

Military and Strategic Affairs

Volume 1 | No. 1 | April 2009

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Military and Strategic Affairs

The purpose of *Military and Strategic Affairs* is to stimulate and enrich the public debate on military issues relating to Israel's national security.

Military and Strategic Affairs is published three times a year within the framework of the Military and Strategic Affairs Program at the Institute for National Security Studies. Articles are written by INSS researchers and guest contributors. The views presented here are those of the authors alone.

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Military and Strategic Affairs is published in English and Hebrew.
The full text is available on the Institute's website: www.inss.org.il

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Hamas' Military Wing in the Gaza Strip: Development, Patterns of Activity, and Forecast

Guy Aviad

On December 24, 2008, the Israeli cabinet led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert authorized the IDF plan to attack the Gaza Strip and to change the security reality in the south of Israel in order to improve the lives of the local population.¹ Three days later, the army embarked on Operation Cast Lead. The operation began with an air strike on Hamas military targets in the Gaza Strip. In two waves of attack involving more than 80 aircraft, the IDF destroyed rocket depots, outposts, training bases, and government centers. This was the start of a continuous, three week long battle, a new climax in the extended struggle between the IDF and Hamas in terms of scope of forces and firepower used by both sides and in terms of the damage to property and harm to people, especially on the Palestinian side.²

In twenty-three days of fighting, the military wing of Hamas, also known as the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, suffered an intense blow, the likes of which it had never sustained. According to various estimates, hundreds of its operatives were killed, and many others injured. By contrast, IDF casualties were considerably fewer and challenged the pessimistic scenarios envisioned before the operation.³ Nevertheless, the military wing of Hamas was far from destroyed, and retains enough capabilities – both in terms of armaments and skilled personnel – to challenge the IDF at some future point. The next round of fighting might, in fact, be closer than ever.

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This essay examines Hamas' military wing as a fighting unit with a fixed configuration, and sheds light on its structure and goals, the logic guiding its fighting doctrine, and its patterns of activity. To this end, the essay analyzes the development of Hamas' military wing in 2004-2008 and its transition from a network of terrorist cells to a semi-military hierarchy, and examines its manner of fighting in Operation Cast Lead on the basis of preparations during these years and the movement's sense of its achievements.

2004-2005: Transformation

The year 2004 marked the beginning of the process that transformed Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip from a terrorist group to an entity with fixed routines and a military doctrine. The factors that sparked this transformation related both to intra-organizational changes in Hamas and to decisions made by Israel directly impacting on Gaza's future. The targeted assassinations of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his deputy Abdel Aziz Rantisi in early 2004 strengthened Hamas' outside leadership in Damascus and brought about a closer relationship between the organization and Iran.⁴ Consequently, the military wing in the Gaza Strip, directly subordinate to the outside leadership, began to benefit from significant budgets and professional guidance from Iran's intelligence services and from Hizbollah, Tehran's Lebanese extension. Practical expression first appeared in the form of the establishment of the al-Mourabitoun militia and the placement of Ahmed Jabari, who was to lead Hamas' military wing and become heir to Mohammed Deif at its head. The militia was supposed to form the basis of a people's army, and be a part of preparations for a military confrontation with Fatah over the image of the Palestinian Authority. These trends, which suited Hamas' long term strategy, were accelerated when the Knesset approved the disengagement plan on October 26, 2004, and the Sharon government received the legal imprimatur to carry it out.

Hamas' understanding that Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was becoming reality, touching off a struggle for its control, accelerated the process of building the force and adopting fighting methods that matched the ethos of resistance and the jihadist identity of the movement. First, the Gaza Strip was divided into six or seven regional divisions responsible for clearly defined sectors. Regiment commanders and company commanders, responsible for smaller areas

such as neighborhoods, operated under the command of every division commander, prepared fortifications, and deployed personnel in prepared positions. Second, the recruitment cycles to the military wing grew, and every regional division numbered on average 1,500 operatives.⁵ Third, the use of tunnels was expanded from their original goal of smuggling arms and operatives, and became the favored means of operating against IDF outposts. Bomb-filled tunnels became a concrete threat and in Hamas' view an effective means of undermining Israel's rule of the Gaza Strip before the disengagement, and of presenting the withdrawal from Gaza as a panicked retreat and true achievement for the resistance.⁶ Fourth, a system for the mass production of Qassam rockets was established throughout the Gaza Strip, including a network of machine and metal shops. Gradually, the range of Qassams was increased, as was their impact force. The smuggling of Grad missiles into the Gaza Strip further improved the quality of arms and brought many Israeli towns and cities within firing range. This is how high trajectory weapons became the long arm of the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the means of punishing Israel for the occasional attacks against its fighters.⁷

Hamas' readiness to establish a security-related calm with Israel in March 2005 suited the movement's plan to run in the local government elections and in the elections for the Legislative Council in order to build political capital.⁸ Further, the insight that armed struggle at the time might impede realization of the disengagement plan helped to lower the level of violence on Hamas' part for a while. Nonetheless, its military wing hardly rested on its laurels. The relative quiet was used by its operatives to build up strength and recruit personnel in the four ways noted above, and as Israel was completing its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August-September 2005 the transition from terrorist cells to a hierarchical organization with doctrines of war and military trappings was complete. Thus, Hamas prepared for the day after Israel's evacuation of the Gaza Strip and was ready to begin the violent struggle for control over it.

2006-2008: Consolidation

Early 2006 was a period for Hamas to realize its gains. Not only was the movement able to stitch together a victory narrative, whereby armed resistance had brought about the withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip – like the IDF's withdrawal from the security zone in southern

Lebanon in May 2000 – but it also succeeded in translating this into political support and the backing of the masses. On January 26, 2006, the movement swept the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, and gained 74 of the 132 seats.⁹ Two months later, a government headed by Ismail Haniyeh, composed entirely of Hamas members, was established and the movement became the ruling party. This development helped sustain the ongoing growth of the military wing until it became an entity overshadowing the Palestinian Authority's security mechanisms. Not only was a new militia, the Operational Force, established alongside the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, with Hamas boasting thousands more armed men wearing the blue of the police force,¹⁰ but it was also possible to expand the smuggling in the Rafah tunnels and the rocket production lines virtually without any interference, especially in light of Israel's withdrawal from the Philadelphi axis and the absence of continuous oversight of the corridor.

However, once Hamas became the dominant political force in Palestinian society, the strength of its military wing was measured not only by the growth of its ranks and its ability to maintain military tension with Israel, but also by its functioning as the mainstay of governance in the Gaza Strip. Despite the swearing-in of the Haniyeh government, Fatah did not come to terms with losing its centers of power to Hamas, and consistently undermined its base. Therefore, the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades turned into the Hamas government's gatekeepers in everything relating to the Gaza Strip, and helped the Operational Force handle instances of anarchy and suppress revolt and political subversion. Thus the survivability of the regime, led by the local leadership in the Gaza Strip, came to depend on the effectiveness of the military wing, which obeyed the non-local leadership in Damascus, from which it received financing, arms, and guidance.

More than once the military wing, a group subordinate to the members of Hamas' political bureau – the supreme leadership of the movement, residing abroad – acted against the interests of the local Gaza leadership and demonstrated its own independent stance, imposing a different political reality. The kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit on June 25, 2006 was but a prominent example. While release of prisoners was seen as a universal goal in Palestinian society and the action garnered much public support, the blows absorbed by Hamas

in a series of operations undertaken by the Israeli army under the code name Summer Rain between June 28 and November 26, 2006 made it difficult for the Haniyeh government to rule effectively. The violent struggle in the streets of Gaza with the Abu Mazen loyalists and Fatah members escalated. These confrontations continued into 2007, reaching a climax in May-June, with Abu Mazen's decision to deploy the security services subordinate to him throughout the Gaza Strip against Hamas' wishes. Hamas' military wing came to an independent resolution, and in a well-orchestrated move defeated the PA security services, superior in numbers and equipment, through intensive use of exploding tunnels dug underneath Fatah command centers in the Gaza Strip. The takeover of the command center for preventive security in Tel al-Hawah by the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades on June 14, 2007 sealed the fate of PA rule, led by Abu Mazen, over the Gaza Strip. Hamas control in the Gaza Strip became entrenched.¹¹ With the elimination of two clan-based power centers – the Hilles family (August 2008)¹² and the Durmouh family (September 2008)¹³ – Hamas' rule of Gaza became incontestable, and its military wing became the strongest institution in the Strip.

Hamas Warfare: From Doctrine to Practice

While Hamas' military wing retained its role as the guardian of Hamas' exclusive rule of the Gaza Strip against internal threats, it did not abandon its original objective as a fighting body and prepared to withstand external threats as well, such as an Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip. Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, the ability to leave and enter the Gaza Strip with relative freedom, and the expansion of smuggling activities to a full scale industry under the aegis of Haniyeh's government gave new dimensions to the force buildup of the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Hundreds of activists left Gaza and underwent advanced training in Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, training that included gathering intelligence, establishing camouflage, constructing sophisticated explosive charges, and operating advanced anti-tank missiles. Furthermore, thousands of new recruits underwent training in the Gaza Strip itself, including training on lightweight weapons and anti-tank missiles such as RPGs and the Yassin (a Hamas-manufactured missile), field training, and laying explosives.¹⁴

More than anything else, the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 and Hizbollah's success in standing up to the Israeli army for 34 days

energized Hamas' military wing to upgrade its capabilities. Hizbollah's patterns of action became a model for Hamas and a symbol of how to conduct asymmetrical warfare while taking advantage of the conditions on the ground and the enemy's weaknesses.¹⁵

On the basis of lessons learned, Hamas' military wing developed a multi-tiered defense concept. First, Hamas distinguished the advantages of the underground spaces, like Hizbollah's "nature reserve" model in Lebanon. Not only was effective use of the tunnels able to neutralize the superiority of Israel's air force to a certain extent, but it also turned out to be an effective defensive system for expanding the stamina of Hamas' military wing as a fighting body and a means for the survival of its operatives. The scattering of rocket stores deep in the ground in every regional division also served this goal.¹⁶

Second, Hamas understood that exhausting the Israeli home front with standoff fire and suspending normal civilian life for an extended amount of time until the last day of the battle, as happened in the Second Lebanon War, was enough to detract from Israel's military achievement and become a source of frustration and feeling that the IDF had not met public expectations. Therefore, the military wing worked hard to formulate an orderly fire program in conjunction with tight operational discipline, aimed at launching measured but continuous barrages at Israeli targets, which would continue to operate even if some of the better-known launching regions in the north of the Gaza Strip were to be captured, using the crowded urban space in Gaza City and the refugee camps on its outskirts.¹⁷

Third, Hamas' military wing strove to take a costly human toll of the IDF, while dragging the army deep into the urban landscape where Israeli soldiers would encounter booby traps, mine pits, sniper fire, suicide terrorists, and so on. Knowing Israel's sensitivity to casualties among soldiers, Hamas felt that a large number of fatalities among Israeli men in uniform would shorten the duration of the fighting, hurt morale, and leave a bitter taste of failure.¹⁸

Fourth, Hamas' military wing prepared to create "surprises" during fighting in order to upset Israeli society's equilibrium and create an effect whose psychological value would of necessity be greater than its direct operational importance. In addition to the terminology copied directly from Hizbollah, Hamas' thinking was based on the desire to display IDF ineptitude, shout its failures from the rooftops, and create public

pressure to stop any future battle before its goals had been achieved. As such, Hamas' military wing would be able to present a victory in a series of isolated incidents, which to its thinking would constitute a decision in its favor.

Fifth, in light of the IDF's intelligence capabilities, especially the targeted assassinations, Hamas' military wing made a major point of integrating into the local population. Hamas became an amorphous, elusive, hard to find enemy, in order to reduce the number of casualties and retain survivability of its forces. Hamas understood that in light of the IDF's qualitative superiority, it was necessary to act in small frameworks, at the level of cells, in a hit-and-run fashion. That is to say, the quantitative force used against internal enemies is not analogous to what is needed to withstand an external enemy enjoying technological superiority and far greater force. In addition, integrating into the local population had the potential of the IDF killing masses of uninvolved people unintentionally. Such an incident, like the attack on Kafr Qana both during Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996 and in the Second Lebanon War a decade later, would likely result in a lull, if not a complete halt of the battle. As far as the military wing was concerned, not only would the IDF's image as a moral army be tarnished, but international pressure would impose a result that would necessarily benefit Hamas and minimize any Israel achievements until that point in time.

As Hamas' military wing rallied from the opening assault of Operation Cast Lead, its operatives tried to apply the principles of action underlying its defensive plans for the Gaza Strip. In general, Hamas fighters took off their uniforms, blended into the civilian population and turned them into unwilling human shields, and avoided direct friction with the IDF in the open areas that extend to the outskirts of the urban areas.¹⁹ Other than sniper fire, Hamas fire at the IDF originated from afar and involved the use of mortar bombs, ready-to-operate explosive devices laid along travel routes and in booby-trapped houses, and anti-tank fire such as RPGs and Yassins.²⁰ Hamas' military wing sought to drag the IDF deep into the urban area, canceling out some of its advantages, and at the same time tried to create tactical surprises that would have changed the cost in human lives and thereby, perhaps, also the face of the battle as a whole. Hamas fighters moved through the underground tunnels in attempts to strike at Israeli army forces from the home front and in at least one

instance were close to kidnapping a soldier by forcing him into their network of tunnels and from there to a secure location.²¹

While fewer rockets were fired at Israel than anticipated (prior estimates were 100-200 per every 24-hour period²²), this cannot necessarily be attributed to the air force's attacks on munitions stores and launching sites; rather, this is evidence of the orderly logic of the enemy's methodology. Apparently in the course of the fighting, Hamas calculated that it was enough to fire a few long range rockets towards Beer Sheva or Ofakim in the east, and towards Ashdod or Yavne in the north, in order to derail the routine of life in southern Israel.²³ Pursuing this sparing trend until the last day of fighting is evidence of operational discipline, a well-planned fire program, and the desire to extend the duration of the fighting while maintaining operative survivability at the same time as contesting the achievements of the IDF.²⁴ The steady, unceasing drip of rockets, despite the IDF's presence in the northern part of the Gaza Strip and its siege of Gaza City, also proved that Hamas had calculatingly deployed its Grad order of battle among its regional divisions and regiments. Thus, the ability to render a decisive blow to Hamas' artillery was denied to Israel, despite blows to key figures such as Iman Ziam, the head of rocket systems in the Gaza Strip, and Amir Mansi, commander of the Gaza City division.²⁵ Hamas thus sent a clear message: without conquering all of the Gaza Strip, which Israel wanted to avoid if only because it was incompatible with the political hourglass, it would be impossible to end the fire.

In reality, Hamas' plan achieved its goals only partially, though this was enough to give its military wing the sense of victory. Although hundreds of activists were killed despite integrating into the population, they represented a small percentage of Hamas' fighting forces.²⁶ Dozens of people killed were not organizationally affiliated with Hamas but with other groups such as Islamic Jihad and the Popular Resistance.²⁷ Further, the senior command echelon of Hamas' military wing, headed by Ahmed Jabari and the division and regiment commanders beneath him, was hardly touched. That is to say, Hamas retained its military force in a way that allowed it to continue to control the Gaza Strip and to renew the confrontation with Israel at any given time.²⁸

While the use of civilians as human shields in Gaza caused a high fatality rate of uninvolved individuals, this did not stop Israel from

continuing its military operation. Even the isolated incident of a strike near the UNRWA al-Fahoura School in Gaza on January 6, 2009, in which 42 civilians were killed, did not, in Hamas' view, achieve the effect that the incident at Kafr Qana did and bring about the end of the operation,. However, the high number of casualties definitely served Hamas the day after in its struggle for local hearts and minds and the fight for Arab and international public opinion.²⁹

Establishing the system of tunnels and bunkers in the heart of the urban space of Gaza City and its outskirts provided Hamas with hiding places. Nevertheless, the movement's political leadership did not manage to escape the threat of targeted assassinations completely. On December 31, 2008, the IDF managed to kill Nizar Rayan, a member of Hamas' political leadership and a senior religious authority, and on January 15, 2009 killed Said Siam, the Hamas government minister of the interior. The two were part of the starting five of Hamas' leadership in the Gaza Strip, and together with the death of Salah Abu Sharkh, the head of Hamas' interior security service, the Israeli military earned intelligence and operational gains.³⁰ Still, at the end of the battle most of Hamas' leadership remained intact and its hold on the Gaza Strip was as strong as ever. This also was enough to be interpreted as a victory and proof that aerial and intelligence capabilities, as successful as they may be, are not enough to cause the movement to collapse.³¹

Hamas' military wing did not succeed in exacting a costly human toll from the IDF, and failed in creating tactical surprises. In general, its fighters avoided frontal confrontations with the IDF and fled into the constructed interior while leaving much military equipment behind. However, in the eyes of Hamas, it was enough that the IDF avoided entering the crowded refugee camps to conclude that it had created a kind of deterrence.³²

The military wing's ability to maintain the high trajectory fire in a measured and continuous way was, from Hamas' point of view, one of the important achievements of the battle. Not only was the movement's artillery not completely paralyzed despite the duration of the fighting and the IDF's air superiority and its ground maneuver, but it even managed to preserve an orderly plan, showed high operational discipline, and proved that scattering the rocket stores and launchers among the regional divisions withstood the test. In addition, it was enough that about one

million Israeli civilians were within Hamas' firing range, with disruptions to civilian life, real damage to the economy of the south, and the creation of a threat to strategic assets, such as the port of Ashdod and the air force airfields in the region, especially after Hamas shot the last shot of the war in order to win a few extra points.

Conclusion

Operation Cast Lead dealt a hard though not fatal blow to Hamas' military wing. Despite the IDF firepower and Hamas' many casualties, the last round of fighting actually indicates the long way the military wing has come, from being terrorist cells loosely held together in a hierarchical system to a fighting force with a fixed configuration and a fighting doctrine. Its capability of maintaining its force to a great extent even after 23 days of continuous fighting against the might of the Israeli armed forces, even though Hamas did not manage to take the human toll it had expected, demonstrated the amount of thought and effort the movement had invested over the years, both into building the force and into its mode of operation. Thus, one must not doubt the military wing's capacity to learn lessons for the future from the last confrontation, replenish its ranks, and grow stronger in a way that will improve its capabilities. Therefore, rather than viewing Operation Cast Lead as an Israeli success in reasserting its deterrence, additional attention must be paid to the warning light that has emerged in its wake. While Israel may have won the battle, it is still far from winning the war.

Notes

- 1 Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's statement in a press briefing about the operation in Gaza. For the full statement, see <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechgaza271208.htm>.
- 2 Amir Bouhbout and Amit Cohen, "Shock Therapy," *Maariv*, December 28, 2008; Amos Harel, "Most Hamas Bases Destroyed in Under 4 Minutes," *Haaretz*, December 28, 2008.
- 3 As early as December 2007, the IDF estimated – in an assessment that was given to the prime minister – that in a widespread ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip Israel might suffer over one hundred dead. See Amir Rapaport and Amit Cohen, "Talking and Shooting," *Maariv*, December 12, 2007.
- 4 For the development of the relationship between Hamas and Iran, see Guy Aviad, *The Hamas Lexicon* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 2008), pp. 46-50.

- 5 Amir Bouhbout, "Senior Officer: We Can't Stop Hamas Rearming," *Maariv*, July 20, 2007; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center – Center for Intelligence Heritage, "The Process of Hamas' Growth in Strength in the Gaza Strip," April 2008, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/Hebrew/heb_n/pdf/hamas_080408h.pdf.
- 6 Eitan Yitzhak, "Under the Ground," *Maarachot*, No. 422, December 2008, p. 20.
- 7 Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center – Center for Intelligence Heritage, "The Gaza Strip Rocket Threat 2000-2007," December 2007, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/Hebrew/heb_n/html/rocket_threat.htm.
- 8 The agreement about a period of calm was achieved in the Cairo talks in March 2005 between Fatah and Hamas with Egypt's mediation, without Israel being a party to it. It was established that the calm would be imposed for a limited time and would be conditional on Israel's conduct, i.e., any violation on Israel's part, from Hamas' perspective, would be met with a measured response by the organization. Moreover, Hamas committed itself not to use violence on the intra-Palestinian front and to participate in government institutions – the local government and the Legislative Council.
- 9 Aside from the fact that the achievement expressed a protest vote in the territories as a sign of the revulsion with the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and disappointment with its political path, the split in the Fatah lists and their candidates running as independents in the various districts also contributed to Hamas' victory. For more on the results of the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council, see the website of the Central Elections Committee at www.elections.ps.
- 10 It was Said Siam, the Hamas government interior minister, who in April 2006 established the operational force as part of a Hamas attempt to root out the phenomenon of anarchy in the Gaza Strip and be a counterweight to the security services subordinate to President Abu Mazen. Jamil Jarah headed the operational force of thousands of armed men, some of whom were simultaneously also serving in the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades – the Hamas military wing.
- 11 For more about the confrontations between Fatah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip in 2006-2007, see Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 95-119; C. Jacob, "Escalation in Fatah-Hamas Conflict," MEMRI, *Inquiry and Analysis*, No. 316, January 23, 2007, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=palestinian&ID=IA31607>.
- 12 Amos Harel, Avi Issacharoff, and Yuval Azulay, "Dead in Gaza Fighting, Hundreds Flee to Israel," *Haaretz*, August 3, 2008; Ali Wakad, "Battle Day: Hamas Defeats Clan Identified with Fatah," www.ynet.co.il, August 2, 2008.
- 13 Avi Issacharoff, "11 Dead, Also Children, in Battles between Hamas and Members of Durmouh Clan in Gaza," *Haaretz*, September 17, 2008.

- 14 Taken from an interview with GOC Southern Command Yoav Gallant. Ben Caspit, "We Now Have a Little Hizbollah on the Southern Fence," *Maariv*, September 29, 2008; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center – Center for Intelligence Heritage, "The Process of Hamas' Growth in Strength in the Gaza Strip," April 2008, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/Hebrew/heb_n/pdf/hamas_080408h.pdf.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Yitzhak, "Under the Ground," pp. 20-22.
- 17 Avi Issacharoff, "Sources in Gaza: Hamas Fighters Hiding Under Populated Neighborhoods," *Haaretz*, January 6, 2009.
- 18 Alex Fishman, "Tragedy on the Road to Settlement," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 7, 2009.
- 19 Yossi Yehoshua and Alex Fishman, "Shelter for Hamas High Command: Under Sick Children," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 7, 2009.
- 20 Amir Bouhbout, "Inside the Gaza Strip," *Maariv*, January 7, 2009; Alex Fishman, "Not Such a Big Deal," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 30, 2009.
- 21 On January 4, 2009, a Hamas cell moving through the tunnels on the eastern outskirts of Gaza City tried to kidnap a soldier from the Golani Brigade operating in the area. The attempt was foiled. Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "Hamas Attempt to Kidnap IDF Soldier Foiled," *Haaretz*, January 5, 2009.
- 22 Ben Caspit, "Playing from Weekend to Weekend," *Maariv*, January 2, 2009.
- 23 Ashdod took its first hit on December 29, 2008, and Beer Sheva came into range the next day. From a systematic examination of the map of hits during Operation Cast Lead and announcements made by Hamas' military wing, it would seem that on most days Hamas' artillery made a point of shooting at least two long range rockets both to the east (Beer Sheva, Ofakim, and Netivot) and the north (Ashkelon, Ashdod, Yavne, and the Gderot Regional Council). Moreover, based on statistics published by the Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades at the end of the fighting, 213 Grad missiles were fired at targets in the 20-40 km range. Some 92 were fired eastwards and some 104 northwards, i.e., symmetry was maintained between the two regions in a way that paralyzed the entire spectrum of communities in the south by an average steady drip of five missiles to the north and four to the east for every day of the operation, http://www.alqassam.ps/arabic/special_files/forqan/hassad_alqassam.doc.
- 24 In a survey given by Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidetz, head of Research at Military Intelligence, before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on January 5, 2009, it was stated that the decrease in scope of the firing was tactical and that the organization had the capacity to launch rockets into the depth of Israel for weeks. Arik Bender, "Military Intelligence: Hamas Has Enough Missiles and Rockets for Another Month," *Maariv*, January 6, 2009; Ofer Shelah, "He Knows How to Take It," *Maariv*, January 9, 2009.
- 25 Diary of Events – Cast Lead, of January 4, 2009, at the website of the General Security Services at <http://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/oferet/Pages/>

- oferet-yoman.aspx; Hanan Greenberg, "The IDF: Commander of Rocket System in Gaza City Eliminated," www.ynet.co.il, January 10, 2009; Amir Bouhbout and Amit Cohen, "IDF Force Eliminates Head of Rocket System," *Maariv*, January 11, 2009.
- 26 At the end of the battle in Gaza, Hamas' military wing claimed that only 48 of its operatives were killed in the fighting. At the same time, the spokesman for the Gaza Ministry of Interior, Ihab al-Routzin, stated that 300 activists subordinate to the ministry, headed by Minister Said Siam, were killed in battle, of them 230 policemen and 50 from the security services, <http://www.alqassam/ps/english/?action=showsta&sid=1309>, and <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=45037&SecID=451>.
- 27 At the end of Operation Cast Lead, the Jerusalem Brigades, the Islamic Jihad military wing, stated that 39 of its activists had been killed in the fighting in Gaza, www.paltoday.com/arabic/Tools.php?act=PrintPage&id=34535; the Salah a-Din Division, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Councils, stated that 15 of its activists had been killed in the battle in Gaza, www.moqawmh.com/ara/index.php?act=News&id=2584.
- 28 Amir Bouhbout, "Hamas Chief of Staff Commanding from the Bunker," *Maariv*, January 8, 2009.
- 29 Amos Gilboa, "Hamas' Victory Laurels," *Maariv*, January 26, 2009.
- 30 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "IDF Assassinate Senior Hamas Official in Gaza Strip," *Haaretz*, January 2, 2009; Yossi Yehoshua and Roni Shaked, "Assassination at the Top," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 2, 2009; Avi Issacharoff and Anshel Pfeffer, "IDF Assassinate Senior Hamas Official in Gaza," *Haaretz*, January 16, 2009; Ron Ben-Yishai, "Assassination of Siam – Part of IDF 'Picture of Victory,'" www.ynet.co.il, January 16, 2009.
- 31 A short time after the fighting died down, senior Hamas personnel, including Ismail Haniyeh, Halil al-Haya and Moushir al-Mitzri, emerged from their hiding places and surveyed the ruins of Gaza. In early February, Mahmoud al-Zahar even left Gaza for talks in Cairo, and thus refuted the rumors that he had been wounded or had fled to el-Arish.
- 32 In an interview that Col. Herzi Halevy, Paratroopers Division Commander, granted after the operation, he said: "The intensity with which we entered reduced the number of casualties... The force we applied in the attack did not let them use the means they were most prepared for....We came at them from unexpected directions and with such intensity that the terrorists did not stay behind to set off the booby traps they had prepared for us....The terrorists who took over the homes abandoned by civilians left behind explosives with connected wires running and ready to operate, ready to launch RPGs, rifles on the floor. Just like real arms depots. But the intensity with which we entered drove them off. They did not stick around to make use of it." See Yossi Yehoshua and Reuven Weiss, "So I Have No Dilemma," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.

Is the IDF Prepared to Face a Regular War against the Arab States?

Zaki Shalom

Since its establishment, Israel's security policymakers believed the IDF must be prepared to face every possible threat scenario presented by the Arab states, including a war involving all Arab countries.¹

This principle guided Israel's position on various security issues. The IDF's performance in the Sinai Campaign, the Six Day War, and to a large extent the Yom Kippur War seems to have proved the validity of the principle. In each of these cases, the Israeli army emerged with the upper hand, and there was little doubt that Israel was the victor. However, this was not the case in recent military confrontations: in Lebanon (July-August 2006), and in the Gaza Strip (December 2008-January 2009). Following those conflicts, Israel's ability to meet all threat scenarios successfully has been questioned. This paper will examine the reasons for this shift in perception, with the war in the Gaza Strip as the test case. It will also present lessons learned from the events of the Second Lebanon War.

Both the war in the Gaza Strip (Operation Cast Lead) and to a large extent the war in Lebanon started with optimal conditions from Israel's perspective. The Gaza operation began after years of Israeli restraint towards ongoing barrages of missiles, rockets, and mortar bombs aimed at Israel's southern towns. This restraint, whatever its reasons, was harshly criticized by many Israelis, especially southerners whose towns were targeted and those on the right of the political spectrum.

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Once Operation Cast Lead began, however, it became clear that this policy of restraint greatly contributed to creating a broad consensus of support among Israeli society for the war. Wide segments of the Israeli public, including those who consistently expressed reservations against “militant” Israeli policies, were aware that as far as Gaza was concerned, Israeli governments were not eager for battle and had done everything in their power to avoid the confrontation. Consequently, internal criticism of Israel’s military moves in Gaza was muted. Those who did criticize Israel for its escalation did so in a fairly low key and conciliatory way.²

The restraint shown by Israel (akin to “the waiting period” that preceded the Six Day War) created a supportive atmosphere for Israel’s military moves in the international arena as well. This basic support would probably have existed without regard for the policy of restraint because many countries viewed radical Islam, as represented by Hamas, as a threat not only for Israel but also for themselves. Nonetheless, one may assume that the policy of restraint greatly intensified the fairly forgiving and supportive attitude shown by many countries towards Israel’s massive military undertaking in the Gaza Strip. The international community’s support in essence reflected its willingness to give Israel a period of free rein of attack in order to achieve a clear decision over Hamas.

Most European countries were clear about placing the responsibility for the situation on Hamas...Many countries such as Italy, Germany, and the Czech Republic showed understanding for Israel and described Israel’s actions as self-defense. These countries generally used strong language against Hamas and demanded that it stop the rocket attacks unconditionally... After the ground operation took place, countries of this group remained supportive of Israel and focused on the need to work for a durable ceasefire that would reflect Israeli concerns.³

The timing of the operation was also convenient for Israel, in at least two respects. First, the end of the calendar year marks a near-freeze of activity in international diplomacy, making it difficult to formulate a political end to the hostilities, i.e., Israel enjoyed freedom of military action, and there was no significant diplomatic effort to bring it to an end. Second, the interim period between the end of the Bush administration and the incoming Obama administration lent Israel a great deal of

freedom, regardless of the fact that the Bush administration supported Israel from the beginning of the operation.⁴

The operation started with a tactical surprise for Hamas. Hamas assessed that Israel would avoid a comprehensive confrontation just before the Israeli elections, and thus the decision to embark on an extensive operation took Hamas by complete surprise. The campaign began with a massive aerial assault that severely injured dozens of Hamas police personnel and damaged its infrastructure. The first stage of the confrontation displayed Hamas' state of shock to Israel's offense. Hamas was also taken by surprise by the ground campaign and eventually by the ceasefire.⁵

In the course of the war, Israel enjoyed total superiority in terms of forces at its disposal, available firepower, and technology. Above all, Israel had and still has unquestioned and unthreatened aerial superiority. The air force succeeded in causing severe blows to Hamas, while Hamas was incapable of neutralizing that activity. Yet notwithstanding these favorable conditions, today it is clear that Israel did not succeed in winning a clear decision on the ground, such that would, in Chief of Staff Ashkenazi's terms, preclude any question of who won the war.⁶ The question is indeed being asked, though with much less hesitation than after the Second Lebanon War.

To be sure, Israel scored many great achievements in the war, including:

- a. Severe damage to Hamas' infrastructure and personnel: Israel's disproportionate response brought about extensive destruction in the Gaza Strip. According to a report made by the Minister of Internal Security Avi Dichter, the campaign caused 2,000 Hamas casualties, including dead and injured.
- b. Israel strengthened its deterrence with regard to Hamas. Israel managed to create a credible threat that it was prepared to use tremendous firepower even against populated areas, mosques, schools, universities, UN institutions, and other locations where Hamas fighters were hiding. All of these had previously been considered off limits to Israel's response. These results will presumably deter Hamas from continuing to fire missiles at southern settlements in such scope and intensity that would in their estimation force Israel to take action in Gaza as it did in Operation Cast Lead.⁷

- c. Israel seems to have partially succeeded (at least according to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert) in ensuring a more effective mechanism to control arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip, a mechanism in which Egypt, the United States, and the European Union all play a part.⁸

At the same time, one cannot minimize Hamas' achievements. At the end of a three week confrontation with a state (Israel) defined as "a regional military superpower," with opening conditions optimal from the Israeli point of view, Hamas remained on its feet. It does not hesitate to send an almost daily drizzle of rockets, mortars, and so on aimed at Israel's southern settlements. To date, almost a year after the war, most have fallen in open spaces and caused no significant damage. On the political level, Hamas draws encouragement from the statements of officials and leaders, mainly in Europe, calling on the international community to demonstrate more flexibility in all that regards recognition of, and negotiations with, the organization. Such calls empower Hamas' legitimacy in the international arena and are another component of Hamas' achievements after the campaign.⁹

This overall balance of the battle in the Gaza Strip, coming after the Second Lebanon War, should lead Israel's leaders to undertake a thorough examination of the validity of its longstanding security doctrine. In particular it should examine its ability to withstand threats far worse than the ones it has faced recently. While carrying out such an examination, several background points should be kept in mind:

- a. The battles in Lebanon and Gaza clearly indicate that the threats terrorist organizations pose towards Israel are not just part of Israel's ongoing, daily security concerns; they are true strategic threats. It is impractical to classify these as low profile threats, because they often develop into all-out wars.
- b. The battles in Lebanon and Gaza exposed the vulnerability of the Israeli home front. During the war in the north, hundreds of thousands of citizens temporarily abandoned the region. Similar phenomena, though to a much lesser extent, occurred in the south during Operation Cast Lead. The economies and social systems of both sectors were badly hit and have yet to be fully rebuilt.
- c. Both battles required the IDF to use massive force from the air, the armored corps, and the infantry. There were significant mobilizations of the reserves, although the IDF did not employ all

its capabilities. In many ways the two battles were conducted as full-scale wars rather than as low intensity conflicts, as it is customary to call confrontations between states and terrorist organizations.

- d. In neither battle did the IDF manage to reach a real decision against a militarily inferior enemy. It may be assumed that in the next confrontation residents of the center of the country will also suffer casualties and the IDF will again find it difficult to ensure victory, even in limited terms.

This is a fairly worrisome picture from the Israeli perspective. In addition to the dangers posed by terrorist organizations, Israel has to prepare for far worse future threats, such as a confrontation with Arab nations similar to the nature of the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War. In both cases, Israel simultaneously faced two to three Arab states. Currently, the odds of such a scenario are low, given that Israel has fairly stable peace agreements with both Egypt and Jordan. The only apparent threat is Syria, who would almost certainly avoid solely facing Israel in a confrontation. Nonetheless, history demonstrates that the Middle East is filled with surprises and unexpected scenarios. Therefore, the State of Israel must consider the risk of a multi-Arab military confrontation, while simultaneously fighting the terrorist organizations that help them. In such an event, the Israeli army would face regular armies of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, aided by armored troops, infantry, and air forces of huge dimensions. Above all, these states would have a significant capability of neutralizing Israel's air superiority by two basic means: a) creating a balance of terror, i.e., launching long range missiles at Israeli cities in the center of the country as retaliation for air force activity; and b) operating advanced systems of aerial defense to damage the air force's aircraft. In other words, Israel's primary strategic arm will not be able to operate as freely as in past confrontations.

An even worse possibility is a preemptive war against Israel launched by Arab states and terrorist organizations, beginning with massive missile fire and artillery barrages aimed at Israeli cities, population centers, military bases, industrial complexes, and so on. Reports indicate that Hizbollah already has tens of thousands of such missiles that threaten large areas of Israel. Syria has an even larger stockpile. Israel must consider the possibility that such fire would take the country by complete surprise. Until now, it has been customary in Israel to assume

that the intelligence services would provide adequate warning of such a preemptive strike. There is no longer certainty that this is the case. Such a massive attack is liable to cause paralysis, if only partial, of the preparations for a counterstrike.

In conclusion, Israel may face an extremely dangerous security situation in the future. On the basis of its current security preparedness, it is doubtful if Israel has an appropriate response to those future threats. A more significant question mark hovers over whether Israel would emerge from such a confrontation with the upper hand. All these possible future threats should lead Israeli leaders to seriously reexamine its security doctrine.

Notes

- 1 In an interview with the press, Yitzhak Navon, Ben-Gurion's personal secretary, said the following: "Ben-Gurion always told the senior command echelon that two major principles must guide the IDF: the ability to be victorious against all the Arab armies should they attack Israel all at once, and second, never to let the IDF fight against any European army." Interview with Yitzhak Navon, *Maariv*, December 7, 1973.
- 2 The policy of restraint and forbearance was expressed in declarations made by national leaders during the war. See "Olmert: It is Liable to Take Time; Patience is Needed," *Ynet*, December 27, 2008.
- 3 Tamas Berzi, "European Reactions to Israel's Gaza Operation," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Articles on Europe & Israel, Volume 8, no. 20, January 29, 2009.
- 4 For the "convenient" timing of the operation, see Rowan Scarborough: "Timing of Israeli Invasion Limited Obama's Options," *Washington Times*, January 19, 2009.
- 5 For Hamas' surprises in the battle, see statements by Head of Intelligence Amos Yadlin, Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, and the Head of the General Security Services, in Roni Sofer, "Intelligence: Hamas to Try to Balance the Picture Using Attacks," *Ynet*, January 18, 2009. "As early as the cabinet meeting on January 11, the Head of Intelligence made it clear that Hamas leaders had not anticipated an aerial strike, did not anticipate a ground maneuver, and did not anticipate the cold shoulder from the Arab world." Channel 2 News, January 11, 2009, <http://news.reshet.tv/News/Politics/StatePolicy/Article,11392.aspx>.
- 6 Yuval Azoulay, "Ashkenazi: In Every Future Confrontation It Should Be Clear Who Won," *Walla News*, September 27, 2007.
- 7 "Avi Dichter: Some 2,000 Hamas personnel were killed or injured in Operation Cast Lead," as cited by *Reuter.net*, January 22, 2009. In this context, Prime Minister Olmert said explicitly: "Today, Israel's deterrence

is higher than ever, not just in the last decade but well beyond...This is deterrence against all the components of the axis of evil, and whoever needs to know knows...The war in Lebanon created deterrence not just with regard to Hizbollah but also with regard to Syria." Ben Caspit, "Now Go Cope," *Maariv*, January 23, 2009. For the new rules of the game against Hamas, also see Ron Ben Yishai, "Shock Treatment," *Maariv*, January 23, 2009.

8 Caspit, "Now Go Cope."

9 For the achievements of Hamas, see Yoni Ben Menahem, "Israel attained only partial achievements in the course of Operation Cast Lead. Accepting the Egyptian ceasefire initiative is liable to erode Israel's achievements and Hamas will again grow strong within a matter of months," http://www.arabexpert.co.il/2009/01/blog-post_08.html.

From the Second Intifada through the Second Lebanon War to Operation Cast Lead: Puzzle Pieces of a Single Campaign

Gabriel Siboni

This essay seeks to view Operation Cast Lead as a piece in a developing sequence, beginning with the second intifada and continuing through the Second Lebanon War, in terms of two major components: the military response to the threat and the public understanding of the effectiveness of the military response. There is a close symbiotic relationship between the two components because Israel's response to the threat involves military combat elements alongside civilian stamina and defense capabilities. The two components are intertwined, as the supreme goal of the enemy is to harm the nation's civilians. Harming the Israeli military is the enemy's secondary goal; if achieved, it enables the enemy to proceed towards its primary objective.

The IDF embarked on Operation Cast Lead after many years in which the southern part of the country was subjected to severe ongoing rocket fire that completely changed the fabric of civilian life. The enemy's guiding principle was to exhaust the country's inhabitants and make life in Israel's public domain unbearable. During those years, the IDF took various actions in accordance with different operational approaches. These did not yield any real change in the scope of the high trajectory fire, and in practice did not lead to an improvement in the lives of the residents of the south. The period of calm during the last six months of 2007 produced brief intervals without terrorism, but did not change the state of affairs in any essential way. On the contrary, it allowed the enemy

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to grow stronger without any interference. In operational-professional terms, it was clear for some time that the situation could not continue for much longer and that military action was in the offing.

This essay examines how the threat against the State of Israel has changed and the process by which the response to this threat was formulated. Internalizing the deep significances of the change is important for understanding the country's security challenges and for producing relevant, up-to-date approaches to these challenges.

Changes in the Threat and the Components of Response

The threat against the State of Israel has undergone a dramatic change. The enemy¹ changed its strategic concept from an offensive maneuver aimed at conquering part of the country² to a strategy of long term attrition of Israel's citizens. The enemy reasoned that over many years, it would succeed in exhausting the country's residents and damage the fabric of life to such an extent as to make life intolerable.³ The phenomenon of attrition is not in and of itself new: since the establishment of the state, the enemy has used terrorism at varying levels of force against Israel, from the fedayeen to Palestinian terrorism of various stripes with limited success. That did not require a change of Israel's security concept, as Israel continued to deal with the primary threat of large military forces trying to conquer Israeli land. The change in the country's security philosophy occurred as a result of the change in the enemy's method of operation. The size of Israel and the fact that it has no strategic depth made Israel's enemies assume that high trajectory fire aimed at the Israeli home front in large quantities and with a minimum of variables⁴ would allow them to achieve their goal.⁵

Israel's security response as formulated by Ben-Gurion was based on three fixed principles. First, because Israel lacks the capacity to change the total strategic situation by means of aggression, its basic strategic goal must be defensive. Therefore, the goal of war is to act forcefully to achieve a quick decision against the enemy and create as long an interval as possible until the next confrontation. The second principle concerns the notion of deterrence. Once deterrence collapses, the IDF must move quickly and decisively in order to foil the threat and create the maximum number of years until the next confrontation. Underlying the

third principle is the notion of moving the fighting onto enemy soil and shortening the duration of the war as much as possible.

The application of this philosophy against the classical threat allowed Israel to foil several threats while creating intervals of several years between one violent confrontation and the next. The results of these confrontations, which did not involve Israel's civilians, created great expectations of the armed forces among the public. This view of the military did not change in recent years, despite the change in the nature of the threat and the subsequent outdating of Israel's security philosophy.

Starting to Understand the Change: The Second Intifada – “Let the IDF Win”

The second intifada forced the IDF to confront waves of deadly terrorism and obligated IDF commanders to conduct an in-depth examination of basic concepts such as “decision” and “victory.” As Shlomo Gazit summarized:

This is how a political reality was created, which allowed and justified our asking two persistent questions: (a) What constitutes an Israeli victory and decision in the violent struggle between us and the Palestinians? (b) Is it possible to attain such a decision using IDF forces in this Palestinian uprising?⁶

When it became clear to the Israeli public that the IDF's attempt to confront this threat did not provide an immediate response, rather continued to confront it with a complex challenge, the slogan “let the IDF win”⁷ fell on fertile public soil. The IDF was facing a critical difficulty in finding a response to terrorism, while large segments of the population were convinced that the army was capable of solving the problem in one fell swoop. The comments by GOC Southern Command on the popular slogan were also not helpful in this regard:

Saying such things is idiotic. I command the IDF forces in the Gaza Strip and the Southern Command, and I am telling the entire nation of Israel that I, as a military commander... am taking every step that needs to be taken and making every move that needs to be made.⁸

The complexity of the threat and the shortcomings of the response, while permeating the public discourse, did not ripen into an acute

understanding of the need to change the terminology of the strategic discourse in Israel, which instead continued to be based on irrelevant terms such as “victory” and “decision.” Between 2002 and 2005, the IDF, together with the General Security Services, managed to formulate an updated concept of warfare against terrorism and significantly reduce its scope in a gradual process until it was overcome in practice (in the Judea and Samaria region) in 2005 and removed from the State of Israel’s public agenda.

The Second Lebanon War: Media-Saturated Disappointment versus Lasting Strategic Achievements

The Second Lebanon War raised the public’s frustrations to new peaks. The IDF embarked on this war under a hailstorm of bellicose, sneering utterances using terms such as “victory” and “achieving a decision against Hizbollah,” based on an idea that the IDF had the capability of stopping the high trajectory fire, without bothering to clarify the meaning of such terms in the context of the confrontation with Hizbollah and the threat it represented. The end of the fighting set off a media-saturated wave of disillusionment and the most senior commentators on the war proclaimed a defeat for Israel. Moshe Arens said, “In the history of the State of Israel there has never yet been such a war...There has never yet been such a defeat, a defeat in a war against a few thousand Hizbollah fighters.”⁹ The lack of understanding of the essence of the threat and the ways to handle also encouraged the Winograd Commission to join in this wave. The Commission wrote in its report: “At the end of 34 days of fighting, there was no decision for the IDF, not even in isolated ‘points.’ Hizbollah fire at Israel’s home front stopped only because of the ceasefire. Israel did not win a clear victory in the war.”¹⁰

In practice, several strategic goals were defined for the IDF in the Second Lebanon War, and three major ones were in fact achieved:¹¹ (1) stopping terrorism aimed at Israel from sovereign Lebanese territory: the years since the Second Lebanon War have been among the calmest along the northern border since June 1982; (2) realization of Lebanon’s responsibility to rule its southern region: the Lebanese army has deployed through the south, Hizbollah has been pushed back into urban areas and is therefore finding it difficult to operate in open spaces, and its freedom of movement in the south has been significantly curtailed;

and (3) inflicting substantial damage on Hizbollah: the organization took an unprecedented blow with some 1,500 casualties among its forces, including over 600 killed, as well as severe damage to its assets in Beirut and the south. Therefore, the organization has been careful not to act openly against Israel.¹²

Understanding the complexity of the threat the IDF faces and internalizing the achievements of the war came only after some time had passed. To cite the words of Amir Peretz: "Lebanon was a war of awakening...We have to ask why so many important conclusions were reached only after the Second Lebanon War."¹³ In the army, it became clear that the achievements of the Second Lebanon War stemmed from the application of a different operational philosophy. This philosophy, applied in part in the Second Lebanon War, is based on understanding the army's limitation in paralyzing all the high trajectory launching capabilities of the enemy within the relevant time frame. The new way of thinking includes three fundamental notions: (1) a destructive strike of firepower against the enemy's core assets; (2) a quick maneuver to damage the enemy and paralyze its launching capabilities in the area of the maneuver;¹⁴ and (3) stamina and defensive capabilities on the civilian front.

Operation Cast Lead

Israel embarked on Operation Cast Lead two and a half years after the Second Lebanon War, and in that time efforts were made to implement its lessons. Regarding the operational concept, during the operation the IDF implemented two primary components: destructive firepower against the core assets of Hamas and terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, and a follow-up ground maneuver designed to deepen the damage and stop rocket launches from the area of the maneuver. The civilian defense component was also more effective than in the Second Lebanon War. In the course of the operation, the IDF garnered the support of the media, and most of the reports noted the positive aspects of the fighting and the changes for the better in the IDF, while pointing out that the commanders were fighting on the front lines, in front of their men.¹⁵

The comparison to the Second Lebanon War is self-evident. Did Operation Cast Lead attain any outstanding achievements not attained in the Second Lebanon War? In the Second Lebanon War, the fighting

stopped as the result of a ceasefire agreement, while in Operation Cast Lead, though the rocket fire continued, Israel unilaterally announced a ceasefire. The scope of the maneuver in Operation Cast Lead was immeasurably smaller than the scope of the maneuver in the Second Lebanon War. Complete paragraphs lifted from the Winograd Commission Report fit Operation Cast Lead, such as: "A para-military organization, numbering thousands of fighters, managed to hold out for long weeks against the strongest army in the Middle East, which enjoys total aerial superiority and vast advantages in size and technology."¹⁶ Nonetheless, no voices were raised to cry about a defeat in this operation. This change in the public discourse is likely the result of two causes. The first is the desire to create a corrective to the defeatist criticism that emerged after the Second Lebanon War; the second relates to the understanding of the complexity Israel is forced to face.

Trends and Future Directions

The Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead must be viewed as a continuum in Israel's campaign against the resistance movement. It seems that difficult confrontations still await Israel, but the cumulative achievements from Operation Defensive Shield through the Second Lebanon War to Operation Cast Lead, alongside the formulation of an appropriate strategic-operational philosophy and its realization in future confrontations, will supply the inhabitants of Israel with a satisfactory level of security. In this context, it is important to note several components:

A forceful response to every incident: Israel and the IDF must formulate disproportionate response packages for every attempt to undermine the security of the country's citizens, using the principle that one rocket counts as much as one hundred, and understanding, on the basis of past experience, that one rocket is always followed by more. Israel must determine – in deeds, not in words – a forceful price tag for every enemy attempt from the north or the south to harm Israeli citizens, even if this means a possible deterioration into a widespread confrontation. Israel must view such a confrontation, if forced upon it, as an opportunity to respond with force and leave the enemy with high costs of continuing provocations. Only prior preparation and training of such response packages, alongside clarification of their underlying principles to the public, will allow for effective application in real time. Therefore,

and because of the nature of the threat, it is necessary to stop the unproductive, paralyzing discussion of what is called “exit strategy” or “exit scenario.” There is no point in looking for any exit scenario ahead of time; the attempt to prophesy such processes in the past has never succeeded, and it is hard to imagine how it would succeed any better in the future. It is necessary to identify the opportunities as well as the risks as they present themselves and to deal with them during the fighting. Constructing an infrastructure of strategic and operational knowledge that will allow Israel to manage the risks must be done both before and in the course of the fighting.

Civilian stamina and defensive capabilities: Israel must build up civilian stamina to handle long situations of confrontation when the home front is attacked by rockets and missiles. Such stamina requires first and foremost sharing with the public all the components of the security concept. The Israeli public proved its stamina in the years of suicide bombings during the second intifada, and there is no doubt as to its ability to withstand challenges that the future may hold. In addition, the State of Israel and the IDF must act in order to formulate an effective defensive philosophy for the civilian front, whose harbingers were already visible during Operation Cast Lead. It is necessary to continue the development of this component in the security philosophy taking shape.

The media and public opinion shapers: The media and various commentators have tremendous influence over the mood of the Israeli public. The stark contrast between the conduct of the media in the Second Lebanon War and its conduct during Operation Cast Lead, despite the similarities between the two events, requires closer examination. The various media personnel and commentators, not to mention former IDF commanders, must understand the enormity of their responsibility for the Israeli public’s stamina. Irresponsible talk on the part of any one of them is liable to cause twofold damage: (1) constructing a snapshot of the situation that is encouraging to the enemy, which feeds on its information and uses it as its primary source for understanding the reality on Israel’s side, and (2) weakening the social resilience and spreading panic and confusion.

A sober look at the fighting that was forced on the State of Israel in recent years necessitates a look at the fundamental bases of the country’s security concept. This philosophy must be brought up to date in order

to create the proper strategic-operational framework for the challenges awaiting the nation. One may look at the full half of the glass and see how Israel was able to stand up to the Palestinian terrorist threat coming from Judea and Samaria, formulate an appropriate response and patterns of conduct, and in practice remove this threat from the public agenda. Only a similar move against the high trajectory fire can provide a fitting security response.

Two and a half years after the Second Lebanon War it is clear that many achievements were attained, despite failures in the IDF's operation. The achievements of Operation Cast Lead too must be measured over time. We must stop measuring the success of the operation on the basis of fleeting events. Such an analysis must be made from a long term perspective, knowing that only in the future will it be possible to judge whether Israel's strategic situation improved as a result of this operation.

Notes

- 1 This essay uses the word "enemy" to refer to Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and organizations such as Hizbollah and Hamas
- 2 The threat embodied by this strategic idea will henceforth be called "the classical threat."
- 3 The sense of attrition is seen in the erosion of the public's trust in the state's ability to provide it with basic security, and damage to the economic and social fabric of life and the state's ability to provide basic services, such as maintaining the educational system routine.
- 4 The idea of changing dosage is a component in the enemy's philosophy striving to find the balance between operating firepower of great enough scope to damage the fabric of life yet contained enough to prevent a significant response on Israel's part.
- 5 See Gabriel Siboni, "High Trajectory Weapons and Guerilla Warfare: Adjusting Fundamental Security Concepts," *Strategic Assessment* 10, no. 4 (2008): 12-18.
- 6 Shlomo Gazit, "Let the IDF Win," Council for Peace and Security, January 3, 2003.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Brig. Gen. Samiya, "The Slogan 'Let the IDF Win' Is Despicable" Ynet, December 7, 2000.
- 9 Moshe Arens in a speech at a gathering in favor of establishing a commission of inquiry into the events of the Second Lebanon War, Tel Aviv, September 8, 2006.
- 10 Winograd Commission Report, p. 369, paragraph 19.

- 11 See Gabriel Siboni, "From Gaza to Lebanon and Back," *Strategic Assessment* 10, no. 1 (2007): 66-69.
- 12 See the essay by Ronen Manelis in this publication, comparing the response of the organization to Operation Defensive Shield to its response to Operation Cast Lead.
- 13 Attila Somfalvi, "Lebanon Was a War of Awakening," Ynet, December 28, 2008.
- 14 For more on the subjects of firepower and maneuver, see the essay by Giora Segal in this publication.
- 15 In the Second Lebanon War IDF commanders were greatly criticized even though they fought on the front lines no less than the commanders of Operation Cast Lead. However, as part of what was in media style at the time, they earned the nickname "plasma commanders."
- 16 Winograd Commission Report, p. 34, paragraph 9.

The Limitations on Fighting a Terrorilla Army: Lebanon and Gaza as Test Cases

Yoram Schweitzer

In the past two and a half years, Israel has waged two military campaigns – against Hizbollah in Lebanon and against Hamas in Gaza – and in both, the campaigns were labeled in the public discourse in Israel and abroad as wars against terrorist organizations. The use of this term to describe the enemies Israel fought and the characteristics of these battles is not only imprecise and misleading but also shrouds the character of the enemy and the nature of the confrontation in a haze, minimizes their complexity, and creates unrealistic expectations in the mind of the public about the feasibility of overcoming them with a clear and unambiguous victory.

In the battles against Hizbollah and Hamas, Israel fought with enemies that can be described as military terrorilla outfits, i.e., sub-national organizations that at their inception based their “military” status on their use of terrorism,¹ that is, on sporadic, violent operations against civilian targets. After these, they added small scale guerilla activity and hit-and-run actions to their methods arsenal, and later on built well ordered and institutionalized military forces with squadrons, brigades, and even divisions (though at this stage they are smaller than in conventional armies), and employed fighting tactics combining all these components.

The purpose of this article is to clarify why a democratic state such as Israel, operating with constraints and restraints that are the direct result of its form of government and of broad political and international considerations, finds it so difficult to prevail fully and clearly in the confrontation against military terrorilla organizations such as Hizbollah and Hamas, which are multi-system outfits backed by social, economic,

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political, and religious institutions and that operate in the very heart of densely populated civilian areas in failed states or entities.²

The battle Israel waged against Hizbollah in the summer of 2006 broke out after Hizbollah attacked a number of Israeli settlements with massive missile fire as cover for the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers who were on Israeli territory, patrolling the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon. Consequently, Israel, using its air force, embarked on an extensive operation attacking strategic targets of the organization in the depth of Lebanese territory. Hizbollah responded with massive missile fire aimed at Israel, and this led to a military confrontation that lasted thirty-three days.

During the fighting, Hizbollah operated its institutionalized military system that it had built over many years with the direct assistance of Iran (and over the last few years, with significant Syrian contribution). Iran trained Hizbollah fighters, and armed and equipped them at a level suitable to a regular army of an actual nation.³ In the Second Lebanon War, Hizbollah's military organization assumed the fighting methods of guerillas, undertook hit-and-run actions, fired at IDF soldiers from afar, and fired massive rocket fire at Israeli towns and cities from within residential areas and even from within the homes of Lebanese citizens. This was according to the explicit logic of terrorism,⁴ which seeks to cause indiscriminate harm to as many civilians as possible in populated urban centers.

Hizbollah had free rein in firing at Israel because the country from which it operates is weak; its sovereignty lacks effective power of enforcement and has no influence whatsoever on the operation of the organization's military means or on its decision making processes. Israel avoided punishing Lebanon, from whose territory the attack was carried out, and did not greatly harm its infrastructures as a means of pressure on Hizbollah to stop the fire, though had it wanted to do so it certainly had the capability. Israel acted thus also because of the requests of its allies that have clear interests in Lebanon, primarily the United States and France, who urged Israel to avoid harming the Siniora government. In Israel too, this was considered a moderate Arab government, a member of the pragmatic camp and a possible partner for a future political move between the two countries. Harming a Lebanon led – at least officially – by a pro-Western sovereign government might have undermined its

stability, and perhaps even toppled it, dragged Lebanon into a civil war, and thus strengthened Hizbollah and the radical camp it represents.

As part of its operational strategy, Hizbollah took advantage of the harm that was nevertheless caused to Lebanon and the population, especially the Shiites, by Israel's reaction to the fire launched from or near their residential areas. Hizbollah used pictures of the destruction, broadcast all over the world during the war, in order to undermine the legitimacy of Israel's actions and in order to besmirch it as an immoral and aggressive country. It especially focused on isolated events with mass civilian casualties like the Kafr Qana incident (July 30, 2006) that killed 28 civilians who, unbeknownst to the IDF, were hiding in the basement of an abandoned building from which fire was regularly aimed at Israeli soldiers. The longer the fighting lasted, the more Hizbollah managed to suppress among public opinion the circumstances that led to the outbreak of the war by constantly harping on these images.

Israel's hesitant conduct and its leaders' avoidance of making a clear decision to embark on extensive and comprehensive ground maneuvers in order to penetrate into the depth of Lebanon, surround Hizbollah forces, and deal them severe blows using Israel's ground forces, helped Hizbollah construct the illusion of victory in the war. As the days of the war passed without Israel confronting Hizbollah's primary military force and its rocket launching units, Israel allowed Hizbollah fighters to continue firing them towards Israeli territory and establish what its spokesmen later on would call "the divine victory."⁵

Hizbollah is a movement that has been operating in Lebanon already for 27 years, and during those years it developed an extensive and well-established organizational, social, and economic system, which is represented in the Lebanese parliament and government and is supported by many Shiites, the largest of the ethnic groups in Lebanon. Therefore, the possibility of toppling it and wiping out its military forces via a military move seems patently unreasonable. Given the constraints of time and the restraints under which Israel was operating, it was at most possible to exacerbate the damage done to the organization's infrastructure and its commanders so that it would be much harder for it to present the façade of victory that took hold among the organization's supporters and many others who expected a more significant Israeli achievement. Clearly, the intensive support by the patron states Iran and

Syria – with money, equipment, and weapons – helped the organization rebuild its military force, which was rendered a blow within a short period of time, and this fact too clearly indicates the difficulty in bringing about the total annihilation of a military terrorilla organization of Hizbollah's kind given the circumstances under which it and its enemies operate.

Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza (as well as against other organizations using terrorism against southern Israel) got under way after a period of several weeks when Hamas escalated its rocket fire. This was no different from the seven years preceding the operation during which rockets of various kinds and mortar bombs were fired at the towns and kibbutzim of southern Israel. Israel prepared for the operation thoroughly and over a significant period of time, and chose its timing without being pressured to act by a mass-casualty event as was the case in Lebanon in 2006. Therefore it succeeded in conducting an intelligent and focused campaign against the military terrorilla organization constructed by Hamas with the ever-present assistance of Iran. Despite the many differences between the two campaigns and the two organizations,⁶ there was nonetheless a common denominator. Hamas operated on the basis of the same rationale as Hizbollah, i.e., the use of its military units, many of whose personnel were trained in Iran, and acted in organized patterns – to the extent that the IDF allowed them – of command and control of organic units, even if these were smaller than Hizbollah's. They fought the soldiers of the IDF to the best of their ability, and tried in particular to act using classic guerilla methods against military forces that outnumber their own, attacking sporadically in hit-and-run attacks,⁷ in order to try to "sting" IDF personnel by harming them with suicide bombers, sniper fire, and light weapons and mortar bomb fire, as well as kidnapping soldiers, knowing full well both the morale and practical damage such kidnappings represent for Israel. The rationale behind firing at Israeli towns and cities was also terrorism, i.e., causing a lot of indiscriminate damage to the extent of their ability to Israeli civilians and towns, resulting in deaths, property damage, and damage to Israeli civilian routines and morale.

Despite Hamas attempts during all twenty-two days of the operation to harm IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians and their infrastructures, its successes were relatively few, primarily thanks to the IDF's careful preparations for this type of warfare. This was seen for example by

the IDF use of its aerial advantage and the intensity of the firepower directed at the sources of Hamas fire on IDF soldiers in the battlefield and on Israeli civilians, and proper preparation of the civilian home front. Despite Israel's relative success in limiting the damage caused by Hamas, it avoided a massive incursion into the heart of Gaza City to render even stronger blows against the Hamas infrastructure and its leadership. Moreover, Israel did not manage completely to stop the missile fire against its towns but only to reduce it. Accordingly, Israel left Hamas' military terrorilla the possibility of creating an illusion of victory over Israel, one that was eagerly consumed by the movement's ardent supporters. Even in Israel, some parts of the public experienced a sense of a "miss" because of the feeling that the IDF could have achieved a more impressive military decision and achieved a halt to the Qassam and Grad fire at Israel altogether. This fire, even though it dwindled as time went by, did not stop completely even after the end of the operation, and it would seem that only an agreement between Israel and Hamas – with Egyptian mediation – is likely to end it, even if only for a given amount of time allotted by the renewed *tahadiya*.

In conclusion, as long as the State of Israel (like other democratic nations facing enemies of this type) conducts itself on the basis of the constraints of conventional wartime law and morality and the laws, norms, and values that define it and it considers norms accepted in the West, it will likely find it difficult to achieve a clear cut and unequivocal decision against military terrorilla organizations such as Hizbollah and Hamas. This is especially true when these multi-system movements are so deeply embedded in the civilian-urban fabric of the communities from which they operate and their support is based on a broad infrastructure. They have the help of patron states that take care to prepare them and equip them for military campaigns before they begin and finance their rebuilding after the end of the fighting, thus preventing the achievement of a total victory over them.

Because the type of warfare against them greatly resembles fighting normal conventional campaigns, which the terrorilla organizations simply copied into the heart of the civilian arena without any restraints or limitations (except at times in a range of their harm to enemy civilians), a democratic state cannot employ – over an extended period of time and in various situations that come up in the course of fighting – a surgical,

focused strategy, which is usually to be preferred when fighting against terrorist organizations and small guerilla armies. Their lack of restraint and their willingness to take advantage of harm to civilians on both sides, as against the self-imposed limitations set by democratic nations fighting them, help them emerge at the end of these military confrontations with declarations of victory, even when it is clear that militarily they were much more badly hurt relative to the damage they managed to inflict.

Therefore, beyond developing effective strategies and methods and adapting them to the manner of the fighting and the nature of military terrorilla, Israel faces a political and public relations challenge of the highest order. Before the outbreak of hostilities, Israel must prepare for a public relations campaign aimed at heads of state and public opinion around the world, and present the complexity of the new type of warfare it is facing, what needs to be done against such enemies, and the toll that this is liable to take on the countries hosting military terrorilla organizations. Constructing a strategy of proper public relations will allow Israel to gain widespread support, or at least greater tolerance, among both domestic and international public opinion for the harm caused to civilians in the states where military terrorilla has made itself at home. Such a complex type of warfare is definitely liable to appear at the doorsteps of other Western democracies, e.g., those involved in multinational forces stationed in regions of conflict in the world, such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Exposing the fighting strategy of military terrorilla and the rationale at its core, as well as clarifying the military might of these organizations – on a scale usually characterizing sovereign nations – may allow for a more effective confrontation with them, despite the constraints imposed on the use of force by democratic countries when operating in a civilian environment.

Despite the extensive criticism leveled internationally against Israel's actions in the last two campaigns, one may say that as a policy, Israel chose to operate its forces with maximum care under these circumstances of fighting against civilians, and certainly did not sweepingly compromise the rules of restraint expected of a democratic nation in this type of warfare.

Whoever thinks that it is possible to wage war on military terrorilla that finds refuge in obvious civilian environments in failed states, using

only surgical strategy without harming civilians, is deluding himself. One the other hand, whoever expects a democratic state to achieve an unequivocal, total, and clear decision against military terrorilla organizations only through the use of great force against their military component is liable to be very frustrated when it becomes clear that the support of their patrons and civilian systems helps them rebuild so that they will again be equipped for terrorism and guerilla and perhaps even completely reconstruct their military strength. This situation helps create an image of victory for terrorilla, because for them and their supporters the lack of a decision means victory.

Notes

- 1 It is not the intention of this article to go into a deep analysis of the problematics inherent in finding a single definition of terrorism accepted around the world, because there are more than one hundred such definitions (or nuances thereof). In this context, see Research Symposium: "Terrorism on Trial" at Case Western Reserve University School of Law, sponsored by the Frederick K. Cox International Law Center on October 8, 2004.
- 2 While there is wide acceptance among those who differ about the correct definition that systematic attack designed a priori against innocent civilians is an essential component in defining an action as a terrorist attack, there are those who prefer to focus on the action's justifications rather than on the action itself. There is also a difference between the policies and the manner of conduct of these two movements. Today, Hizbollah is part of the Lebanese establishment and is represented in parliament and the government, but it does not control the country. On the other hand, the state is incapable of controlling its conduct vis-à-vis its military security policy. Hamas operates within a Palestinian entity that is not a sovereign state. Since winning the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006, Hamas heads the Palestinian government, but since its forceful takeover of Gaza in June 2007, its government rules only this area, and the Palestinian Authority has established an alternative government in the West Bank.
- 3 Isaac Ben-Israel, *The First Missile War: Israel-Hizbollah 2006*, Tel Aviv University, May 2007.
- 4 Giora Romm, "A Test of Rival Strategies: Two Ships Passing in the Night," in Shlomo Brom and Elran, Meir, eds. *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspectives* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007), p. 51.
- 5 "'Today,' said [Nasrallah] at the beginning of his speech, 'we are celebrating an historic, strategic and divine victory,'" <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/766312.html>.

- 6 See Amir Kulick, "'Lebanon Lite': Lessons from the Operation in Gaza and the Next Round against Hizbollah," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2009): 51-66.
- 7 Interview with Paratroopers Division Commander Col. Herzi Halevy, *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.

Between Lebanon and Gaza: Hizbollah in Operation Cast Lead

Ronen Manelis

At the end of the Second Lebanon War, many claimed that the State of Israel had not succeeded in strengthening Israel's deterrence vis-à-vis Hizbollah. An examination of the organization's response to Operation Cast Lead and a comparison with its response to Operation Defensive Shield demonstrate that Israel's actions in the Second Lebanon War did in fact result in considerably stronger Israeli deterrence.

After the end of the Second Lebanon War, various elements commented on Israel's relative success or lack thereof in restoring its deterrence vis-à-vis Hizbollah. Many critics claimed that the fact that the organization maintained its capability of firing until the moment the war was over was proof of the IDF's lack of success in the war. Others held that the attempt to act against the intentions of the enemy with a widespread, powerful, and surprising attack on its military and civilian seats of government ("indirect influence") was ineffective, and that Israel should concentrate its efforts against Hizbollah's capabilities ("direct influence").

In the Second Lebanon War, the Israeli military used a variety of means against selected centers of gravity of the organization. On the one hand, the IDF operated against Hizbollah's capabilities, led by its high trajectory fire capability. Damage to its launching capabilities occurred in an initial strike against Hizbollah's array of rockets, in the hunt for launchers, and in the ground maneuvers directed at firing sites. On the other hand, the IDF attacked many structures in Beirut's Dahiya quarter, the center of Hizbollah's civilian and military leadership. The

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Dahiya attack was an example of an action intended to impact on the enemy's intentions and demonstrate the cost to be paid by Lebanon and its population in the event of a future war. This attack, like attacks on other villages and towns where the organization operated in a civilian environment, earned the name of "the Dahiya effect."

Those who criticize the extent of the effect of actions against the enemy's intentions claim that the enemy may act irrationally and make decisions that differ radically from what was intended by strikes on infrastructures and government and financial centers. Others claim that according to basic principles, a military is supposed to act first and foremost against the enemy's capabilities, and only thereafter against its intentions. Indeed, this is true, and every military action should strive towards this end.

Nonetheless, the way in which Hizbollah reacted in extreme cases after the Second Lebanon War proves that a disproportionate action against the enemy's intentions had a significant effect on strengthening Israel's deterrence and the way in which the organization operates. A short analysis of some events since the war shows that the Lebanese people and the leaders of the terrorist organization have heard the echoes of the explosions in the Dahiya quarter loud and clear.

This essay does not deal with the central event that took place in the period since the end of the Second Lebanon War, the assassination of Imad Mughniyeh, the deputy secretary general of the organization for military matters, an assassination attributed by Hizbollah to Israel. Those wishing to examine the thesis of this essay with regard to this event may compare the organization's response in the first months after Mughniyeh's death to the organization's response after the assassination of its previous secretary general, Sheikh Abbas al-Musawi, in 1992.

Rather, this essay concentrates on the organization's response to the IDF's activity in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead, which ended in mid January 2009. A brief comparison of the response to this operation with the organization's response in Operation Defensive Shield demonstrates clearly that Israel's disproportionate activity in the Second Lebanon War was internalized and understood. Thus, Israel's deterrence with regard to Hizbollah is stronger than ever.

Hizbollah's Response in Operation Defensive Shield

Following the September 2000 outbreak of the violent confrontation with the Palestinians, March 2002 was the deadliest month, with civilians and soldiers killed in seventeen suicide bombings in Israel and dozens of shooting attacks and infiltrations into settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The suicide attack at the Park Hotel in Netanya on March 27, 2002, in which 29 civilians were killed during the Passover seder, was the last straw that convinced the Israeli government to embark on Operation Defensive Shield.

The operation began on March 29 with taking control of Arafat's offices in Ramallah, and lasted until Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's announcement of the end of the operation on April 21.¹ In the course of the operation, the Israeli army took over the cities in the West Bank (with the exception of Jericho and Hebron) as well as most of the rural areas, and operated for the first time in many years in the refugee camps in Nablus and Jenin. Thirty-four Israeli soldiers and 260 Palestinians were killed in the operation.

Operation Defensive Shield aroused a wave of anti-Israeli events around the globe, including demonstrations of support for the Palestinians, terrorist attacks against Jewish targets, sharply worded declarations on the part of Western leaders, and an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council. Most Arab states denounced Israel in the strongest possible terms, and acted to ensure a quick end to the operation, but only Hassan Nasrallah's organization acted militarily to assist the Palestinians.

As early as the first day of the operation, Hizbollah began firing artillery and anti-tank missiles at Israeli army outposts on the northern border. These events, called Northern Defensive Shield, were the organization's attempt to open a second fighting front and thus make it more difficult for the IDF to focus its activities on Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip. In claiming responsibility for the first firing event on March 30, the organization announced: "In addition to fulfilling the duty to liberate Lebanese territory, the resistance is warning the Zionist enemy not to continue its escalation against the Palestinian people."²

During the twenty-four days of the operation, Hizbollah fired more than 100 anti-tank missiles and over 500 mortar bombs and rockets.³ The organization also infiltrated Israel to plant an explosive charge and

attempt an attack on the Gladiola outpost. In these events, nine soldiers were injured (five of them moderately).⁴ Alongside attempts to harm IDF soldiers, the organization also fired at Israeli Air Force planes operating in Lebanon. Some of the bombs fired fell in Israeli territory and lightly injured civilians.

At the time the organization was carrying out attacks along the northern border, many of its senior officials issued announcements in support of the Palestinians and noted that the organization's activities were meant to help them in their struggle against Israel. In his speech on April 2, 2002, Hizbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah said: "At this stage, we are experiencing fateful, historic days; it is possible that what is happening now is not so different from what happened in 1948. Every Lebanese who carries out an act in defense of Palestine is above all working in defense of Lebanon. We will fulfill our responsibility without fear."⁵ He explicitly called for opening all the fronts – political, economic, and military – against Israel, as the only way to remove the siege of the Palestinian people.⁶ As part of this stance, the organization took open responsibility for every anti-Israel action during the course of the operation.

Hizbollah's Response in Operation Cast Lead

At midday on Saturday, December 27, 2009, after years of rocket fire at the settlements near the Gaza Strip and the western part of the Negev, the IDF embarked on Operation Cast Lead. The operation started with a surprise widespread aerial attack on dozens of terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, and ended 23 days later with a unilateral ceasefire declared by the Israeli government. In the operation, Israeli forces operated against terrorist targets throughout the Gaza Strip, while the ground maneuvers were carried out primarily in its northern parts. Ten IDF soldiers and three Israeli civilians died in the operation. The Palestinians reported more than 1,200 dead.

The Palestinian demand that Hizbollah assist them by opening a second combat front in the north was uttered virtually every day, but senior organization officials, led by Hassan Nasrallah, chose instead to respond with a long litany of complaints against the Arab states, saying the Arab states "must not allow this aggression to attain even a single one of its aims....Here the responsibility rests on the governments of the

Arab and Islamic world and the nations. The governments aren't lifting a finger – their people have to make them act.”⁷ The secretary general gave a televised speech from his hiding place every night of the operation. Calling on the states of the region to take to the streets and demonstrate, he cast the responsibility for the operation on Egypt, announced a day of mourning, identified with the Palestinians, and even served as a military commentator on Israel's activity in the Gaza Strip and the extent of its effectiveness, but he was careful not to threaten Israel.

Moreover, Nasrallah expressed great concern that the operation in Gaza would be exploited for the purpose of an offensive move against his organization: “It is possible that the enemy will turn to doing something in Lebanon, will use this opportunity....All the words of reassurance that Israel will not fight on two fronts are irrelevant; Israel has already fought on four fronts.”⁸ These statements were made by a man who six years earlier, in Operation Defensive Shield, had called on forcefully opening another front against Israel, and did so in practice.

During Operation Cast Lead, one terrorist attack against Israel (on January 8) was carried out from Lebanese territory: two rockets were fired, falling in the Nahariya area. In a second event (on January 14), another attempt was made to shoot at Israel; that time, two rockets fell on Lebanese territory and the Lebanese army and UN forces found three other rockets ready for launching. Hizbollah did not claim responsibility for these events, and the widespread assessment is that the fire was carried out by Palestinian organizations in support of the Palestinian struggle in the Gaza Strip. Even if this is not the case and the attacks were carried out with the authorization or assistance of Hizbollah, this time – unlike Operation Defensive Shield – senior organization officials chose to hide the fact and even issue vehement denials. For example, immediately after the shooting at the Galilee panhandle, Muhammed Fneish, the Lebanese minister of labor and a Hizbollah representative, stated “We [Hizbollah] do not know who launched these rockets. We are in no way connected.”⁹

In the two shooting incidents from Lebanon during Operation Cast Lead, Israel responded with artillery fire towards the sources of the shooting. In the past, Hizbollah would respond to such incidents by returning fire and presenting the Israeli action as clear examples of the infringement of Lebanese sovereignty. During Operation Cast Lead,

not only did the organization not respond; it also expressed its concern that Israel would take advantage of the shooting to launch an offensive against it. The minister of labor said: “We refuse to accept the enemy’s attempt to take advantage of the attacks in order to turn its aggression towards Lebanon.”¹⁰

The number of Palestinian fatalities in the two operations further strengthens the assessment that Hizbollah’s considerations have changed and that it has no desire to respond violently against the State of Israel. Despite the data that from its perspective indicates the Palestinian hardship resulting from Operation Cast Lead and the number of casualties, the organization chose not to respond.

Table 1. Hizbollah Responses: Defensive Shield and Cast Lead

	Duration of operation	Number of Palestinian dead	Attacks from the Lebanese border	Mortar bombs and rockets on Israel	Casualties in attacks from the Lebanese border
Defensive Shield	24 days	~250	19	Over 500	9
Cast Lead	23 days	~1,200	1	2	0

Conclusion

The hundreds of rockets fired by Hizbollah during Operation Defensive Shield were exchanged during Operation Cast Lead for a series of speeches and general declarations by senior organization officials on the need for the Arab world to assist the Palestinians. Unprecedented public pressure from the Palestinian and Lebanese street forced the organizations in Lebanon to react during Operation Cast Lead. The first and quite muted response came only on January 8, 2009, almost two weeks after the beginning of the operation, and seemed like a forced, mechanical response. This essay has sketched the essential difference between it and the response during Operation Defensive Shield, when the organization responded as early as the first day. The decision not to respond after Israel returned artillery fire and the avoidance of explicit threats against Israel bring this difference into even sharper relief.

Hizbollah’s decision not to respond to Operation Cast Lead and to refrain in every possible way from opening another front may

be attributed to a broad range of reasons (including the Lebanese parliamentary elections). There is no doubt that some of them played a role in the situation assessments made by senior organization officials during the days of fighting in Gaza. The results of the Second Lebanon War, such as UN Resolution 1701 and the deployment of Lebanese army soldiers and UNIFIL forces in southern Lebanon, also had a certain effect, but the organization's lack of response, its focus on talk instead of action, and the lack of practical help extended to the Palestinians in Gaza all point first and foremost to the effect of the Second Lebanon War on the organization's leadership.

Because the war's ground maneuver left a relatively slight imprint and the organization's capabilities were largely reconstructed, it is possible to attribute Hizbollah's inaction to Israel's disproportionate response. Despite skepticism in Israel, to this day the streets of Dahiya and the homes of Ita a-Shaab are a reminder of this response, capable of convincing at least the Lebanese and their leaders. As Saad Hariri, the head of the Future Movement in the Lebanese parliament, said during Operation Cast Lead: "I am sure that as a lesson of the Second Lebanon War, Hizbollah will not act against Israel's border."¹¹

Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead also served as a reminder to Hizbollah that the State of Israel continues to respond with force to terrorist attacks carried out against it. Nevertheless, the analysis presented here by no means guarantees that the situation will hold indefinitely. It is quite possible that under certain circumstances, because of a situation assessment in the organization or because of a change in Lebanon's internal situation (after the 2009 elections or because of the conclusion of the work by the team investigating the assassination of former prime minister Hariri), the organization might choose to carry out a terrorist attack against the State of Israel on the northern border or abroad. Should the organization decide to do so, the response of the IDF will be the key to maintaining Israel's deterrent capability.

Notes

- 1 The IDF announced the official end of the operation on April 25, 2002.
- 2 Radio Noor, March 30, 2002
- 3 The data is from an internal Israeli army document.

- 4 Between April 14 and 23, 2002, the organization did not carry out any terrorist attacks because of widespread international pressure on the Lebanese government.
- 5 Al-Manar, April 2, 2002.
- 6 *Al-Siasa*, March 31, 2002.
- 7 Roi Nahmias, "Nasrallah: Egypt a Partner to Crime and Disaster," Ynet, December 28, 2008.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Reuters, "Hizbollah: Not Involved in Katyusha Fire," Ynet, January 15, 2009.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Amir Bouhbout and Jacky Hogi, "Don't Lose the North," *Maariv*, January 7, 2009.

“Lebanon Lite”: Lessons from the Operation in Gaza and the Next Round against Hizbollah

Amir Kulick

Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in the Gaza Strip filled both the IDF and the Israeli public with a sense of success, and justifiably so – at least militarily speaking. In the course of the fighting, Israel managed to greatly reduce the rocket fire at the Israeli home front, with relatively little loss of life and property; the air force managed to render severe blows to the Hamas infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and eliminate senior operatives in the military and political wing of the organization; and the ground forces successfully fought in crowded urban areas saturated with enemy combatants. The civilian routine was affected in the south of the country, but local governments continued to function. Cooperation between the southern local governments and the army was far better than the situation in northern Israel during the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

A well known saying holds that armies tend to fight the next war on the basis of lessons learned from the previous one. There is often some truth to this. In the Gaza operation, the IDF, at times successfully, tried to implement lessons of the Second Lebanon War. The forceful opening blow, the relatively rapid entrance of the ground forces and the way in which they fought, the clear definition of objectives for the fighting units, the mobilization of the reserves and their refresher training at the start of the battle, the effective logistics and more were the result of lessons learned in a process undertaken by the IDF after the summer of 2006. The threat the IDF faced in the Gaza Strip was similar in essence to that posed by Hizbollah: attack on the Israeli home front with rockets, ground fighting, and infliction of casualties. The outcomes of the IDF's

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campaign in Gaza are liable to lead to the conclusion that the IDF has largely found the recipe to cope with this type of threat.¹ Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that the lessons of the operation will serve the military commanders as they plan the next battle against Hizbollah.

This article has two major objectives: first, to warn against directly linking the fighting in Gaza and its lessons to any future fighting in Lebanon; and second, to analyze which principles and lessons on the operative level can nevertheless be applied to the Lebanese arena and which are irrelevant. Clearly, military activity emerges from the definition of national and strategic interests and goals. The purpose of this article is not to deal with these interests and the extent of the IDF's success in attaining them in Gaza or in the future in Lebanon. The starting assumption underlying the analysis below is that in every military operation against a fighting model presented by Hamas or Hizbollah, the purpose of the military action will at the very least be to damage the enemy's capabilities, attain deterrence, and create conditions for a more favorable political settlement.

Applying Hizbollah's Model in the Gaza Strip

Hamas sought to build its military strength on the basis of the military model demonstrated by Hizbollah in Lebanon, which builds on the basic operating assumption that Israeli society is weak and incapable of handling an extended battle with many casualties.² Based on this assumption, a military approach was developed whose purpose was not to attain a military decision against Israel, rather to apply pressure on its civilian front by rocket fire aimed at populated areas and inflict as many casualties as possible on IDF ground forces. According to this logic, the time factor in war is detrimental to Israel. The longer the battle, the more the rocket fire persists, and the greater the number of soldiers killed in battle, the more public pressure will mount on the Israeli government to stop the fighting.³

Two fighting arrays helped realize these principles. The first was the rocket artillery array designed to fire a large number of rockets at Israel continuously over a long period of time. In order to prevent destruction of this system by the Israeli air force, Hizbollah deployed a large number of launch barrels over a vast geographical area. Thus the chances of identifying the rocket launchers before firing were reduced because of

the dispersed deployment of the IDF's intelligence gathering efforts. At the same time, given the large number of launchers, the IDF's ability to destroy some of them did not significantly reduce the amount of firepower against Israel. For example, in the summer of 2006 the air force managed to identify and destroy 33 launchers in the course of the fighting (50 additional launchers were destroyed during the opening strike). By contrast, the number of rockets fired into Israel hardly decreased, and averaged some 200 per day.⁴ The second fighting array created by Hizbollah was a ground defense based on anti-tank positions, tunnels, and previously prepared booby traps. The purpose was twofold: to delay the attack by the ground forces and buy time to continue the rocket fire, and at the same time, to cause as many IDF casualties as possible. As became clear in the Second Lebanon War, conducting the battle on these principles did in fact greatly reduce the IDF's advantage and created great pressure on the Israeli home front.

Hizbollah's operative success caused Hamas to adopt a similar fighting model in the Gaza Strip, beginning with rocketry as the major component. Indeed, much of Hamas' efforts were dedicated to rocket improvement. Hamas developed Qassams early in the second intifada, and in 2001 the organization was already firing at Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip. After the disengagement from Gaza and particularly after Hamas took control of the Strip in June 2007, Hamas accelerated its force buildup. The freedom of action enjoyed by Hamas led to rapid improvements in the Qassam. The focus of the organization's efforts was to stockpile large numbers of rockets and extend their effective target range. By December 2007, six months after seizing power in the Gaza Strip, Hamas managed to overcome the technological problem preventing it from storing Qassam rockets over long periods of time.⁵ The organization was able to hoard large numbers of rockets to realize the primary goal of its firepower: intensive, nonstop, and extended rocket fire at the Israeli home front.

In addition to stockpiling rockets, Hamas, using Iranian know how, managed to increase the Qassam's range from a few kilometers to thirteen. As early as the second half of 2007, improved rockets with this range were fired at Ashkelon.⁶ Hamas was also laboring to smuggle into the Gaza Strip regular Grad rockets with a 20 km range and improved Grads with a 40 km range. These longer range rockets expanded the threat

to Israeli cities such as Ashdod and Beer Sheva. Israel's withdrawal from the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt in September 2005 made it easier for Hamas to bring these rockets into the Strip. Thus as early as March 2006, the first Grad rocket was fired at Ashkelon. In that instance Islamic Jihad was responsible for the actual firing, but from that point on Hamas stockpiled dozens or even hundreds of Grads.⁷ Hamas fired the rockets with methods copied from the Lebanese model: barrels buried in the ground, small cells, timers, and more. These techniques were implemented long before the confrontation, and seemed to improve the survivability of Hamas firing cells in the different rounds of fighting with the IDF.⁸

Along with an improvement in its rocket capability, Hamas tried to apply the ground defense approach modeled by Hizbollah, i.e., relying on skilled personnel, organized along military lines, and based on defensive systems prepared in advance. Immediately after taking over the Gaza Strip, Hamas built its military mechanisms and instituted a military routine, including training, exercises, and ongoing security activities. Its fighting personnel were organized along a military hierarchy: platoons, companies, battalions, and brigades. By the start of Operation Cast Lead, Hamas had managed to build eight brigades. They were manned by relatively skilled personnel who had either trained in Iran or were trained by instructors trained in Iranian camps. Hamas relied on a defense that would cause a delay of the ground invasion and inflict losses on the IDF's ground forces. As in southern Lebanon, Hamas relied on booby trapped houses and entrances, underground tunnels, and sniper and anti-tank fire.⁹ As Herzl Halevy, the commander of the Paratroopers Division, explained at the end of Operation Cast Lead: "There were tunnels, there were large explosive devices, there were booby traps such as a dummy of a Hamas fighter in front of an explosive device and a tunnel opening meant for kidnapping soldiers. Even I was surprised by the number of devices that awaited us. Entire streets were crisscrossed by barbed wire hooked up to explosives....The devices there were everywhere, even inside satellite dishes."¹⁰

The IDF and the Hizbollah Model in Gaza

Aside from the moral, political, and other issues raised during and after Operation Cast Lead, the IDF and the Israeli local governments copied

successfully with the Hizbollah model of war. The objectives that Hamas sought to achieve by applying this model failed to a large extent. The rocket fire, which Hamas hoped would exhaust the Israeli home front and indirectly pressure the Israeli government to end the fighting, was greatly reduced. Before the campaign Israeli intelligence estimates anticipated an average of 100 launches per day. In fact, Hamas managed to fire an average of 60 rockets per day during the first days of the fighting and on average only 20 rockets per day during the war's later stages.¹¹ Moreover, local governments in the south continued to function under fire; the physical damage inflicted was relatively limited, and thanks to early preparation by the Home Front Command and the civilian response to its instructions, casualties were few.¹² At the same time, Hamas' defenses, which were intended to cause heavy losses to IDF soldiers, did not achieve their goal. The IDF finished the fighting with ten dead soldiers, and the Gaza Strip was far from the "Israeli military cemetery" threatened by one Hamas spokesman.¹³ Thus, the operation, until its last days, earned widespread legitimacy among the Israeli public. A poll taken shortly before the end of the fighting found that 78 percent of the public felt that the operation in Gaza was a success. The ceasefire announcement was even received with some disappointment in Israel, so much so that the number of those who thought the operation was a success fell and equaled the number of those who thought the opposite.¹⁴ Accordingly, the Israeli government's freedom of decision and the army's span of legitimacy were not limited by public opinion.

The two necessary components for the success of the Hizbollah model – rocket fire at Israel and a ground defense – were neutralized by the IDF in a number of ways. First, the opening blow surprised Hamas, primarily by its timing. The massive air strikes took place after a ruse that convinced Hamas that Israel would finally agree to renew the ceasefire under conditions more favorable to the organization. In addition, the IDF also surprised Hamas by its choice of targets. In the first sorties, IDF planes not only attacked military targets and rocket launchers, but also Hamas symbols of government, institutions, and various offices. The intensity of the opening blow appeared to surprise senior Hamas officials.¹⁵

The second way the IDF coped with the Hizbollah model was by joint action of air-based launcher "hunts" and capture of swaths of

territory. Before the ground offensive, the IDF assembled many means of intelligence gathering and attack near the Strip. They subsequently helped damage the rocket system and reduce the number of launches. When the ground forces entered the Gaza Strip and occupied launching areas, especially around Gaza City, the maneuvering room of the rocket launchers decreased even further, and accordingly the number of rockets fired on Israel fell too.

The IDF responded to the challenge of Hamas ground defenses, prepared in advance and intended to take the lives of as many soldiers as possible, by applying high intensity fire from the air and the ground. According to an Israeli military commentator, the last operation employed a fire intensity never before used by the IDF fighting in urban areas. Division commanders were given the green light to destroy any house suspected of being booby-trapped. For example, every second house on average in Beit Lahiya was shelled. The military command instructed that massive fire be applied.¹⁶ This was also the reason, according to the paratroopers commander, for the low number of casualties among IDF soldiers:

The intensity with which we entered reduced the number of casualties...The force we applied in the attack did not let them use the means they were most prepared for. Even the noise before the entrance: when you hear noise like that, you don't want to be the enemy on the other side. It shook the entire area. Fighter planes, helicopters, artillery, tanks. I think that's what the enemy was feeling. We came at them from unexpected directions and with such intensity that the terrorists did not stay behind to set off the booby traps they had prepared for us...The intensity with which we entered drove them off.¹⁷

The Israeli effort was also heavily directed at creating deterrence on the Palestinian side, and even perhaps with regard to Syria and Hizbollah. After the attack on government institutions in the Gaza Strip and because of the scope of the damage left by the army, one senses that in the operation in Gaza, the IDF, whether consciously or not, applied what GOC Northern Command Maj. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot has called the "Dahiya doctrine." Based on this idea, Eizenkot maintained a few months before the Gaza operation that "in every village from which they have fired at Israel, we will apply disproportionate force and cause

monumental damage and destruction. From our point of view, these are military bases."¹⁸ According to this logic, instead of focusing on the hunt for rocket launchers, it is necessary to focus on creating deterrence by causing massive damage to the area from which rockets were fired.¹⁹ For now, it is hard to tell if by using this approach, Israel succeeded in "teaching" Hamas a lesson just as, in Tom Friedman's terms, it succeeded in "educating" Nasrallah.²⁰

Lebanon vs. Gaza: A False Analogy?

The Israeli public, and apparently also the IDF, viewed the operation in Gaza as a "corrective to the failure and humiliation of the Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006,"²¹ and even "a redemption from the Lebanese trauma."²² Yet even if the operation was militarily successful, this success must be taken with a grain of salt, and one cannot jump to the conclusion that the IDF has found the solution to dealing with the Hizbollah model or with similar approaches to warfare. Moreover, over-satisfaction from the success of Operation Cast Lead is liable to plant the seeds of failure in the next round with Hizbollah or other enemy basing itself on these principles. An in-depth look reveals that the major similarity between Lebanon and Gaza was Hizbollah's and Hamas' philosophy of war: exhausting the Israeli home front with rocket fire, while forcing a delay and causing losses to Israeli ground forces using a previously arranged defensive system. Beyond this, one may also point to similar internal circumstances: the existence of pro-Western elements opposing the terrorist organizations – Abu Mazen and Fatah in the Palestinian arena, and the March 14 camp headed by Saad al-Hariri in Lebanon. Other than these points, however, the differences between the two arenas vastly outweigh the similarities, to the point that one wonders whether they can be compared at all.

The Terrain: Size and Topography

The most striking differences in the two areas lie in the physical features of the terrains. The Gaza Strip covers some 365 sq km, while Lebanon is more than 10,000 sq km. The main area of the fighting – southern Lebanon – covers some 600 sq km. The addition of Beirut and the Lebanon Valley sectors, where it is safe to assume that fighting will take place at some level or another, extends the fighting arena to over 2,000 sq km. This is

of great significance, in particular with regard to the IDF's capability of concentrating intelligence and operational resources, thereby allowing it to achieve its technological advantages. Thus the small size of the Gaza Strip allows for a high concentration of resources, while in Lebanon the larger fighting area dictates that resources be diffused.

Aside from the size of the area, the topographies are highly different. The Gaza Strip is level and sandy, while southern Lebanon is hilly and in some places forested. The military implications of this are many, chiefly limits on the scope of maneuver and movement. The Lebanese terrain requires entrance and movement along a limited number of familiar longitudinal and latitudinal axes, critical crossing points, and areas impassable for regular and armored vehicles. This makes a defensive position easier and imposes difficulties on the attacking force. While the urban area of the Gaza Strip is also not convenient for the movement of large troops and maneuver, the outskirts of the city provide level and sandy plains that allow for quick, easy movement.

Gap in Operational Experience

Along with the respective ground conditions, the difference between Hamas' and Hizbollah's operational experience is highly pronounced. By the Second Lebanon War, Hizbollah had already experienced three rounds of fighting with the Israeli army (1993, 1996, 2002). The gaps between the fighting were long, providing Hizbollah ample time to learn lessons and test them in the next round. These lessons were central milestones in the process of constructing the regular force that the organization built with the close assistance of Iran. In other words, as of 2009, Hizbollah had 16 years of experience of building a regularized force based on lessons learned on the battlefield. In contrast, Hamas only began the process of constructing a force in June 2007, after the takeover of the Gaza Strip. Therefore, during Cast Lead, the military arm of the organization was young and operationally inexperienced. While it is true that Hamas could boast of many years of terrorist activity against the IDF in the Gaza Strip, they were unlike the challenges that Operation Cast Lead posed for the organization. In this sense, it is clear that compared to Hizbollah, Hamas' military was immature and inexperienced in the operation in Gaza.

Qualitative and Quantitative Gaps

It is hard to overstate the differences in the capabilities of Hizbollah and Hamas. This is especially true regarding the rocket array, in terms of quantity, launchers, and skilled manpower. When Operation Cast Lead began, Hamas had a few dozen rockets with a 40 km range. By contrast, according to Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Hizbollah has 40,000 rockets of different types that can reach most of the State of Israel.²³ The ground defenses prepared by the two organizations also differed both qualitatively and quantitatively in terms of the available resources. In southern Lebanon, Hizbollah prepared dozens of fortified villages, manned with relatively skilled operatives armed with modern weaponry. In the Gaza Strip, Hamas fortified a few neighborhoods and villages, in particular on the edges of the urban area. The fighters manning these locations were much less skilled and equipped than their counterparts in Lebanon.

The Strategic Home Front: Continuous vs. Discontinuous and Problematic

Another prominent – if not decisive – difference is the size of the strategic home front. Hizbollah enjoys a deep logistical and operational home front in the form of Iran and Syria. These countries continuously transfer military knowledge and equipment through the open border between Syria and Lebanon, including in wartime. Similarly, Hizbollah activists regularly depart for training in Iran.²⁴ This unbroken bond with the strategic home front has many implications – psychological, military (especially with regards to the quality of the arms), and relating to organization of the military force, the combatants' professionalism, and logistical stamina. Unlike Hizbollah, Hamas' link with its strategic and logistical home front – Iran and Syria – is fitful and problematic in light of the lack of direct geographical contiguity and the foiling activities undertaken by both Israel and Egypt.

The Strategic Context

Another important difference between the Gaza Strip and Lebanon lies in their strategic contexts in the international community – one is considered an illegitimate entity and the other is a recognized state. The West sees Hamas as an illegitimate element, standing in the way of the

peace process. Therefore, it is considered a legitimate target, and Israel immediately enjoyed great freedom in attacking targets in the Gaza Strip. By contrast, the Lebanese government is a legitimate entity in the eyes of the West. The coming elections for the Lebanese parliament that will take place in the spring of 2009 might increase the strength of the pro-Syrian faction, but because of the country's system of confessional distribution, pro-Western elements will remain relevant to Lebanese rule in some way or another. Western countries, led by the United States and France, would likely not allow the Israeli army free rein in destroying the infrastructures of the government. Moreover, the West has economic, cultural, and other interests in Lebanon. This kept the Israeli government from authorizing an attack against Lebanese infrastructures in the summer of 2006, and this factor will presumably figure in the next battle in Lebanon as well.

IDF Fighting in Gaza: What to Discard, What to Assimilate

The conclusion is that Operation Cast Lead was at most "Lebanon Lite" under favorable international conditions. In light of the many differences between the two arenas, it would be a grave error to apply blindly the principles of Operation Cast Lead to the next battle against Hizbollah. The assumption that whatever worked in the Gaza Strip against Hamas will also work in Lebanon will almost certainly be revealed as false. The size of the battlefield and the qualitative difference in the enemy's forces will require the IDF to use much larger forces spread over a much larger area. Assuming that long range rockets may be launched also from more distant areas, such as the Lebanon Valley, the challenge posed by Hizbollah's rockets to the Israeli army is incalculably greater than the challenge posed by Hamas during Operation Cast Lead. Therefore, applying the "strategy of crushing"²⁵ or the "Dahiya doctrine" to every location in Lebanon would be extremely difficult and would lead to a scattering of Israeli resources and to diminishing returns.

Regarding the time frame of the next battle against Hizbollah, the assumption that Israel would enjoy a similar political hourglass as it had in Gaza is also liable to be false. President Obama's administration differs from the Bush administration. The new winds blowing in Washington regarding the Middle East are likely to generate rapid pressure for a ceasefire. This pressure may also be affected by the response of the moderate Arab states, which may conclude that rounds of fighting by

the IDF against resistance organizations in Gaza and Lebanon are more destructive than helpful: they do not eradicate the resistance, yet they stir up the Arab street by casting Arab governments as collaborators with Israel and the West. Accordingly, the moderate Arab nations may increase their pressure on Washington to shorten the duration of the fighting.

The policy of attacking targets may also be different due to the international community's views regarding the legitimacy of the Hamas government and the Lebanese government, in addition to the new international circumstances created when President Obama took office. Under such international circumstances, Israel would find it difficult to attack civilian and government infrastructures in Lebanon, the way it did in the Gaza Strip. To the same extent, a ground maneuver directed at capturing territory in order to reduce the number of rocket launches, such as the one launched by the IDF in Gaza, might be ineffective in Lebanon because of the distant launch sites, Hizbollah's tight defenses, and a smaller window of opportunity for Israel to attack. Applying the "Gaza principles" to the next battle in Lebanon may reduce the number of launches, but because of the high number of rocket launches expected from Hizbollah, even a 60 percent reduction – such as was achieved in Operation Cast Lead – would still leave Israeli population centers under a daily barrage of rockets. There would be no practical difference between 300 and 30. Moreover, if Hizbollah has missiles that reach most of the State of Israel, paralyzing the country's political and economic center – the greater Tel Aviv area – can be achieved with just a few missiles a day.

Nonetheless, is there anything that can be learned from the operation in Gaza and applied to the coming battle against Hizbollah or other enemies fighting on the basis of the same model?

Coping Successfully with the "Hizbollah Model"

The basic and perhaps most important lesson is the understanding that it is possible to win a war against the Hizbollah model. After the Second Lebanon War, the feeling in Israel and in the army was that there was no effective response to a threat that combines ground fighting and massive rocket fire on the Israeli home front. Despite the differences between the two arenas, the operation in the Gaza Strip proved that even if the IDF has yet to discover the full formula for dealing with the Hizbollah model,

it has some understanding of how to solve the problem. A war against such a model, as demonstrated by the operation in Gaza on a small scale, must be waged at several levels, and each level must provide a response to a different goal.

Surprise as a Key Element

One of the keys to success is surprise. As was done before Operation Cast Lead, it is necessary to prepare some deception that will take the enemy by complete surprise. It is crucial to use this surprise to render a powerful opening blow, aerial or other, which would preferably neutralize Hizbollah's senior political and military echelon and thus damage the organization's strategic capabilities.

The Operational Level: Destroying the Enemy's Battle Plan and Focusing on the Ground Offensive

Due to the large size of the Lebanese battlefield and the enemy's dispersal within this area, it is necessary to concentrate IDF activity where it will have the greatest effect. Though Hizbollah is at times portrayed as a decentralized organization in which every fighting unit has full operational freedom, the Second Lebanon War proved otherwise. A study conducted by American researchers analyzing the organization's fighting in the summer of 2006 concluded that Hizbollah fought more like a regular military outfit than a decentralized guerilla organization. The determination to hold onto land, the digging into previously prepared positions, the firefights at close range, the centralization of forces, the use of ground conditions for camouflage, local counterattacks, and more all proved that Hizbollah's fighting style was closer to that of a conventional army than to the fighting style of a terrorist or guerilla organization. Three points are of key importance here: first, Hizbollah conducted its fighting through an organized, hierarchical command and control structure making decisions in real time; second, Hizbollah organized the fighting area on the basis of a particular logic intended to delay IDF forces from reaching the major launching sites in the south; and third, Hizbollah evinced strong discipline of fire whereby it successfully timed extensive barrages into Israeli territory and helped its forces with fire.²⁶

If this is indeed the case, Israel's ground activity must be centered on specific areas, using powerful ground and aerial forces, as in

Operation Cast Lead. Instead of seizing land and damaging the enemy, the goals must be the quick neutralization of the command and control structure and access to the major launching sites, on the assumption that shattering Hizbollah's chain of command will also result in a significant decrease of fire into Israel. In this context, the IDF must prepare for an eventual ground maneuver into the depth of Lebanon, especially in order to neutralize Hizbollah's senior command and its capability of firing long range rockets towards the greater Tel Aviv area or other Israeli strategic targets.

The Strategic Level: Strengthening Deterrence and Prolonging Rehabilitation – Damaging the Civilian Organizational Infrastructure

One of the major goals of the Israeli army in the next battle against Hizbollah must be creating deterrence and damaging Hizbollah's capability to rebuild after the war. This goal may be achieved not through damaging government institutions or civilian infrastructures as was done in Operation Cast Lead, but more effectively and with a lower international price tag by damaging the civilian and economic infrastructures of Hizbollah itself. In fact, this infrastructure is a strategic asset of the organization, and though it was damaged in the Second Lebanon War, the damage was a side effect of attacking the military infrastructure. In this context, the large Shiite concentrations in the south, in the Beka'a, and Beirut must be considered prime targets. This is not to suggest conducting a war of total destruction of the Shiite community, but to achieve a forceful blow to Hizbollah's relations with the community and the means whereby the community recruits resources on behalf of Hizbollah. This is in addition to damaging the independent economic infrastructure of Lebanon.

*The Political Level: Shortening the Duration of the Battle by Undermining the Connection between the Military Action and the Formulation of a Settlement*²⁷

Israel must understand that in the next battle in Lebanon, the IDF may have a far shorter period of time at its disposal than it had in the Second Lebanon War or in Operation Cast Lead. Therefore, the battle must be planned first and foremost in such a way as to achieve maximum results in a minimum amount of time. It cannot be assumed that the

fighting will last weeks. One way to shorten the duration of the fighting is to undertake diplomatic activity intended to find an exit strategy even before the start of the battle. Usually, such activity begins a few days after the outbreak of war. Stopping the activities of the Israeli army depends greatly on the outcome of diplomatic efforts rather than on operational considerations. In Lebanon, the principles of a settlement are clear, and it is possible to discuss them with the relevant parties even before the battle. Independent of the battle's outcome, the concluding mechanism must include a solution that offers a more effective closing of the Syrian-Lebanese border, prevention of the transfer of weapons from Iran, and removal of Hizbollah's presence from southern Lebanon. These and other principles, along with general understandings among the future partners to a settlement mechanism, may be formulated before a battle and thus make the expected diplomatic activity more effective. By doing so, it is possible to reduce greatly the interdependence of a settlement achievement and the duration of the fighting.

Conclusion

The operation in Gaza was successful primarily from the military – operational and tactical – point of view. At the same time, any attempt to draw far reaching conclusions regarding the next battle against Hizbollah from Operation Cast Lead is liable to be a grave error. The differences between the two arenas and the organizations are vast, and what is true for one may be false for the other. Blind application of the principles of Operation Cast Lead and self-satisfaction with its successes are liable to bear grave consequences both for building the force and for applying it in the next battle against Hizbollah. Nevertheless, the Gaza operation has taught that it is possible to respond successfully to the Hizbollah model and that it is important to plan for a battle that will lead to a clear cut victory. This must be done wisely, with respect for the enemy and an understanding of the limitations of the Israeli force.

Notes

- 1 The first harbinger of this process may be found in the profound satisfaction that seems to pervade among the senior military commanders of the operation. See Alex Fishman, "It's Not Such a Big Deal," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 30, 2009.

- 2 This military model is part of a broader outlook called *muqawama* (resistance). See Ehud Yaari, "The *Muqawama* Doctrine," *Jerusalem Report*, November 13, 2006.
- 3 An example of the principles of this approach may be found in Nasrallah's speech at the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, *al-Manar*, December 31, 2008. For more extensive treatment of the application of this model in the Second Lebanon War, see Amir Kulick, "Hizbollah vs. the IDF: The Operational Dimension," *Strategic Assessment* 9, no. 3 (2006): 29-33.
- 4 Alon Ben David and Yoav Limor, "Saddam and the Qassam," *Ynet*, April 17, 2008; and Yossi Melman, "The Next War will Look Like This," *Haaretz*, July 6, 2008.
- 5 Amos Harel, " Hamas Has Upgraded the Qassam Rockets, Can Launch Them in Large Numbers," *Haaretz*, December 7, 2007.
- 6 Avi Issacharof and Amos Harel, " Hamas Smuggled Information from Iran to Gaza to Improve Rocket Range," *Haaretz*, March 28, 2008; " Hamas Has Upgraded"; General Security Service, " Hamas: Growing Strength, Building Force," <http://www.shabak.go.il/publications/study/Pages/gaza-hamas-terror-report.aspx>.
- 7 Ari Shavit, interview with Amos Yadlin, the head of the Intelligence Division, in *Haaretz*, May 16, 2008; Amos Harel and Avi Issacharof, " Security Sources: Expanded Rocket Range Will Not Lead to Broad Operation," *Haaretz*, January 4, 2008; for a comprehensive survey of the development of the rocket threat in the Gaza Strip, see The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, " The Rocket Threat from the Gaza Strip: 2005-2007," at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/Hebrew/heb_n/pdf/rocket_threat.pdf.
- 8 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharof, " Qassam is Promoted to New Grade, Let's Hope Not in Our School," *Haaretz*, September 2, 2007; Amos Harel, " Hamas Has Improved Rockets and Use of Timer," *Haaretz*, January 18, 2008.
- 9 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharof, " How Hamas Army Is Preparing for War with the IDF," *Haaretz*, December 26, 2008; General Security Service, " Hamas: Growing Strength, Building Force," at <http://www.shabak.go.il/publications/study/Pages/gaza-hamas-terror-report.aspx>.
- 10 Interview with Col. Herzi Halevy, commander of the Paratroopers Division, *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.
- 11 For data on the numbers of rockets fired at Israel, see Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Operation Cast Lead, Updates 15, 18, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/HebSite/html/search/asp>.
- 12 For information about preparation and readiness of the Israeli home front during the fighting, see Meir Elran, " Operation Cast Lead and the Civilian Front: An Interim Assessment," *INSS Insight* No. 87, January 7, 2009.
- 13 *Al-Jazeera Magazine*, January 5, 2009.

- 14 Yossi Werter, "Haaretz Poll: 78% of the Public Think the Gaza Operation a Success," *Haaretz*, January 15, 2009; poll by Channel 10 News, January 18, 2009, at <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleD=610572>.
- 15 For the surprise among the commanders on the ground, see Chen Kottes-Bar, "Palestine," *Maariv*, January 16, 2009.
- 16 Alex Fishman, "Winograd, You're Free to Go," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.
- 17 Interview with Col. Herzi Halevy, *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009.
- 18 Interview with GOC Northern Command Maj. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, *Yediot Ahronot*, October 3, 2008.
- 19 For more on this view, see Gabriel Siboni, "Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War," *INSS Insight* 74, October 2, 2008.
- 20 Thomas L. Friedman, "This Is Not a Test," *New York Times*, January 24, 2009.
- 21 Amos Harel and Avi Issacharof, "Post-Mortem," *Haaretz*, January 23, 2009.
- 22 Also see Ofer Shelah, "War as You Wish," *Maariv*, January 16, 2009.
- 23 Barak's declaration during a tour of the south, Walla, August 7, 2008, <http://euro.walla.co.il/?w=/21/1326281>. For more on Hizbollah's rocket capabilities after the Second Lebanon War, see Amir Kulick, "The Next War with Hizbollah," *Strategic Assessment* 10, no. 3 (2007): 41-50.
- 24 *A-sharq al-Awsat*, July 16, 2006, cited by Roi Nahmias, Ynet, July 16, 2006, at <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3276355,00.html>.
- 25 A term used by Harel and Issacharof to describe the IDF's fighting. See "Post-Mortem."
- 26 Stephen Biddle and Jeffrey A. Friedman, *The 2006 Lebanon Campaign and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, September 2008, pp. 35-73.
- 27 The idea for this paragraph is taken from a lecture given by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Giora Eiland at a conference held at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv on January 27, 2009, to summarize the operation in Gaza.

Civilian Aid as an Integral Combat Effort

Yigal Eyal

*"The wakf warned against the approach that in order to end the revolt 'with absolute success' it was necessary to take harsh and extreme methods that would destroy the area and turn it into a wasteland – and afterwards call it peace."*¹

General

From early November to December 27, 2008, when Operation Cast Lead got under way, 365 rockets and 177 mortar bombs were fired at Israel; on December 20, 2008 alone, 15 rockets and 25 mortar bombs were fired. The attack on civilian life and the threat against the residential centers near the Gaza Strip and within the rocket range moved the government of Israel and the IDF to embark on Operation Cast Lead to render a blow to Hamas, responsible for the policy of violence towards Israel. The intention was to damage the organization's infrastructures, its forces, and its capabilities of manufacturing rockets and weapons whose effective range represented a strategic threat or risk. Attainment of these goals was meant to create a new, improved security reality following the operation.

Since its last confrontation with a regular army (the 1982 Lebanon War), Israel has been at war with semi-military organizations in a battlefield of limited war. The purpose of the limited war is to reduce, undermine, suppress, or eliminate the concrete threat against the State of Israel. The enemy defined by the government and the security establishment is the terrorist organizations. This is explicitly not war against the civilian population, which is not the enemy, but the paradox is that the civilian population is the source from which the guerilla and terrorist organizations draw their strength. In addition, these

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organizations justify their actions morally and politically by operating in the name of that population. At times the civilian support is based on genuine conviction; at times it is coerced.² History shows that in warfare of this type, terrorism and guerilla – and certainly popular uprisings – have no life without the support of that population.³

The civilian battlefield of a limited war presents many moral, ethical, and legal dilemmas for an army for which “the human spirit is greater [because] we are more in need of the spiritual advantage than any other army in the world; because we are the few.”⁴

Humanitarian assistance is one important element within a broad range of factors that may reduce that population’s involvement in the future, or at least present it with food for thought regarding its chosen method of struggle (violence as a means for attaining political or other goals). It can help it internalize that it itself is the immediate, tragic victim, innocently suffering the effects of its leaders’ decisions. In a democratic state, the army does not determine the desired solution, but just as warfare is the state response carried out by its representative (the army), it is understood that the handling of the civilian population in such a particular battlefield is the direct responsibility of the army fighting in that battlefield.

Another important point is that of legitimacy. Great military-political efforts go into explaining the right, the justness, and the obligation to go to war to defend the inhabitants of the State of Israel and to remove the unbearable weight of the Gazan, Lebanese, or any other threat existentially endangering the country and its population. These efforts are usually expended on three populations: Israel’s public, the enemy’s public, and the international public (differentiated in importance by nation).⁵ History demonstrates that even a just war wears thin, particularly because of the civilian victims in the battlefield.⁶ It is therefore vitally important to present the players involved with both sides of the struggle: the carrot and the stick. That is to say, we know how to wage war for our justice and rights and are committed to the struggle, but we remain moral human beings.⁷

The Civilian Battlefield

The civilian battlefield is the arena of modern warfare. The defensive lines are no longer the ditches, trenches, barriers, minefields, or fortifications

familiar to us from the wars of the past (against armed forces), rather homes, yards, prayer centers, schools, civilian workplaces, and places of entertainment.⁸ Warfare occurring in the civilian battlefield is more complicated and problematic than that occurring in any other battlefield, precisely because there are innocent civilians present. In this type of warfare the civilian's home is the fortification, the outpost, the hiding place, and the shelter of the rebels fighting from it. This battlefield presents many operational, ethical, moral, and legal dilemmas, and a moral, law abiding nation accepts the political, legal, and humanitarian limitations as part of the warfare. It continues to wage war despite the limitations that make effective fighting difficult, and does so while respecting these principles.⁹

The clear and immediate implication is that civilians located in that battlefield become dependent on the good (or ill) will of the conqueror. Any civilian area conquered and cleansed of enemies is severed from its sources of income, and therefore the moral (and legal) obligation to provide for the needs affected by the winds of war is the conqueror's.¹⁰ In addition, humanitarian aid has other functions: to try to blunt – if only minimally – the hatred embedded among the civilian population, the keystone of the struggle, and to continue to prove to ourselves, the enemy, and the world that Israel is a nation of law, and that its soldiers operate on the basis of accepted international moral and legal principles and their inherent flexibility.¹¹ In other words: humanitarian assistance is an inseparable part of the fighting and of war.¹²

Humanitarian Aid

Different efforts are needed in order to sustain the effort of “humanitarian warfare” effectively.

The command: Because of the added sensitivity and values of the humanitarian effort, it must be a part of the war effort and subject to its principles. Therefore, an organic military fighting force (e.g., a division or a brigade) must be charged with this activity, and that fighting force must be integrated into the plans for the operation or the war as a whole (e.g., its role in the operational plan, the boundaries of its sector, stages, and the exchange of liaison officers).¹³

Securing the area: According to this model, the humanitarian order of battle would move in the wake of the fighting forces (the ranking

would be determined in the operational plans), and would in practice be the rear guard of the assault forces, and at times serve as their available reserves. Thus, the humanitarian aid would, like the fighting effort, be an operational tool increasing the operational freedom of movement of our troops by releasing fighting troops to fight at the line of contact.

The function of the effort to secure the area would be to enable the success of the aid efforts. Therefore, it must be capable of undertaking fighting actions such as cleansing pockets of resistance and establishing a secure perimeter around the centers for humanitarian assistance, e.g., opening aid corridors, checkpoints, and water supply areas; ensuring food distribution and medical attention; regulating government affairs; providing escorts and repair services (electricity, water, etc.). Likewise, securing the area also entails responsibility for maintaining the logistical axis passing through the humanitarian brigade sector.

The humanitarian effort must comprise two separate and subordinate efforts: *the immediate humanitarian aid*, relying mostly on the efforts of the fighting forces (e.g., medical treatment): its function would be to mitigate civilian “shell shock” somewhat.¹⁴ Because of the movement of forces and the chaos of the fighting, the division or brigade must be organized and ready to provide this type of assistance (e.g., enhanced medical aid, water, food).¹⁵ The second effort, *principal humanitarian aid*, must be constructed of designated aid modules (e.g., water, food, medicine, governance, damage repair). The commander of this effort would have the rank of a regiment commander, and every assistance module would have a combat commander, a control staff, and a security unit. The command and control of this effort is critical, and demands considerable thought and attention.

Routine effort: The duration of the operation would be the most influential factor and condition. The longer the operation, the more effective the ability of integrating humanitarian efforts would be. Here in practice is where the work gets done to prove that the “Israeli Satan” is actually the good neighbor on the other side of the fence who is interested in seeing that “the wicked suffer and the righteous rejoice” (history teaches that this phrase has become a tactical strategic method in limited wars).¹⁶ The more the effort succeeds, so do the chances that some part of it would be internalized and trickle into this soil, so steeped in hatred.¹⁷

Internalization effort: One of the declared objectives of a comprehensive war, and certainly of a limited war, is to bring about a change in one's security consciousness and determine that the civilian populations are not part of the fighting. Some of the change must come from below, from the population under attack (on both sides of the war),¹⁸ and one way of accomplishing this is by humanitarian operational assistance. Internalization is the effort intended to instill in the civilian populations and its leaderships a significant political message by means of humane accomplishments, assuming or hoping that any activity on behalf of civilian welfare carries relatively great added value in decreasing popular support for terrorism.

Rehabilitation effort:¹⁹ Rehabilitation is a humanitarian activity of great political value and its importance cannot be overstated. At the end of the fighting, human and governmental chaos abound. Experience indicates that in a struggle for the hearts and minds of people, the institution charged with helping the civilian population reconstruct its life is of tremendous significance.²⁰ The Iranians did this in Lebanon through Hizbollah, and this fostered the strong bond between the organization and the residents of the south, as if saying: We will be the ones to fix the severe damage inflicted by the enemy. Thus using funds from Iran, Hizbollah built multi-faceted welfare and support organizations, and this explains to a great extent the ongoing bond that exists between the population of southern Lebanon and the organization. Indeed this link has grown even closer, despite the great suffering inflicted on these civilians over the years.

Conclusion

It is a paradox that the many skills and capabilities allowing a military force to conduct violent firefights with great success are the very skills and capabilities making it possible for the same military force to help masses of suffering people. The obligation to treat casualties, to feed people, to protect them, and to lead them from one place to another while ensuring their safety and maintaining order and discipline – this obligation is an obvious requirement in the context of military work. However, the transition from fighting to extending humanitarian aid is not obvious at all.

The IDF is capable of rendering humanitarian assistance, and has done so in the past, including in Operation Cast Lead. However, that which was done as the last resort of war rather as an organic part of war at times detracted from the successful results of the war. In a changing world, where all contribute and influence, it is necessary to step up the level in thinking and handling of the humanitarian aspect. The only way to make that leap is to understand and internalize that humanitarian efforts are an inseparable part of war – they are war efforts in every sense.

Notes

- 1 Yigal Eyal, *The First Intifada* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1998), p. 161.
- 2 See Ynet, January 18, 2009, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's speech on the Operation Cast Lead ceasefire: "The methods used by Hamas have no place in any civilized society. Hamas arrayed its military forces in crowded residential neighborhoods, operated from within the civilian population, which served as human shields, and operated under the cover of mosques, schools, and hospitals, while turning the Palestinian population into hostages for its terrorist activities, all on the understanding that Israel, as a nation with the highest values, would not react"; see also the chief of staff's letter at the conclusion of Operation Cast Lead, Ynet, January 18, 2009: "We have no quarrel with the residents of Gaza. Our enemies are Hamas and the other terrorist groups who turned their own people into human shields and hostages, and who spewed fire and death out of their people's homes, schools, hospitals, and mosques. Hamas bears responsibility for the results and the suffering and hardships imposed on its people."
- 3 See Bing West, *Without Glory* (Hebrew translation; IDF Conceptual Lab and the Ministry of Defense, January 2009), p. 30: "The situation develops to a classical guerilla system, far from over, and the war in Iraq continues as an insurgency."
- 4 David Ben-Gurion, *The Vision and the Way* (Tel Aviv: Israel Workers' Party, 1951), Vol. I, p. 217.
- 5 The Winograd Commission Report, p. 104: "Steve Hadley called the head of the staff the evening before next morning's meeting with the secretary of state. Mr. Hadley made clear that the subject of humanitarian assistance took precedence over the question of how Israel was viewed by the international community." Ibid., p. 106: "The American secretary of state arrived for a short visit to Lebanon and Jerusalem; she said that the primary purpose of the visit was to make sure that humanitarian assistance was getting through to Lebanon." Ibid., p. 107: "The secretary of state...asked the prime minister in any case to make sure that there were 'humanitarian corridors' within and to Lebanon." Ibid., p. 133: "The secretary of state made reference to the humanitarian issue and said that the mechanism was

not functioning properly.” Ibid., p. 151: “Mr. Hadley initiated a telephone conversation with his colleague about the humanitarian situation. According to him, an American team that was following up on the subject came away with distressing findings...including the IDF’s strict policy in terms of movement through the humanitarian corridors.”

- 6 *Maariv*, January 19, 2009: “If we make a simple arithmetical calculation, if we examine the statistics published by the Ministry of Health, if we assess the damage I saw with my own eyes, and add to that the losses of Hamas and those of the Israeli army, we will come to the following conclusion: the Israeli army won. Hamas won. The Palestinian people were defeated”; see also Pinhas Wolf, Walla! News editor, January 25, 2009: “In his speech, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert referred to the possibility that IDF officers would be tried in international courts for war crimes. ‘Israel embarked on the operation as its last resort, after we exhausted every other effort to achieve an end to the rocket fire. Terrorist organizations thought that Israel would learn to restrain itself, so now they’re trying to even the score with the country, and the international court is one of the major arenas for doing so. Through moral acrobatics, they’re trying to turn the aggressor into the victim, and the victim into the aggressor’”; see *Haaretz*, March 8, 2009: according to Olmert, “the ceasefire agreement Israel accepted in June 2008 was vague as per the request of the minister of defense; there was nothing orderly, just vagueness. Now I didn’t want this to repeat itself and first of all, I wanted our conditions to be accepted. This time too the minister of defense preferred to keep things vague. If the ceasefire achieved anything it was to raise international support for Operation Cast Lead.” Olmert said that it was necessary to take advantage of using the leverage created by the operation in Gaza in order to promote the issue of releasing Gilad Shalit from captivity. “What the minister of defense is really suggesting here is to say that there was no need for the operation and to put aside all of his reservations because we are not using what we achieved to leverage it for the issue of Gilad Shalit and the issue of attaining calm in the south.”
- 7 From the Winograd Commission Report, p. 486: “We would like to note that upholding the laws of war of the international court and providing an effective response to humanitarian needs of civilian populations is not only a legal, moral, or ethical matter. These actions also have a political facet, and are likely to increase the chance that Israel’s military operation will enjoy international support and stamp of approval. Without a doubt, that is how it was in the Second Lebanon War”; see also the letter by Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon on the IDF doctrine of purity of arms: “to know how to win and still remain human beings.”
- 8 West, *Without Glory*, p. 75.
- 9 See the prime minister’s speech, Ynet, January 18, 2009: “In the course of the operation, the State of Israel demonstrated a great deal of sensitivity in using its forces in order to prevent to the extent possible harm to the civilian

- population not involved with terrorism. In cases of doubt, lest harming terrorists would also harm innocent civilians, we elected not to act. There are not many nations that would have acted as we did."
- 10 Winograd Commission Report, Chapter 14, p. 481, on Israel's conduct according to international law: "Humanitarian law is a system of norms that is part of international law and applies to Israel as it does to any other nation."
 - 11 Winograd Commission Report, p. 86: "The European ministers acknowledged the right of Israel to act in self defense, but stipulated that it is critical that such actions occur while paying attention to humanitarian elements and avoiding harming civilian infrastructures." Ibid., p. 92: "The secretary of state called the prime minister and thanked him for opening the 'corridors' to humanitarian aid into Lebanon." Ibid., p. 101: The secretary of state: "Israel must make greater efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in Lebanon." Ibid., p. 491.
 - 12 Winograd Commission Report, p. 482: "In addition, the parties to the fighting must allow humanitarian assistance to reach civilian populations located in the areas of fighting." See also Robert Scales, *Certain Victory in the Desert* (in Hebrew translation), History Department, March 1997, pp. 379-407.
 - 13 See Scales, *Certain Victory in the Desert*, p. 385: "On March 23, the 7th Corps accepted the task of holding the entire area conquered in southern Iraq... The initiative in al-Slaman, born of necessity, was not meant to serve as a permanent solution." At the end of April and at the beginning of May, the 1st Brigade of the 3rd Armored Division noted that it had dealt with 23,000 refugees and distributed more than 979,000 meals, 173,000 boxes of bottled water, and 1,136,000 gallons of water. In addition, doctors and combat medics had treated more than 23,000 people.
 - 14 I.e., in operations of short duration; see the prime minister's speech, Ynet, January 18, 2009: "During the operation itself, we undertook extensive and persistent activities to see to the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population. We allowed the transfer of equipment, food, and medical supplies in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis."
 - 15 I.e., in more extended operations (such as Defensive Shield, the First and Second Lebanon Wars). See Scales, *Certain Victory in the Desert*, p. 382: "The mission of supplying the many refugees with basic supplies became a heavy burden for the regiment... The regiment commander asked for and received help with food and water from the forward maintenance regiment." Ibid., p. 380: "From February 28 until March 28, when the 82nd Paratrooper Division left Iraq, doctors and medics treated more than 1,200 refugees suffering from various ailments, from disease to bullet wounds. The paratroopers served more than 35,000 meals. Trucks and helicopters brought hundreds of displaced Kuwaitis back to their homes."

- 16 See the prime minister's speech, Ynet, January 18, 2009: "We have no quarrel with the people of Gaza. We view the Gaza Strip as a part of the future Palestinian state with which we hope to live as good neighbors, and we hope and wish for the day that the vision of two states will become a reality."
- 17 Distancing the population and concentrating it in previously prepared centers may help the ability to internalize. See also West, *Without Glory*. In the operation to take Fallujah in Iraq, the army announced to the civilians that they should evacuate to points prepared in advance where they would receive humanitarian assistance until the end of the operation.
- 18 See Ynet, January 19, 2009: It seems that the residents of the Gaza Strip are now interested less in the organization's violent ideology and more in rebuilding their lives after an operation that caused significant damage to cities and towns throughout the area. "They must stop now, they have to think how to arrive at a real ceasefire, open the borders, and bring money into the Gaza Strip to be used to compensate those who have to rebuild their homes," said a resident of the city.
- 19 See note 16, the prime minister's comment: "In addition, I have decided to appoint Minister Yitzhak Herzog, the Minister of Welfare and Social Services, to spearhead this effort, and this evening the Cabinet instructed him to make every effort to prepare a comprehensive plan so that in the next few days it will be possible to provide a fitting and all-encompassing response to the needs of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip." See also Ynet, January 18, 2009: "It was decided to hold a 'humanitarian summit' to be hosted by Egypt in the next few days. The leaders of Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Spain, and Turkey, as well as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met...in order to coordinate a joint policy on the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, after three weeks of fighting inside the Gaza Strip and in its surroundings. Israel was not invited to the summit." See also *Yediot Ahronot – Hacalcalist* Economic Supplement, January 21, 2009: "Does Israel have to initiate a comprehensive international program to rebuild Gaza," pp. 4-8; see Ynet, February 5, 2009: "The prime minister instructed that NIS 175 million in bills be transferred to Gaza. After the fighting, Israel continues to infuse the Gaza Strip with cash."
- 20 Ibid. Prof. Shaul Mishal: "from the ruins [of Operation Cast Lead], a different Hamas may emerge, an organization with which it may be possible to conduct a dialogue, and then it may be possible to promote even grandiose economic initiatives"; see also Ynet, January 22, 2009: Hamas government spokesman Tahar a-Nunu stated at a press conference that "starting Sunday, the government will pay ₪4,000 to homeowners whose homes were completely destroyed, ₪2,000 to homeowners whose homes were partially damaged, ₪1,000 to the family of every *shahid*, and ₪500 to every person injured." In his estimation, the total sum of compensation would come to \$35-40 million.

Trapped Between Maneuver and Firepower: Hamas and Hizbollah

Giora Segal

Hizbollah and Hamas are guerilla and terrorist organizations that in less than 20 years have developed into quasi-governmental entities. They have done so in a relatively smaller area than is usually the case in guerilla warfare, and in the case of the Gaza Strip, primarily in urban areas suited to this type of fighting. Militarily, Hizbollah is a big brother of Hamas: Hizbollah is more experienced, knowledgeable, and self-assured. Nonetheless, Hizbollah is learning from Hamas' conduct during Operation Cast Lead and is responding according to its own interests.

The primary military threat that Hamas and Hizbollah pose for Israel is the ongoing launching of rockets and heavy mortar bombs, with varying ranges and impact, directly at the nation's citizens. The military forces of Hamas and Hizbollah add a secondary, parallel threat to the classical arsenal of guerilla and terrorist activities along Israel's borders and within its territory: explosives of various kinds, sniper fire, ambush shootings, car bombs, attempts to kidnap soldiers and civilians, and use of suicide bombers wearing explosive belts.

For many years Iran and Syria have provided Hamas and Hizbollah with military knowledge, offensive and defensive doctrines, and expertise with explosives and the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices. The organizations have received operational advice, instruction in methods of manufacturing arms, training in methods of warfare and use of armaments, training of personnel designated for specific jobs such as anti-tank missile operators and explosives experts, training of rocket

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operators in range finding, sighting, and preparing launch locations and means of various kinds, and more. Hamas' and Hizbollah's force buildup have occurred in an organized process and as dictated by operational needs, e.g., the rocket systems and capability of defending the area, including the use of tunnels for fighting and smuggling.

Israel's use of military force in the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead set many political processes in motion,¹ which would largely have not occurred had it not been for the use of the ground forces. In the final analysis, these political processes shortened the duration of the fighting because of the direct threat that the ground maneuver created to fundamental components of the organizations, be they military force or other elements on which they rely. Some of the political moves were defined as objects of the war and the operation, but most of them were impossible to anticipate, as is usually the case in the wake of a war. Had the IDF used firepower only and not undertaken a ground maneuver, Hamas would have had the opportunity to hide, resort to its defenses, and use its own military force freely and without constraints. Hamas would also have been able to display its fighting, moves, and soldiers to the media, and produce an impressive show of heroics notwithstanding the pressure of the air strikes against which, as we know, it was prepared. The ground maneuver that took place following the air strikes greatly disrupted Hamas' plans.

The IDF's use of force in Operation Cast Lead, namely the concentrated blows of firepower followed by the ground maneuver, constituted a real threat to Hamas' military force. An analysis of the battles, particularly the disorganized withdrawal of Hamas' military force from the battlefield and from direct contact, leads to this assessment. The Hamas army failed in the very task for which it had prepared, defense of its territory.

This essay examines why the ground maneuver, in conjunction with a disproportionate degree of firepower, was the primary factor in creating a real threat to Hizbollah and Hamas. In addition, the essay explains the logic of the ground maneuver and the basic conditions demanded for its effective use.

Area, Defense, Offense, and Guerilla Fighting

The Gaza Strip is a delimited area surrounded on all sides, with no significant topographical depth. Over the years Hamas made meticulous

preparations to defend this territory by preparing the ground for fighting, organizing command and control mechanisms, and preparing arms, intelligence, and other essential components of the organization's military wing. The painstaking organization of the area, the fortifications, the tunnels, the positions, and the explosive devices are all evidence of the system's permanence and Hamas' intention to defend the area. Such defense is not typical of guerilla warfare, and indicates that the defender is interested in holding the ground over time and views it as critical to its existence. This basic principle of defense doctrine has been around since the dawn of history, and does not require further rationale in terms of seeing the need and vitality of the land for Hamas. Thus, the territory – the land of the Gaza Strip – is vital to Hamas' existence and functioning, and is the reason it has invested significant resources of its military wing in defending the land. The offensive element of the military wing is busy with rocket launch capabilities. Therefore, when the IDF attacked the Hamas defense by means of a concentrated effort combining firepower and the ground maneuver, Hamas' military power was unable to withstand the attack and fulfill its designated function – except for the cells launching the rockets, and even their output was smaller than anticipated (about 30 rockets launches per day, as opposed to the 100 expected; towards the end of the operation the number was down to 16 per day).

A similar phenomenon took place during the ground invasion in the Second Lebanon War. There, neither Hizbollah cells nor forces succeeded in defending their positions, even though the IDF did not concentrate efforts against them beyond the battalion level. Nonetheless, Hizbollah's rocket launching capabilities were much higher until the end of the war, about 200 heavy rockets per day on average, a capability that indicates an organization much stronger militarily than Hamas.

The “Concentrated Effort” Principle

There is nothing new in the operational requirement to use disproportional force.² The idea is an expression of Israel's security concept as defined by David Ben-Gurion in 1949 in *The Army and Defense*: a “strike force” used by Israel as it embarks on war, using all its potential and full force. The derivative of this idea in the IDF's fighting doctrine is the “concentrated

effort” and use of disproportional force to attain a significant operational achievement, a knock-out rather than a victory on points.

The IDF strengthened its deterrence through fighting on the basis of certain principles of war, in particular the notion of concentrated effort. In practice, the phenomenon of war is characterized by the use of disproportionate force. For the sake of comparison, we may look to the use of the “shock and awe” tactic by the Americans in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad in 2003. Disproportional fire lasting around three weeks was used, after which a large ground maneuver was launched.

The difficulty of military action requiring the concentration of operational effort among a civilian population requires that the battlefield be prepared in advance. Preparing targets to be attacked and determining the objectives of the ground maneuver, while making every effort to minimize the harm to civilians and the damage to residences and the greater environment, and warning civilians in advance about the battle zone were all part of IDF activity³ during Operation Cast Lead. This does not fully prevent damage to the environment and harm to civilians, but because this was an extensive war or military operation, international law allows a nation to defend its citizens when war is forced on it, as happened in the Second Lebanon War and in Operation Cast Lead. After undertaking all of these actions, applying disproportional force is a matter of fighting method. These considerations are measured against the risk to Israeli soldiers and commanders who, in the case of war and according to the IDF’s code of ethics, must risk their lives for a worthy goal. Stopping the missiles and terrorist attacks against Israel was defined by the Israeli government as a “worthy” goal.

The concentration of effort in Operation Cast Lead was conducted according to IDF fighting doctrine, and thus the term “disproportional” must be understood as the concentration of effort by anyone analyzing Operation Cast Lead. The ground maneuver is part of a maneuver including air strikes, ground maneuver, and firepower, intended to deceive and destabilize the guerilla and terrorist organizations. The air strikes on December 28, 2008 took the enemy by complete surprise, as the Gaza Strip had never before absorbed an attack of such force. The ground maneuver that followed, combined with direct auxiliary fire supporting the maneuver, deepened the surprise and created a dilemma for Hamas. It was required to act under the pressure of the advancing

maneuver. Even if Hamas was surprised and seriously harmed by the opening air strike, the intervening time allowed it to regroup; even operational passivity was considered regrouping by Hamas, because its survivability was determined at this stage by the very nature of war and not necessarily as the result of the existence of a prepared program.

The ground maneuver brought the IDF directly to Hamas' doorstep, and in Hamas' view the continuation of the maneuver in its early stages threatened Hamas' existence. Hamas was incapable of stopping the IDF's advancing maneuver. For a guerilla and state-sanctioned terrorist organization like Hamas, the significance was a choice between withdrawing and hiding or fighting and being destroyed. Hamas fought in groups rather than in battalions; it broke into groups and small units, and did not stand up operationally to the IDF's concentrated effort.⁴ It withdrew to places where the IDF did not advance, while making extensive use of its ability to melt into the local population and hide in its underground system of tunnels. This greatly contributed to its survival.

The end of the operation questioned Hamas' chances of continuing to operate militarily. Its future existence is in real danger if it faces another IDF ground maneuver of similar force. Hamas consists of terrorists and advisors who understand doctrine and force buildup, even if that force is terrorism and guerilla fighting. There is no way to construct a force that can withstand a maneuver of this kind while in hiding, and there are no land resources in the Gaza Strip that allow for the training of such a force at any measurable level. Assuming that the IDF maintains its maneuvering capability in the future, which is a reasonable assumption, Hamas, Hizbollah, and their supporters may begin to understand the size of the problem before them.

Destabilizing the Enemy

Operation Cast Lead demonstrated that air strikes and ground maneuver play a decisive role in destabilizing Hamas and Hizbollah military power.⁵ Hizbollah's military force did not lose its equilibrium during the Second Lebanon War, nor did Hamas' military force during Operation Cast Lead, but had the ground maneuver continued and reached Hamas' essential areas in the depths of its deployment within constructed areas, this would have happened. This is a defined and proven military tactical process.

Loss of equilibrium results from the operational capability demonstrated by the ground maneuver and direct contact with the military forces of Hamas and Hizbollah. In the end, both Hamas and Hizbollah organized their military forces in defined areas and in defensive positions: the ground maneuver capability to operate in direct contact with the enemy on the heels of an air strike and with the simultaneous application of fire deep into the Gaza Strip against all the Hamas defenses turned the ground maneuver of Operation Cast Lead into the decisive component.

One of the definitions of decision is the enemy's loss of the ability to operate effectively against you; Clausewitz also stresses the will to fight, by which he means the loss of the will to fight by the force arrayed against you and not the loss of the organization's capability to remain a terrorist organization.⁶ This is an important distinction, because the achievement required of the ground maneuver is not to earn a decision against Hamas or Hizbollah, rather to earn a decision against its operational military force, something definitely possible that depends on the way the attacking military force is operated. It is much harder to gain a decision, especially tactically, against a guerilla organization because of the very nature of guerilla warfare. However, that is not the situation with Hamas or Hizbollah. They have not been guerilla organizations for a long time, rather organizations that operate organized military forces in areas set up for warfare while retaining some irregular tactics. The commander of Division 35, one of the formation commanders of the ground maneuver, accurately describes this outcome from his own experience and the experience of his forces in battle:

The force we applied in the attack did not let them use the means they were most prepared for. Even the noise before the entrance: when you hear noise like that, you don't want to be the enemy on the other side. It shook the entire area. Fighter planes, helicopters, artillery, tanks. I think that's what the enemy was feeling. We came at them from unexpected directions and with such intensity that the terrorists did not stay behind to set off the booby traps they had prepared for us. Wherever we came, there were virtually no people left. The only ones who remained were the very wealthy families who were afraid of abandoning their property, or the very poor who didn't have anywhere to go. The terrorists who had taken over the homes abandoned by

the civilians left explosive devices with wires running from them, ready to set off, in every home. There were RPGs ready to launch, rifles on the ground. Real arms depots, but the intensity with which we entered drove them off. They didn't stick around to use any of it.⁷

This description by the division commander explains what loss of equilibrium looks like on the ground. Such experiences recurred in other formations as well, to the point that it emerges as an actual phenomenon.

Hamas felt the loss of equilibrium during Operation Cast Lead, and managed to catch its breath only with the end of the pressure leveled by the ground maneuver. The operational results described below, together or in part, indicate operational destabilization. The meaning of operational destabilization of the military forces of Hamas and Hizbollah is measurable and quantifiable:

- a. The loss of the organizations' operational command capability – the ability to operate a military force, to launch high trajectory fire, and to defend the villages and towns.
- b. The loss of operational capability in components such as the orders of battle, commanders, and arms.
- c. The loss of trust between commanders of varying ranks at the operational echelon of the organizations.
- d. The loss of cohesion in the organizations' operational units as the result of direct pressure from the attacking forces in the battlefield.

In Operation Cast Lead, the loss of Hamas' equilibrium began only after the ground maneuver, and was expressed primarily by the inability to perform in the amount of time defined; the inability to use primary means of warfare, including the explosives and subterranean systems prepared in advance; the inability to use reserves; and the inability to control the forces under its command. Hamas' fear of being destabilized affected its political action, and one should not be impressed by Khaled Mashal's demonstration of defiance in Syria. In many cases, the gap between Mashal's position and the situation on the ground was muted only thanks to Israel's decision not to conquer the whole of the Gaza Strip, and to be content with merely deterring the organization.

The ground maneuver made a decisive contribution to Hamas' inability to achieve its operational goals. Hamas did not cause serious damage to the IDF or the home front. The end of the ground maneuver

at a relatively early stage allowed Hamas' survival. Hamas remained in control: it was damaged seriously but not fatally.

Conclusion

Hizbollah and Hamas have changed from terrorist and guerilla organizations to governmental, political, and social entities. Their military forces became institutionalized as a conglomerate⁸ of terrorism, guerilla, and regular military force. Subsequently, the territory – the rural and urban landscapes – became a critical component of their comprehensive activity in general and their governance in particular. The conglomerate of institutionalized military force has melded well with the territory component and attempts to implement military methods from the Iranian and Syrian schools. Southern Lebanon, territory controlled by Hizbollah, is where the organization undertakes most of its social, political, and military activities, and the Gaza Strip is the territory where Hamas undertakes the political, state, social, economic, and military components of its governance. The IDF ground maneuver and disproportional fire and its support components in Hamas and Hizbollah territory endangered their ability to exercise control. Had Israeli forces remained in the territory over an extended period of time, they could have pushed Hamas' achievements back many years, to the point of endangering the existence of critical components, such as the military force itself.

Deterrence versus Hizbollah in Operation Cast Lead and setting in motion political processes concerning the Gaza Strip following the campaign stem from the severe damages and real threat created against the continued existence of the territory of Hamas government, i.e., the Gaza Strip, its military force, and the supporting civilian infrastructures. The eight years of attrition that preceded Operation Cast Lead, characterized by rocket launches and retaliatory fire, and local operations by infantry and the armored corps did not set off processes on the scale of those set in motion by the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead. The eight-year war of attrition that preceded Operation Cast Lead did not pose any sort of threat against the Gaza territory and the organizations. In fact, the terrorist organizations – Fatah and later on Hamas – enjoyed a large measure of freedom of action within their territory both for governing and for launching terrorist and guerilla operations against

Israel, including high trajectory fire and ground operations. The IDF force in Operation Cast Lead, through the concentration of air strikes and the ground maneuver that followed, constituted a real threat against the existence of Hamas' military force. Although it had prepared extensively for this contingency, the Hamas army made a failed attempt at standing the ground.

The situation is similar with regard to Hizbollah. The bombing of Beirut alone – without creating a real threat against southern Lebanon, one of Hizbollah's most important power bases and the place where their territory directly abuts Israel – would not have brought about the deterrence that was tested during Operation Cast Lead. Control of its semi-state in southern Lebanon and direct contact with Israel's northern border are critical Hizbollah territorial assets. The measure of deterrence with regard to Hizbollah – stemming from the concern of losing southern Lebanon, the organization's largest home base – stems from Hizbollah's understanding that the Israeli army would conquer southern Lebanon in any war against it. Preparations against a ground maneuver are proof that this is the case. The complementary measure stems from the concern about disproportional air strikes throughout all of Lebanon that might demote Hizbollah from the status of Lebanon's savior to that of Lebanon's destroyer.

From the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead one may conclude that an effective ground maneuver in an asymmetrical confrontation requires at least four basic operational conditions for continuous application over the duration of the ground maneuver:

- a. Disproportional operational capability of a ground maneuver in conjunction with air strikes at any required depth in the area of operations, and the capability to concentrate and operate the force as quickly as possible and move the fighting onto Hamas and Hizbollah territory.
- b. Maintaining permanent and continuous multi-organizational capabilities for defending the home front⁹ (the IDF Home Front Command, Ministry of Defense, local government and mayors as the local government commanders in time of war or operations, active anti-missile defense capabilities).
- c. Regular continuous capability to apply humanitarian operational efforts on a large scale during and after the fighting.

- d. Regular continuous capability of communications and public relations material for use during and after the fighting.

As an operational and strategic lesson of the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead, it behooves the IDF to maintain its capability to maneuver on the ground, at any depth required, against future potential asymmetrical threats. The defense establishment of the State of Israel and the IDF must enable basic operational and strategic conditions for ongoing ground fighting. Hence the operational importance of home front defense; humanitarian assistance efforts; and ongoing communications efforts, which are strategic conditions that create internal and external legitimacy and most of all, the time required to complete the operational campaign.

The military force of Hizbollah and Hamas – each in its own way – has consolidated into a conglomerate of a military organization that uses guerilla tactics; applies terrorist and guerilla efforts; uses methods of warfare based on universal military doctrines such as defense and offense with firepower, retreat, and holding; organizes the area in accordance with its doctrine; uses methods of military instruction in military schools; and more. This is the reason that these organizations are caught between the proverbial rock and hard place – maneuver and firepower. Hamas and Hizbollah have become large military organizations that have produced a vast number of objectives and exposed themselves to growing and uncontrollable intelligence penetrations.

These factors explain why the ground maneuver in conjunction with disproportional air strikes creates the primary threat. The ground maneuver, an essential component in applying military force against Hamas and Hizbollah, is neither able nor required to terminate the existence of these organizations. Their deterrence in acting against Israel with their main force components, such as high trajectory fire and terrorism via different terrorist attacks over an extended period of time, is a significant achievement, one that may allow for the development of political conditions favorable to future settlements.

Notes

- 1 Oded Eran, "Operation Cast Lead: The Diplomatic Dimension," *Strategic Assessment* 11, no. 4 (2009): 13-17.
- 2 Gabriel Siboni, "Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War," *INSS Insight* 74, October 1, 2008.

"Israel does not have to be dragged into a war of attrition with Hizbollah. Israel's test will be the intensity and quality of its response to incidents on the Lebanese border or terrorist attacks involving Hizbollah in the north or Hamas in the south. In such cases, Israel again will not be able to limit its response to actions whose severity is seemingly proportionate to an isolated incident. Rather, it will have to respond disproportionately in order to make it abundantly clear that the State of Israel will accept no attempt to disrupt the calm currently prevailing along its borders. Israel must be prepared for deterioration and escalation, as well as for a full scale confrontation ... This approach is applicable to the Gaza Strip as well. There, the IDF will be required to strike hard at Hamas and to refrain from the cat and mouse games of searching for Qassam rocket launchers. The IDF should not be expected to stop the rocket and missile fire against the Israeli home front through attacks on the launchers themselves, but by means of imposing a ceasefire on the enemy."

- 3 Organized preparatory activity of the Department for International Law allowed the IDF, and will continue to allow it in the future, to prepare the battlefield in terms of its legal constraints. The fact that terrorism fights within civilian populations and uses them as human shields makes fighting harder but does not prevent it. Defining orderly operational procedures for staff work that carefully examines the fire targets and the ground maneuver objectives helps commanders fulfill their missions. It is important to understand that the operational response drives the legal requirement and not vice versa. In this matter, the IDF acts systematically and well, and in fact, the number of casualties among the civilians without this work would have been many times higher than the number reported.
- 4 In many cases Hamas cells fled the battlefield. This is similar to the phenomenon that occurred in the Second Lebanon War in every location that the IDF attacked Hizbollah terrorists directly. After the war, Hizbollah held an inquiry into the forces that fled.
- 5 A lack of operational equilibrium means that the force has no capability to function according to its plans and cannot put its missions into practice in an orderly manner. This does not mean that the force ceases to exist, but the fight for survival while lacking equilibrium outweighs dedication to the mission. This is an important step on the road to attaining a decision against the enemy or destroying it.
- 6 Yossi Yehoshua and Reuven Weiss, "So I Have No Dilemma," *Yediot Ahronot*, January 23, 2009. The commander of Division 35 during Operation Cast Lead testified in a newspaper interview after the end of the fighting: "There was no exaggeration in the descriptions ... There were tunnels, there were large explosive devices, there were booby traps such as a dummy of a Hamas fighter in front of an explosive device and a tunnel opening meant

for kidnapping soldiers. At the beginning, they deployed themselves like an army...From a squadron, we turned them into a collections of bands.”

7 Ibid.

8 A conglomerate is a cohesion of sedimentary rock containing different rock fragments in a geological environment. The metaphor is one of joining different components into a single body – a conglomerate of fragments difficult to identify in a body with substance that may be identified and characterized.

9 Meir Elran, “Operation Cast Lead and the Civilian Front: An Interim Assessment,” *INSS Insight* 87, January 5, 2009.