in which strong ties exist between the civilian population and military organizations. Ben-Gurion's three-pronged division structured Israel's security concept around deterrence, early warning, and offensive capability, a framework that has remained largely unreformed to this day (Nagel–Schanzer, 2019). The Second Lebanon War marked a significant turning point for the IDF, leading to substantial organizational changes (Rapaport, 2010). These organizational shifts were preceded by changes in the conceptualization of security, including the expansion of Ben-Gurion's three pillars with a fourth component: defensive capability (Nagel–Schanzer, 2019).

Hypothesis 3: Modern security challenges, risks, and threats have not overridden Israel's historical security perception but have rather supplemented it, transforming it into a continuously adaptive security doctrine capable of responding to hybrid threats.

After the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Israeli military doctrine increasingly focused on addressing challenges posed by non-state actors. Armed groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which operate differently from conventional military structures, often hiding among civilian populations and employing unconventional tactics, present a significant challenge for the IDF. In response, Israeli military thought has developed various adaptive strategies and outlined new directions in both conceptual approaches (Kochavi – Ortal 2014) and tactics, including preventive strikes (Shapira 2022) and technological innovations. To counter these new threats, Israel has placed greater emphasis on strategy, leadership and command structures (Baruch 2015), intelligence capabilities (Kuperwasser – Siman-Tov 2017), counterterrorism methods and tactics (Jager 2021), as well as advancements in technological capabilities (Frantzman 2024).

Hypothesis 4: As a result of new security challenges, Israeli military thought has become increasingly adaptive in handling asymmetric threats, where technology-driven

threat management, defense strategies, and long-term security maintenance have taken precedence, while the focus on conventional threats has diminished.

The Second Lebanon War served as a primary lesson on the necessity of developing ground forces and shattered the myth of the air force's "omnipotence." The experience highlighted the need for enhanced reconnaissance and intelligence capabilities (Glenn 2012). As a result, technological advancements, innovations, and the principles of precision warfare came to the forefront, culminating in the development of drone capabilities (Rémai 2021), offensive and defensive cyber capabilities (Tabansky – Ben-Israel 2015), as well as defense systems against rocket and drone attacks (Kuperwasser – Siman-Tov 2017). Fifth-generation warfare has become fundamental in the modern era (Szenes 2006), and it is therefore unsurprising that, based on the lessons of the 2006 war, the IDF has focused on integrated operations.

Hypothesis 5: In the years following the Second Lebanon War in 2006, several key turning points in Israeli military development can be identified, closely linked to changes in the CRT's framework. However, the attitudes of military leadership (particularly the Chief of General Staff) have played a decisive role, and in several cases, political influence has also emerged as a significant factor.

As Ben-Gurion stated: *"The IDF is not a club, not a cushy lifelong job, not a group of people with nothing better to do than dress in uniform. [...] The IDF is part of the spirit that created the State and forged our unique community. This is why the military stems from the State and why this organization embodies defense more than aggression. This organization is not only a potential threat but also the guardian of democracy."* (Ben-Gurion, 1970)

The social role and integration of the IDF within Israeli society is the result of a historical process that began even before statehood with the formation of early self-defense organizations (Ben-Eliezer, 1998). Mandatory military service affects nearly all Israeli citizens, creating a shared experience that strengthens national identity (O'Sullivan – Shany – Cohen, 2018). This social embeddedness is a mutually shaping process between the military and society, as the IDF plays not only a defense role but also functions as an educational, integrational, and social cohesion-supporting institution, engaging in numerous Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Cohen, 2004). The training and social programs provided by the IDF facilitate soldiers' reintegration into civilian life, employment opportunities, and economic contributions to Israel (Lifshitz, 2012). An essential aspect of this

integration is the relationship between the IDF and the education system, which strengthens patriotic attachment among youth through educational programs. Although Ben-Gurion's *"melting pot"* theory (Goirny, 2001), which envisioned the IDF as a "people's army," has been challenged in recent decades, its influence remains significant in shaping security, social solidarity, the economy, and Israeli identity (Císcar, 2021).

Hypothesis 6: The close relationship between the IDF and Israeli society persists, but in recent years, fundamental transformations have introduced new dynamics in terms of public support, civil-military relations, military engagement, and the social integration of the IDF.

The most commonly used risk analysis and management methods, such as SWOT, TOWS, or ASCOPE/PMESII, provide organizations with the ability not only to assess current Challenges-Risks-Threats, but also to estimate their future probability, potential impacts, and model alternative scenarios. Various analytical approaches, including big data analysis, LLM models, trend assessments, custom-developed scales, and the combination of different methodologies, offer alternative frameworks for examination.

Hypothesis 7: Modern analytical methods, data-driven evaluations, and their restructured, even combined, alternative versions can be effectively applied in the study of the Israeli Defense Forces' military organization and development after 2006.

Research Questions

Aligning with the research objectives, the research questions of the dissertation are as follows:

1. What theoretical frameworks define military organization and development in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and how does the evolution of threats influence the structure of the armed forces?
2. How is the post-2006 Israeli framework of challenges, risks, and threats structured?
3. What are the historical roots of Israel's security perception, and how has it been shaped by modern security challenges, risks, and threats after 2006?
4. What relevant changes can be observed in Israeli military thought with the emergence of new security challenges?
5. What were the key turning points in Israeli military development after 2006, and along what strategic directions did force development evolve?

6. What roles do the Israeli Defense Forces play in Israeli society? How can their responsibility be interpreted? How is the relationship and balance between the military and society evolving?

7. To what extent can data-driven, alternative, and combined methodological approaches, which are gaining increasing prominence alongside traditional analytical methods, be applied to examine the functioning and development of the IDF?

Methodology

Research Scope and Delimitations

The research examines the development of Israel's defense concept and the organizational transformations, evolution, and modernization of the Israeli Defense Forces from the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War in 2006 to the present day. The study aims to explore the theoretical and practical frameworks that have shaped the transformation of the IDF in response to new security challenges. At the core of the research lies an analysis based on the Challenges-Risks-Threats matrix and its impact on change.

The research framework is structured around security theories and military organization theories, with particular emphasis on the role of realism, neorealism, and deterrence theories in shaping Israel's security policy. While historical developments in Israel's security concept and military thought are taken into account, the primary focus is on the post-2006 period. The analysis extends beyond the traditional CRT matrix to include non-traditional challenges, risks, and threats.

1. **Theoretical Framework:** The dissertation is based on security theories, particularly the Buzan's multi-sectoral approach, as well as threat-based military organization and development theories. The research also incorporates relevant elements of realism and neorealism, with a focus on the relationship between military power, deterrence, and security. Additionally, risk analysis theory serves as a supplementary theoretical framework. The research methodology is supported by theoretical frameworks such as descriptive statistical data analysis and natural language processing (NLP) methodologies.

2. **Temporal Scope:** The 2006 Lebanon War is considered a turning point—while historical precedents are acknowledged, the primary focus is on 21st-century security challenges and Israel's responses to them between 2006 and 2024.

3. **Content Scope:** The research primarily examines Israel's security concept and the development of the IDF. While a holistic approach is applied using Buzan's security sector theory, the dissertation remains centered on the IDF, avoiding excessive exploration of regional security changes (e.g., the Abraham Accords, shifts in Israeli foreign policy). Similarly, in terms of domestic security issues, the research focuses on CRT factors relevant to the IDF, necessitating a case study-based approach to specific areas, from which inductive conclusions will be drawn.

4. **Geographical Scope:** The dissertation primarily focuses on Israel and its regional security environment, though certain issues—such as Israeli defense economics and trade relations—are analyzed in an international context.

5. **Depth:** Although the research scope is clearly defined, its breadth makes it impossible to provide an exhaustive analysis of every aspect. Therefore, beyond outlining general trends and directions, the study zooms in on specific subfields, offering targeted insights.

By defining the research framework, the aim is to ensure that the analysis remains focused, comprehensive, and in-depth, while avoiding overly broad coverage and loss of focus. Accordingly, the dissertation specifically focuses on the force organization and development of the Israel Defense Forces in the period between 2006 and 2024.

The research was concluded on January 12, 2025.

Overall, the dissertation aims to highlight the availability, applicability, and effectiveness of rarely used methodologies in security research through the study of IDF military development. Thus, beyond examining IDF modernization, the research also focuses on presenting applicable methodologies, illustrating them with case studies, and drawing methodological conclusions.

Structure of the Dissertation

The structure and sequence of the chapters in this dissertation align with the research objectives and hypotheses. At the beginning of each chapter, the examined topics are contextualized, while at the end, the key findings and conclusions are summarized through independent summaries or case studies. Parts of my previously published works on the subject have been incorporated into the dissertation, with explicit citations provided in footnotes where applicable.
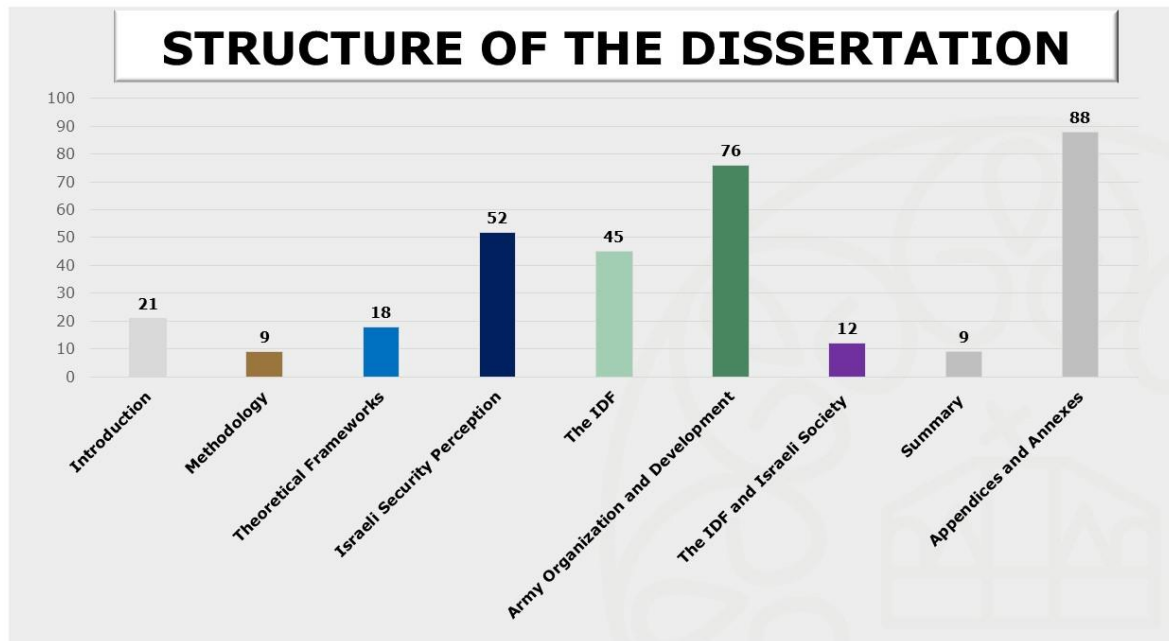

Figure 1: Distribution of the dissertation's structure by chapter. (Source: Edited by the author.)

The introductory chapter presents the relevance and justification of the research topic. This is followed by the formulation of the scientific problem, based on which the research objectives (C) and research questions (K) are established, along with the justification of the hypotheses (H). This section also addresses methodological challenges in detail and includes a literature review based on descriptive statistical methods.

The second chapter outlines the fundamental principles of research methodology and the essential elements of an interdisciplinary research approach. It provides a detailed description of the applied methods, including both traditional techniques (e.g., source analysis) and new methodologies (e.g., NLP, AI, big data). Additionally, this chapter introduces the databases used in the research.

The third chapter reviews major security theories, with a focus on those most relevant to the research topic, particularly realist and neorealist theories and the military interpretation

of security. A dedicated subsection explores key Israeli security theories and the perspectives of Israeli experts and theorists. This subsection concludes with an AI-assisted methodological experiment used to compile a list of experts and summarize its findings.

The fourth chapter examines the evolution of Israeli security perceptions through three distinct methodologies. By combining a traditional literature review, NLP-based data processing, and an extended application of the Buzan's analytical framework, I was able to construct a Challenges-Risks-Threats matrix for Israel and the IDF at the beginning and endpoint of the study period. This chapter not only lays the groundwork for analyzing military organization and development but also contributes several methodological findings and insights.
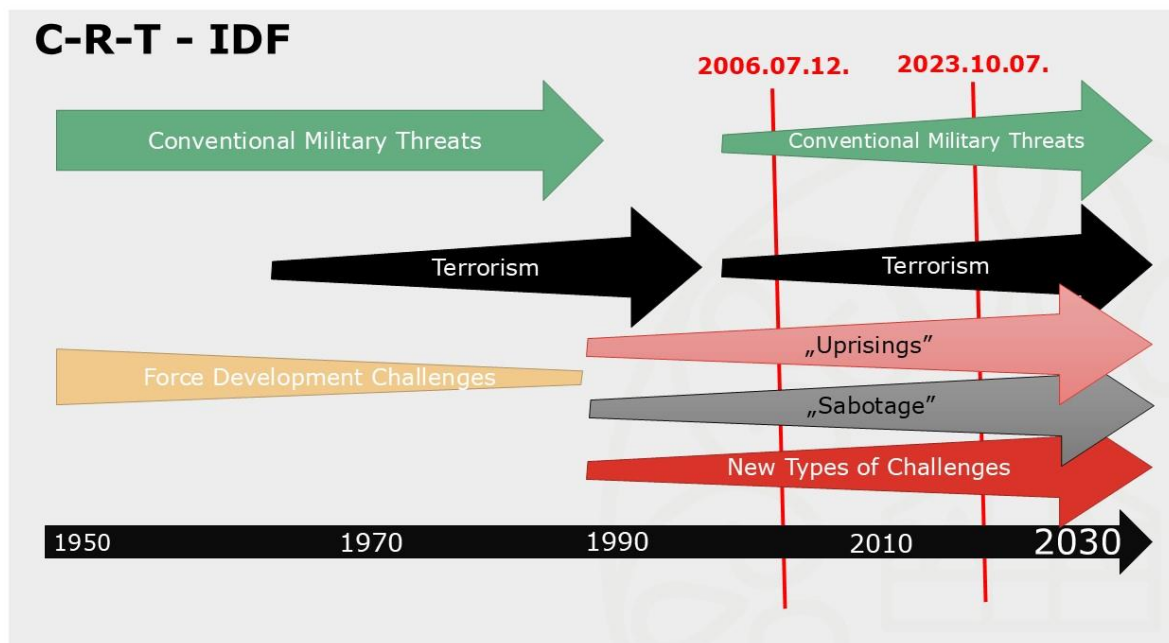

Figure 2: Changes in the IDF CRT System (Source: Edited by the author.)

In the fifth chapter, I presented the Israeli Defense Forces from various perspectives. In addition to data-driven analyses outlining the regional context, I provided a detailed examination of the so-called determining factors influencing the functioning and development of the Israeli military, along with an analysis of their impacts. At the end of the chapter, I illustrated the diversity of Israeli defense planning through a case study using the theory of military cultures.

In the sixth chapter, I provided a detailed analysis of the IDF's development strategies between 2006 and 2024, considering the initial conditions observed in the early 2000s, as well as the events and processes that drove subsequent developments. In addition to reviewing the

activities of the Chiefs of General Staff, I presented the military development plans, as well as the relevant strategies, doctrines, concepts, and operational approaches that influenced the IDF's development during the examined period. Based on these, I conducted an in-depth analysis of organizational operations (e.g., structure, C2), the branches of the armed forces, certain key subfields (e.g., logistics, intelligence, international engagements), and organizational and developmental processes related to human resources. Furthermore, I examined the effects and outcomes of the listed reforms, as well as the emerging criticisms.

The Impact of Israeli Military Development Activities on Relations
with Neighboring States

Figure 3: The impact of military development activities on relations with neighboring states (Source: Edited by the author.)

In the seventh chapter, I examined the role of the IDF in Israeli society through selected key dimensions (e.g., historical background, the status of soldiers, tradition preservation, climate protection, and social media usage) to inductively demonstrate the IDF's social embeddedness and to present its CSR-like characteristics and role.

The final chapter of the dissertation summarizes the main findings of the research, the validation of the hypotheses, and the methodological insights, addressing new scientific contributions, further research opportunities, and the applicability of the findings identified within the research framework.

The bibliography, appendices, and supplementary materials section includes figures, tables that aid comprehension, and technical materials such as program codes, lists, and other details demonstrating the use of novel research tools.

Summary of the Dissertation

Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces are key actors in the security landscape of the Middle East. The objective of my research was to outline the IDF's military organization and development strategies between 2006 and 2024 by examining the evolution of challenges, risks, and threats. My goal was to assess the impact and effectiveness of these strategies in an evolving environment—in essence, to formulate the "Israeli equation" of military organization.

One of the guiding objectives of the dissertation (C7) was to analyze and thereby validate the applicability of interdisciplinary, data-driven, and technologically advanced analytical approaches in the study of military development. To this end, I examined and compared various databases (Chapter 2.3) and new methodologies (Chapters 2.2 and 2.5). To evaluate their effectiveness, I analyzed specific topics from multiple perspectives, drew methodological conclusions (Chapter 4.2), and applied the findings throughout subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

A key research goal (C1) was to summarize the theoretical frameworks that influence military organization and development, with a particular focus on the threat-based approach to military organization (Chapter 3.1). While adopting an expanded interpretation of security, I also considered it essential to present the strictly military dimension (Chapter 3.2). Additionally, I aimed to compile a list of key Israeli theoretical researchers, military experts, former officers, and military leaders, summarize and categorize their views, and thus provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution of Israeli security policy and military thought, along with its practical applications (Chapter 3.3). Another key objective was to classify Israeli military culture and position the IDF within global armed forces, based on fundamental operational principles (Chapter 5.2.6).

Most of my hypotheses were based on the assumption that Israeli military development is fundamentally shaped by the constantly evolving CRT framework. To verify this, I constructed a post-2006 matrix outlining Israel's security landscape and the challenges defining the IDF. I employed both traditional source analysis (Chapter 4.1) and new NLP-based analytical methods (Chapter 4.2). Based on the findings, I structured the CRT system within the analytical framework of Buzan's security sectors. In using Buzan's model, I considered its limitations and criticisms that have emerged since its introduction. Additionally, I supplemented the original analytical framework with a subjective scale, facilitating the comparison of different time periods (Chapter 4.2.3).

As the IDF is an integral part of Israel's statehood and historical trajectory, I aimed (C3) to identify historical precedents that are crucial for understanding the post-2006 period (Chapter 5.2.5). The examination of Israel and the IDF cannot be detached from regional power dynamics (Chapter 5.1), nor from determinant factors (e.g., lack of strategic depth, geographical, ethnic, and economic characteristics) that influence military development options (Chapter 5.1).

The 2006 Second Lebanon War was a turning point in the historical evolution of the IDF, as it shattered the perception of its invincibility and failed to secure a decisive victory. My research fundamentally started from this scenario, analyzing Israel's responses to it, necessitating a comprehensive examination of initial conditions, for which I applied the ASCOPE/PMESII methodology (Chapter 6.1).

My research focused on Israeli military thought (C4), military organization, and development directions (C5) between 2006 and 2024. What justified the conceptual shifts? What specific changes were implemented? What developments took place? In addition to reviewing the force development concepts and activities of the Chiefs of General Staff (Chapter 6.2.1), I provided a detailed analysis of military development plans (Chapter 6.2.2) and introduced a wide array of strategies, doctrines, concepts, and operational approaches that have influenced and continue to influence the evolution of the IDF (Chapter 6.2.3).

Beyond outlining strategic directions and concepts, I also sought answers to how specific development directions were realized. How can they be evaluated, and what impact did they have on the IDF and Israeli security? To answer these questions, I examined and analyzed various aspects of organizational change, strategic and procedural considerations (Chapter 6.3.2), the impact on the different branches of the armed forces, key areas such as logistics, intelligence, international engagement, human resource management, and military technology development. I also aimed to uncover the criticisms of specific developments and assess them in light of ongoing conflicts and the anticipated evolution of the CRT framework (Chapter 6.3).

The IDF is not merely a military force but one of the foundational institutions of Israel's social and political structure, an essential pillar of modern Israel that is deeply intertwined with contemporary Israeli identity. Due to my background in sociology, I have long been interested in the impact of armed forces on society and the nature of civil-military relations. Therefore, it was essential to examine the evolving relationship between the IDF and Israeli society within this dissertation (C6). Through historical precedents and selected key aspects, I aimed to illustrate the IDF's social embeddedness and highlight the processes that have influenced changes in the IDF-society relationship during the examined period. I sought to demonstrate that beyond its core military functions, the IDF continues to engage in significant social

responsibility initiatives. I also aimed to explore how these initiatives align or conflict with military development processes and societal expectations and what challenges lie ahead (Chapter 7).

Results of the Hypothesis

In alignment with the research objectives and research questions, I formulated seven hypotheses. A summary table presenting the research objectives, research questions, hypotheses, and related variables (results, methodologies) is included in the Appendix section (Appendix 7).

Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data, facts, sources, and knowledge necessary to examine the hypotheses, based on which I formulated conclusions. My summarized findings regarding the hypotheses are as follows:

H1. The post-2006 military development of the Israeli Defense Forces is dominated by realist, neorealist, and threat-based theoretical frameworks. However, these are blended with other theories in a goal-oriented manner and do not appear in a pure theoretical form.

A review of the theories of realist and neorealist security theorists—particularly elements related to the impact and management of threats—alongside an analysis of Israeli security and military theoretical perspectives (Chapter 3) in comparison with the evolution of Israel's challenges, risks, and threats (Chapter 4) and the corresponding military organization and development responses (Chapter 6) clearly confirmed the validity of the first hypothesis. Throughout its history, Israeli defense planning and the functioning and development of the IDF have been influenced by numerous theoretical approaches (Chapter 4.2.1), yet none of these theories have overridden the prevailing CRT system at any given time. The IDF is fundamentally characterized by pragmatism and goal orientation: theoretical concepts do not impose rigid frameworks, constraints, or barriers for managing challenges, risks, and threats but rather serve as tools offering possible approaches.

The most applicable elements of theoretical frameworks are indeed reflected in the force development concepts of the examined period, yet they do not function as mutually exclusive models. In fact, in numerous cases, these concepts merge, allowing the IDF to develop alternative solutions and pathways for countering asymmetric and hybrid threats. The multi-domain strategy, which incorporates various methodologies, procedures, and approaches,

further confirms the blending of theoretical frameworks within the IDF's military organization and development concepts (Chapter 6.2.3).

H2. The framework of Israeli challenges, risks, and threats after 2006 is a multidimensional matrix that integrates both traditional and new types of CRTs and can be interpreted on global, regional, national, societal, organizational, and individual levels.

Through various methodological approaches, I have confirmed the validity of the second hypothesis, demonstrating that Israel simultaneously faces a broad spectrum of both traditional and new types of challenges, risks, and threats (Chapter 4). By applying Buzan's analytical framework—supplemented with quantitative indicators—I successfully proved that CRTs manifest in different forms and exert varying impacts across global, regional, national, organizational, societal, and individual levels.

The extension and application of this experimental framework—beyond Israel, to the IDF as an organization—validated both the applicability of the methodology and enabled temporal comparisons, thereby facilitating the assessment of the effectiveness of development processes. Furthermore, this analysis highlighted that the IDF fundamentally transcends the conventional concept of armed forces, with its influence and impact observable at all levels and within all Buzan's dimensions (Chapter 4.2.3).

H3. Modern security challenges, risks, and threats have not overridden Israel's historical security perception but have instead supplemented it, shaping an adaptive security approach capable of responding to hybrid threats.

Through a historical overview, I traced the evolution of the CRT framework from the foundation of the state to the present, highlighting the emergence of new types of threats (Chapter 4.2.1). In addition to CRTs, I also examined the so-called determining factors that influence not only Israel's security perception and defense strategy but also the development of the IDF (Chapter 5.2). To this day, Israel structures its security strategy around the three pillars formulated by Ben-Gurion in 1953: (1) deterrence, (2) early warning, and (3) offensive capability. However, in the early 2000s, this framework was expanded with a fourth pillar: (4) defense. Overall, this reveals a security strategy that is rooted in stable historical foundations yet continues to evolve. It is important to note, however, that the introduction of the defense pillar did not yield the expected results. Its emergence and increasing prominence had a significant impact on post-2006 military development, yet in several areas—such as missile defense, border security, the MABAM doctrine, precision strikes, and the diminished role of land maneuverability—the associated concepts and measures did not produce the anticipated

outcomes and have been met with criticism (Chapter 6.2.3.1). Based on this nuanced assessment and the analysis of the evolution of Israel's security perception (Chapter 4.1), it can be concluded that the third hypothesis has been partially confirmed: Israel and the IDF have developed an adaptive security and defense strategy rooted in historical foundations and capable of responding to contemporary CRTs. However, when it comes to effectiveness, the success of this approach remains debatable.

H4. Israeli military thought has become increasingly adaptive in response to new security challenges, prioritizing technological solutions, defense strategies, and long-term security maintenance, while shifting focus away from conventional threats.

Based on the CRT framework established by the early 2000s (Chapter 6.1.2) and the lessons of the Second Lebanon War (Chapter 6.1.3), Israeli military planning and force development initially returned to the IDF's core concept between 2006 and 2011. However, in parallel, a new military concept centered on technological superiority began to take shape. An analysis of the Chiefs of General Staff's military development visions (Chapter 6.2.1) and the overall military development plans (Chapter 6.2.2) clearly outlines a modernization strategy favoring high-tech innovations and technological superiority. Military strategy and operational planning placed increasing emphasis on preemptive strikes against enemy targets and infrastructure (e.g., precision strikes), aimed at weakening enemy resources through the MABAM doctrine. At the same time, capabilities for countering conventional threats, such as land maneuverability and deep operational capabilities, were deprioritized (Chapter 6.3). After 2006, Israeli military leadership sought to delay conflict escalation and did not actively pursue decisive victories. Based on the research findings, I consider the fourth hypothesis to be fully confirmed.

H5. In the years following the 2006 Second Lebanon War, several key turning points can be identified in Israeli military development, closely linked to changes in the CRT framework. However, the attitudes of military leadership (Chiefs of General Staff) played a decisive role, and in many cases, political influences also emerged.

The dissertation's core chapters, which focus on military organization and development processes (Chapter 6), provide a detailed account of the developmental directions between 2006 and 2024, the concepts of the Chiefs of General Staff, and the organizational impacts of these developments. It is clearly demonstrable that determining factors (Chapter 5.2), regional power dynamics (Chapter 5.1), changes in the CRT framework (Chapter 4.3), traditions (Chapter

5.2.5), military leadership visions (Chapter 6.2.1), political influences (Chapter 7.2), and societal factors (Chapter 7.3) all had an impact on Israeli military development.

However, I was only partially able to confirm the fifth hypothesis, as I initially assumed that distinct periods of military development could be clearly identified. While I did find well-defined points associated with strategic shifts, I had to acknowledge that military development is a continuous, coherent process. Due to the complexity of the IDF's structure and operational framework, military development unfolds across multiple dimensions, making a straightforward periodization impractical.

H6. The close relationship between the IDF and Israeli society remains intact; however, in recent years, it has undergone fundamental changes, introducing new dynamics in public support, military participation, and the IDF's societal integration.

The absence of a decisive victory in the Second Lebanon War was widely perceived as a failure, which significantly weakened the historically unique bond between Israeli society and the IDF, a connection that had existed since the foundation of the state (Chapter 6.1.3). The "IDF way of life" fundamentally shaped the early decades of modern Israel (Chapter 7.1), but due to societal changes, globalization, and modernization, fractures have emerged between the IDF and Israeli society as a whole, as well as with specific social groups. Military development concepts continuously emphasize the need to strengthen ties with Israeli society, and in response, the IDF has developed numerous approaches and methods over the past years. These efforts generally align with modern societal expectations, such as engagement with social media, corporate social responsibility initiatives, participation in non-military operations, climate protection, tradition preservation, and memory politics. However, in several areas, the IDF has yet to find effective solutions to various contentious and divisive issues, including career models, the status and recognition of soldiers, value differences between military leadership and enlisted personnel, opportunities for female soldiers, and the conscription of the ultra-Orthodox community. Through the analysis of specific issues and case studies, I have successfully demonstrated that while the close relationship between the IDF and Israeli society persists, its dynamics have fundamentally shifted in recent decades.

H7. Modern analytical methods, data-driven evaluations, and their reimagined or even combined alternative versions can be effectively applied in the study of the Israeli Defense Forces' military organization and development after 2006.

A key objective of this dissertation was to validate the legitimacy of new data-driven analytical tools and combined methodologies alongside traditional analytical methods in the

field of security studies, with a particular focus on military organization and development. Throughout the dissertation, I employed a wide range of analytical methods and tools, including literature reviews based on descriptive statistics (Chapter 1.3), data and trend analysis (Chapter 5.1), the application of LLM models (Chapter 3.3), the development of an experimental analytical framework (Chapter 4.2.3), the application of risk assessment models (Chapter 6.1.3), and NLP-based analyses (Chapter 4.2.2). Based on the results and methodological insights gained, I consider the seventh hypothesis to be fully confirmed.

New Scientific Results

Based on the research conducted for this dissertation, I consider the following as scientific contributions:

1. 1. I have identified and systematized the challenges, risks, and threats related to Israel and the IDF, as well as the determining factors that influenced the operation and development of the IDF between 2006 and 2024.

2. In the field of military science research in Hungary, I was the first to summarize the theoretical framework, practical elements, and effectiveness of Israeli military development between 2006 and 2024 in responding to challenges, risks, and threats.

3. I developed an experimental framework based on Buzan's dimensions, which, through its associated quantified scale, facilitates temporal comparisons. Using the IDF as a case study, I demonstrated its applicability not only for states but also for armed forces, while also outlining the limitations of the analytical framework.

4. I summarized the changes in the dynamics between the IDF and Israeli society and identified areas and possible strategies through which a modern military force can successfully engage with society and strengthen civil-military relations.

Recommendations – Practical Applications of Research

– This dissertation contributes to a better understanding of the security situation and challenges in the Middle East, as well as the role and operations of the IDF for interested readers.

– By summarizing the theoretical background of security studies and analyzing Israel's framework of challenges, risks, and threats, the dissertation provides a comprehensive overview of Israel's security situation and strategy, both in historical development and its current state. As such, it may serve as a reference work in higher education institutions in Hungary.

– Due to its detailed presentation of multidimensional operational frameworks, Israeli military strategies, doctrines, procedures, and operational approaches, the dissertation can also serve as a resource for the Hungarian military science community and military higher education.

– By comprehensively summarizing the directions, specific measures, impacts, and criticisms of Israeli military organization and development between 2006 and 2024, the dissertation may be useful for political and military decision-makers in formulating domestic military development concepts.

– The findings on the evolving relationship between the IDF and Israeli society, as well as the analysis of the IDF's CSR activities and programs, may provide valuable insights for political and military decision-makers in developing civil-military relations and designing military promotion programs in Hungary.

– The methodological insights gained from the application of interdisciplinary, new analytical tools may be useful for researchers in military science and contribute to shifting Hungarian military science research toward a more data-driven approach.

– The dissertation's extensive bibliography, consisting of nearly 500 source documents, may serve as a useful reference list for similar academic research and dissertations.

New Research Directions

Due to the formal requirements of the dissertation and the focal points of the research objectives, several further research directions remain open, and new research opportunities have emerged:

(1) Further examination of the effectiveness and efficiency of Israeli military organization and development measures, with a particular focus on modernization and technology- and artificial intelligence-based military development.

(2) Investigating the applicability of the experimental analytical framework based on Buzan's security dimensions to other comparable military forces (e.g., South Korea) or other professional service organizations (e.g., law enforcement). Based on methodological insights, further refinement of the framework would become possible.

(3) A comparative study of the applicability of interdisciplinary, new analytical tools in other areas of military science.

(4) A broader examination of military forces' corporate social responsibility campaigns and programs, which could help the scientific community better understand civil-military relations and contribute to the more effective planning of such initiatives.

(5) A data-driven analysis of the theoretical framework proposed for examining the IDF's social media activities.

Summary Table – Research Objectives, Research Questions, Hypotheses, Methodology, and Results

Research Objective	Research Question	Hypothesis	Related Methodology	Corresponding Chapter	Result
1. Examination of the theoretical frameworks of military organization in the context of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), with a particular focus on the threat-based military organization school.	1. What theoretical frameworks define military organization and development in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and how does the evolution of threats influence the structure of the armed forces?	**1. After 2006, the Israeli Defense Forces' force development has been dominated by realist, neorealist, and threat-based theoretical frameworks. However, in practice, these frameworks mix with other approaches in a goal-oriented manner and do not appear in their pure theoretical form.**	Review of foreign, domestic, and key israeli literature sources. To construct the CRT framework, I applied literature analysis and NLP methods.	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Chapter 6	The Israeli defense planning and the operation and development of the IDF have been influenced by numerous theoretical frameworks throughout history; however, these have not overridden the current structure of the CRT framework. **Hypothesis 1 is CONFIRMED.**
2. A comprehensive analysis of the Israeli security situation post-2006, focusing on changes and assembling the matrix of challenges, risks, and threats (CRT) using the Copenhagen School's security sector framework, supplemented by	2. How is the post-2006 Israeli framework of challenges, risks, and threats structured?	**2. After 2006, the Israeli Defense Forces' force development has been dominated by realist, neorealist, and threat-based theoretical frameworks. However, in practice, these frameworks mix with other approaches in a goal-oriented manner and do not appear in**	I constructed the IDF CRT matrix by experimentally modifying Buzan's analytical framework, relying on literature sources and the results of the NLP analysis.	Chapter 4	Israel simultaneously faces a wide range of both traditional and new types of challenges, risks, and threats. **Hypothesis 2 is CONFIRMED.**

innovative, data-driven research methods.		**their pure theoretical form.**			
3. Exploration of the historical roots and transformation of Israel's security perception, presenting the formation and evolution of security concepts in response to the challenges of the modern era.	3. What are the historical roots of Israel's security perception, and how has it been shaped by modern security challenges, risks, and threats after 2006?	**3. Modern security challenges, risks, and threats have not overridden Israel's historical security perception but have rather supplemented it, transforming it into a continuously adaptive security doctrine capable of responding to hybrid threats.**	Analysis of literature, historical sources, memoirs, and documents related to the post-2006 development of the IDF.	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6	Israel and the IDF have developed a historically grounded adaptive security and defense strategy capable of responding to current CRTs; however, its effectiveness is not unequivocally successful. **Hypothesis 3 is PARTIALLY CONFIRMED.**
4. Presentation of the evolution of Israeli military thought after 2006, with particular emphasis on the emergence of new types of security challenges and their impact on military strategy and force development.	4. What relevant changes can be observed in Israeli military thought with the emergence of new security challenges	**4. As a result of new security challenges, Israeli military thought has become increasingly adaptive in handling asymmetric threats, where technology-driven threat management, defense strategies, and long-term security maintenance have taken precedence, while the focus on conventional threats has diminished.**	Analysis of documents and sources related to the post-2006 development of the IDF.	Chapter 6	Based on the CRT framework established by the early 2000s and the experiences of the Second Lebanon War, Israeli military planning and force development between 2006 and 2011 returned to the IDF's core concept while simultaneously initiating the development of a modern, technology-driven military force. My findings were consistent with my original assumption. **Hypothesis 4 is CONFIRMED.**

5. Analysis of the phases of Israeli military development after 2006, identifying turning points, underlying causes, and evaluating the impact of the development directions initiated by these changes.	5. What were the key turning points in Israeli military development after 2006, and along what strategic directions did force development evolve?	**5. In the years following the Second Lebanon War in 2006, several key turning points in Israeli military development can be identified, closely linked to changes in the CRT (Challenges-Risks-Threats) framework. However, the attitudes of military leadership (particularly the Chief of General Staff) have played a decisive role, and in several cases, political influence has also emerged as a significant factor.**	Literature review, analysis of databases (MilBal, GFP, CBS), and processing of a large volume of source texts (NLP analysis of INSS documents) using new data-driven methods, along with the review of documents and related sources on the post-2006 development of the IDF.	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 7	It is clearly evident that determining factors, regional power dynamics, changes in the CRT framework, traditions, the visions of Chiefs of General Staff, political influence, and societal impact have all shaped the development of the Israeli military. However, within this dynamic process, no distinct turning points could be identified in the period between 2006 and 2024. **Hypothesis 5 is PARTIALLY CONFIRMED.**
6. Examination of the social embeddedness of the IDF, analyzing its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, with a particular focus on the interactions between the military and society and the delicate balance that exists.	6.What roles do the Israeli Defense Forces play in Israeli society? How can their responsibility be interpreted? How is the relationship and balance between the military and society evolving?	**6. The close relationship between the IDF and Israeli society persists, but in recent years, fundamental transformations have introduced new dynamics in terms of public support, civil-military relations, military engagement,**	Analysis of documents related to the post-2006 development of the IDF, as well as sources on civil-military relations and CSR activities. A key focus of the analysis was the IDF's use of social media.	Chapter 6 Chapter 7	By presenting specific areas and issues, I was able to confirm that the close relationship between the IDF and Israeli society still exists; however, its dynamics have fundamentally changed over the past decades. **Hypothesis 6 is CONFIRMED.**

		and the social integration of the IDF.			
7. Investigation of the applicability of interdisciplinary approaches, with special attention to the use of data-driven and combined methodologies in the study of the Israeli Defense Forces.	7. To what extent can data-driven, alternative, and combined methodological approaches, which are gaining increasing prominence alongside traditional analytical methods, be applied to examine the functioning and development of the IDF?	**7. Modern analytical methods, data-driven evaluations, and their restructured, even combined, alternative versions can be effectively applied in the study of the Israeli Defense Forces' military organization and development after 2006.**	Literature review based on descriptive statistics, data and trend analysis, application of LLM models, development of an experimental framework, application of risk analysis models, and NLP analysis.	Chapter 1.3 Chapter 3.3 Chapter 4.2 Chapter 5.3 Chapter 6.1	Based on the results of various methods and methodological experiences, I clearly find the application of new interdisciplinary analytical approaches useful in the field. **Hypothesis 7 is CONFIRMED.**

Related Publications of the Author

Co-authored publication in Hungarian:

1. Boda Mihály – Rémai Dániel (2022): A háború áldozatai: a diszkriminációs szabály története és kortárs dilemmái. *Hadtudomány*, 32(2), 86–97. Online: DOI: https://doi.org/10.17047/HADTUD.2022.32.2.86

2. Boda Mihály – Rémai Dániel (2022): A háború áldozatai: a diszkriminációs szabály jelene az arab–izraeli konfliktusokban. *Hadtudomány*, 32(3), 3–18. Online: DOI: https://doi.org/10.17047/HADTUD.2022.32.3.3

Single-authored publications in Hungarian:

1. Rémai Dániel (2019): Az izraeli nemzetbiztonsági rendszer fejlődésének története. *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle*, 7(4), 3–19.

2. Rémai Dániel (2020): Biztonsági kihívások hálójában, avagy az Izraeli Védelmi Erők esete az aszimmetrikus hadviseléssel. *Honvédségi Szemle*, 148(6), 16–31. Online: DOI: https://doi.org/10.35926/HSZ.2020.6.2

3. Rémai Dániel (2020): Az izraeli védelmi tervezés: a hadikultúrák kaméleonja *Szakmai Szemle*, 18(4), 143–157.

4. Rémai Dániel (2020): #Hadsereg – Haderőszervezés a közösségi média segítségével. *Hadtudományi Szemle*, 13(4), 83–98. Online: doi: 10.32563/hsz.2020.4.7

5. Rémai Dániel (2020): Made in Israel, avagy hadiipari és logisztikai sajátosságok az izraeli védelmi erőkben. *Katonai Logisztika*, 28(4), 76–103. Online: DOI: https://doi.org/10.30583/2020.4.076

6. Rémai Dániel (2020): Kihívások, fenyegetettségek a 21. században az Izraeli Védelmi Erők vonatkozásában. In Kovács Petra – Pollák Orsolya (szerk.): *A hadtudomány és a 21. század*. Budapest: Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Hadtudományi Osztály.

7. Rémai Dániel (2021): A légi uralom elméletének hatása az Izraeli Légierő kialakulására és fejlődésére. *Repüléstudományi Közlemények*, 33(2), 19–30. Online: DOI: 10.32560/rk.2021.2.2

8. Rémai Dániel (2022): Izraeli válaszok napjaink kibervédelmi és kiberhadviselési kihívásaira. *Hadtudomány*, 32(4), 3–18. Online: DOI: https://doi.org/10.17047/HADTUD.2022.32.4.3

9. Rémai Dániel (2023): Az izraeli nemzetbiztonsági rendszer fejlődése. *Szakmai Szemle,* 21(4), 184–209.

10. Rémai Dániel (2024): Izrael űrpolitikája és az űrképességei. In: Edl András – Szenes Zoltán (szerk.) *Új űrkorszak kapujában.* Budapest: Zrínyi. 200-222.

Single-authored publications in English:

1. Rémai, Dániel (2021): In the web of security challanges or the case of the Israel Defense Forces with assymetric warfare. In Čadová, Lenka et al. (szerk.): *15th Annual Doctoral Conference proceedings on the topic New Approaches to State Security Assurance*. Brno: University of Defence, Faculty of Military Leadership. 192–205.

Publications under editing:

1. Rémai, Dániel (2025): Israel's Multi-Domain Defense Strategy Against Hybrid Threats: Insights from Hezbollah and Hamas. In: *National Security Review.*

2. Rémai Dániel (2025): Izrael titkosszolgálatainak leghíresebb műveletei. In: *Nemzetbiztonsági Szemle.*

Professional Biography of the Author

Dániel Rémai obtained his bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in 2009. Later, he completed master's studies in security and defense policy as well as civilian national security at the National University of Public Service (NKE). In recent years, he has participated in numerous data analysis and data visualization courses. He is also proficient in information technology, with programming and statistical analysis skills. In 2019, he was admitted to the Doctoral School of Military Sciences at NKE.

He began his professional career as a market researcher, later working as a parliamentary assistant in the European Parliament. Since 2016, he has been a member of the Counter-Terrorism Centre (TEK). Since June 2019, he has been serving at the Counter-Terrorism Department of the National University of Public Service, where he participates in teaching, research, and the implementation of grant projects. He regularly lectures at domestic training programs, events, and international conferences.

He currently has 20 records in the Hungarian Science Bibliography (MTMT).

In addition to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), his research areas include the historical evolution of terrorism, foreign fighters, social alert systems, and the applicability of data-driven tools in scientific research.

He has a C1-level (advanced) language certificate in English, B2-level (intermediate) certificates in German and Latin, and basic proficiency in Hebrew.

Notes